

Translated from the original French

FOR QUALITY, ATTRACTIVE, AND HEALTHY LIVING ENVIRONMENTS

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

TOWARD A NATIONAL URBAN AND LAND USE PLANNING STRATEGY



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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

On the road to healthier, more sustainable and prosperous living environments!

Urban and land use planning are a top priority for our government and literally shape the daily lives of all Quebecers. In recent years, issues related to climate change, population aging, urban sprawl, health, and public safety have highlighted the need to improve land planning in Québec.

We are holding a great national discussion with everyone concerned because it is important to modernize our practices. This will enable us to rally around a comprehensive and coherent vision of land use planning based on a clear overview of the situation. By taking a unifying and courageous approach, we will be able to identify measures to address the challenges we face. The work will also enable us to develop a strategy for improving land use planning across Québec.

I am proud to release this consultation document, which lays the foundation for the strategy. It includes 11 orientations dealing with governance, urban growth, living environments, rurality, finances, and taxation.

I invite the entire population to study these orientations and avenues to explore and to participate in the consultation. By sharing your ideas, whether about socio-economic development, built heritage, local services, health, education, the environment, public transportation, or your own living environment, you will help develop the vision that will shape land use planning in Québec.

I want the strategy to reflect and help strengthen our sense of belonging to our communities. I hope this sense of belonging will encourage you to get involved in creating quality living environments that meet the conditions for sustainable economic development.

The strategy, which will be published in April 2022, will enable us to design the Québec of the future, a Québec that we would be proud to leave to our children and grandchildren, where land is considered a common heritage, a non-renewable and precious resource, an integral part of our national identity.

Andrée Laforest

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Minister Responsible for the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean Region

List of acronyms

CMA	Census metropolitan area
GHG	Greenhouse gases
KRG	Kativik Regional Government
LU DP	Land use and development plan
MC	Metropolitan community
MPDP	Metropolitan planning and development plan
OPHQ	Office des personnes handicapées du Québec
RGEIJB	Regional Government of Eeyou Istchee James Bay
RCM	Regional county municipality

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SUMMARY

Since January 27, 2021, numerous experts and key players in government, municipalities, associations, and universities, and members of civil society, have engaged in numerous discussions at committee meetings, think tanks, and innovation laboratories to assist the government's reflection on urban and land use planning. The aim of this great national discussion among municipal leaders, First Nations and Inuit, the general public, and associations and groups involved in land development is to provide Québec with a national strategy on creating sustainable living environments that promote the health and well-being of those who live in them.

This consultation document reports on the findings, vision, and potential solutions put forward during the discussions that have taken place to date and lays the foundations for Québec's development based on sustainability and quality of life.

One vision, five main axes

In 2042, Québec's territory is considered to be a common heritage, a non-renewable and precious resource, a legacy for future generations, an integral part of the national identity. Quebecers are proud to live in complete, high quality, friendly, and inclusive living environments that contribute to the health, safety, well-being, and development of all. These living environments promote sustainable mobility and are adapted to the impacts of climate change without contributing to it.

This vision is complemented by the following five principles:

- Quality of life, health, and equity
- Resilience and responsible use of resources
- Protection of natural environments and cultural heritage
- Attractiveness, vitality, and complementarity
- Community commitment, expertise, and government exemplarity

Main axis 1: Governance

Land use planning requires society to make choices about how it wants to use its territory. Decisions are made at different levels, including the government, municipalities, and the public. Although Québec has a robust legislative and regulatory framework governing land use planning, discussions among key players consulted to date have revealed deficiencies in the monitoring mechanisms at various decision-making levels, tools whose potential is underused, and a disconnect between current issues and those addressed by the legislative and regulatory mechanisms in place.

The government recognizes that it must reaffirm and strengthen its leadership in the area of land use planning by rallying municipal leaders and the public around a powerful vision based on sustainable development, the health and well-being of all, and a balanced environment, without compromising economic development. It must also strengthen existing mechanisms to ensure that its actions are in line with its own land use planning framework.

Discussions with First Nations and Inuit representatives revealed that Aboriginal communities feel that they are not sufficiently involved in certain discussions and planning processes that concern them, particularly with respect to development projects. They also emphasized that there needs to be more dialogue and collaboration between Aboriginal communities and land use planning authorities to ensure that Aboriginal issues are given greater consideration.

The orientations explored in this document therefore provide for:

- An in-depth reflection on the land use planning framework to promote the development of sustainable communities
- A government that applies its own guidelines consistently and in an exemplary fashion
- Consideration of First Nations and Inuit realities before decisions are made

Main axis 2: Urban growth

Current land development practices in Québec encourage land use patterns that are costly both from a public finance perspective and in human and environmental terms. Urban sprawl perpetuates the use of cars to access services, to the detriment of active modes of transportation that are healthier for people and the environment. To create quality spaces, prevent the destruction of environments of interest, and help Québec meet the challenges of climate change, we need to develop the land in such a way as to concentrate the population near services while preserving agricultural land and natural environments. Tax incentives and wise transportation choices also have a role to play.

The orientations currently being considered concern:

- Integrated planning of land use and transportation promoting sustainable mobility
- Human-scale densification of living environments near services
- Protection and enhancement of non-urbanized areas, including agricultural land and natural environments

Main axis 3: Living environments

Land use planning is a major determinant of quality of life, both collectively and individually. Québec is currently faced with the devitalization of certain communities, a deficit of natural areas that are essential to people's mental and physical health, the loss of heritage sites, and families suffering from limited access to quality housing and local services. Landscapes must be protected and industrial zones consolidated and reserved for activities that are incompatible with living environments, especially those associated with heavy industry. All too often, health and well-being are overlooked in land use planning decisions, even though our quality of life depends on them.

The land use planning orientations are therefore designed to promote:

- Living environments that provide access to nature and everyday services
- Ways to revitalize communities and devitalized areas
- Health and safety for all in order to build sustainable and resilient communities

Main axis 4: Rurality

Rural areas as living environments are multiple and diverse. Québec is lucky to have some of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. This rich territory offers significant opportunities for farming and resort activities and access to natural environments. Over time, however, our practices have prevented us from properly preserving and taking advantage of these assets. Optimal planning would allow for a more harmonious land use mix and attenuate potential conflicts. The current development framework is practically uniform throughout Québec and applies to both urban and rural areas, despite the fact that their respective realities are different. Québec would gain by considering the diversity and vitality of rural areas as central components of sustainable development and dynamic land use.

Main axis 5: Finances and taxation

The current tax system and financial mechanisms affect numerous development choices. While they can drive development, they can also lead to decisions aimed at obtaining new short- or medium-term revenue for municipalities. The decisions are sometimes to the detriment of natural environments, and their effects must be considered from a longer-term perspective. These practices must support Québec's vision of its development and encourage responsible choices focused on sustainable development, for the benefit of all.

A broader consultation for a shared vision

Over the summer, Ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation will increase the number of communication channels and discussion opportunities so it can take comments on the proposed orientations from both the general public and key players. Citizens and interested groups will be able to participate in the discussions through an online consultation in French, an opportunity to take part in a process that will shape not only the way we use the land, but also our lifestyles and the quality of the environments in which our communities develop.



INTRODUCTION

Since the *Act respecting land use planning and development* was passed in 1979, Québec has made considerable progress in this area. All municipal entities have planning documents and urban planning regulations in place to regulate and optimize land use patterns. An actual urban planning culture and solid expertise have been developed in this field.

Today, however, it is clear that we can do better.

The unprecedented health crisis we are currently experiencing, the major floods that occurred in 2017 and 2019, and the debates sparked by the demolition of heritage buildings or the devitalization of commercial streets are all events that have recently revealed the importance of conducting a broad-ranging reflection on land use planning and development in Québec.

Many issues also lead us to question our usual practices, including urban sprawl, which generates significant impacts and costs, particularly in metropolitan areas; the loss of agricultural land and natural areas; the lack of affordable housing; and environments that are not conducive to healthy lifestyles. Low population growth in Québec will also be an issue in the coming decades.

An institutional framework that needs to evolve

Urban and land use planning are strategic tools in the fight against climate change and the resolution of social and economic issues. However, the framework that currently guides government action and that of municipal authorities in the area of urban and land use planning has changed little over the past 40 years.

Although the *Act respecting land use planning and development* has been amended several times since its adoption, it has never undergone a major overhaul. Furthermore, the main government policy direction regarding land use planning, *Pour un aménagement concerté du territoire* (For a coordinated approach to land use planning) was published in 1994. This situation restricts Québec's ability to develop its different regions, attract investment, and take advantage of factors that appeal to the public.

A national strategy for sustainable living environments

The time has come for a national urban and land use planning strategy (the strategy) to provide Québec with a comprehensive and coherent vision. A strategy to guide the actions and investments needed to create quality living environments that foster a sense of belonging and provide the conditions for sustainable economic development.

In developing the strategy, Gouvernement du Québec intends to:

- Focus the efforts of key players on the development of sustainable, healthy, and quality living environments
- Increase the attractiveness of Québec's territories
- Promote respect for and enhancement of the particularities of each territory
- Respond to a request expressed by a wide variety of civil society groups

The main stages in developing the strategy

To develop a coherent strategy, it is important to have a clear idea of the current situation and define the objectives accordingly. The first step in this vast undertaking was to get an accurate picture of land use planning in Québec.

A preliminary overview was first drawn up by the Ministère, in collaboration with the some fifteen government departments and agencies involved in urban and land use planning. This preliminary overview was then the subject of consultations with municipal and civil society organizations, as well as researchers and specialists with specific expertise in the issues targeted by the strategy.

The work is organized along five main axes:

- Governance
- Urban growth
- Living environments
- Rurality
- Finances and taxation

The Ministère, in collaboration with other departments and agencies, will draft the strategy during the fall of 2021 and winter of 2022, for publication in April 2022. Thus the work will take place over a total of 15 months, divided into four main stages.



Consultation mechanisms used for the great national discussion

A large number of key players concerned with land use planning, including municipal and regional partners, civil society organizations, academic experts and groups, the general public, and First Nations and Inuit, will have taken part in this major national discussion thanks to a number of consultation mechanisms.

Two national committees are tasked with advising the government and making recommendations:

- An advisory committee made up of some fifteen key municipal partners and members of civil society that advises the government at different stages in the strategy development process
- A committee of experts that includes some twenty scientists, university researchers, and people with specific expertise relevant to the process. This committee makes recommendations to the government in relation to the five main axes of the strategy

Organizations on the advisory committee

Action patrimoine, Association des aménagistes régionaux du Québec, Association des directeurs généraux des MRC du Québec, Association des directeurs généraux des municipalités du Québec, Association des directeurs municipaux du Québec, Espace MUNI, Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec, Fédération québécoise des municipalités, Ordre des urbanistes du Québec, Propulsion Québec, Regroupement des offices d'habitation du Québec, Regroupement national des conseils régionaux de l'environnement du Québec, Union des municipalités du Québec, Union des producteurs agricoles, Vivre en Ville

Members of the expert committee

Sylvie Bernier (Table sur le mode de vie physiquement actif and Table québécoise sur la saine alimentation), Geneviève Cloutier (Université Laval), Carmela Cucuzzella (Concordia University), François Desrosiers (Université Laval), Ursula Eicker (Concordia University), Pierre Filion (retired professor from the University of Waterloo), Mario Gauthier (Université du Québec en Outaouais), Bruno Jean (Université du Québec à Rimouski), Pierre Lavoie (Le Grand défi Pierre Lavoie), Justin Leroux (HEC Montréal), Jean-Philippe Meloche (Université de Montréal), Catherine Morency (Polytechnique Montréal), Dr. Éric Notebaert (Association québécoise des médecins pour l'environnement), Michel Rochefort (Université du Québec à Montréal), Julie Ruiz (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières), Luc-Normand Tellier (Université du Québec à Montréal), Pierre Thibault (Université Laval), Juan Torres (Université de Montréal), Fanny Tremblay-Racicot (École nationale d'administration publique), Marie-Odile Trépanier (retired professor from Université de Montréal), Bernard Vachon (retired professor from Université du Québec à Montréal)

In addition to the work of these two committees, numerous consultations will be held to allow all organizations, elected municipal officials, First Nations and Inuit, and citizens concerned by urban and land use planning issues to take part in this great national conversation. The Ministère has already held the following activities:

- In the winter of 2021, seminars on land use and urban planning were held. University researchers and experts presented their key findings on the strategy's five main axes.
- From February 22 to March 25, 2021, the Ministère tasked École nationale d'administration publique with organizing public innovation laboratories. A total of 12 laboratories, each focusing on a different theme, were held. The laboratories brought together more than 80 organizations from different backgrounds to share their concerns and observations. They were also asked to identify priority issues that they felt the strategy should address. These organizations will be consulted again on the preliminary orientations in the summer of 2021.
- A special consultation process is also being conducted with First Nations and Inuit, their organizations, and their representatives, to hear their concerns and their expectations for the strategy. Meetings were held on April 29 and 30, 2021.

Further consultations will take place in the summer of 2021. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will hold discussions across Québec with regional actors and key players. An online consultation (in French only) will also allow citizens and organizations to participate in the great national discussion.

A consultation document to define a vision and a plan for the future

This document sets out the main findings and issues identified in the situational overview. The preliminary orientations presented throughout the document are based on these findings and issues. The reflection that went into producing this document was fueled by the many discussions that took place during the seminars, public innovation laboratories, and meetings held since the beginning of the process.

The document contains 11 preliminary orientations related to the strategy's five main axes. These orientations are based on the overview of the main issues and are broken down into different avenues to explore, which may eventually be transformed into objectives.

These orientations are guided by an overall vision of urban and land use planning in Québec, which will also be examined by the advisory committee. The vision propels us into 2042, and leads us to imagine redesigned living environments, a shared commitment to sustainable development, and proud, fulfilled, and healthy Quebecers.

The feedback on the document from the many consultations held will serve to refine the preliminary orientations and help us draft the strategy.



VISION

In 2042, Québec's territory is considered to be a common heritage, a non-renewable and precious resource, a legacy for future generations, and an integral part of the national identity. Quebecers are proud to live in complete, high quality, friendly, and inclusive living environments that contribute to the health, safety, well-being, and development of all. These living environments promote sustainable mobility and are adapted to the impacts of climate change without contributing to it.

Quality of life, health, and equity

Land use planning in Québec ensures optimal and fair access to high-quality local services, public facilities, and natural areas. It contributes to the overall health and well-being of all Quebecers by fostering an active lifestyle on a daily basis at all stages of life within a safe, healthy environment where everyone is properly housed.

Resilience and responsible use of resources

Land and resources are used responsibly. Growth is managed in such a way as to limit the artificialization of land, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, maximize the use of existing infrastructure, and reduce the need for new infrastructure and public services, thereby promoting long-term fiscal balance. Land use planning helps boost communities' resilience to risks and current and future climatic variations. Natural resources and agricultural land are developed so as to protect the environment and allow for the cohabitation of uses. Protecting the land and farming activities increases Québec's food autonomy.

Protection of natural environments and cultural heritage

Areas are developed in such a way as to increase their accessibility and multifunctionality. The quality of the landscape and built heritage is maintained and enhanced. Biodiversity and ecological connectivity are preserved, and ecosystem services are put to use.

Attractiveness, vitality and complementarity

To promote territorial complementarity, communities build on the diversity and uniqueness of their environments. Development choices ensure the vitality of town centers, village cores, and neighborhood centers. Urban and land use planning development foster economic synergies and preserve the fundamental nature of environments to ensure productive and sustainable economies and thriving and attractive communities.

Community engagement, expertise, and government exemplarity

Land use planning is well thought out, based on objective information, and determined by residents and elected representatives in collaboration with creative professionals, according to ambitious, collective goals. Administration and decision making are optimized through regular monitoring. Government and its agents apply land use planning guidelines in an exemplary fashion and in close cooperation with local and regional municipalities. They encourage initiative, innovation, healthy competition, citizen participation and education, and consideration of regional specificities.



MAIN AXIS 1: GOVERNANCE

Land use planning, by definition, involves making choices—choices based on a framework, a set of laws, rules, and procedures that shape how we use the land. The planning framework is the basis on which decision-makers address the challenges they face with respect to sustainable land use planning and development in Québec. Land use planning decisions are made at all levels: Gouvernement du Québec, metropolitan communities (MC), regional county municipalities (RCM), local municipalities, and the public. Are the structures we have developed together to plan sustainable living environments still appropriate, effective, and efficient? Should planning roles and responsibilities be redefined and refined? Does the government follow its own guidelines and orientations in an exemplary fashion?

LAND USE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Over the years, Québec has developed a legislative and regulatory framework, processes and tools for land use planning. While a number of them are considered effective, they are not always properly applied in the field because they do not take into account new environmental, social, and economic challenges facing society, as well as the specificities of each area.

Overview of the main issues

Incomplete monitoring mechanisms

The *Act respecting land use planning and development* has very few provisions on monitoring how municipal partners fulfill their land use planning obligations. Although it does require MCs to produce a biennial report on the measures they have taken and whether they have met the objectives in their metropolitan planning and development plan (MPDP), it does not formally detail the required content of the report or necessary follow-up.

Furthermore, the *Act respecting land use planning and development* currently fails to provide for a mandatory monitoring mechanism for enforcing the government policy directions regarding land use planning and land use and development plans (LUDP).

This leaves key municipal players and the government with an incomplete understanding of the impact of planning documents on the territory, making it difficult to measure the effects and adapt their planning tools and land use planning framework accordingly.

There are few monitoring mechanisms to demonstrate the effects of land use planning. Monitoring mechanisms would make it possible to set targets, measure how well they're met, and release the results to the public.

Tools that need improvement

Some of the tools municipalities use to draw up their land use plans seem to be poorly adapted to their needs. In this regard, the urban plan, the main planning tool that local municipalities have to guide their development, appears to be ill-suited, particularly for smaller municipalities. Most existing urban plans were adopted before 2010 (Rochefort, 2019). Ad hoc changes are preferred over full-scale revisions.

Municipal bodies also have a wide range of regulatory tools at their disposal to carry out their projects or control land use appropriately, at the desired level of detail, complexity, constraint, and flexibility. However, most do not exploit the full potential of these tools. Among the obstacles to their optimal use are:

- The growth context
- A lack of knowledge of legal or technical aspects
- Requirements set at supralocal levels
- Insufficient staffing and limited resources for drawing up, updating, and monitoring planning by-laws and regulatory tools, particularly in some smaller municipalities

There are also gaps in the regulatory tools available that prevent municipalities from meeting specific needs with respect to the conservation of natural environments.

RCMs and CMs are also required to review their LUDPs and MPDPs every five years. These deadlines are not being met. For example,

- In 2019, the LUDPs in effect were 14 years old on average
- Both MPDPs, which came into effect in 2012, have never been revised (Gouvernement du Québec, 2010)
- It takes 80% of local municipalities six years to update their by-laws in compliance with the LUDP¹

The failure to meet the deadlines set for key municipal players to revise the LUDPs and MPDPs and ensure their alignment causes delays in updating urban planning documents and makes it hard to meet land use planning objectives.

The government policy directions regarding land use planning must be adapted to new issues and regional specificities

Most government policy directions regarding land use planning have not been revised since 1994. The current government land use planning framework does not specify the frequency at which they must be revised and updated.

However, certain issues have become increasingly important for land use planning in recent years and need to be considered in the planning process: reduction of GHG emissions, consequences of climate change, heat islands, flooding, sustainable mobility, access to housing, sustainable food systems and food autonomy, effects on health, aging of the population, etc.

The planning and regulatory tools lack flexibility and do not always make it easy to meet land use planning objectives set by municipal bodies.

There is a lack of resources to implement planning. Apart from financial resources and staff, there is also a lack of expertise among the key players responsible for territorial planning and its implementation. Different types of land use planning expertise need to be recognized.

The authorities concerned are often unable to meet the deadlines set out in the *Act respecting land use planning and development* for updating and harmonizing planning tools.

Most government policy directions regarding land use planning do not take new land use planning issues into account.

¹ Data from a survey of 729 municipalities conducted by the Ministère in spring 2018.

Government policy directions regarding land use planning generally apply to all RCMs in Québec, regardless of regional particularities. The only exceptions are those developed specifically for the two MCs and the 15 perimetropolitan RCMs of Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal.

Municipal bodies and elected officials have repeatedly pointed out that the government policy directions regarding land use planning do not take sufficient account of regional specificities. They also repeatedly express the wish that government policy directions regarding land use planning requirements respect municipal autonomy and different planning scales.

RCMs should play a bigger role in land use planning

The government has created several planning tools for RCMs. Examples include agricultural zone development plans and regional wetland and water plans. The planning framework does not always require these sectoral plans to be in line with the LUDP, making land use planning objectives difficult to meet, especially because of:

- Contradictions between planning documents within the RCM
- A dilution of the LUDP's role in land use planning

RCMs must be able to take on a greater planning role, while respecting the balance of power between local municipalities and the government.

A vision to establish and share

Citizens are not very involved in land use planning decisions at any level. Mechanisms to help them participate are sometimes non-existent and often limited and not easily accessible. For example:

- The ALUDP does not oblige authorities to consult the public when developing new government policy directions regarding land use planning
- Public participation requirements of local municipalities and RCMs are minimal
- Recourse before Commission municipale du Québec in matters of local compliance is not well adapted to public concerns

Also, some land use planning issues go beyond the supralocal level and concern more than one RCM. Therefore, they require consultation at the regional level. However, existing structures make it difficult to address these issues in a concerted manner. There is also no formal supramunicipal mechanism for studying a project's impacts before it starts or during compliance analysis.

The planning framework, especially the government policy directions regarding land use planning, does not allow local specificities to be sufficiently taken into account. Yet, detailed knowledge of each area is required to ensure proper planning.

The RCM's role and responsibilities in land use planning should be enhanced. The division of jurisdictions between the local and supralocal levels is not optimal, notably when it comes to environmental concerns. The LUDP's role should also be reviewed.

The planning framework, especially the government policy directions regarding land use planning, is complex, which makes it hard for the public to understand it. They should be better informed, better supported, and consulted more.

The land use planning framework does not allow for optimal cooperation and consultation between supralocal authorities on issues that go beyond the boundaries of a single RCM.

Orientation 1

A new land use planning framework for sustainable communities

It has been too long since the land use planning framework has been revamped. The *Act respecting land use planning and development* is over 40 years old and has never been thoroughly reviewed. Most of the government policy directions regarding land use planning have not been revised in over 20 years. Consequently, although the structure underpinning the planning framework is still relevant and has helped lay the foundations of land planning in Québec, the framework needs to evolve.

Avenues to explore

- A results-based approach to more efficiently update and harmonize plans on multiple scales and further empower the parties involved
- A land use planning framework that makes for agile municipalities and takes regional specificities into account (government policy directions regarding land use planning, urban planning tools, etc.)
- Inclusion of sustainable development principles and current planning and development issues (climate change, energy transition, healthy lifestyles, maintenance of built heritage, biodiversity conservation, sustainable mobility, etc.) in the land use planning framework particularly in the *Act respecting land use planning and development* and in the government policy directions regarding land use planning
- A collaborative approach and partnership between the government and the parties concerned (regional and metropolitan stakeholders, municipal bodies, and civil society), as well as government support for communities
- A greater role for RCMs, especially in arbitrating supralocal issues
- A land use planning and development plan that pulls together the various plans affecting RCMs
- Greater consideration for the role of municipal planners to ensure optimal use of their urban planning tools
- Recognition and support for expertise and sharing of resources at different scales
- Resident understanding of the land use framework
- Greater collaboration among supralocal entities

GOVERNMENT EXEMPLARITY

Government leadership is based in part on the exemplarity and consistency of its governance and actions in the area of land use planning.

Overview of the main issues

The need for a shared vision and government leadership

Gouvernement du Québec determines land use planning priorities. It is within this framework that the Cabinet adopts the government policy directions regarding land use planning.

Since 2017, the *Act respecting land use planning and development* has indicated that when drawing up documents setting out the government policy directions regarding land use planning, the government must consult with the representative bodies of municipal partners and any other civil society body that it considers appropriate. However, while the issues of how the land is used affect many groups and key players, there has been no formal dialogue with the government's primary partners or with First Nations and Inuit, civil society, or the public to help Québec establish broad objectives and a concerted and compelling land use planning vision.

Without a shared vision, efforts can sometimes be hindered by a lack of coherence among:

- The positions of the various departments and agencies
- Territorial planning at each level (governmental, regional, local)
- Sectoral land use planning
- Policies, guides, action plans, and interventions by various government departments, agencies, and agents with respect to new facilities and infrastructure that are not always in harmony with each other

Government action having a major impact

Public facilities and infrastructure generally have a major impact on land use planning. However, there is no formal mechanism for taking this into account when making decisions regarding these projects. In some cases, this can lead to public services being located in places that are contrary to the objectives of the government policy directions regarding land use planning.

Land that requires less investment because it has no constraints or requires little work can be attractive, but it is often located on the outskirts of central areas.

Lastly, there are no formal mechanisms in place to monitor the extent to which planning tools such as LUDPs and MPDPs are harmonized across Québec. As a result, the location of major government facility and infrastructure projects is not chosen based on detailed impact analyses of the area in which they are located.

Government leadership in urban and land use planning must be strengthened. A vision, developed in collaboration with all key players, is required. The objectives of the vision should be to help fight and adapt to climate change and promote sustainable development and the conservation of natural environments and agricultural land.

Government land use interventions must be more coherent and based on a global understanding of the issues.

Although government facilities, services, and infrastructure can play a strategic role and foster development, they don't always contribute to optimal land use planning.

The fact that the harmonization of planning tools is not monitored makes it harder to take land use planning into consideration when making decisions.

Orientation 2

A government that consistently supports responsible land use planning and development in an exemplary fashion

The government plays a central role in land use planning through its legislative and regulatory framework, guidelines, planning, and actions. Therefore it must exercise greater leadership to ensure that actions and interventions are consistent and harmonize planning at all decision-making levels.

Avenues to explore

- Public analyses of the anticipated impacts of land use planning choices on the territory and its resources
- Optimal placement of government equipment and infrastructure and compliance with the land use planning framework, especially the government policy directions regarding land use planning
- Ministère's leadership within the government (coordination, arbitration, etc.) with respect to land use planning and development based on active and effective collaboration with departments and agencies in line with their respective responsibilities and expertise
- Mechanisms to ensure that land use and urban planning issues are better taken into account in the implementation of government department and agency plans and projects
- Government-funded projects and financial support programs that encourage sustainable land use planning

NORTHERN ENVIRONMENTS

Land use planning in northern environments, i.e., the area covered by the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement* and the *Northeastern Québec Agreement*, involves specific characteristics related to how territories are organized. Land use planning is the purview of a number of bodies and is subject to rules that vary from one category of land to another and from one organization to another. The climate in these regions imposes additional constraints on project planning and logistics.

Overview of the main issues covered by the consultations

The observations and issues related to Orientations 3 and 4 are largely based on comments made by First Nations and Inuit representatives during the discussion meetings held in April 2021 as part of the project to develop an overview of the land use planning situation in Québec.

A specific type of governance

In areas subject to modern treaties, territorial organization is different than in other regions of Québec. The *Act respecting land use planning and development* does not apply to areas north of the 55th parallel or to certain lands south of the 55th parallel that are subject to the provisions of the *Act respecting the land regime in the James Bay and New Québec territories*. A number of organizations and communities coexist on the same territory. This diversity is reflected in how responsibilities are allocated to the various authorities and organizations in charge of land use planning.

Land use management is the responsibility of the following entities in the Nord-du-Québec region, south of the 55th parallel:

- Gouvernement de la nation crie
- Cree village municipalities
- Premières Nations cries
- Conseil de bande de la communauté de Kawawachikamach, the only Naskapi community
- Gouvernement régional d'Eeyou Istchee Baie-James (Regional Government of Eeyou Istchee James Bay (RGEIJB))

North of the 55th parallel, land use planning falls to the following bodies:

- Administration régionale Kativik (Kativik Regional Government (KRG))
- The 14 northern villages, recognized as municipalities
- Municipalité de village Naskapi, Municipalité de village cri Whapmagoostui, and Première Nation crie de Whapmagoostui

Governance issues to be analyzed

During the discussion meetings, Aboriginal community representatives mentioned that they would like more long-term visibility regarding local activities and projects so they can be more easily included in local and regional land use planning

Aboriginal community representatives also feel that it is hard to see how the various departmental plans tie in with each other and with the overall vision that guides them, despite the existence of departmental coordination mechanisms and unifying planning tools. It appears that due to the multiple levels of jurisdiction, collaboration between jurisdictions can be challenging, particularly in terms of reconciling their respective visions.

Territorial organization in northern Québec is the only one of its kind in Canada. The particularities of governance in the North are complex.

Project predictability helps harmonize planning tools with activities taking place within the area.

There are several territorial plans and authorities in the territory under modern treaties.

Lastly, Inuit and Naskapi representatives feel that the planning framework provided for in the *Act respecting northern villages and the Kativik Regional Government* is outdated. The Act has not been substantially revised since its adoption in 1978.

The need for sustainable land use planning

Sustainable land use planning in the North involves challenges related to natural hazards, including flooding, landslides, coastal flooding, and avalanches. However, the legislative and regulatory framework does not require planning tools to include areas where land use is subject to constraints. In Nunavik, for example, there is no mechanism in place to require key players to take areas with natural hazards or potential soil instability into account in the planning, construction, and monitoring of infrastructure. Since many northern villages are affected by melting permafrost, this raises issues of infrastructure sustainability and personal safety, and has economic implications, especially since existing construction standards adapted to the northern environment are not mandatory.

Furthermore, population growth in Nunavik is expected to continue at the same level over the next few years, which could lead to an increased need for housing and municipal services.

Careful planning of development and infrastructure projects is important, given the particular context of Nunavik, which is characterized by a short construction period and the need to transport materials by boat. Construction challenges are magnified by the shortage of granular materials in some northern villages. All these factors put upward pressure on project costs.

In addition, detailed planning of areas of urban growth takes several years. However, the lack of visibility regarding construction projects limits opportunities for designing buildings adapted to the effects of climate change, including thawing permafrost.

Nunavik's unique climate also creates challenges for drinking water distribution and wastewater collection. Because of the permafrost, these services cannot be based on a pipe system and are currently provided by tanker truck. This entails several constraints, namely limited drinking water per dwelling and frequent service interruptions, due to equipment breakdowns or storms for example.

The natural resource industries' increased activity between the 49th and 55th parallels may raise cohabitation issues. For example, more roads can impair ecological connectivity and affect traditional activities.

Legislative provisions on the jurisdiction of Nunavik authorities with respect to land use planning have not changed since their adoption.

Land use planning must take natural hazards and the effects of climate change into account.

The housing stock does not meet the needs of modern treaty communities, which could have an impact on physical and mental health.

Reconciling different land uses may be a challenge.

A need for support from key players

The KRG provides support to northern villages on municipal land use planning issues. In general, the planning teams of modern treaty nations have a hard time recruiting and retaining staff. Whereas, there has been an increase in the number of requests for consultations with the communities, partly because of mining development in the region, which increases the workload of their teams.

Although the RGEIJB and the Cree Nation Government may declare their jurisdiction over land use planning and development, there is currently no land use plan or equivalent document.

The availability of technical and professional resources in the North is limited, in part because of the isolation of northern communities.

Orientation 3

Processes that promote a sustainable, integrated approach to land use planning in northern areas

In the area covered by the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement* and the *Northeastern Québec Agreement*, territorial organization differs from that in southern Québec, as special governmental and administrative bodies have been established there. Their singular form of governance presents unique land use planning particularities. Sustainable land use planning also raises challenges related to the particularities of these areas, such as the isolation of certain communities and the effects of climate change specific to arctic and subarctic regions. Therefore, Gouvernement du Québec must help Inuit and Cree communities and the Naskapi community document current issues, adopt best practices, and develop their planning tools.

Avenues to explore

- Better knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of key players in land use planning and the applicable framework in northern Québec
- Identification of land use planning issues and tools based on the specific characteristics and needs of northern Québec
- Sustainable land use planning in northern areas (e.g., access to the land, protection of heritage and natural environments, infrastructure security, and housing)
- Greater land use planning support from the government for local key players based on northern agreements

COMMUNITIES IN THE SOUTH

First Nations have a special relationship with the land. They frequent areas that extend well beyond the boundaries of Aboriginal reserve lands and communities and coexist with municipal communities. First Nations, as users of the land, are important actors in land use planning. As such, they must be able to get involved in these issues and have opportunities to express their point of view and their concerns, whether as part of consultation processes conducted by Gouvernement du Québec or dialogue with municipal partners.

Overview of the Main Issues Covered by the Consultations

Consultation and collaboration tools to be strengthened

First Nations representatives believe that it is better to hold government consultations or initiate dialogue on collaborative municipal initiatives before land use planning decisions are made. The government consults Aboriginal communities on specific projects and initiatives that require permits or rights and authorizations, but community representatives argue that initiating dialogue at the planning stages would help ensure that their concerns are better taken into account. Representatives said that Aboriginal communities want to be involved in land use planning above and beyond consultations required under the Crown's constitutional obligations.

When consultations are held to allow First Nations to share their concerns about land use planning initiatives, it is good practice to provide feedback on efforts made to address their interests and rights. First Nations representatives believe that ongoing consultations would help to take better account of their concerns in land use planning.

Given the many departmental and sectoral planning processes, First Nations feel that better coordination and harmonization mechanisms would help facilitate their participation in these efforts.

In addition to being encouraged, holding discussions between municipal partners and Aboriginal communities is also prescribed in the government policy directions regarding land use planning's document *Pour assurer une cohabitation harmonieuse de l'activité minière avec les autres utilisations du territoire* (Harmonizing mining activity with other forms of land use), as part of the process of identifying areas that are incompatible with mining activity. Nevertheless, First Nations representatives noted that municipalities vary widely in how they contact and discuss with them about various land use projects.

First Nations representatives feel that there are few regional consultations and planning bodies in which they can participate, which may limit opportunities to take part in developing supralocal visions, strategies, and plans.

Dialogue with First Nations at the land planning stage would help ensure better consideration of their concerns.

Orientation 4

Greater dialogue with First Nations on land use planning before decisions are made

First Nations generally have a close relationship with the land. The way they use the land, especially the rights they can exercise in connection with traditional practices, makes them key players in land use planning. Where land use planning choices may affect First Nations' ancestral or treaty rights, processes may have to be put in place to address the potentially adverse effects of government actions. Apart from the consultation obligations that government may have, more dialogue with municipal partners and a better understanding of First Nations concerns can contribute to more comprehensive land use planning. The government therefore needs to encourage communication between municipal partners and First Nations, their organizations, and their representatives as part of planning process for municipalized territories. Ultimately, entire communities will benefit from these closer relationships.

Avenues to explore

- Land use planning processes that take First Nations' points of view into account
- New discussion forums for gathering First Nations' input on land use planning
- Closer cooperation between key players in land use planning and First Nations
- Promotion of exemplary practices regarding interactions between municipal partners and First Nations



MAIN AXIS 2: URBAN GROWTH

Urban growth, both in large and small cities, has significant effects on the environment, our landscapes, the way we travel, our activities in natural and recreational areas, and consumption and health habits—in other words, our overall quality of life. How can we reconcile the development needs with harmonious land use? How can we provide effective and strategic public transit and active transportation infrastructure and update our approaches to urban form and transportation, particularly to limit GHG emissions? What policies should be adopted to protect areas essential to the development of sustainable communities, including agricultural land and natural environments?

URBAN GROWTH AND THE PROTECTION OF UNDEVELOPED AREAS²

Our current practices encourage urban sprawl, which is the most costly form of development on all levels: economic, environmental, and human. Dependence on the automobile, loss of agricultural land, the degradation or even disappearance of natural environments, and increased vulnerability are all collateral effects of the way we use the land. Although these issues are more pronounced in the main urban centers, they can also be observed in medium-sized cities, less populous municipalities, and villages that are home to new residential developments, both in rural and metropolitan areas.

Overview of the main issues

Urbanization that takes up too much space

Among the 34 Canadian census metropolitan areas (CMAs), the 6 in Québec recorded the greatest urban sprawl during the decade from 2001 to 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Furthermore, the land area devoted to urbanization is increasing disproportionately to population growth. Managing population growth will be a challenge, particularly for the administrative region of Montréal and adjacent regions, which will probably account for 82% of the expected population growth between 2016 and 2041, or 926,000 people out of a total of 1.1 million (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2021a).

This expansion comes at a significant cost in cities whether large or small, as it requires massive public investment to build and maintain new infrastructure and facilities (e.g., roads, water and sewer systems, fire stations, libraries). The development choices we make collectively have costs that vary depending on the form of the built environment.

This relationship has been demonstrated by empirical studies elsewhere in Canada. A good example is the following data from a cost analysis conducted for the Halifax Regional Municipality in Nova Scotia (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2005) (see illustration).

CMAs in Québec are spreading out more and consuming more land than CMAs in the rest of Canada. In addition to this high land consumption, current practices result in significant costs associated with automobile use, increased GHG emissions, and isolation and mobility problems for certain population groups.

²Developed areas are areas where the natural function of the soil has been significantly transformed by urbanization (brownfield). Undeveloped areas include large natural green spaces (forests, wetlands, etc.) as well as urban parks and woodlands and agricultural land (greenfield).

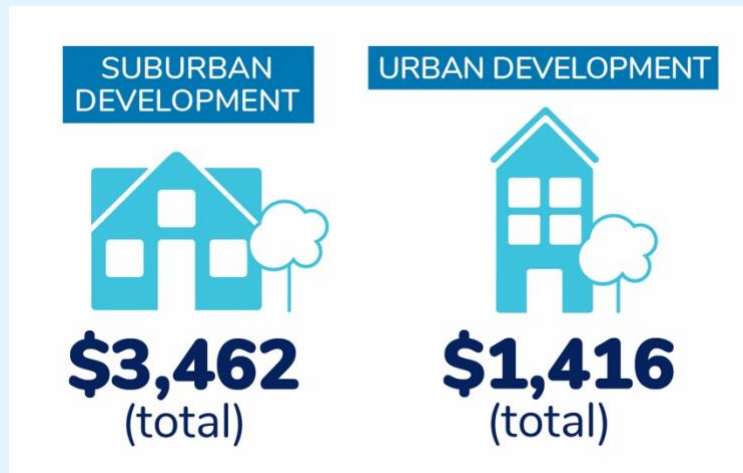


Illustration of the annual costs per household for different types of residential developments (Smart Prosperity Institute, 2021). The utilities associated with suburban-type neighborhoods cost more than double those of a more urban neighborhood.

The costs considered in this calculation include roads and sidewalks; water; waste, sewage and stormwater management; parks; emergency services (police and fire); public transit, and school transportation; and certain public cultural, economic, and governance services and infrastructure.

As a development mode, urban sprawl is costly for society as a whole. The scattered nature of this form of development increases the cost of linear networks (e.g., water and sewer lines) and requires more public investment in human services. Urban sprawl is clearly expensive for municipalities. However, since some human services are provided directly by senior levels of government, government spending is also increasing.

Conversely, by directing urban growth towards areas with public infrastructure and services and adopting various forms of denser (see illustration) growth, economies of scale can be generated, which helps optimize public spending and reduce the tax burden on citizens.

FORMS OF DENSITY



Density can take many forms. Some density-related building forms, such as high-rise buildings, may be cause for apprehension. However as this figure illustrates, a significant density level such as 76 dwellings per hectare, can be achieved with townhouses and compact single-family homes on smaller lots as well as with medium-sized apartment buildings (Institut d'aménagement et d'urbanisme de la région d'Île-de-France, 2005).

Land use planning practices that do not internalize development costs

Although some development methods are more expensive than others, their costs are generally not internalized, regardless of the type of development. The medium and long-term costs of development are not systematically considered in land use planning. This data is simply non-existent most of the time. This situation:

- Makes it difficult to optimize investments
- Weakens public finances
- Undermines the vitality of some communities

Moreover, these development choices also have consequences for Gouvernement du Québec, for example in the areas of highway transportation, health, and education.

We need a better understanding of the capacity of existing living environments to accommodate new residential and commercial projects. In other words, the question should always be: Can existing public services and infrastructure adequately serve new residents?

Land use planning does not pay enough attention to the costs of growth.

Competition between municipalities

Furthermore, competition between municipalities to accommodate urban growth, particularly within metropolitan areas, can contribute to inefficient land use. This competition is partly linked to the fact that local planning does not take sufficient account of regional dynamics. For example, RCMs do not necessarily consider how changes in their LUDPs affect municipalities in other RCMs or factor in the impact of planning decisions of neighboring RCMs in their own decisions. It then becomes difficult to harmonize efforts arising from the different plans.

Agricultural land and natural environments

In addition to the high costs of infrastructure and public services, urban sprawl also contributes to the destruction of sensitive environments, such as agricultural land and natural environments.

Québec has established robust mechanisms for protecting its agricultural land and agricultural activities. However, although the area of the agricultural zone has remained relatively stable throughout Québec since the early 1990s, substantial losses to urbanization have been recorded in sectors with good soil near major population centers.

Another worrying trend is the constant and increasing destruction of natural environments by urbanization. This results in a loss of ecological services, including:

- Biodiversity conservation
- Carbon sequestration
- Climate regulation
- The natural protection they provide against hazards, such as flooding, landslides, and erosion
- Their essential role in pollination

Finally, natural environments are essential to people's physical and mental health by improving air and water quality and providing space for sports and educational activities.

The lack of alignment between the planning and regulatory frameworks of neighboring municipalities is a problem. It encourages different areas to compete for urban growth. Within metropolitan areas, the varying levels of harmonization of local planning are particularly at issue.

The current planning framework does not promote optimal protection and enhancement of agricultural land and natural environments.

It is not very effective in optimizing land use and preventing encroachment on sensitive environments.

Orientation 5

Compact distribution of urban growth that supports Québec's competitiveness, protects undeveloped areas, and curbs urban sprawl

Land use planning can help limit encroachment on undeveloped areas, reduce GHG emissions, and increase the benefits of public investments.

Avenues to explore

- Growth concentrated in urbanized areas that already have infrastructure and facilities
- Planning choices that limit resource use
- Optimal placement of housing and activities
- Human-scale densification of existing living environments
- Requalification of underused spaces and redevelopment of urban wastelands prioritized according to community needs (new construction, public spaces, ecosystem restoration, etc.)
- Protection and enhancement of all non-urban areas, including agricultural land and natural areas, in particular to ensure connectivity between them

INTEGRATED PLANNING OF LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

Sustainable mobility offers solutions to multiple social, economic, and environmental challenges. However, land use planning must encourage the establishment of structures adapted to the needs of the population. How can we curb the use of solo driving and encourage people to switch to active and public transportation modes?

Integrated land use and transportation planning can be a pivotal factor in optimally channeling urban growth, due to its structuring effect. This approach makes urbanization more efficient by directing it near access points to the transportation network, ensuring access to goods and essential and everyday services via active transportation, and planning housing and activities in optimal locations. Since higher densities are required to make public transit and active transportation systems more profitable, certain existing living environments must be densified.

Overview of the main issues

The costs of failing to properly incorporate transportation into land use planning

In Québec, the transportation sector is responsible for 44.8% of GHG emissions, 79.6% of which are attributable to road transportation (Gouvernement du Québec, 2020). Freight transportation alone is responsible for 40% of the transportation sector's GHG emissions. Transportation by truck generates 79% of these emissions (Conseil du patronat du Québec, 2017).

Land use planning can make a significant contribution, in the medium and long-term, to the reduction of GHG emissions associated with transportation. Transportation and land use planning are currently managed by different planning bodies, and their objectives are not always consistent or organized by level of priority. The *Act respecting land use planning and development* does not require RCMs to undertake integrated land use and transportation planning, and the government policy directions regarding land use planning are unclear in this regard.

Moreover, responsibility for transportation is shared between Gouvernement du Québec, which is responsible for the highway system, and municipalities, which are in charge of local roads. This sharing of responsibilities influences the development mode preferred by municipalities. It is sometimes advantageous for them to use the publicly funded highway system to pursue residential and commercial developments in a less efficient way than if they had to foot the bill.

In addition to generating GHG emissions, the failure to consider transportation in land use planning results in significant costs. In 2018 the annual cost of traffic congestion was estimated at \$4.2 billion (Les conseillers ADEC, 2018). Added to that are negative externalities such as pollution and accidents, for a total bill of about \$7.6 billion in public funds. Reliance on cars as the main mode of transportation isolates low-income socioeconomic groups and hinders active aging (Trajectoire Québec et la Fondation David Suzuki, 2017).

Transportation planning is not well integrated into land use planning.

The government's funding approach to transportation encourages solo driving, whereas it is essential to promote public transit and active transportation. Solutions in this area must be modulated according to the type of environment.

Orientation 6

Integrated planning of land use and transportation promoting sustainable mobility

Integrated land use and transportation planning contributes to economic development and community vitality, due to its structuring effect. Areas that are developed in a way that promotes the efficient movement of people and goods attract more private investment in value-added economic sectors. This type of planning also promotes efficient urbanization that contributes to the physical, mental, and financial health of households. An integrated approach is also one of the most effective ways to fight climate change, if only because of its effect on reducing GHG emissions.

Avenues to explore

- Channeling of urban growth near access points to the public transit and active transportation network
- Development practices that reduce dependence on cars and decrease GHG emissions
- Increased cohabitation of uses in the vicinity of existing infrastructure, equipment, and strategic transportation facilities, to maintain their efficiency
- Access to everyday goods and essential services through active transportation, and access to places of employment via more sustainable mobility
- Intermodal transportation, both for people and goods, and universal access to transportation services and infrastructure



MAIN AXIS 3: LIVING ENVIRONMENTS

Land use planning is a powerful tool for ensuring collective and personal quality of life. It can help boost the vitality of both urban and rural living environments, and all other types of environments with which Quebecers can identify. Good land use planning allows us to give back living environments to their residents, regardless of their socio-economic condition, and to preserve and showcase our history through our heritage buildings. It can have a direct effect on access to essential services (food, health care, schools, and daycare centers) and how we get around by prioritizing active transportation. How can we improve the quality of our living environments in large cities, small towns, and villages? How can we give everyone access to welcoming public green spaces? How can we ensure a diversified housing stock that meets the varied needs of residents across Québec?

COMPLETE LIVING ENVIRONMENTS

Fostering universal access to local services, quality affordable housing, and public and natural spaces through active mobility, including walking and cycling, is a key factor in the health of communities and an effective way to reduce social inequality. Over the years, development in Québec has not given enough consideration to the population's broad spectrum of needs for housing, public spaces where people can gather, and green spaces.

Overview of the main issues

Dependency on the automobile

In Québec, the automobile is the most common mode of transportation in both urban and rural areas. Moreover, the distances travelled and the travel times are getting longer every year, while the use of public transit and active transportation remains low. Since the rise of the automobile, mobility has been transformed and the impact of this transformation has been amplified, on both the environment and public health. Often, activities can only be accessed by car. Village cores and town centers generate fewer and shorter trips than outlying areas, which are characterized by urban sprawl and greater functional segregation.

They also offer more opportunities for active transportation. Concentrating activities in village cores and town centers generally results in converging public transit routes, thereby reducing car travel from the periphery. In short, people who live in denser central neighborhoods that are close to jobs and service centers have more opportunities to travel on foot, by bicycle, or by public transport. In fact, transportation surveys show that the modal share of cars in these neighborhoods is lower.

However, many Québec municipalities have single-function residential sectors that include few local services, whether private (e.g., pharmacy, grocery store) or public (e.g., daycare centers). This type of development encourages the use of cars as the primary mode of travel. Other factors such as vehicle ownership, personal income, access to services, and number of children per household influence individuals' travel behavior.

Many neighborhoods depend on cars, which means roads and parking lots take up a great deal of space, and local services (grocery stores, health services, schools, etc.) are virtually absent. Complete living environments should promote social equity by providing access to everyday services.

Living environments that put households at risk

Housing prices in the most sought-after sectors, the lack of public transportation in certain areas, and the lack of local services, particularly in devitalized areas, are all issues that put households at risk.

While the major urban centers continue to attract new residents, some parts of them are becoming devitalized. For example, some first-generation suburbs, which emerged from the 1950s to 1970s, suffer from an aging built environment and declining services compared to newly urbanized neighborhoods. Similarly, there has been a shift of poverty and social exclusion from historic working class neighborhoods to peripheral areas. Many of these zones lack local services, alternatives to solo driving, and public gathering places.

Unmet housing needs

Government action in terms of housing is divided among various government entities (Ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation, Société d'habitation du Québec, Tribunal administratif du logement and certain other departments). Housing and land use planning are not integrated into a comprehensive vision of community development. Issues related to the aging population, demographic changes, and the need for housing that meets all needs are not well reflected in LUDPs. In practice, the land use planning framework does not sufficiently ensure the required links between housing and land use planning.

Demographic changes in Québec are having an impact on the existing housing stock and its development. The current supply of housing does not fully meet the diversity of Quebecers' housing needs. Apart from the demographic changes in Québec, the influx of temporary workers and foreign students is putting additional pressure on the housing situation, not to mention the effects of the conversion of lodging into short-term rental units for tourist accommodation. The situation particularly affects certain CMAs where the average rent can be nearly \$100 higher than the average rent for municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants.

In 2016, 9% of Québec households, both owners and renters, were in core housing need. Although Québec's situation is better than that of many other areas of Canada, with one of the lowest core housing need rates in the country, 305,600 households still lack access to affordable, appropriately sized, and quality housing.

According to an analysis of housing issues and adaptation needs carried out by Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ) and using data from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, an estimated 25% of people age 15 and over living with a disability, or nearly 263,000 people, were living in housing they could not afford.

Furthermore, the need to adapt the living environment to physical disabilities tends to increase with the person's age. In 2017, OPHQ estimated that approximately 70,000 people with disabilities had unmet needs concerning adaptations of their accommodations. That number may increase as the population ages.

A number of characteristics of the environment in which households live contribute to their being at risk.

Land use planning pays very little attention to housing issues. Moreover, the population's varying and evolving needs are not sufficiently taken into account by all housing actors (e.g., dwelling size, the diversity of households, proximity of services, and adaptation of residential buildings to the conditions of their occupants).

For a dwelling to be considered affordable, households below the low-income threshold must not spend more than 30% of their income on housing expenses, including rent. Yet 454,585 households spend more than 30% of their income on rent according to the 2016 census. In addition, the proportion of households spending 30% or more of their income on housing increases with the age of the primary maintainer, namely one in five households when the maintainer is aged 65 to 74 (Gouvernement du Québec, 2018).

Apart from affordability issues, many households live in substandard housing. Although it is difficult to assess the extent of substandard housing in Québec due to the lack of quantitative data, 7.2% of renter households in 2016 considered that their dwellings required major repairs. Many homes need to be renovated to improve their thermal insulation and reduce heating and air conditioning costs.

In this respect, municipal regulations play an important role in managing unsanitary conditions by providing a framework for regional and local actors to intervene with the population, provided that they have sufficient means and resources to apply it, the ability to impose severe penalties, and the will to act.

One of the problems is that the cost of legal fees involved in preparing a case for the Superior Court is significant for municipalities. Being able to acquire buildings may be of some interest to municipalities and useful in some cases, but may create a financial burden for them if they must manage newly acquired real estate that could be costly to rehabilitate.

A deficit of public spaces

There are too few safe, welcoming, and accessible public spaces in Québec. The fact that streets are rarely designed as public spaces isolates people and leads to safety issues, particularly due to:

- The lack of infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists
- Intersection design conducive to accidents
- No measures to slow traffic down
- Streets that are too wide

Public land use planning decisions do not sufficiently take into account the economic value or the social and environmental benefits of green infrastructure. Consequently, in urban areas, greening measures and the amount of functional, biodiverse, and connected green space are often insufficient. Yet, this lack of urban greening causes public health problems and amplifies the effects of climate change.

Access to public spaces is uneven from one community to the next, and many communities lack a full range of outdoor public spaces (parks, public squares, walking paths) and indoor public spaces (community centers, libraries, natural and recreational centers, public markets, etc.).

Higher rents are putting renter households in a precarious financial situation, not only in metropolitan areas, but also in suburban and rural areas. Socio-economically disadvantaged households are the most vulnerable to sanitation problems.

The resources available to manage unsanitary housing conditions vary from one municipality to another. The use of municipal powers in the area of sanitation can be administratively demanding and financially burdensome.

Public spaces, and especially streets are not sufficiently accessible, adaptable, and multifunctional, which leads to issues of safety, conviviality, and accessibility.

Orientation 7

Complete living environments designed to provide access to nature and everyday services

Creating complete living environments with easy access to services and public spaces meets the twofold challenge of responding to both the needs and aspirations of households and the sustainable development requirements of the community. Complete living environments must provide universal access to local services, such as health care, food, and schools through active mobility, as well as quality, affordable housing and adaptable, multi-functional public and natural spaces.

Avenues to explore

- Human scale living environments encouraging sustainable and active mobility
- A diversity of uses and optimal placement of local services
- A sufficient supply of quality, accessible, and affordable housing that meets a diversity of needs
- Private, public, and community neighborhood services that help create fair, inclusive, quality living environments
- Greening of our communities and green and blue spaces in urban areas that are accessible to all, particularly through active and public transportation, and that promote biodiversity conservation
- Attractive, accessible, adaptable, and multifunctional streets and public spaces

VITAL COMMUNITIES

Part of our history is to be found at the heart of our cities, villages, and neighborhoods. Long neglected, forgotten, and ignored, our neighborhoods and built heritage are now attracting new interest. They are both economic drivers and places that reflect and nourish our identity. However, municipalities and communities that want to develop them face many challenges. The vitality of our communities also hinges on thoughtful and visionary economic development.

Overview of the main issues

Urban sprawl hinders the diversification of living environments

Areas on the outskirts of city centers are less dense and have little functional mixing. The strictly residential nature of many projects pushes businesses and public services away from where people live.

This leads to urban sprawl around urban perimeters. New service centers develop along roads and highways, competing with the urban perimeters. Moreover, these peripheral destinations, which are often monofunctional, increase dependency on cars and counteract efforts to diversify urban cores.

Lack of action to protect and showcase built heritage and landscapes

Landscapes and built heritage can be important economic drivers and reinforce regional identities and residents' sense of belonging to their living environment. We lack a comprehensive picture of the heritage situation in Québec, particularly with regard to built heritage. RCMs and municipalities, especially small ones, have limited financial and technical resources to preserve and showcase their heritage buildings, so they often face the difficult task of deciding between safeguarding their built heritage and promoting economic development.

A substantial obstacle to preserving this heritage is the high cost of restoring heritage buildings and ensembles (whether the goal is to rehabilitate them or adapt them to today's needs) compared to the cost of new construction. Financial aid to offset the additional costs could encourage heritage building owners to preserve them.

Although many municipalities have leveraged their built heritage to drive development, the economic benefits and positive effects associated with conserving and developing heritage buildings and landscapes are not well known. Since RCMs and municipalities are unable to include evidence of this in their project analyses and development plans, it is difficult for them to take into account the benefits of developing heritage buildings and landscapes on their territory.

City centers, the heart of neighborhoods, and areas of heritage value are often neglected in favor of peripheral sectors. This phenomenon leads to living environments losing vitality and diversity.

Municipalities have some authority to protect buildings of heritage value, but it is evident that they often lack the means to address the challenges they face (e.g., building maintenance costs, opportunity costs, lack of expertise, etc.).

The benefits of developing heritage buildings and landscapes, such as economic spinoffs from tourism and positive effects on the attractiveness and vitality of municipalities, are not well known. This lack of data makes it harder to preserve heritage buildings and landscapes.

Economic development: powers and roles to be clarified

Local municipalities are vested with a range of specific powers, often with no obvious linkages between them, so that it can be hard for them to clearly identify the economic development role that the government has reserved for them.

The vast majority also have no obligation to engage in a formal economic development planning process. However, a number of large cities are required to do so by their charters.

Each MC must develop and adopt a plan for the major economic development issues on its territory. However, there is no legal provision for any specific requirements as to its content.

RCMs carry out their economic development duties in their own way, which creates differences from one area to another. There may also be conflicts between local and provincial interests in terms of economic development.

Commercial spaces to be upgraded

Over the years, major commercial hubs, including restaurants, accommodation, grocery stores, and gas stations, have sprung up along highways and local roads outside core areas. This is a recurring problem in many Québec municipalities, since it distances services from residential areas and encourages car travel.

Although there has been increasing interest in the downtown areas of certain small towns, they have not always received the same level of reinvestment. Many communities still have a hard time revitalizing their town cores. These difficulties are particularly pronounced in municipalities where there has been a net transfer of commercial activity to new peripheral hubs.

Industrial planning to be defined

Generally speaking, many industrial zones and parks coexist on the territory of RCMs and certain municipalities. This proliferation of industrial space can lead to competition between municipalities to attract new businesses. Moreover, it reflects a lack of planning as to industrial activities, which makes it harder to consolidate and optimize the investments made.

Space in industrial zones is rarely used efficiently. Planning of industrial zones should be revised to make more effective use of available space.

The development of sensitive uses near maritime, air, and rail transport infrastructure and operations leads to local conflicts that can limit development of these modes of transport and threaten their long-term viability. A similar phenomenon sometimes occurs near businesses with activities involving the production, use, or storage of hazardous materials that may be the cause of major accidents.

Lastly, few RCMs provide a comprehensive overview of industrial activity on their territory. They focus mainly on delimiting industrial zones, and very little on what activities they allow or the quality of the facilities that have been set up. Yet, this information would give them a better understanding of the industrial dynamics on their territory so they can optimize existing sectors.

Planning tools lack vision and flexibility and can act as a brake on economic development projects due to their rigidity or the time required to amend planning documents.

Commercial spaces are often located on the outskirts of living environments.

Poor planning of industrial activity makes it impossible to earmark these areas solely for activities that are incompatible with living environments and therefore gets in the way of optimizing past investments.

Orientation 8

Communities relying on their dynamism and full development

Vital city centers, neighborhood and village cores, and ensembles of heritage value play a key role in quality of life. Protecting and showcasing heritage buildings and landscapes can drive economic development and maintain vital communities.

Harmonizing development and land use planning provides for coherent, well thought-out spaces. Well-designed economic development hubs and optimal planning of commercial and industrial space are key to building vibrant communities.

Avenues to explore

- Vital city centers, neighborhood cores, village cores, and heritage sites
- Development of natural and cultural heritages and landscapes as an economic driver and a source of vitality for communities
- Optimal placement of economic activities in relation to land use planning
- Growth of economic development hubs that contribute to complete living environments
- Development of commercial spaces that contribute to community vitality
- Optimal planning of areas earmarked for heavy industry

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF COMMUNITIES

More than ever, we are witnessing events that highlight the importance of using good land use planning to increase our resilience. The health measures adopted from spring 2020 onwards have made us aware of the key role natural environments play in our health and quality of life. The consequences of climate change offer us an opportunity to develop territories that are better adapted to the natural constraints to which they are subject. The way we develop the land makes us collectively vulnerable to climate change and the potential climate events that can compromise the health and safety of communities.

Overview of the main issues

Refocusing decision-making on health and well-being

The health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, like other crises, has highlighted a number of issues. In particular, it has accentuated inequalities and made certain parts of the population that were already economically, socially, physically, and psychologically vulnerable even more vulnerable.

The restrictions imposed to control the spread of the disease have highlighted the importance of access to parks, green spaces, and natural environments near residential areas for the physical and mental health and well-being of residents.

In its wake, climate change exacerbates existing inequalities. Certain individuals and groups are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change because of their geographic location, physical limitations, financial constraints, or lack of adequate social support. Among those most affected are Northern and Aboriginal communities, as well as children, seniors, and people with certain chronic diseases.

Insufficiently acknowledged natural and human-induced constraints

Current approaches to land use planning pay little heed to the risks that may affect people's health and safety and the natural and human-induced constraints that characterize their environment.

This includes road transport, which is an important source of:

- Air pollutants, mainly from vehicle exhaust
- CO₂ emissions, the largest source of GHGs in Québec
- Other pollutants, such as certain metals
- Road noise that is likely to affect people's health, particularly due to trucking, heavy daily traffic, and the proximity of sensitive uses

The risk of climate-related events such as flooding, landslides, and coastal erosion make it necessary to determine zones subject to a normative framework. While essential, these measures can sometimes raise concerns for homeowners, particularly with respect to insurability, mortgages, and property values.

The scale of climate-related events is likely to increase due to human activity. For example, soil sealing, drainage, wetland destruction, and deforestation may increase the frequency and intensity of events such as flooding, erosion, and landslides.

Without concerted planning, waste management facilities, such as landfills, transfer centers, storage sites, and contaminated soil treatment sites, can affect people's health and quality of life and create nuisances (odors, dust, etc.) for more sensitive land uses nearby.

The impact of the current health and climate crises is significant, particularly in terms of indirect health costs. These issues make it clear that we need to revisit our land use plans, especially with regard to mobility, housing, public spaces, and greening. They demonstrate the need to incorporate the notion of health and land use diversification into the planning of living environments.

Natural and human-induced constraints, including the current and projected effects of climate change, are not considered in a consistent and sufficiently concrete manner in the planning framework and associated tools. Land use planning does not pay enough attention to risks that can compromise public health and safety (e.g., storage and transportation of hazardous materials, air pollutants, and noise), even though this is essential to developing sustainable, resilient communities.

The interface between large commercial spaces and the surrounding environment can be an obstacle to the harmonious cohabitation of uses. In addition, the location and layout of commercial spaces can create accessibility issues and be detrimental to health, particularly by creating food deserts.

Industrial activities, especially heavy industry, are a source of nuisances and pollutants. For example, complex industrial processes can generate noise, odors, dust, fumes, light, and contaminants. Some industries are a safety risk because they produce, store, or use hazardous materials or because they are likely to contaminate the environment in which they operate.

Measures on cohabitation of uses must take the different types of industry into account. For example, heavy industry should be located away from residential areas, whereas living environments can accommodate light industry.

Focus on sustainable development principles

Land use planning does not seem to be based on tools that make it possible to anticipate all the consequences of the choices made, including long-term costs, social benefits, and environmental impacts. In fact, municipalities are not subject to the *Sustainable Development Act*.

Certain land use planning practices contribute to the destruction of natural environments and the loss of agricultural land and put more pressure on road networks. These phenomena in turn deregulate ecosystems, increase food insecurity, and help speed up climate change through GHG emissions.

The need to consider seasonality in our land use planning practices

Urban forms influence wind behavior, radiant temperature, and water flow. These effects, which vary by season, influence how people get around and use public places. For example, in winter:

- Pavement conditions and the design of public transit waiting areas have a big influence on what mode of transportation people choose.
- Accessibility problems for people with reduced mobility and seniors increase.
- Access to some basic services, such as drinking water fountains and washrooms in parks, may be compromised for more vulnerable populations.

Segregating uses is not the best way to ensure harmonious cohabitation of all industries. In many cases, cohabitation could be facilitated through better insertion into the urban fabric and by planning site accessibility and the interface with sensitive uses, for example.

The land use planning framework does not sufficiently consider sustainable development principles, even though they are closely tied to the development of healthy, attractive, high quality living environments. The land use planning framework should take the principles of the Sustainable Development Act more into account.

Taking seasonality into account when planning living environments better protects the public's physical and psychological health and sense of security.

Orientation 9

Healthy and safe environments that contribute to sustainable and resilient communities

Sustainable land use planning of living environments (including greening, active mobility, and sustainable infrastructure) increases resilience and helps fight climate change. To build sustainable and resilient communities, we need to better consider natural (flooding, landslides, erosion) and human-induced (roads, rail, port and airport infrastructure, hazardous materials and waste management, etc.) constraints in our planning efforts. This will help create communities that meet the needs of all, not only on a day-to-day basis but also during exceptional events, such as disasters and health crises. Complete living environments must also provide for a variety of uses, while promoting harmonious cohabitation.

Avenues to explore

- Land use practices and planning that allow for better adaptation to current and anticipated effects of climate change and various hazards and that reduce environmental vulnerability
- Greater consideration of natural and man-made constraints in planning and development practices
- Harmonious cohabitation of uses to ensure public health and safety in line with sustainable development principles
- Greater consideration of seasonality in land use planning



MAIN AXIS 4: RURALITY

Québec has some of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. A trip across Québec offers a multitude of discoveries and breathtaking views. Rural Québec is home to a wide variety of environments, offering infinite possibilities for engaging in outdoor activities in natural and recreational areas and developing our natural resources, including our forests, waterways, and agricultural lands. These environments have specific characteristics and issues that need to be taken into account. Although all the main axes in this document concern rural areas in some way, the fourth, on rurality, addresses certain issues not specifically covered elsewhere. Should we preserve natural landscapes in our rural areas or should we allow wind turbines to be set up there? Should we prohibit mineral exploration and development in some areas or should we maintain this economic development opportunity? What strategies can we adopt to support our rural areas in their efforts to increase their vitality? How can we change our planning practices to take into account local specificities? How can we ensure harmonious cohabitation of uses?

DIVERSITY, VITALITY, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS

Rural areas are made up of a wide variety of territories, support a range of activities, and have unique characteristics that distinguish them from each other. Some areas are characterized by their natural attractions and resources, such as vast forests, lakes, and rivers, while others feature coastal or island environments. Some are major agricultural areas, whereas others bear witness to Québec's industrial history. Rural areas therefore play a special role in the Québec economy and occupy a significant portion of its territory. While some communities are vital and prosperous, others face demographic or economic challenges that make it difficult to maintain their populations.

Overview of the main issues

A partnership approach adapted to rural areas

In many respects, the steps taken in recent years to increase support for RCMs have been successful. Their objective is to enable the government departments and agencies concerned to conduct the necessary discussions with municipal partners so that each territory's situation can be taken into account when integrating government policy directions regarding land use planning into planning documents.

While the partnership relationship between government and rural areas has gotten stronger, a more regionally and territorially sensitive approach may be needed.

The government is not always sufficiently hands-on. It should act as a partner to support rural communities. Better support would encourage innovation and consideration for regional specificities.

In fact, municipal actors in rural areas outside major urban centers feel that the land use planning framework in Québec does not sufficiently reflect their particular situations and challenges. Some rural areas are innovative and vibrant. Others feel that they would be better served by a more flexible land use planning framework.

Some natural resource development projects are contested by local and Aboriginal communities, depending on the nature and proposed location of the project. Arguments raised in opposition to projects are usually related to environmental, public health, or safety concerns, or to values and ideology.

These projects may cause nuisances and generate risks in the surrounding environment. The nuisances are generally noise, dust, vibration, light, the release of contaminants into the air and soil, and impacts on wildlife. They can affect the physical and psychological health of those subjected to them.

Social acceptability is therefore a key success factor for these projects, and reconciling the interests of the various key players takes considerable work. Consultation with all key players on all issues helps foster community support for projects.

Enhancing rural areas

Since it occupies large areas, agriculture shapes the landscape. By creating and maintaining jobs and generating income, it contributes to the socio-economic vitality of rural communities.

Farming can be done on a small or large scale and a full or part-time basis, and use organic or conventional production methods. This wide range of farming models and practices offers a variety of development models pertaining to agricultural land in rural areas.

Beyond its production function, agriculture has social, economic, and environmental benefits. For example, agri-tourism, whether for local, regional, or provincial clienteles, contributes to regional development and farming activities. A number of RCMs have used their land use planning tools to encourage agricultural diversification, but the scope of these efforts varies.

Rural areas also feature numerous natural environments and water bodies. However, certain factors make it harder for the public to enjoy them, such as the lack of protected public access and the fact that some lakes are too busy.

The development of new residential areas, including those intended for cottagers, can also have a marked effect on the natural landscapes in which they are located.

Finally, heritage sites bear witness to the history of their communities. They contribute to the identity and uniqueness of different territories, particularly in rural areas, where they promote the vitality of towns and villages. Greater access to human and financial resources could help municipalities protect and showcase these invaluable assets.

Although RCMs play an important role in rural areas, it could be strengthened to give them greater latitude in their land use planning choices.

Projects at the provincial level do not sufficiently take into account local concerns, particularly with respect to natural resource development and environmental protection.

The vitality of rural areas depends on diversified and dynamic agricultural activities and access to enhanced natural areas, landscapes, and heritage sites. It is important to recognize the functions and benefits of the different land uses in each territory.

New land uses to be added in rural areas

Introducing new activities in rural areas is likely to create new cohabitation challenges. The expectations and perceptions of different users are not always easy to reconcile.

Municipal organizations have a number of tools at their disposal to ensure harmonious cohabitation of uses. However, some of these tools are outdated. For example, odor management tools in the agricultural sector only concern animal production, whereas new activities can also cause nuisances. Odor management rules could be revised to reflect changing agricultural practices and activities.

Many planning documents do not cover potential conflicts of use. This is the case for new natural and recreational areas that can be a source of nuisances or are located near activities that also generate nuisances. This situation can lead to conflicts of use. Mining, logging, ATV trails, and hunting generate noise and visual nuisances in natural and recreational areas and affect residents' safety and tranquility.

An appropriate planning framework for activities in natural and recreational areas

Activities in natural and recreational areas and tourism contribute to the economic development of rural areas by attracting people who consume products and services. The development of activities in natural and recreational areas is governed differently on private and public land. On private land, the development and planning of these activities is not subject to specific guidelines and expectations.

Residential, commercial, and service activities in natural and recreational areas must be carefully planned to avoid any risk of devitalizing town centers or village cores. It is also important to consider the impacts of developing activities in natural and recreational areas on surrounding natural environments and landscapes.

Reconciling cottagers' needs and interests with those of nearby permanent residents can be difficult.

In 2019–2020, interregional migration had a positive effect on a number of RCMs with natural and recreational areas according to Institut de la statistique du Québec (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2021b). Activities in natural and recreational areas can therefore have a structuring effect, or be a destructuring factor. Many natural and recreational facilities are gradually being transformed into permanent housing, which increases the demand for public services. In addition, when natural and recreational areas are scattered, it is more difficult for the municipality to ensure that the public services provided are profitable.

Conflicts of use in rural areas can be caused by the introduction of new activities. Newcomers sometimes inhabit the living environment differently than existing residents. For instance, this situation can lead to problems of cohabitation between residential uses and agricultural activities.

It is important to plan the development of natural and recreational activities to ensure that they generate the desired benefits in rural areas and fit well into the local environment.

Developing natural and recreational activities can lead to the devitalization of certain village cores and homes and businesses scattered across the territory.

Car-based mobility

In rural areas, land use and development are often dispersed across the territory. This scattered development pattern hampers carpooling and regional public transit services such as interregional buses and taxibuses due to the long distances involved and low housing density. It accentuates dependence on cars and gets in the way of adding infrastructure that promotes active transportation.

People frequently travel beyond the boundaries of a single municipality or RCM. Mobility must therefore be planned on an appropriate scale.

Local municipalities do play a role in promoting sustainable mobility. However, measures may be more difficult to implement in rural areas where destinations are widely dispersed.

Access to public transit and private transportation is an important issue in rural areas. It can meet a basic need associated with independence and quality of life, especially since a significant number of people in these areas do not have access to a car.

Many rural municipalities are facing major issues including the maintenance and aging of their population, the loss of services, and personal mobility. These challenges can generate new rural and regional transportation needs.

The effects of demographic change

The anticipated demographic decline in some areas makes it harder and more expensive to maintain public services. The government policy directions regarding land use planning recommend consolidating major facility and service hubs. This approach has its advantages, as it reduces public expenses. However, it may also increase migration to these hubs at the expense of smaller municipalities.

An RCM may appear very dynamic because its main urban center is growing, but its other municipalities may be experiencing significant demographic losses.

Intra- and inter-regional migration near the main facility and service hubs puts increased pressure on the provision of services in these areas. Moreover, the dispersal of urban functions that drive development accentuates this effect.

According to data from Institut de la statistique du Québec, communities in the bottom quintile of the economic vitality index are generally far from metropolitan areas or census agglomerations and are characterized by their small size and relatively elderly population (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2021c).

Municipalities outside major centers have experienced ongoing population losses in recent years. Municipalities in the top economic vitality quintiles may see their population grow, including the number of workers, unlike municipalities in a lower quintile.

Between 2012 and 2017, 48,300 jobs disappeared in rural Québec and small municipalities, i.e., those with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants. Conversely, between 2011 and 2016, Québec's nine largest towns and cities accounted for 75% of job growth (Fédération québécoise des municipalités, 2018).

Mobility in rural areas relies mainly on access to a car, which reduces travel options and can be problematic in the face of an aging population and the need to adapt to climate change. Strategic public and interurban transit is more difficult to implement in rural areas far from major urban centers.

Demographic phenomena, such as population aging and low immigration rates, make it difficult to maintain local and public services in certain rural areas, in addition to modifying residential demand. This could result in increased pressure on the main regional service hubs. That is why consolidating village cores is a good strategy.

Some rural municipalities seem to have more difficulty than others in ensuring their economic development and vitality. In certain cases, they face the prospect of economic and population decline.

Development costs

Land use planning choices and development history generate different outcomes in rural areas than in more urban areas. For example, built areas in rural communities sometimes lack water and sewer systems, but they can still generate public expenditures.

Urban expansion and diffuse non-agricultural land use in agricultural areas are detrimental to the maintenance and development of agriculture. Among others, they lead to phenomena such as:

- Loss of arable land
- Destructuring of agricultural areas
- Additional constraints on agricultural practices
- Reduced production capacity

Therefore, we need to continue regulating development, as it can generate negative externalities that are not only economic, but also environmental and social.

Attractive rural settings

Institut de la statistique du Québec's data for 2019–2020 shows Quebecers moving away from major urban centers (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2021b). Regional specificities, such as land use patterns, can be leveraged to attract new residents to revitalize the core areas of rural municipalities. Landscapes, natural attractions, and low population density are all distinctive assets prized by city dwellers who move to the country.

Like in urban areas, development costs are not always taken into account at the planning stage in rural communities. The impact of different land use planning choices can be significant for some rural municipalities with limited financial means.

Living outside major urban centers has become more popular.

Orientation 10

The diversity and vitality of rural areas as central to sustainable development and dynamic land use planning

Rural areas embody different ways of using the land. They have many natural areas, landscapes, and heritage sites to offer. Encouraging dynamic land use planning in rural areas necessarily involves building on their diversity and ensuring their vitality. To achieve this, it is important that the government and municipal partners work together to ensure harmonious development of rural areas while preserving their specificities.

Avenues to explore

- Greater consideration of local specificities in planning guidelines and documents
- Development of mineral, forest, land, and agricultural resources in collaboration with the key players involved
- Judicious land planning practices to ensure harmonious cohabitation and respect for the characteristics of different environments when new activities, such as new natural and recreational areas, are added to existing environments
- Promotion and protection of natural areas, biodiversity, landscapes, and heritage sites in rural areas
- Consideration of the importance of rural service areas and how enhancing them can affect surrounding communities
- Land use planning that promotes sustainable mobility for the benefit of communities
- Protection of agricultural land and the primacy of farming activities in agricultural areas to help increase food autonomy
- Sustainable land use planning that takes into account the demographic challenges that certain areas are or will be facing



MAIN AXIS 5: FINANCES AND TAXATION

Land use planning issues cannot be addressed without considering the economic and financial implications of different options. Do our fiscal and financial choices allow us to collectively achieve our sustainable development goals? How can financial and fiscal tools be used to optimize development according to sustainable development principles?

MECHANISMS AND DRIVERS SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE LAND USE PLANNING

The current tax system and financial mechanisms affect a number of land use options. While they can be used to drive development, they can also lead to decisions aimed more at obtaining new short- or medium-term revenue for municipalities, sometimes to the detriment of natural environments. Practices in this area must encourage responsible choices that promote the sustainable development of communities.

Overview of the main issues

Financial repercussions to assess

In Québec, the lack of comprehensive data and studies on the costs associated with land use decisions makes it difficult to assess their financial implications at the planning stage. Some financing arrangements also make it difficult for taxpayers to see the link between their financial contribution and the cost of the services and infrastructure provided to them.

The financial impacts of land use planning choices are poorly documented and complicated to assess.

Land use planning driven by the search for new short-term revenue

The widespread use of property taxes to generate new, short-term revenue has led some municipalities to focus on growth. However, since this growth is not always used to consolidate existing areas, it also generates medium- and long-term costs that are often underestimated (maintenance and renewal of infrastructure, increasing demand for services, etc.).

Not all project costs are systematically internalized by developers and municipalities, and this has long-term impacts on municipal and government finances.

Due to competition between municipalities, some are reluctant to introduce mechanisms to internalize development costs, such as development charges.

When medium- and long-term development costs are not fully internalized, there is a certain amount of spillover onto the other levels of government responsible for providing public services (schools, roads, etc.).

The impact of land use planning on municipal finances is not well addressed in planning documents. The absence of a vision and clear objectives in this regard leads to a lack of coherence and coordination between different decision-making levels.

Leveraging fiscal and financial tools

The judicious use of fiscal and financial tools can help meet sustainable land use planning objectives and ensure efficient management of public finances. Municipalities have certain ecotax tools, such as development charges and regulatory fees and taxes to encourage optimal land use. These tools can be a way to diversify revenue and promote the energy transition. However, municipalities make very little use of these powers.

While the legal framework for expropriation is broad and complex, some powers of expropriation can support sustainable development practices. Municipalities have the means to protect heritage buildings and natural environments of value and help revitalize downtown areas or fund the construction of schools and the development of public spaces. However, expropriation costs in Québec can make it hard for municipalities to acquire properties.

The growth of artificialized areas in southern Québec has been mainly at the expense of natural environments. In fact, 66% of this growth has occurred in forested environments and 10% in wetlands (Rioux, 2019). The artificialization of land also affects agricultural land. Compensatory measures can be put in place to make up for the alteration or loss of these environments that have a lot to offer the community. Such measures may take the form of a financial contribution or compensation in the form of an equivalent area of land. When this type of measure is aimed at protecting environments of national or regional value, the compensation should be applied at a supralocal level to avoid direct financial benefit to the local bodies authorizing the development of these areas. Otherwise, the compensatory measures could create an incentive at the local level to encroach on the environments to be protected.

In government programs, there is little or no emphasis on ecoconditionality to encourage the application of sustainable urban planning principles. Yet some existing funding programs could include ecoconditionality measures. There are also few resources to support model land use planning initiatives. But model projects could help improve practices. For example, such measures already exist in the agricultural sector, where financial assistance is provided to producers who adopt certain sustainable agri-environmental practices.

Municipal taxation powers that can be used to diversify revenue sources and promote sustainable land use practices are often misunderstood and perceived as unwieldy. The same applies to municipal powers of expropriation.

Compensatory measures should be applied only if it is impossible to avoid or minimize encroachment into the area to be protected, since they involve the loss of an area of value.

Certain financial incentives are conditional on meeting sustainable land use planning objectives. These incentives could be associated with the objectives of financing programs to support good practices or the inclusion of ecoconditionality criteria in certain programs.

Orientation 11

Informed planning and taxation choices that contribute to sound public finances and sustainable land use planning for the benefit of all

Land use planning choices have considerable impacts on public revenues and expenditures at various levels, both for municipalities and Gouvernement du Québec. They result in positive externalities, such as the protection of natural environments, or negative externalities, such as the impact on ecosystem services. They thus generate long-term collective costs and benefits. Better consideration of these impacts in decision making will result in healthier public finances in the long term and provide fiscal and financial tools to achieve sustainable development objectives.

Avenues to explore

- Development and dissemination of knowledge about the costs associated with different management models and the value of ecosystem services
- Internalization of land development costs to optimize the use of public infrastructure and services
- Government and municipal financial tools that support sustainable land use planning and development (financial assistance programs, municipal reserves for infrastructure and sustainable development, funds supporting good practices, ecoconditionality criteria, etc.)
- Tax measures that make better use of existing powers and promote the consolidation of existing environments and sustainable development of the territory



CONCLUSION

This consultation document is a first step in the government's effort to provide Québec with a vision underpinning its national urban and land use planning strategy. It presents a preliminary look at the orientations Québec is establishing to guide its planning and development actions. The ultimate goal of these orientations is to create sustainable, eco-friendly living environments that are conducive to good mental and physical health, without compromising our collective ability to grow our economy.

The five main axes addressed—governance, urban growth, living environments, rurality, and finances and taxation—have a number of themes in common: modernizing our approaches to land use planning and development to increase our communities' resilience to climate change; providing more equal access to nature; reducing poverty; creating dynamic, balanced living environments; and protecting and enhancing agricultural land, waterways, wetlands, and landscapes so that they can continue to provide us with multiple services.

There are other consultation steps to come, including a series of meetings held by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to which key regional players are invited, as well as a Web consultation in French to gather public input. The issues outlined in these pages, as well as the proposed orientations, will evolve based on the views expressed during these consultations.

The time has come for all of us to work together to create a Québec that fully meets our needs and expectations.

APPENDIX

Summary of orientations

Main axis 1 – Governance	
Orientation	Avenues to explore
Orientation 1: A new land use planning framework for sustainable communities	▪ A results-based approach to more efficiently update and harmonize plans on multiple scales and further empower the parties involved ▪ A land use planning framework that makes for agile municipalities and takes regional specificities into account (government policy directions regarding land use planning, urban planning tools, etc.) ▪ Inclusion of sustainable development principles and current planning and development issues (climate change, energy transition, healthy lifestyles, maintenance of built heritage, biodiversity conservation, sustainable mobility, etc.) in the land use planning framework, particularly in the <i>Act respecting land use planning and development</i> and in the government policy directions regarding land use planning ▪ A collaborative approach and partnership between the government and the parties concerned (regional and metropolitan stakeholders, municipal bodies, and civil society), as well as government support for communities ▪ A greater role for RCMs, especially in arbitrating supralocal issues ▪ A land use planning and development plan that pulls together the various plans affecting RCMs ▪ Greater consideration for the role of municipal planners to ensure optimal use of their urban planning tools ▪ Recognition and support for expertise and sharing of resources at different scales ▪ Resident understanding of the land use framework ▪ Greater collaboration among supralocal entities

Orientation 2:

A government that consistently supports responsible land use planning and development in an exemplary fashion

- Public analyses of the anticipated impacts of land use planning choices on the territory and its resources
- Optimal placement of government equipment and infrastructure and compliance with the land use planning framework, especially the government policy directions regarding land use planning
- Ministère's leadership within the government (coordination, arbitration, etc.) with respect to land use planning and development based on active and effective collaboration with departments and agencies in line with their respective responsibilities and expertise
- Mechanisms to ensure that land use and urban planning issues are better taken into account in the implementation of government department and agency plans and projects
- Government-funded projects and financial support programs that encourage sustainable land use planning

Orientation 3:

Processes that promote a sustainable, integrated approach to land use planning in northern areas

- Better knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of key players in land use planning and the applicable framework in northern Québec
- Identification of land use planning issues and tools based on the specific characteristics and needs of northern Québec
- Sustainable land use planning in northern areas (e.g., access to the land, protection of heritage and natural environments, infrastructure security, and housing)
- Greater land use planning support from the government for local key players based on northern agreements

Orientation 4:

Greater dialogue with First Nations on land use planning before decisions are made

- Land use planning processes that take First Nations' points of view into account
 - New discussion forums for gathering First Nations' input on land use planning
 - Closer cooperation between key players in land use planning and First Nations
 - Promotion of exemplary practices regarding interactions between municipal partners and First Nations
-

Main axis 2 – Urban growth

Orientation

Avenues to explore

Orientation 5:

Compact distribution of urban growth that supports Québec's competitiveness, protects undeveloped areas, and curbs urban sprawl

- Growth concentrated in urbanized areas that already have infrastructure and facilities
- Planning choices that limit resource use
- Optimal placement of housing and activities
- Human-scale densification of existing living environments
- Requalification of underused spaces and redevelopment of urban wastelands prioritized according to community needs (new construction, public spaces, ecosystem restoration, etc.)
- Protection and enhancement of all non-urban areas, including agricultural land and natural areas, in particular to ensure connectivity between them.

Orientation 6:

Integrated planning of land use and transportation promoting sustainable mobility

- Channeling of urban growth near access points to the public transit and active transportation network
- Development practices that reduce dependence on cars and decrease GHG emissions
- Increased cohabitation of uses in the vicinity of existing infrastructure, equipment, and strategic transportation facilities, to maintain their efficiency
- Access to everyday goods and essential services through active transportation, and access to places of employment via more sustainable mobility
- Intermodal transportation, both for people and goods, and universal access to transportation services and infrastructure

Main axis 3 – Living environments

Orientation

Avenues to explore

Orientation 7:

Complete living environments designed to provide access to nature and everyday services

- Human scale living environments encouraging sustainable and active mobility
- A diversity of uses and optimal placement of local services
- A sufficient supply of quality, accessible, and affordable housing that meets a diversity of needs
- Private, public, and community neighborhood services that help create fair, inclusive, quality living environments
- Greening of our communities and green and blue spaces in urban areas that are accessible to all, particularly through active and public transportation, and that promote biodiversity conservation
- Attractive, accessible, adaptable, and multifunctional streets and public spaces

Orientation 8:

Communities relying on their dynamism and full development

- Vital city centers, neighborhood cores, village cores, and heritage sites
- Development of natural and cultural heritages and landscapes as an economic driver and a source of vitality for communities
- Optimal placement of economic activities in relation to land use planning
- Growth of economic development hubs that contribute to complete living environments
- Development of commercial spaces that contribute to community vitality
- Optimal planning of areas earmarked for heavy industry

Orientation 9:

Healthy and safe environments that contribute to sustainable and resilient communities

- Land use practices and planning that allow for better adaptation to current and anticipated effects of climate change and various hazards and that reduce environmental vulnerability
- Greater consideration of natural and man-made constraints in planning and development practices
- Harmonious cohabitation of uses to ensure public health and safety in line with sustainable development principles
- Greater consideration of seasonality in land use planning

Main axis 4 – Rurality

Orientation

Avenues to explore

Orientation 10:

The diversity and vitality of rural areas as central to sustainable development and dynamic land use planning

- Greater consideration of local specificities in planning guidelines and documents
- Development of mineral, forest, land, and agricultural resources in collaboration with the key players involved
- Judicious land planning practices to ensure harmonious cohabitation and respect for the characteristics of different environments when new activities, such as new natural and recreational areas, are added to existing environments
- Promotion and protection of natural areas, biodiversity, landscapes, and heritage sites in rural areas
- Consideration of the importance of rural service areas and how enhancing them can affect surrounding communities
- Land use planning that promotes sustainable mobility for the benefit of communities
- Protection of agricultural land and the primacy of agricultural activities in agricultural areas to help increase food autonomy
- Sustainable land use planning that takes into account the demographic challenges that certain areas are or will be facing

Main axis 5 – Finances and taxation

Orientation

Orientation 11:

Informed planning and taxation choices that contribute to sound public finances and sustainable land use planning for the benefit of all

Avenues to explore

- Development and dissemination of knowledge about the costs associated with different management models and the value of ecosystem services
- Internalization of land development costs to optimize the use of public infrastructure and services
- Government and municipal financial tools that support sustainable land use planning and development (financial assistance programs, municipal reserves for infrastructure and sustainable development, funds supporting good practices, ecoconditionality criteria, etc.)
- Tax measures that make better use of existing powers and promote the consolidation of existing environments and sustainable development of the territory

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