



the partnership for water sustainability in bc

Waterbucket eNews on May 11, 2021
<https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

A photograph of a modern, multi-story apartment building with a water feature in the foreground. The building has large windows and balconies. The water feature is a small pond or stream with a waterfall, surrounded by lush greenery and flowers. The text is overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

**Living Water Smart in
British Columbia:
*Dockside Green, World's
Greenest Neighbourhood***

Note to Reader:

Waterbucket eNews¹ celebrates the leadership of individuals and organizations who are guided by the vision for [Living Water Smart in British Columbia](#)². The edition published on May 11, 2021 featured Kim Fowler's book about the Docksider Green neighbourhood in Victoria, B.C.

More than a decade ago, Docksider Green piloted the standards for the *LEED for Neighbourhood Development* program. It went on to become the most sustainable development in the world and has a platinum rating under LEED-NC.

The umbrella for Partnership initiatives and programs is the [Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia](#)³. In turn, the Action Plan is nested within [Living Water Smart, British Columbia's Water Plan](#).

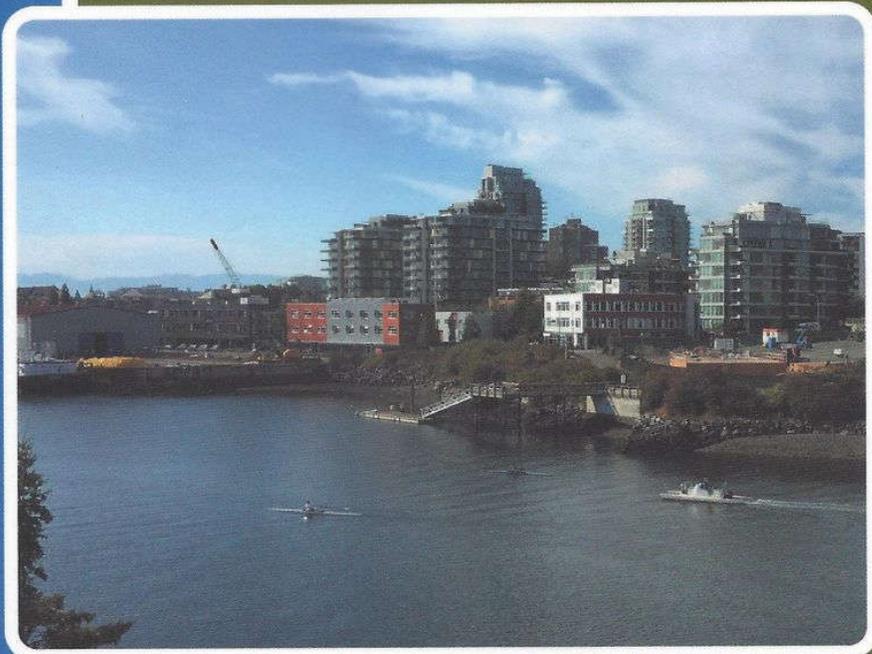


COVER PHOTO CREDIT: Kim Fowler

¹ <https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

² https://waterbucket.ca/wcp/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/11/livingwatersmart_book.pdf

³ <https://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/sites/wbccfa/documents/media/81.pdf>



DOCKSIDE GREEN

The Story of the Most Sustainable
Development in the World

KIM ALISON FOWLER

Editor's Perspective

How did a 15-acre contaminated harbour area in Victoria, BC, once nicknamed “Darkside”, become Dockside Green, the world’s most sustainable development? Kim Fowler’s book explains how community and sustainability can be achieved by an inclusive, responsible, innovative, and self-sustaining development.

From its inception in 2001 through its ongoing development, Kim Fowler shares the successes and failures of Dockside Green’s design, construction, operations, and lessons learned. Fowler, the original project manager and sustainability planner, was guided by visionary principles based on the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model that successfully integrated a New Urbanism mix of residential and commercial use with its adjoining industrial working harbour.

The question remains – world leading sustainability was built, has proven to be successful, and is loved by those who live and work there – yet has not been substantially replicated. Why is that? This is the question that I put to Kim Fowler in a recent conversation. As we talked, it clicked in my mind that ground-breaking projects such as Dockside Green are once-in-a-generation occurrences. Rarely is there an opportunity to pass on a how-to-do-it understanding to another generation.

Kudos to Kim Fowler for having the passion, perseverance, and commitment to write “the story of Dockside Green” as a how-to-guide. Making things happen in the real world requires an appreciation and understanding of human behaviour, combined with a knowledge of how decisions are made. It takes a career to figure this out. In her book, Kim Fowler builds a bridge of understanding and passes the baton from the past to the present and future.

To achieve the goal of water sustainability, the 45 actions and targets in Living Water Smart establish expectations for *Doing Business Differently*, *Preparing Communities for Change*, and *Choosing to Be Water Smart*. The story of Dockside Green ticks so many boxes for [Living Water Smart in British Columbia](#).



“Do we have the intelligence and will to impel change? Can convention be busted open again to develop sustainably? This book encourages sustainable change agents to make fundamental, systemic change. Please go implement. Now.”

KIM FOWLER, AUTHOR AND
LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLANNER

Why Kim Fowler's book matters:

Why do you want people to read your book, I asked Kim?

“Well, because there is a better way of doing development work,” Kim replied. “We have proven a model, that can be replicated in whole or in part. There are parts people can take – for example, I describe the Triple Bottom Line matrix used in the Request for Proposals for the Dockside Green land sale. Please, go use it! Adapt it to your project. My message to those who are interested in sustainable development is to take the pieces from Dockside Green that would work for you.”

Kim A. Stephens, MEng, PEng,
Executive Director
Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC
May 2021



DOCKSIDE GREEN - How to Bust Convention and Develop Sustainably

"Accelerating climate change, persistent global pandemic, skyrocketing government debt and increasing social disparity are the results of conventional practice and processes. Perhaps it is time to realize conventional approaches have failed and need to be fundamentally changed," says Kim Fowler, author and long-time planner in local government.

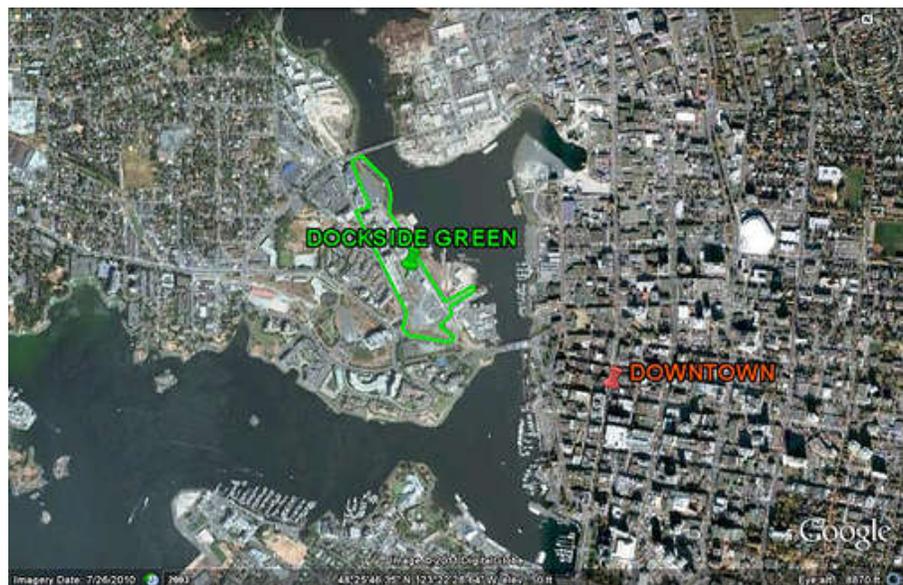
"Humans have tried to control the uncontrollable, master the unmasterable, and conquer the unconquerable. We have failed. Do we have the intelligence and will to impel change?"

- Kim Fowler, 1990

"The poem that I wrote and published on the preface of my 1990 Masters of Science in Planning thesis at the University of Toronto has guided my career in local government. It provides my personal context for the Dockside Green project in Victoria, British Columbia."

"Dockside Green is an example of a project that did just that with three key aspects that busted convention wide open. Dockside Green is a 15-acre Brownfield site redevelopment located adjacent to downtown Victoria, BC. It was redeveloped to achieve the highest sustainability rating in the world under the LEEDTM green building rating system in 2008 and again in 2009."

"Dockside Green used the LEED-NC (new construction) standard in 2008 and 2009. It piloted the draft ND standards as the first project to do so. The ND standards were finalized and made available after the first two phases of Dockside Green were constructed."



The Many Innovations of Dockside Green

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- An on-site district wastewater treatment system that reuses 80% of wastewater onsite through irrigation, creek, and pond renewal along a greenway running the length of the project, and use of greywater toilets.
 - A district heat and hot water plant, originally designed to make the site greenhouse gas negative.
 - A 100-year storm retention and overflow design that collects all onsite rainwater.
 - Energy costs that are 50-80% less than convention.
 - Cycling, walking, and mass transit as the main forms of transportation with direct connection to the TransCanada Trail and over 48 km of regional trails.
 - Design that embraced New Urbanism.
 - Over \$5 million in community amenities.
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COMMUNITY AMENITIES

- *\$3 million affordable housing fund*
 - *\$400,000 Sustainability Centre for non-profit sustainability organizations*
 - *\$187,500 fund for public art*
 - *Public dock for small boat launching and a harbour ferry stop*
 - *Complex of greenways, parks, pathways, and urban streams with over 400 trees*
 - *First Nations art, site information and employment priority program*
 - *Community amphitheatre, public washroom, park shoreline restoration, children's play area, and seniors' housing complex*
 - *Car co-op with Smart Cars*
 - *Rooftop vegetable garden complex*
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TIP #1 - Provide a sandbox to play in – don't make development partners fit into a straitjacket

"Do we have the intelligence and will to impel change? Docksider Green is an example of a project that did just that with three key aspects that busted convention wide open."

- Kim Fowler, 2021

"At Docksider Green, a 'sandbox' development concept was created instead of a 'straitjacket' conventional approach. This was achieved by setting the basic requirements for site redevelopment while still providing flexibility to promote innovation and competition in the land sale process," states Kim Fowler.

"Traditional zoning ---- which would include details such as side lot setbacks, individual building heights, and specific uses --- was deemed to be a 'straitjacket' containing far too detailed and prescriptive land use and design. It would have destroyed competition and innovation."

Fatal Flaws in a "Straitjacket" Approach

"Pre-zoning a site with prescriptive zoning for 'necessary' control and 'certainty' prior to the land sale is often lengthy and costly. A further problem would arise after the community has given its input and the local government has stamped its approval, as the successful land sale proponent usually goes through another rezoning process to customize the details of their proposal to the site. This 'second time around' only confuses and frustrates the community into mistrust, skepticism, and objection."

"Overly prescriptive requirements in a design competition also would result in all responding proposals looking similar, and everyone, including the designers, hating them. Without flexibility within requirements to propose innovative work, this 'straitjacket' is not much of a competition, for it stifles innovation and creates a lose-lose result for both development proponents and the local government."

"At Docksider Green, a 'sandbox' development concept was created instead of a 'straitjacket' conventional approach."

- Kim Fowler, 2021



TIP #2 - Value the Triple Bottom Line – don't sell to the highest cash bidder

"The vision for the Docksider Green redevelopment called for a mixed use, sustainable development based on Triple Bottom Line (TBL) principles. This then directed the Development Concept, which was used to set TBL criteria in the land sale request for proposal," continues Kim Fowler.

Incent / Reward Sustainable Design

"Developers could then review how their proposal would be assessed in advance of initiating design and maximize their point scoring and chances of winning the proposal process. Developers were incented to design a highly sustainable development.

"The successful proponents in the Docksider Green project reported the triple bottom line matrix was the first time they had been rewarded for sustainable design. TBL assessment enabled a broader assessment of value, not just money offers, which resulted in the best value for taxpayers over the long term."



TIP #3 - Prove your project feasibility – don't build it and expect they will come

"Market demand for the Dockside site was assessed through a risk analysis that estimated the market demand for a range of land uses with resulting employment generation," explains Kim Fowler.

"Various types of residential, commercial, and industrial land use with comparisons to local and regional markets were analyzed. This information was then input into a pro forma to project estimates of gross income, operating expenses, and net operating income over time."

"Viability was tested for both the City selling the land and the developer purchasing and developing the land. In short, when combined with the 'minimum break even' financial requirement for the City, the analysis showed the City would break even and the developer would make a reasonable profit."

"This provided further credibility to the project and reduced risk for both the development partner and the municipality."

"Do we have the intelligence and will to impel change? Can convention be busted open again to develop sustainably? This book encourages sustainable change agents to make fundamental, systemic change. Please go implement. Now," concludes Kim Fowler.

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- Kim Fowler, 2021

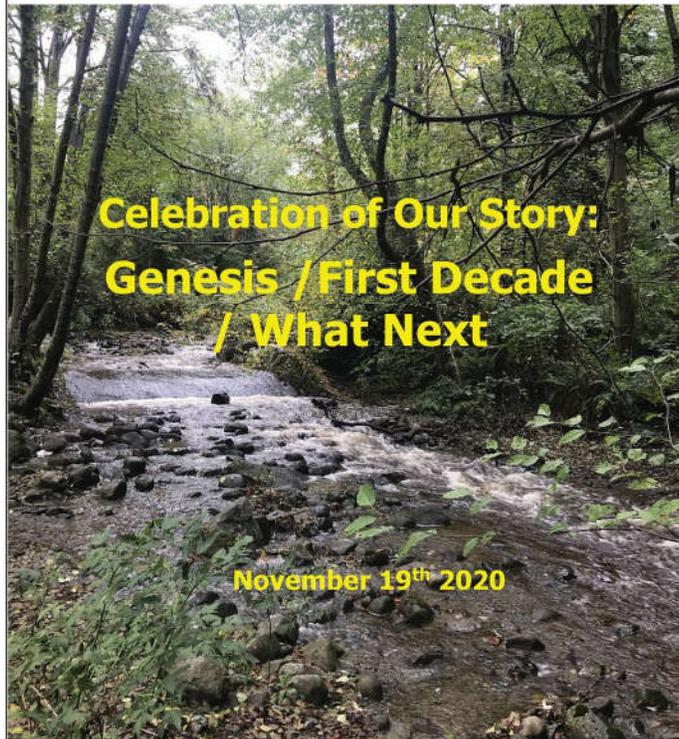




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TO LEARN MORE, VISIT:

<https://waterbucket.ca/about-us/>

About the Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia

Incorporation of the Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia as a not-for-profit society on November 19, 2010 was a milestone moment. Incorporation signified a bold leap forward.

Over two decades, the Partnership had evolved from a technical committee in the 1990s, to a “water roundtable” in the first decade of the 2000s, and then to a legal entity. The Partnership has its roots in government – local, provincial, federal.

The Partnership has a primary goal, to **build bridges of understanding** and pass the baton from the past to the present and future. To achieve the goal, the Partnership is growing a network in the local government setting. This network embraces collaborative leadership and **inter-generational collaboration**.

The Partnership believes that when each generation is receptive to accepting the inter-generational baton and embracing the wisdom that goes with it, the decisions of successive generations will benefit from and build upon the experience of those who went before them.



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