



INTEGRATED COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

DISTRICT OF WELLS

February 2025



PREPARED FOR:

District of Wells
4243 Sanders Avenue
PO Box 219
Wells, B.C. V0K 2R0

550 - 1090 Homer Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 2W9 | T: 604.235.1701

File: 1944.0005.02

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THE DISTRICT OF WELLS RESPECTFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES
THE COMMUNITY OF WELLS AND THE SURROUNDING
AREA IS LOCATED ON THE TRADITIONAL, ANCESTRAL,
AND UNCEDED TERRITORY OF THE SOUTHERN DAKELH
NATIONS: LHTAKO DENE NATION AND NORTHERN
SHUSWAP: XATŚŪLL FIRST NATION.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Action Planning. A key part of developing an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) that should be done annually to set short-term priorities for moving the community toward the vision and goals. Action planning can be done by committees or task forces working together or by the district. The action planning process involves reviewing past and newly recommended actions, evaluating the most current indicator data, assessing opportunities, reviewing the vision and goals, identifying potential actions, and prioritizing them.

Climate Change Mitigation. Actions to limit the magnitude or rate of long-term climate change, such as switching to renewable energy or improving energy efficiency.

Desired Outcomes. Statements describing what a community should be like in a more sustainable and successful future without explaining how to achieve the outcomes. This allows for creativity, innovation, and flexibility when identifying steps for achieving those outcomes.

Goals. High-level statements describing what a community must work on to achieve long-term success and sustainability. All goals are equally important and interdependent.

Indicators. Specific metrics used to track a community's progress toward its sustainability goals.

Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP). A long-term plan for a community that is developed in consultation with community members and addresses sustainability considerations across a wide range of topics, including economic prosperity, cultural vibrancy, social health, and protected ecosystems. An ICSP is not a regulatory document but may inform future policy. ICSPs are:

- Broad in scope
- Collaborative
- Future-oriented
- Integrated

Key Initiatives. Ideas for how to move a community toward its vision and goals. These ideas will be considered for implementation through planning and budgeting processes.

Official Community Plan (OCP). A comprehensive plan that guides land use, development, and infrastructure in a community.

Sustainability. Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Another definition is improving quality of life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems.

Targets. Measurable goals that help communities track progress toward their vision and goals.

Vision. A high-level picture of the desired future for a community. A vision should inspire action and be something most people can agree on.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The District of Wells' Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) is strategic framework to guide the community towards a sustainable and resilient future across the three pillars of sustainability: social, environmental, and economic. This Interim Report details the activities undertaken so far in the development of the ICSP, including extensive community engagement, visioning and focus area workshops, a best practice review, and a gap analysis.

The vision for Wells is to build a resilient, vibrant, and sustainable future for all. The plan focuses on six key areas:

1. **Indigenous Reconciliation:** Foster partnerships with Indigenous communities and prioritize reconciliation efforts.
2. **Housing and Development:** Ensure sustainable growth, affordability, and diverse housing options.
3. **Environment:** Protect natural resources, mitigate climate change, and maintain water quality.
4. **Community:** Enhance well-being, support arts and culture, and ensure safety and security.
5. **Economy and Financial Sustainability:** Promote economic diversity, workforce development, and financial sustainability.
6. **Infrastructure and Transportation:** Invest in infrastructure, improve transportation, and promote sustainable energy.

A gap analysis identifies the current state of Wells and the desired future state, highlighting areas needing improvement.

Next steps in developing Wells' ICSP are to identify actions and implementation strategies, including developing performance indicators, prioritizing short-, medium-, and long-term actions, and creating an operations checklist to guide decision-making. These next steps will involve continued collaboration with staff to ensure the ICSP is actionable and responsive to their needs and objectives.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The District of Wells, incorporated in 1998, is located at the end of Highway 26, about 78 kilometres east of Quesnel. With a small but dedicated population of approximately 220 residents, Wells is renowned for its charming historical buildings and murals that create a unique, creative atmosphere. Nestled amid wild spaces and forested slopes, Wells was initially developed in the 1930s as a planned mining town to support the Cariboo Gold Quartz Mine, which operated until 1967.

Today, Wells faces the challenges of being a small, end-of-the-road community, yet it thrives with resilience and adaptability. Although population growth has remained modest, the local economy has shifted towards tourism and the arts. Wells is a gateway to popular tourist destinations like Barkerville Historic Town & Park and Bowron Lakes Provincial Park. The town also boasts a vibrant arts scene, home to organizations, festivals, and year-round performance spaces such as Island Mountain Arts (established in 1977), the Sunset Theatre, and SARRAS (Stage and Recording, Retreat and Sanctuary). Remarkably, 14% of Wells' residents are employed in arts, culture, or recreation, compared to just 4% province-wide.

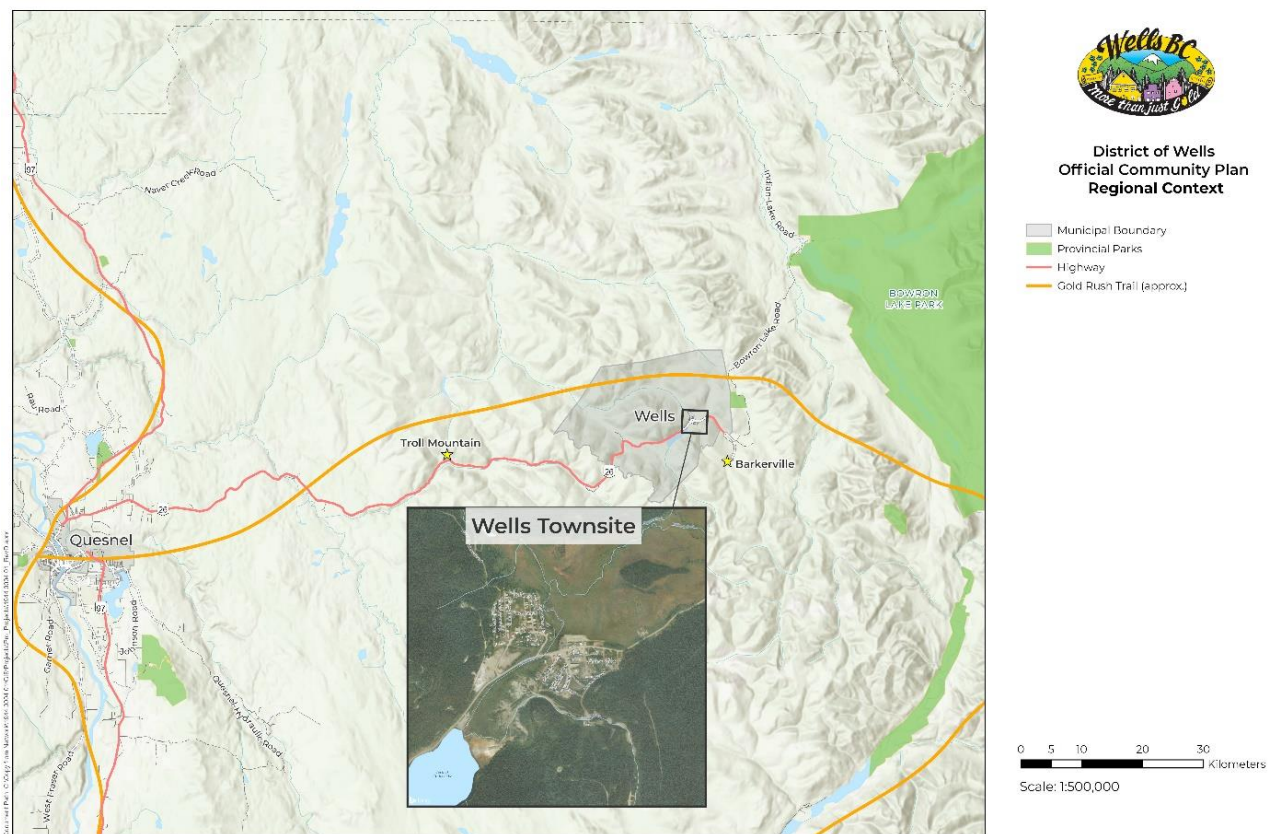


Figure 1: Regional Map

Gold mining has continued to be a part of the District of Wells, with placer miners consistently living and working in the District of Wells. In 2015, exploration began for the new gold mine, which has the potential to start a new chapter in the community's mining history. The project presents both opportunities and challenges for the local and regional community and, after a three-year Environmental Assessment Process, obtained an Environmental Certificate from the provincial government in October 2023. The Government of British Columbia is responsible for the mine project's environmental certificate and related permits.



Figure 2: Key Features of Wells

1.2 WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

The classic definition of sustainability comes from the United Nations' Brundtland Commission report, "Our Common Future." It defines sustainable development as ***"development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."***

The idea of sustainable development suggests achieving economic growth without damaging environmental or social systems is possible. In that sense, sustainability has three pillars (Figure 3):

1. Social Sustainability
2. Environment Sustainability
3. Economic Sustainability

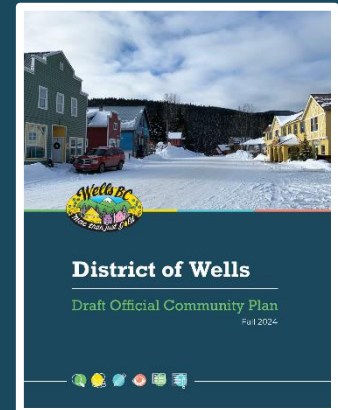
In addition, resiliency has also gained traction and importance in the community in the face of climate change. The District was heavily impacted by wildfire in 2017, highlighting the need to rethink how the community prepares and plans for a future with increasing risk from extreme weather events.



Figure 3: The Three Pillars of Sustainability

Wells' Official Community Plan: Developed with a Sustainability Lens

In 2024, Wells completed an update to its Official Community Plan (OCP). In the process of developing the OCP, residents of Wells expressed their passion for environmental stewardship and sustainability. People in the community dedicate their time and effort to a host of volunteer causes, often wearing multiple hats as they try to make the District the best place it can be. The words sustainable, self-sufficient, and sustaining were frequently used by respondents in the OCP survey. As a result, sustainability and resiliency became lenses through which the OCP was written. The Plan's guiding principles enhance the sustainability of Wells' environment, economy, and social cohesion.



1.3 WHAT IS AN ICSP?

An Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) is a long-term plan created with input from the community to help achieve sustainability goals across environmental, cultural, social, and economic dimensions. While they are not regulatory documents (e.g., zoning bylaws), an ICSP is a strategic document that builds on existing planning tools and is intended to be read alongside the Official Community Plan (OCP). It provides a framework for communities to plan how to meet the needs of current and future generations.

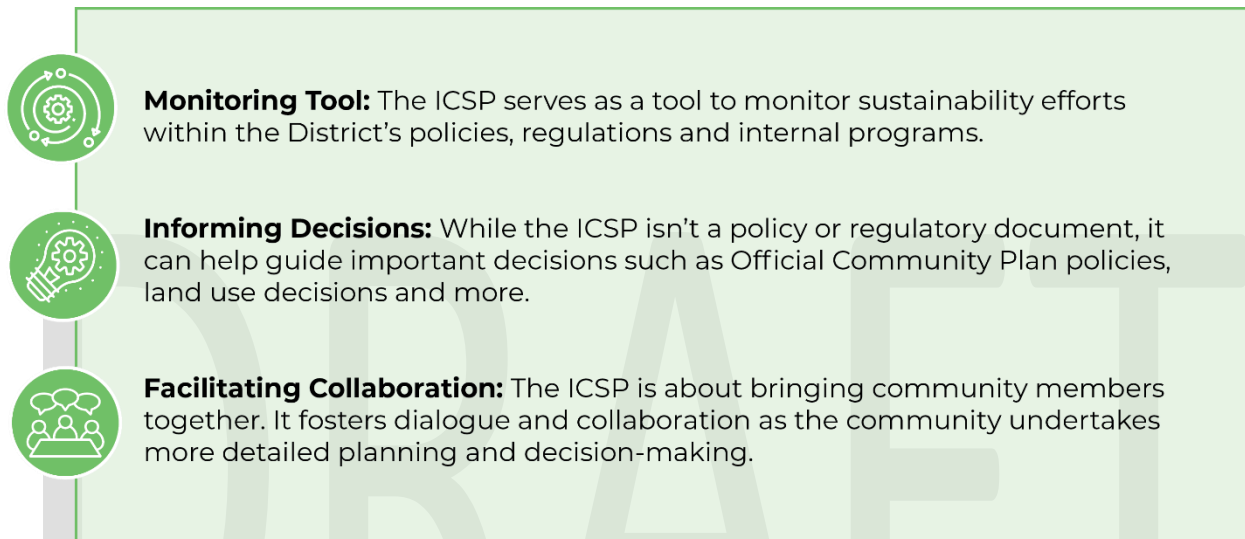


Figure 4: Community Functions Served by an ICSP

1.3.1 WHY CREATE AN ICSP?

Wells faces numerous challenges, including economic, environmental, and social issues, which are all interconnected. While these challenges are not necessarily unique to Wells, they need to be given special attention so that they can be addressed in context. Given the community's limited capacity, it is crucial to prioritize holistic decision-making to navigate these complexities effectively. The District cannot afford to make "either-or" choices, as all aspects are vital for its sustainable future.

An ICSP is essential for Wells because it provides a comprehensive framework that aligns various planning documents and suggested actions. By integrating economic, environmental, and social dimensions, the ICSP helps Wells make informed decisions that support long-term objectives. This approach ensures the community can address immediate concerns while planning for a sustainable and resilient future.

The ICSP serves as a strategic guide, complementing existing tools and plans such as the OCP. It offers a north star for decision-making, helping Wells achieve its vision of sustainability and resilience despite its challenges.

1.3.2 OBJECTIVES OF WELLS' ICSP

The ICSP for Wells aims to provide a comprehensive and strategic framework to guide the community – a north star for decision-making in support of Wells' long-term success, helping the community navigate its complexities effectively and build a sustainable and resilient future for current and future generations. The primary objectives of Wells' ICSP include:

- **Enhancing Economic Resilience:** By aligning various planning documents and actions, Wells can make informed economic decisions that support long-term objectives and ensure economic stability and growth.
- **Promoting Environmental Stewardship:** The ICSP emphasizes the importance of protecting and enhancing natural resources, reducing environmental impact, and preparing for the increasing risks associated with climate change.
- **Strengthening Social Cohesion:** The Plan seeks to foster a strong, inclusive, and connected community by addressing social issues and promoting cultural heritage and community well-being.
- **Integrating Planning Processes:** As a strategic guide, the ICSP complements existing tools and plans, such as the OCP, providing a cohesive direction for decision-making and ensuring consistency across various planning initiatives (Figure 5).

By prioritizing holistic decision-making and considering the interconnectedness of economic, environmental, and social dimensions, Wells' ICSP aims to navigate the community's complexities effectively and build a sustainable and resilient future for current and future generations.



Figure 5: Relationship Between Wells' ICSP and Other Planning Documents

1.4 DEVELOPING WELLS' ICSP

The ICSP was developed over a five-phase process, including community engagement, detailed analysis of existing policy infrastructure, best practice reviews and workshops with staff, and the planning advisory committee.

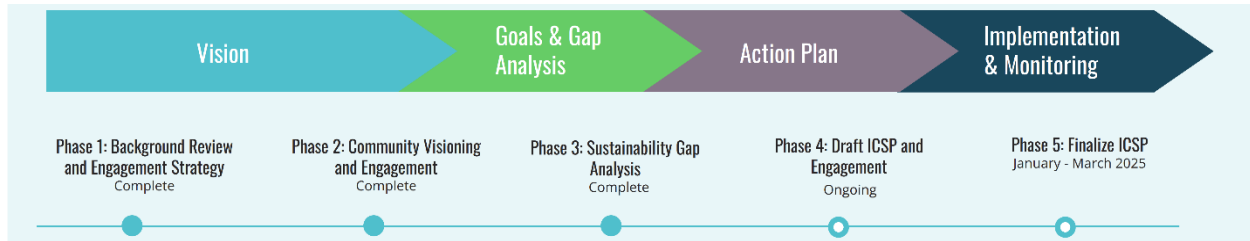


Figure 6: Overview of the Approach Taken to Develop Wells' ICSP

PHASE 1: PROJECT START-UP, BACKGROUND REVIEW, AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Complete

A background review of the District's relevant documents and data was conducted, informing the vision statement and focus areas. A Communications and Engagement Strategy was also developed to guide how the District would inform, consult, involve, and collaborate with First Nations, audiences, and stakeholders throughout the planning process. Lastly, a background review involving a scan of other ICSPs and documentation of best practices and key themes was completed.

PHASE 2: COMMUNITY VISIONING AND ENGAGEMENT

Complete

In this phase, engagement materials were developed, and web and social media presences were established to raise awareness about the ICSP process. Facilitated workshops with District staff and the Advisory Committee helped to develop a vision statement and identify focus areas. An online community survey was conducted to gather public input on the vision and focus areas. The vision statement and focus areas were finalized based on the feedback received.

Engagement Activity	Audience	Date(s)	Attendees/Responses
Workshop1 – Vision Statement and Focus Areas	Advisory Committee and Staff	February 8, 2024 (Staff) February 16, 2024 (Advisory Committee)	16 (Advisory Committee) 8 (Staff)
Community Survey	Community	January 30-October 9, 2024	18
Workshop2: Sustainability Gaps and Goals	Advisory Committee and Staff	November 26, 2024 (Staff and Advisory Committee sessions)	13 (Advisory Committee) 5 (Staff)
Community Open House	Community	November 26, 2024	2
Workshop3: Action Development	Advisory Committee and Staff	To be Scheduled	
Council Presentations	Community	November 26, 2024 Future Sessions TBD	

Figure 7: Summary of Engagement Activities



Figure 8: ICSP Workshop with Advisory Committee

PHASE 3: SUSTAINABILITY GAP ANALYSIS AND ENGAGEMENT

Complete

A sustainability gap analysis to identify gaps between the community's current reality and a sustainable future was conducted in Phase 3. To do this, the District of Wells' planning and decision-making framework documents were reviewed through the lens of the six focus areas and their associated goals, asking, "Where is Wells now?"

Meetings were held with District Staff and the Advisory Committee, and a community open house was held to engage stakeholders and gather feedback on the gap analysis findings and additional community perspectives on the survey questions asked in Phase 2. A "What We Learned" memo was prepared to summarize the engagement activities and key feedback received (**Appendix A**).

PHASE 4: ICSP INTERIM REPORT AND ENGAGEMENT

Ongoing

Phase 4 saw the development of a comprehensive draft of the ICSP using the information gathered from previous phases. This draft was reviewed with District of Wells staff and Council and the Advisory Committee to ensure it met the community's needs and expectations.

PHASE 5: FINALIZING ICSP AND PREPARING IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

All feedback from the public open house and previous workshops will be considered to develop a set of tangible (draft) actions to help the District meet its vision and goals for sustainability.¹ The project's final phase will finalize the actions and their implementation through workshops with District staff and the Advisory Committee. A workshop with District staff will be facilitated to develop actions and strategies to bridge the sustainability gaps for each focus area, brainstorm partnerships and investments, and prioritize actions in the short, medium, and long term. A similar workshop will be conducted with the Advisory Committee and Council.

Based on the priorities identified throughout the planning process, the implementation plan will be refined and confirmed to identify short-, medium-, and long-term projects. This plan will also identify key partners and proposed roles for key tasks, ensuring collaboration with several stakeholder groups and government agencies, including local First Nations.

Lastly, a final draft of the ICSP will be prepared, including any necessary updates to the final graphic structure and format, and care will be taken to ensure that the final plan is user-friendly and graphically appealing. An operations checklist will be developed to guide everyday decision-making in line with the ICSP's goals. Any outstanding revisions to the ICSP will be made, and the document will be submitted to District staff. A presentation on the final

¹ Note – the actions drafted in this interim report have not yet been workshopped with District staff and Council and the Advisory Committee. Further engagement is planned before actions are finalized.

project deliverable will be prepared and delivered to Council, signalling the completion of the project.

Additional details on the activities involved in Phase 5 are outlined in Section 7.0.

2.0 BACKGROUND REVIEW

Other communities in British Columbia have developed ICSPs. A best practice review of several ICSPs was completed to understand common themes and consider their relevance and meaning to Wells.

Best Practice Reviews

A "best practice review" is a step used to evaluate and identify effective methods for undertaking a project or initiative, with the aim of adopting them in one's own project or initiative. The term "best practice" can be misleading because it suggests there is no room for improvement and that one solution can work for all communities. Each community has unique needs and goals, making a single approach potentially ineffective. Additionally, best practice reviews done through desktop analysis might not accurately capture what is most effective since effectiveness is subjective and should consider the experiences of those involved in or affected by a project or initiative.

Therefore, in this review, "best practices" refers more to "common practices" and acknowledges that what works for other communities may not work for Wells.

The review considered ICSPs for Tofino, Powell River, Sechelt, and Strathcona. The following summarizes commonalities identified in the review. The Best Practice Review memo can be found in **Appendix B**.

Table 1: Summary of best practice review findings.

Component	Commonality
Vision Statement	<p>Each vision statement included the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location and Environment • Community Characteristics • Values <p>The following themes emerged from the vision statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Community Engagement and Collaboration • Environmental Stewardship • Quality of Life • Cultural and Social Values • Innovation and Creativity • Responsibility and Inclusivity • Resilience

Focus Areas	Communities identified similar focus areas, including housing and development, environment, community, economy, and transportation.
Monitoring and Evaluation	<p>Communities use monitoring and evaluation processes to provide transparency, inform decision-making, and enable continuous improvement. Common practices include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting back to the community continuously via a website/web-based platform • Reporting in the same format and using the same metric year after year to identify trends • Using existing processes/structures for monitoring and reporting • Developing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) targets <p>While differing at times by community context, communities use many of the same indicators related to actions in each focus area to measure progress.</p>



Figure 9: Wells Parcels

3.0 VISION

The vision statement is key to driving and consolidating future actions developed under this plan. The vision statement was developed through a careful review of existing information and community engagement and with key best practices for sustainability in mind. The Wells' ICSP vision is:

Building a resilient, vibrant, and sustainable future for all.

The following guides Wells in working toward its ICSP vision:

Our community: The District of Wells is a charming, quiet, and creative community, maintaining its reputation while leading the way in environmental stewardship. We prioritize a peaceful living environment and strive for a harmonious balance between our historic roots and modern innovations. Every decision, from governance to infrastructure, is filtered through a lens of artistry and creativity. Our small-town charm remains friendly and inviting while we work towards self-sustainability and safety for all residents, both personally and in the face of potential disasters.

Our places: We are committed to providing reliable infrastructure and ensuring convenient access for all residents while minimizing environmental impacts. With well-maintained roads and pathways, we prioritize connectivity and accessibility. Holistic planning for a growing population includes sustainable transportation solutions, addressing the needs of both residents and visitors alike. Additionally, we strive to enhance transportation options to support our seniors and ensure they can easily access essential services.

Our homes: We recognize the importance of affordable housing options for all residents, including seniors. We aim to address the challenges of untenable living costs by implementing innovative solutions that promote housing affordability without compromising quality. Through partnerships with local stakeholders and leveraging available resources, we are dedicated to creating diverse housing choices that meet the needs of our growing population while ensuring that seniors can age in place comfortably.

Our visitors: As a year-round destination, we offer a range of activities for residents and visitors alike while collaborating closely with Indigenous Nations and promoting sustainable growth. Our community is characterized by a healthy environment where wildlife thrives alongside residents. We aspire to be recognized as the best small community in Canada on every level, offering a getaway destination with easy access to nature and significant new activities year-round. Wells preserves its historical heritage while embracing innovation and sustainable practices, supporting solid local businesses and unique attractions.

4.0 FOCUS AREAS AND GOALS

Six focus areas were determined through engagement with District Staff, the Planning Advisory Committee and the community. These focus areas are designed to anchor the actions and implementation measures of the plan to serve the overall ICSP vision.

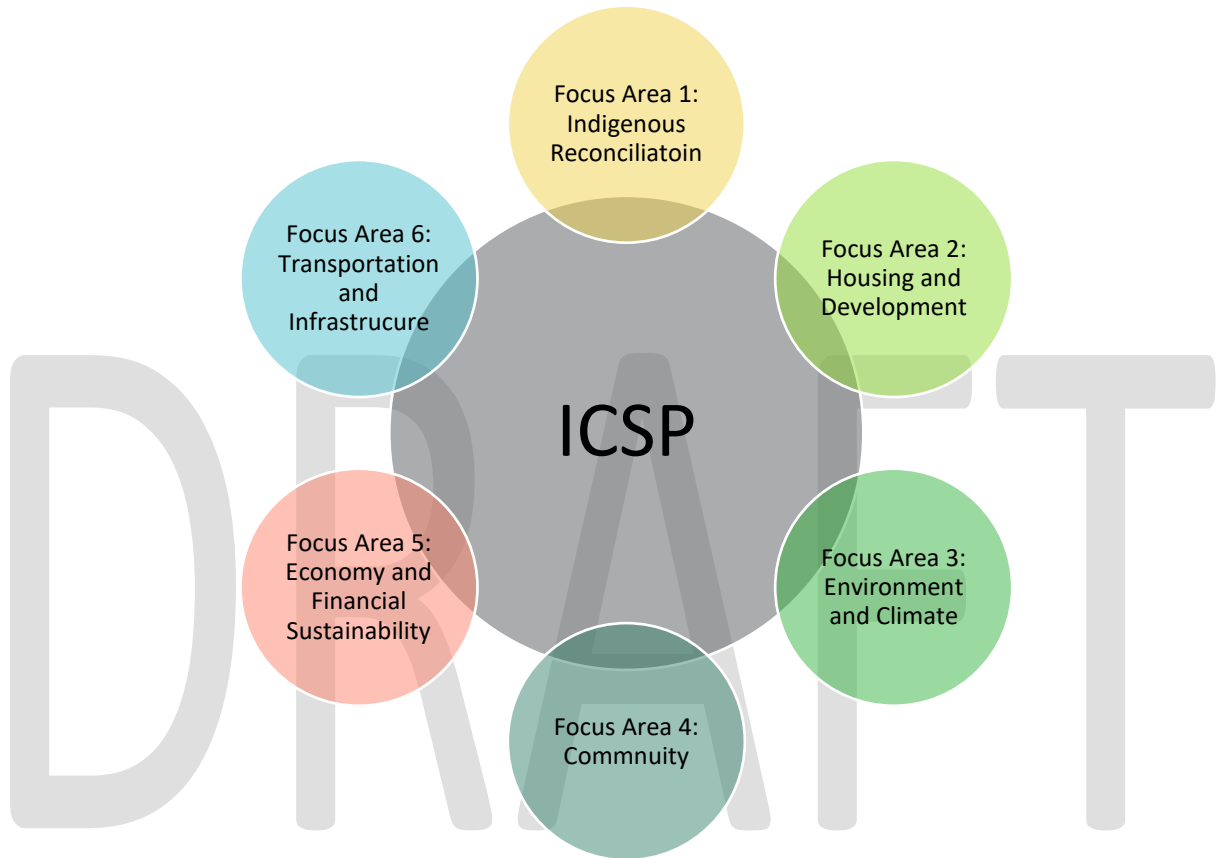


Figure 10: ICSP Focus Areas



FOCUS AREA 1: INDIGENOUS RECONCILIATION

Indigenous Reconciliation is a key priority for the District of Wells. It is an overarching focus area that is integrated into all other aspects of the ICSP and District policies, plans, and strategies. There are a lot of opportunities to build relationships with neighbouring Indigenous Nations on mutually beneficial projects and initiatives.

Advancing Indigenous Reconciliation is an important piece of the District's long-term sustainability. From a social lens, there is value in building and strengthening relationships with the District's Indigenous neighbours. In addition, there may be opportunities to collaborate on projects or initiatives that can advance environmental sustainability or enhance the local economy and create benefits from a financial sustainability lens.

GOALS

1. The District of Wells has partnerships with Indigenous Nations
2. There is reciprocal involvement in community, cultural, and celebratory events with Indigenous Nations.



FOCUS AREA 2: HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT

Housing and development are key areas of concern for the community. The need for more consolidated housing work was identified through the recent Official Community Plan (OCP) update and interim housing needs report processes. In addition, the development of the Cariboo Gold mining project has created some uncertainty over the full extent of what growth might look like in the community. As Wells already struggles to supply a sufficient amount of housing, it needs to be a focus to enhance future community sustainability. The limited availability of housing in the community also impacts the ability of the community to attract new residents. Enabling new housing may be one lever to help promote longer-term social and economic sustainability. In addition, this focus area includes a practical look at the District's current development processes and related bylaws.

To advance sustainability initiatives and ensure that Wells can thrive in the years to come, there will be work to be done to make progress towards more sustainable housing delivery and development processes. These link directly to social sustainability in that they can include different housing types for people with varying needs. Improvements to development processes can also impact the District's financial sustainability through staff time, reducing timelines and adding clarity to prospective developers.

GOALS

1. Development in Wells respects the area's history while embracing modern needs.
2. Wells' growth and development meets current needs without compromising future generations.
3. Housing options in Wells are available and affordable to meet the needs of those who need them.



FOCUS AREA 3: ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

Community members in Wells hold the natural environment in high regard. Residents prize their access to the outdoors and the opportunities for recreation and contemplation that they provide. In addition, community members keenly understand the importance of well-functioning environmental networks and how they contribute to overall ecosystem health. In recent years, the impacts of climate change have highlighted how unbalanced natural systems can impact the community. Wildfires and flooding have become seasonal threats to infrastructure and well-being in the community.

Environmental sustainability is a key pillar of sustainability in general. Its importance cannot be overstated. In addition, environmental sustainability is interlinked with social and financial sustainability. Examples can include the benefits described above and the negative effects that can arise during emergency events such as the 2024 wildfire evacuation. These events are highly disruptive for the community. They can also be costly for the District if infrastructure is impacted or destroyed. Several goals related to environmental sustainability have been identified below.

GOALS

4. Natural resources and biodiversity in Wells, including water sources and green spaces, are protected.
5. Wells is achieving its emissions reduction targets of 80% by 2050 from 2007 levels.
6. Wells is resilient to the impacts of climate change.
7. The District of Wells maintains high drinking water quality standards through effective management practices.



FOCUS AREA 4: COMMUNITY

Wells is a vibrant community that celebrates in numerous ways. For a community of its size, Wells punches far above its weight regarding arts and culture venues, programming, events, education, and markets. There is a high degree of volunteerism, and community members commonly wear multiple hats. This is all to say that the community is tight-knit, and supporting each other and the place they live are key priorities. It is also important to recognize that Wells is an aging community. This influences the proportion of residents who are active participants in the economy, which has other effects on the provision or availability of services. In the long term, it will be important for Wells to attract new residents.

Including community as a key focus area reflects the need to ensure that Wells is a socially sustainable place into the future. Several goals for ensuring future social sustainability are below.

GOALS

1. The District of Wells promotes community engagement and participation in decision-making processes.
2. Residents of Wells have easy access to physical and mental health services, including virtual options.
3. The District of Wells promotes and actively increases sustainable food production.
4. The District of Wells supports arts and cultural initiatives to enrich the community and attract visitors.
5. The District of Wells supports quality primary and secondary educational opportunities.
6. The District of Wells prioritizes community safety and security to create accessible and emotionally supportive environments.
7. The District of Wells promotes and protects tranquility and reduces noise and light pollution, including ensuring minimal light pollution for clear night skies.
8. Wells is a place where people are eager to come and choose to stay.



FOCUS AREA 5: ECONOMY AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Core to the District's ability to function and provide services is that it can operate in a financially sustainable way. More broadly, the community's future is predicated on its local economy and ability to attract new residents. Economic and financial sustainability are linked. This links to other focus areas like community and housing and development, which describe how the community can address housing issues and attract new residents. Increasing or maintaining the current proportion of working people is important to sustain the community in its current state. It is also about recognizing and exploring how the community can support or build on seasonal industries to enhance and grow the local economy.

The District's Economic development plan provides a great number of ideas and actions that can potentially benefit the local economy. However, the District's services and functions must also be financially sustainable in terms of its internal operations and public-facing processes to enable development and decision-making. Careful attention to policy and procedure can have important long-term effects on the economy, the local market's ability to build projects, and the district's efficiency and ability to enable them.

GOALS

1. The District of Wells supports various types of employment opportunities for locals, including entrepreneurship and remote work, reducing reliance on a single industry and increasing long-term viability.
2. The District of Wells provides and supports educational opportunities and training programs to develop the workforce.
3. Wells offers destination activities for residents and tourists to enhance community engagement and tourism.
4. The District of Wells offers incentives for the growth of local businesses.
5. The District of Wells ' operations are financially sustainable.



FOCUS AREA 6: INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

For Wells to be a sustainable community over the long term, its infrastructure and transportation systems must be functional and maintained to support residents. The District's current water, storm and sanitary infrastructure has been scaled well for the community, but its small population can make it difficult to capture sufficient revenue from taxes and fees to operate and maintain it. There is some hope that future economic endeavours like the pending mine project will help alleviate some of these concerns in the short term, but the longer-term question remains. Prioritizing investments and advocacy in community infrastructure can help enable a variety of economic growth, which can, in turn, help enable housing development and attract new residents.

Key goals for infrastructure and transportation improvements or actions are provided below.

GOALS

1. The District of Wells prioritizes easier access to daily needs.
2. The District of Wells invests in infrastructure to support economic growth.
3. Trail networks in Wells enable safe and active transportation for pedestrians and cyclists.
4. The District of Wells promotes alternative fuel operations in alignment with changing trends in transportation and emissions reduction objectives.
5. Wells has a secure energy future with reliable and affordable electricity.
6. Wells has improved emergency routes for enhanced disaster preparedness and response.

5.0 GAP ANALYSIS

A gap analysis identifies differences between the current state and the desired future state of an organization or process, highlighting areas that need improvement and opportunities to close the gaps. There are three overarching questions in the gap analysis (**Figure 11**):

1. *Current state: Where is the District of Wells now?*
2. *Future state: Where does the District of Wells want to be?*
3. *How does the District of Wells get there?*

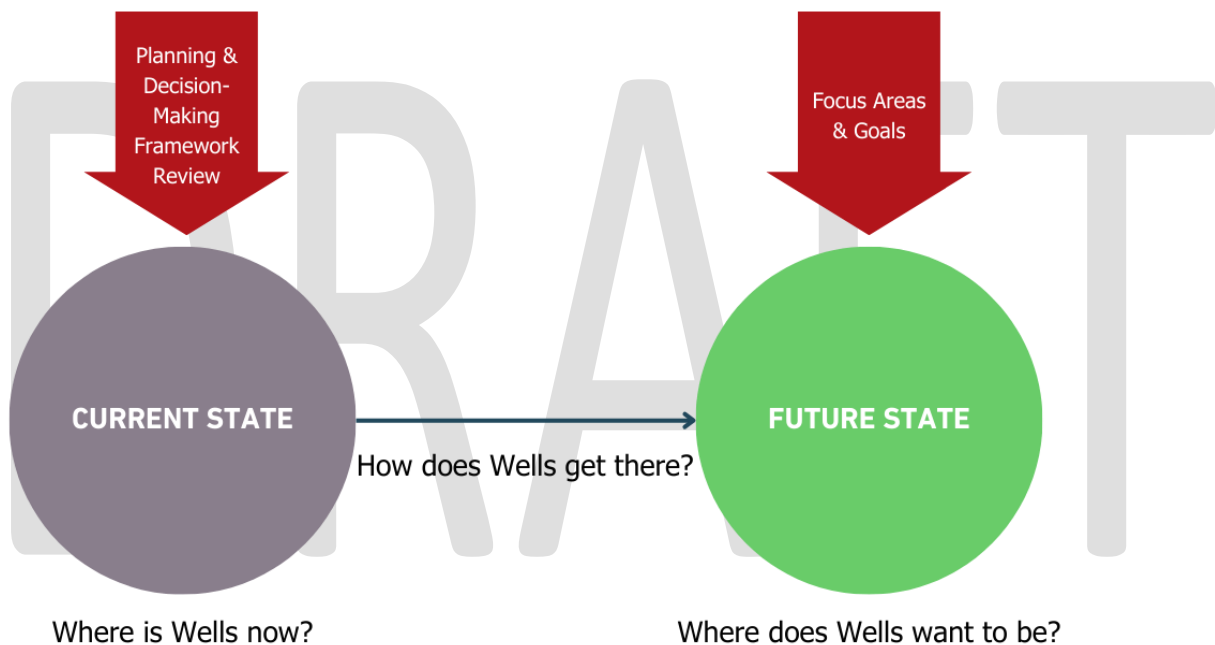


Figure 11: Overview of Gap Analysis

The second question regarding Wells' "future state" – "*Where does the District of Wells want to be?*"—is defined by the vision (Section 3.0) and focus areas and associated goals (Section 4.0). This gap analysis focused on the first question— "*Where is the District of Wells now?*"

The "current state" of the District of Wells was understood through a process of reviewing documents that are core to Wells' planning and decision-making framework – those that guide its planning and decision-making procedures and policies (Table 2).² This included documents created by the District of Wells and those not created by the District, but which contribute to, influence, or advocate for different District decisions and processes.

² The review did not include documents currently in draft form, for example, Wells' Economic Development Strategy.

Table 2: Documents that guide the District’s planning and decision-making procedures and policies.

Document	Year	Indigenous Reconciliation	Housing and Development	Environment and Climate	Community	Economy and Financial Sustainability	Infrastructure and Transportation
District of Wells Documents							
Business Plan	2024						
Official Community Plan	2024						
Bylaw No. 16, Heritage Properties	1999						
Bylaw No. 26, Zoning	2000						
Community Wildfire Structure Protection Plan	2022						
Emergency Management Plan	2024						
Community Energy and Emissions Plan	2015						
Other Documents							
Wells Community Forest 100-Year Vision	2023						
Wells-Barkerville Culture and Recreation Centre Business Plan	2020						
BC Hydro Powerline Upgrade Review Report	2023						

What we noticed in this process is summarized in **Figure 12**. Details about the gap analysis process and findings are outlined in **Appendix C**. The outcomes of this and the “What We Noticed” identify high-level actions and opportunities that will inform the next steps and implementation stages of the ICSP. The project’s next steps, outlined in detail in the following section, focus on answering the third question, “How does the District of Wells get there?”

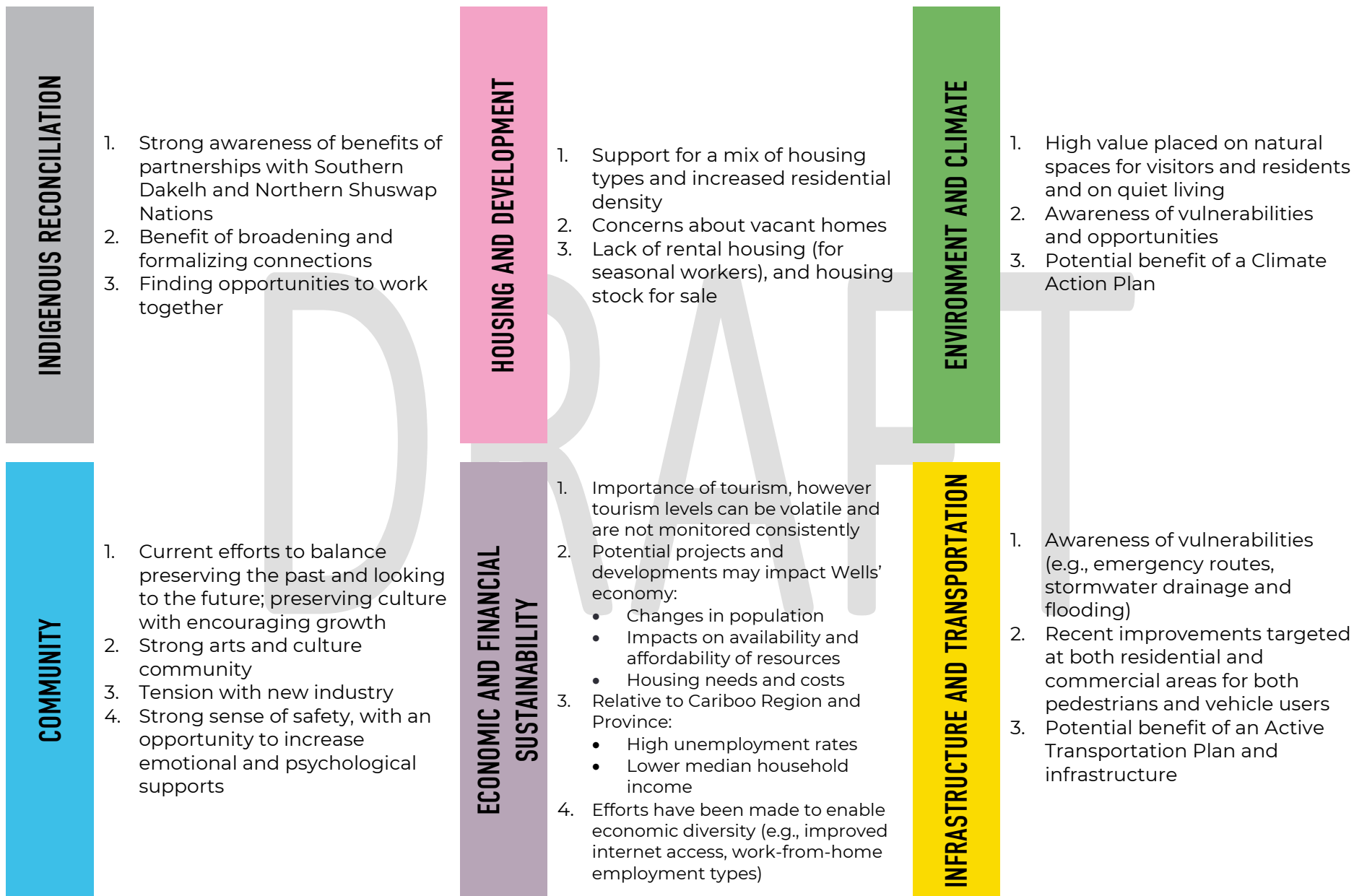


Figure 12: Gap Analysis - Summary of What We Noticed

6.0 ACTIONS

To bridge the sustainability gap for each focus area, a series of targeted actions were identified. These actions are designed to be practical, actionable, and supported by the District of Wells' available capacity and resources. Using input from meetings and engagement sessions, some key criteria were established to guide the development of actions:

Capacity and resources

- Actions should fall under the responsibility of municipal staff and/or Council.
- Actions should be manageable with the current staff size.
- Actions should focus on low-cost or no-cost options that do not require significant financial investment.
- Actions should help build capacity and set the stage for future initiatives (e.g., training staff).

Policy and Planning integration

- Actions should be geared toward developing policies that integrate sustainability into existing frameworks (e.g., procurement, energy management).
- Actions should help align policies with what is important to the community.
- Actions should be able to be referenced in other plans or strategies.

Practical and Actionable

- Actions that involve updating or creating bylaws and policies should be prioritized.
- Actions should avoid "micro-level" interventions, instead focusing on broader, impactful options.

Note:

The actions listed in this section are currently in draft form. Further engagement with District staff and the Advisory Committee is planned prior to the actions being finalized.

FOCUS AREA 1: INDIGENOUS RECONCILIATION

GOALS

ACTIONS

<p>1. The District of Wells has partnerships with Indigenous Nations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Act on policies in the Official Community Plan (2024) and Strategic Plan to partner with Lhtako Dene. b) Establish a Protocol Agreement with Lhtako Dene that outlines guiding principles and demonstrates commitment to the relationship between Wells and Lhtako Dene. Ensure that this agreement remains a living document. c) Develop a statement of Wells' role in implementing B.C.'s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA). d) Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or similar agreement with Indigenous Nations on mutually beneficial economic development initiatives.
<p>2. There is reciprocal involvement in community, cultural, and celebratory events with Indigenous Nations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Organize educational opportunities for staff and council on topics of reconciliation, anti-racism, equity, and inclusion.

FOCUS AREA 2: HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT

GOALS	ACTIONS
1. Development in Wells respects the area's history while embracing modern needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop and maintain a heritage register. b) Continue to use the Development Permit Areas (DPAs) in the Official Community Plan (2024).
2. Wells' growth and development meets current needs without compromising future generations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Adopt the BC Energy Step Code into policies, programs, and bylaws to establish measurable, performance-based energy efficiency requirements for new buildings. Explore how Wells wants to apply the Step Code. d) Develop a policy in the Strategic Plan for Wells to take a balanced approach to resource projects. e) Allow and promote a greater array of housing options and types through housing policies in the Official Community Plan (2024) and zoning bylaw. f) Identify future infrastructure, community facility, and programming needs to support social and financial sustainability for future residents in a 5 Year Capital Plan.
3. Housing options in Wells are available and affordable to meet the needs of those who need them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> g) Allow and promote greater array of housing options and types through housing policies in the Official Community Plan (2024) and zoning bylaw. h) Implement and enforce policies to incentivize housing development on underused properties (parcels that are either vacant or have derelict housing on them). Explore, for example, Vacant Home or Property Tax Bylaw, Unsafe or Unsightly Premises Bylaw. i) Consider Crown Lots for community uses including institutional and housing. j) Leverage existing housing stock by promoting renovation and restoration activities and addition of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). k) Identify and pursue opportunities to support visitors and shorter-term housing (e.g., rental units, AirBnb's, hotels, campgrounds). l) Collaborate with large employers to develop worker accommodation strategies. m) Consider the recommendations in the Housing Needs Report (2024) to address the challenges of Wells' housing development context.

FOCUS AREA 3: ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

GOALS	ACTIONS
<p>1. Natural resources and biodiversity in Wells, including water sources and green spaces, are protected.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Continue to work with the Wells-Barkerville Community Forest (WBCF) Board to maintain sustainable operation and community benefit. b) Continue to work with community groups and services to integrate their findings, activities, and interests into decision-making as appropriate. c) Develop and approve Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with resource sector partners to formalize cooperative efforts on environmental protection. d) Develop a Natural Asset Management Plan to protect natural assets through land use and infrastructure planning.
<p>2. Wells is achieving its emissions reduction targets of 80% by 2050 from 2007 levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) Establish 2030 and 2040 emissions reduction targets. f) Include climate topics during Land Use Planning Committee Meetings. g) Adopt the BC Energy Step Code into policies, programs, and bylaws to establish measurable, performance-based energy efficiency requirements for new buildings. h) Include policy direction in the Official Community Plan (2024) to create a Climate Action Plan and/or Community & Corporate Energy Plan. i) Explore financing tools to reduce energy costs/increase energy efficiency (e.g., a limited property assessed clean energy (PACE) loans or local improvement charges (LIC)). j) Advocate for three-phase power in Wells to enable initiatives like electrical vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. k) Offer development fee incentives for “green designs” and “smart growth” initiatives that reduce runoff, promote energy conservation, and preserve biodiversity.
<p>3. Wells is resilient to the impacts of climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> l) Include climate topics during Land Use Planning Committee Meetings. m) Review existing infrastructure servicing plans with a focus on future needs and climate change. n) Review existing District services with a focus on future needs and climate change. o) Establish review and update process for District Wildfire Risk Mapping and Flood Hazard mapping to reflect changing climate realities and consider the development of DPAs to mitigate risks associated with future development. p) Develop an Asset Management Strategy to determine and plan for infrastructure upgrades

	needed to support community growth and development.
4. The District of Wells maintains high drinking water quality standards through effective management practices.	No new actions.

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FOCUS AREA 4: COMMUNITY

GOALS	ACTIONS
1. The District of Wells promotes community engagement and participation in decision-making processes.	a) Develop an engagement strategy that identifies templates, procedures, and triggers for community communications.
2. Residents of Wells have easy access to physical and mental health services, including virtual options.	b) Advocate with Northern Health and BC Ambulance Service to retain and attract health service providers to Wells.
3. The District of Wells promotes and actively increases sustainable food production.	c) Continue to action policies in the Official Community Plan (2024) Section 5.2.2 Food Security
4. The District of Wells supports arts and cultural initiatives to enrich the community and attract visitors.	d) Continue to action policies in the Official Community Plan (2024) Section 5.2.1 Arts, Culture & Heritage
5. The District of Wells supports quality primary and secondary educational opportunities.	e) Continue to work with School District #28 to ensure the need for educational facilities and staff are in alignment with Official Community Plan (2024) growth projections.
6. The District of Wells prioritizes community safety and security to create accessible and emotionally supportive environments.	No new actions.
7. The District of Wells promotes and protects tranquillity and reduces noise and light pollution, including ensuring minimal light pollution for clear night skies.	f) Develop and approve Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with resource sector partners to formalize cooperative efforts on noise and pollution mitigation. g) Update the zoning bylaw to set out rules for industrial light, noise, and screening..
8. Wells is a place where people are eager to come and choose to stay.	h) Work on implementing actions in the Economic Development Strategy (2024) Strategic Area #5, Improve Livability. i) Invest in community infrastructure upgrades in conjunction with a 5 Year Capital Plan. j) Invest in community enhancement initiatives (beautification, recreation, housing development) designed to attract professional service providers. k) Explore the potential for using the community forest for recreational purposes..

FOCUS AREA 5: ECONOMY AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

GOALS	ACTIONS
<p>1. The District of Wells supports various types of employment opportunities for locals, including entrepreneurship and remote work, reducing reliance on a single industry and increasing long-term viability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work with business stakeholders to identify barriers to business activity and to support local economic development. b) Support home businesses through (Official Community Plan Section 5.4) policies and bylaws. c) Complete an Employment Land Needs assessment/strategy to identify and quantify current and future employment needs.
<p>2. The District of Wells provides and supports educational opportunities and training programs to develop the workforce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) Create targeted training programs such as summer student placements and apprenticeships to provide community members with hands-on learning and skills development opportunities. e) Work with project proponents to provide unique educational and skills-building opportunities in Wells. f) Work with the mine to identify potential training/skills development opportunities for locals. g) Work with local post-secondary institutions to find opportunities to promote employment and life in Wells (e.g., through career fairs).
<p>3. Wells offers destination activities for residents and tourists to enhance community engagement and tourism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> h) Enact the recommendations in Economic Development Strategy (2024) Strategic Area #2, Expand Tourism Opportunities.
<p>4. The District of Wells offers incentives for the growth of local businesses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Develop a social procurement policy that favours businesses providing the best value to Wells in terms of economic, social, and environmental benefits. j) Work with Northern Development Institute Trust to fund incentive programs like the façade improvement program. k) Invest in community beautification efforts as recommended in the Economic Development Strategy (2024) Strategic Area #5.
<p>5. The District of Wells' operations are financially sustainable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> l) Ensure that all District fees, charges and tax rates are routinely reviewed to ensure appropriate value is captured for services while ensuring that the impact on residents and businesses is balanced. m) Improve District processes (e.g., development approvals) for clarity, efficiency and function to best use staff time, expedite service delivery and facilitate new growth. n) Enact the recommendations of the Boundary Extension Study (ongoing).

FOCUS AREA 6: INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

GOALS	ACTIONS
1. The District of Wells prioritizes easier access to daily needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Invest in community beautification as recommended in the Economic Development Strategy (2024) Strategic Area #5. b) Enact policies in the Official Community Plan (2024) related to active transportation. c) Develop an Active Transportation Plan. d) Complete the actions required by the Accessible BC Act (2023), which include establishing an accessibility committee, an accessibility plan, and a mechanism to receive feedback on accessibility.
2. The District of Wells invests in infrastructure to support economic growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) Consider the role of natural assets in infrastructure planning f) Ensure the Capital Plan remains up to date and responsive to community needs g) Consider the second life of project infrastructure when making decisions about projects. h) Identify future infrastructure, community facility, and programming needs to support social and financial sustainability for future residents.
3. Trail networks in Wells enable safe and active transportation for pedestrians and cyclists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Couple trail networking planning with the development of an Active Transportation Plan, with input from existing community groups. j) Work with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MoTT) to improve pedestrian safety along Highway 26. k) Support the existing community groups in communicating trail networks and future trail developments.
4. The District of Wells promotes alternative fuel operations in alignment with changing trends in transportation and emissions reduction objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> l) Explore incentives and funding opportunities to install electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. m) Consider replacing municipal fleet and equipment with zero emissions vehicles (ZEVs).
5. Wells has a secure energy future with reliable and affordable electricity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n) Promote energy initiatives (BC Hydro, Province) within the community. o) Advocate for three-phase power in Wells to enable initiatives like electrical vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure.
6. Wells has improved emergency routes for enhanced disaster preparedness and response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> p) Enhance public confidence and readiness to respond effectively to emergencies by organizing interactive community preparedness events (e.g., evacuation route tours).

7.0 NEXT STEPS

Once the actions in Section 6.0 are finalized, the next step is to create an action plan to progress toward the final version of the ICSP (Figure 13).

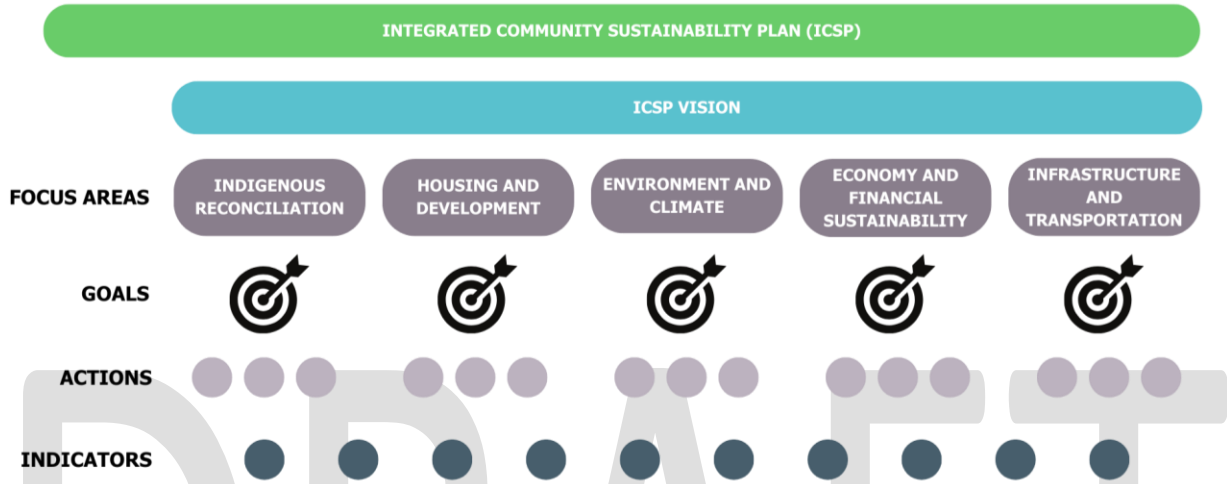


Figure 13: ICSP Structure Overview

7.1 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

7.1.1 IMPLEMENTATION

Roadmap

This section will describe the overarching framework for implementing the ICSP. It will include resources, references, and tools to support implementation, ensuring all stakeholders have the necessary information and guidance.

This involves continuing to collaborate with District of Wells staff and Council and the Advisory Committee to:

1. Identify and outline resource requirements (human and financial) for each of the actions outlined in Section 6.0.
2. Prioritize the short-, medium-, and long-term actions, including identifying low-barrier actions (“quick wins”) that can be implemented immediately.

Based on the priorities identified throughout the planning process, the implementation plan will be refined and confirmed, and short-, medium-, and long-term projects will be identified. This process will also consider how the projects in each time frame fit into the District's capital works budget.

Upon completion, these steps will serve as a roadmap for implementing the ICSP, detailing roles and responsibilities, resource requirements, and timelines associated with each focus areas' actions.

Operations Checklist

In addition to the implementation roadmap, an operations checklist will be developed as an everyday guide for making decisions that help meet the district's overall sustainability goals. The checklist will serve as an everyday reminder of the ICSP's vision, goals, and actions and provide a critical list that can be used in operations.

7.1.2 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Performance Indicators

In collaboration with District staff and the Advisory Committee, metrics will be defined to measure progress toward sustainability goals. These indicators will help track the effectiveness of the actions and strategies outlined in the ICSP.

Review Process

This part will outline a regular review and update process to ensure the ICSP remains relevant and effective. It will include timelines for reviews, criteria for updates, and mechanisms for incorporating stakeholder feedback.

APPENDIX A: WHAT WE LEARNED REPORT

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APPENDIX B: BEST PRACTICE REVIEW MEMO

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APPENDIX C: GAP ANALYSIS MEMO

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