



**Comox Valley**  
REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

Round One

**Open House**  
Summary & Notes

March 2009

This brief summarizes the outcomes of the first round of community open houses for the Comox Valley Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) that were held during the week of February 16, 2009. A transcript of public comments is also provided.

The three-hour workshops used the same drop-in format and were held in the evening at Black Creek, Courtenay and Cumberland, and during the afternoon in Comox. The workshops were structured to allow participants provide feedback on important regional issues, challenges and opportunities at the following three, key stations.

**Community questionnaire:** Using flip charts, participants were asked to write down the three things they liked best about living in the Comox Valley and the three worst things about living there.

**Community visioning:** Using a mock newspaper from 2030, participants were asked to help imagine what an article entitled, “Comox Valley recognized as BC’s best!” actually said about the region. What had changed over 20-years?

**Community mapping:** Using a large map of the region, participants were asked to identify important areas that may require special attention during the RGS process.

Common themes and ideas generated at the first two stations are provided on the next page. Full transcripts of the community visioning and community questionnaire are provided at the end of this report. Community mapping information will be presented back to residents during the next round of consultations after project consultants have mapped it.

## Community Questionnaire

While residents identified many good and bad things about living in the Comox Valley, there was considerable agreement over the top issues/opportunities. These are summarized below.

### Best Things:

- Quality of life
- The area's natural beauty
- Proximity and range of outdoor recreational activities (hiking, biking, skiing, sailing, etc.)
- The valley's rural qualities, local farms, and availability of local foods

### Worst Things:

- Urban and rural sprawl
- Increasing traffic congestion
- Uncoordinated regional planning
- Deterioration of ecosystem health and ecosystem connections

## Community Vision

While some residents used the vision wall less to imagine what a positive future for the region would look like and more to identify current constraints and issues, a large number of people took the time to share their vision of the Comox Valley in 2030. Similar to the community questionnaire, several common themes and ideas emerged. These are summarized below.

- An environment-first, more sustainable approach to regional and local planning
- Protection of ALR and expansion/diversification of local food production and consumption
- A safe and efficient regional bike path network and improved transit connections
- A restored and protected Courtenay River estuary
- Coordinated and cooperative regional planning
- An interconnected regional park system
- More innovative, leading edge, green, community-scaled development, including infill development in the three municipalities

Note: The ♦ indicate the number of times participants selected a particular item rather than writing it out themselves

## Black Creek – Monday, February 16th

### Best Things

- Clean air and water (◆◆◆◆)
- Natural beauty (◆◆◆◆)
- Social community (◆◆◆)
- Local farm produce (◆◆◆)
- Lots of eco-stewardship organizations (◆◆)
- Green space, trails and greenways (◆◆)
- Numerous recreation opportunities (◆◆)
- Protection of watershed (◆◆)
- Fabulous potential to create a unique and spectacular place to live and work (◆)
- Clean rivers
- Un-crowded places
- We still have a chance to reverse ecological decline
- Wilderness space
- Wild creatures
- We still have time!
- The future is beyond our vision, but not beyond our control
- People who care about creative livable communities – compact, walk-able, safe
- Environmental spaces large enough to nourish the soul
- Forest land stewardship for local employment
- This is cattle country
- Beautiful area with majestic mountain views and close to water
- Potential to be a model for food security, environmental protection practices and
- Good people for the most part
- Farmers market
- Fair grounds for equine use
- Best part of the “best place on earth”
- Arts/ music/ cultural events

## Worst Things

- Rural sprawl (◆◆◆◆)
- Increased production of CO2
- Water waste
- Loss of ecosystems (◆◆◆)
- Lack of public and political will to take meaningful action towards future sustainability (◆◆◆)
- Lack of rural control over rural communities (◆◆)
- Complacency (◆◆)
- Lack of accountability – forest companies (◆)
- People buying large pockets of land, removing resources and hoping to sell it off in small lots for big profit! (◆)
- Lack of pro-activity regarding growing ageing population (◆)
- Lack of infill development – “grey areas”
- TimberWest land sales
- Lack of good, clean and safe biking paths to aid in commuting
- Loss of forestry jobs when land is converted to other uses/ sawmills closed
- Lack of “regional” approach
- Idiotic talk of “boutique farms”
- Not seeing ourselves living in a bio-region; lack of strategic planning that unites urban and rural
- The treat of methane gas coming
- Lack of decent, frequent public transportation
- Urban areas have more power
- Over-crowded schools, lack of amenities in rural Black Creek and surrounding communities for children, youth and seniors – lack of funding for recreational opportunities in rural areas
- A concern: assisted living developments like Casa Loma and The Berwick encourage seniors to relocate here. However, as soon as they need a higher level of care they are asked to leave. The next option is usually extended care so they join the growing waiting list for that. This is an infrastructure problem. How do we provide for this and who pays? Should there be a DCC on these to help pay since those who profit should be responsible for the increased cost to pay?
- Lack of respect for all life forms
- Lack of strong urban core
- Lack of accessible, affordable, healthy food
- We are part of the (arguably) worst ecological decline in the country at this time – the loss of our salmon stocks
- Lack of any food security strategy
- Lack of an energy supply strategy
- Water problems/ lack of handle on it
- We intend/ destined to repeat all the sprawl and environmental destruction – completed by areas like Vancouver/ Toronto/ New York

## Community Vision

- Agricultural lands are preserved
- Better transit service
- In wilderness is the preservation of life. Our elders did well for us. Thank you.
- The environment is considered as first priority in all planning
- Local food security has improved dramatically
- Public transportation is green, clean and reliable
- The Comox Valley is a bio-region while all growth and land use policies have been determined by giving priority to what is sustainable based on criteria such as: is there enough drinking water available; our farms produce food for local consumption; our buildings are built to the highest efficiency standards; mandatory recycling; rainwater recycling; etc.
- Comox Valley leading the way in developing community garden projects
- Framework to determine development placement
- In 2009, the CVRD discovered on-line bulletins boards where stakeholders, including all ages, interests and status could both express concerns and offer solutions. Additionally, real conversations developed and new, visionary leaders became obvious.
- Record salmon run in Oyster River!
- Ground water at historic levels!
- Western bluebird returns to valley
- Healthy population of Orcas bring joy to tourists when at Miracle Beach
- Provincial government in partnership with local government provides grants for organic farming
- In 2008, BC Transit finally twigged to the notion that majority of transit users commuting to and from Courtenay from the Black Creek area actually worked business hours, and thus for transit to be remotely useful, it required buses leaving and arriving 6 to 9 am and 3 to 7 pm six and seven days a week
- Awards given for self-sufficiency in food security
- Organic farming know-how
- Development with view to promoting wildlife habitat
- Lots of walking, cycling, new roads and trails
- Working together to achieve a great place to live and work
- Create communities that link values to development rural communities need safe corridors to walk, bike and enjoy
- Early example of watershed-based planning shows most success of any planning strategy
- All agricultural lands are preserved
- Comox Valley leads the way in ensuring development is eco and enviro-friendly
- Agricultural lands preserved
- Seniors and elders live out their years in home communities – good quality health care is close to home for seniors
- All homes and businesses are outfitted with full cut-off lighting for outdoor lights. No light pollution! Great stargazing at any time of year. People realize how important the dark is to our lifestyles.
- State-of-the-art transit systems in CV – links all the way north/south on the Island
- Indigenous lifestyles embraced – building and renovating own homes, native plants for landscaping, fruit and nut trees and orchards, hunt and fish nearby, clean drinking water
- Wildlife corridors

- Wise stewardship of water resources
- Frequent small bus service to town (very flexible)
- Infrastructure that builds on values – e.g., bike lock ups in rural area in order to ‘bike and catch a bus’
- Vision that supports sustainability through: taxation/land-use policies that promote cooperative living spaces (i.e., farms with multiple families living together to make it more economical and more labour to produce food); financial incentives for smaller pieces of farmland; policies that encourage a closer farmer-consumer relationship (i.e., make it easier to slaughter own animals for food, share raw milk); mandatory water protection plan that removes all recreation-private interests on Comox Lake; economic incentives for creation of local economy and jobs that aren’t minimum wage; a focus w/incentives on training and retraining in seniors health care
- Comox Valley produces and sustains farms and local wares
- Major pollution from Gas n’ Go on dyke Rd leads CVRD to ban all future such developments
- Pressure on lands for future industrial needs on highways near RD entrances
- Area C is too large, needs dividing

## Comox – Tuesday, February 17th

### Best Things

- Diversity of recreation and green spaces (◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆)
- Natural beauty (◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆)
- Courtenay River Estuary (◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆)
- The arts (◆◆◆◆◆◆)
- Climate (◆◆◆◆◆◆)
- Dog walking access (◆)
- Regional library (◆)
- Community appreciation for the environment (◆)
- Public safety
- New hospital vision
- Sailing access
- Fresh air
- Skiing
- Lack of traffic issues compared to the Lower Mainland
- Lack of violent crime – a safe place to live
- Clean water in estuary and Baynes Sound
- Land value is very cheap for high quality compared to other areas
- Solid foundation economically due to DND
- People smile at each other

### Worst Things

- Few bike paths and on-street bike lanes (◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆)
- Lack of low income housing (◆◆◆◆◆◆)
- No viable protection for the estuary (◆◆◆◆◆◆)
- Big box stores (◆◆◆◆◆◆)
- Lack of coordinated planning with all jurisdictions buying in (◆◆◆◆◆◆)
- Developer-driven subdivisions (◆◆◆◆◆◆)
- A lot of planning, but limited action (◆)
- Lack of employment (◆)
- A possible Gas-n-Go on the Dyke Rd. (◆)
- No interconnecting green spaces (◆)
- Limited moorage and storage for non-motorized boats (◆)
- Political infighting between main communities/governments (◆)
- Overlapping government bodies and costs (◆)
- Special interest groups not listening to the other side/ lack of respect (◆)
- Ever increasing land tax on larger properties with little control re: future densities – subdivisions (◆)
- Lack of/limited/old infrastructure
- Poor transportation (roads and traffic)
- Drugs
- When can we expect access to water and sewer services
- Regional District delays

- Snow ploughs filling my driveway
- No off-leash dog park
- No interconnected drainage and water control
- Lack of marina space
- No acquisition of new parks in RD in last five years
- Disconnection between regional growth and zoning
- No major publically funded arts centre
- Too many negative opinions
- Lack of cultural diversity
- Need another bridge – tunnel crossing Courtenay river
- Putting \$\$\$ into another river crossing instead of putting it into better transit
- Big box stores replacing green spaces
- Too many governing bodies – local governments/school district
- Sprawl
- Lack of health care services, proximities and specialties
- Lack of RD planning flexibility
- No regional composting
- Development is progressing without sufficient protection for natural systems – water, air, wildlife (topsoil, natural vegetation, wetlands)
- Retain ALR and timber lands (no trading either)
- Homelessness
- Disconnected policing

## Community Vision

- A true “learning society” has been created where residents and visitors can witness and interact with an abundance of biodiverse flora and fauna and watersheds with clean air, water, soil and food sources
- A sustainable economy has been achieved – with meaningful work for young people, without environmental exploitation, and with the highest possible quality of life characteristics including good housing and services for those in need
- The Comox waterfront has lengthy walking trails leading from one destination to another, providing worthwhile beautiful hikes
- The country of Ecuador has incorporated into their constitution “Rights for nature and the natural world”. It is my dream that we could incorporate a similar statement in a RGS that has some teeth. We are but one of millions of species on this planet.
- Courtenay River Estuary a protected area
- The Dyke Road (Comox Ave) a parkway with no industrial development
- All natural systems are recognized with regulations which ensure their continuation – including watershed natural systems, estuary natural processes resulting in thriving flora and fauna
- Protection and restoration of natural systems in Valley provides the starting point for all land use decisions
- 1. Affordable housing 2. Clean healthy rivers and Georgia Strait 3. Bike and walking trails 4. Preserved farm land – local food
- A special governance and advisory structure to protect the estuary
- Change from moonscape land development to preservation of topsoil/ plants
- Encourage landscaping with native plants/ food production – including front yards!
- Clotheslines! Cisterns!
- Allotment space available for people with no land to grow food etc.
- Chickens
- Local governments are required to follow direction for land use as recommended by the RGS
- Possible single municipal government for three existing ones – to administer RGS strategy objectives with CVRD
- We need to densify to encourage transit use and protect the ALR. We should provide an urban containment boundary
- After the report has been given to the regional district, I would strongly hope there is a referendum so all would have a say
- Housing affordability: mix of housing types – not so much homogenization of housing
- Due to the growing population of elderly, the issue of viable transportation services to access healthcare facilities is an important issue. Also, healthcare should be considered with population growth and planning a system that will support the demographic for the next 20 years
- Need to plan for large cultural centre, arts etc. supported and paid for by all who use it – RD, Courtenay, Comox, Cumberland
- There should be schedules posted at all bus stops to encourage people to ride. At the present time even the main terminals (outside the Courtenay Museum) have no posted times.
- With a 50% increase in population, park and green space should be purchased in advance that will accommodate the increase. Think ahead and act.

- Urban containment boundaries are a must! Protecting drinking water and Baynes Sound water quality are also vital. No more industrial activity near the estuary. Protect ALR and green spaces.
- Return to Middle School model. Continue to improve bus system. More safe walking and biking paths, away from roads where possible. No more big box stores.
- I have not heard any discussions on the development of alternative energy. Does this planning factor in energy (clean) for the future.
- Water availability is going to be so important, especially at this time of climate change. We should have a base use for all and then metering above the base. All new housing should be mandated to have water conservation measures incorporated. Where is the solar in our new construction

## Cumberland – Wednesday, February 18th

### Best Things

- Abundance of beauty and nature (◆◆◆◆)
- Outdoor recreation (◆◆)
- Potential to grow substantial percentage of food needed
- Centrally located (on the Island)
- Rural atmosphere but still has complete economies and complete communities (e.g., Cumberland)
- Great place to raise young children
- Small town feel
- Ocean/beaches- public open space
- Rural areas surrounding urban development
- It's home and a beautiful place to live and enjoy
- Easy to get around (by car)
- Diversity- rural, village, town, wilderness mix
- Potential for building resilient, sustainable communities

### Worst Things

- Bad connectivity to biking and transit (◆◆◆)
- Sprawl development (◆◆)
- Lack of coordinated government
- Subdivisions designed by engineers
- "Us" versus "them" attitude: environmentalists vs. developers, rural vs. urban
- \$1 = 1 vote
- Politicizing everything
- Commodification
- Lack of a single valley OCP
- Local (Cumberland's) politicians focused on BIG development and sprawl- wrong direction
- No urban containment- rural land is viewed as a land bank for urban development

## Community Vision

- Entire Goose Spit now protected as a regional park!
- All areas of the Comox Valley are now accessed by a network of cycling paths along old rail, ROWs and minor roads
- 100 organic vineyards make major economic contribution to Valley
- Comox Valley hosts world symposium on sustainable communities, Valley cited as successful example
- E&N Rails- to trail now complete- the last bridge was completed in May!
- Public shore line trail links Valley to Campbell River and Qualicum Beach
- Enforced residential containment boundaries
- Green parks
- Protected watersheds
- Low-rise, not 12-storeys high
- Gartley Beach (Royston) still natural and beautiful! No sewer pipes were ever installed under the beach- wise people put them on land and used innovative technology to handle sewage treatment. Cape Lazo/Willemar Bluffs mistakes of the park were no repeated at Gartley Beach
- Area's individual character maintained despite increasing co-operation and connection with one another.
- Bird watching at the site of the Cumberland constructed wetlands
- Farms, green energy
- Happy kids
- Great recreational areas/wetlands
- Place to raise a family

## Courtenay – Thursday, February 19th

### Best Things

- Natural beauty of region (◆◆◆)
- Activist community – social and environmental (◆◆)
- Our beautiful and diverse environment (◆◆)
- Parks and green spaces and access to outdoor recreation (◆)
- Great air quality (◆)
- All facilities accessible on foot in downtown Courtenay (◆)
- Great drinking water (◆)
- Friendly and welcoming community (◆)
- No tacky shops on 5th Street
- Healthy, happy population in general
- Better than anywhere else
- Best kept secret in BC
- Being the gateway to Strathcona Park
- No traffic
- We have everything we need (except for analog CBC)
- Climate will support low impact design, passive design, natural day-lighting, net zero water use
- Valley life style
- We now seem to have leaders – well done!
- Vibrant and active community
- Access to community resources
- Comox Valley Land Trust's Conservation strategy
- People willing to put time into these exercises – let's not disappoint them
- Denman and Hornby Islands
- Wildlife
- The rivers and swimming
- The climate
- Agricultural land base
- Fish and shellfish resources
- Mt. Washington
- Goose Spit
- Variety of support for community groups
- Culture and art

## Worst Things

- Lack of cooperative between governments – Valley's too small for four governments (◆◆◆◆◆)
- The lack of a real, defensible and definitive growth containment boundary (◆◆◆◆◆)
- Hooked on low-density sprawl (◆◆)
- GMO crops grown in CV (◆◆)
- Bedroom communities with cookie cutter designs, all auto dependent, being approved (◆)
- Pollution – air and water (◆)
- No recycling for apartments
- Gas-n'- Go
- Uncontrolled growth
- Developers' paradise
- Local governments did not require the owner of the sawmill site by the estuary to clean up and restore their site
- Food production in and around Comox Valley not regulated for sound environmental practices
- Lack of bike land
- Urban sprawl and coming of big box stores
- Far too many car dealerships
- Too much "Old Boys" club pushing through their agendas
- Poor turn out at these and most meetings (you snooze you loose), but the silent majority will scream bloody murder for not being consulted
- Inability to collect "bounty" fees turning in polluters and rogue developers
- Easy access of "from-aways" who are drawn to area because of its "beauty", but they contribute to the problems
- Too little attention to focusing growth and centres and strengthening them with containment boundary for growth
- Recently, boom growth has taken energies of municipal planners who haven't been able to give enough through and guidance on long-term issues to their councils
- Unimaginative, non-innovative built form
- Focus on becoming a retirement community – how boring is that
- No enough sidewalks for pedestrians
- Money too often trumps good sense with our local politicians
- Lack of diversity – very vanilla
- Lack of regional planning approach that considers ecosystem protection and restoration
- Staff shortage and capacity issues
- So far unwilling to be a global example and take lead in sustainability
- Local political bickering
- Divergent vested interests that do not appear to cooperate to resolve problems
- Poor and unimaginative planners
- Are we open to innovative housing? If there are no homes for young people who will service the older population?
- Too much haphazard development
- Too lax in development control of approved developments
- Too many 'beach protection walls' allowed into high tide water
- Lack of affordable housing for working families, singles, etc.

- Lack of planning for drought conditions
- Tree slaughter
- Not protecting salmon and their habitat
- Comox Lake – drinking water or public recreation area?
- The fact that the municipalities use the rural area as a holding area for development -when they want to annex territory there is little to stop them
- Municipal governments out vote the rural areas on the CVRD board
- Newcomers who try to change things to more represent the areas they came from and who try to eliminate activities that have traditionally been valued by residents (e.g., use of Comox Lake, beach fires, etc.)
- There is no mechanism for compensating owners of land that simply should not be built on, such as sawmill site, Gas n' Go, etc.
- Land use plans have been created by surveyors with no understanding or consideration of the suitability of the land for use, so land owner can end up owning lots with large portions of property that should not be built upon (ESA, RAR, etc.)
- We are 10-20 years behind where we need to be in terms of smart growth, sustainability, self-sufficiency
- The RGS/policies will be intertwined with political boundaries to be effective and actually resolve the long standing issues the RGS has to discuss and clarify
- We do not realize how good we have it here! We take it for granted!
- Many green thinkers/feelers, but lack of a plan
- Business, politics taking the place of a vision

## Community Vision

- Building sizes (height) have been limited, park areas increased, new housing developments are neighbourhood friendly, small green businesses have been encouraged
- Each community has a permanent, central, beautiful green house (transit accessible) where farmers and artisans can markets their crops, arts and gatherings can be held
- Composting toilets are rewarded and encouraged with technical support from the region
- The CVRD has adopted Ecosystem-based management and started using cutting edge tools like decisions analysis, risk assessment and management to ensure that our natural areas are protected
- Logging in our watershed is a distant, painful memory. A thriving, mixed forest brings in income from the global community for carbon sequestering, water capture and oxygen production
- Swimming spots are protected from being bought up and declared private
- In 2010, the people of the Comox Valley decided to protect natural ecosystems in the Baynes Sound area, including the estuaries and watersheds and the sound itself. They decided all development should be based on this principle. Thirty-years later, we are now recognized as one of the best examples of people and nature living together on the coast.
- Comox Valley has become a leader in sustainable land use planning with a long-term plan to protect and restore ecosystems
- Bike paths have made it possible for large numbers to rely on bikes for their transport
- The estuary has been restored and is vibrant with natural life and people walking and biking (the turning point was the defeat of the Gas-n-Go in 2009)

- Natural ecosystems will be restored to health levels of the 1970s and will be improving rather than deteriorating (key indicators include salmon, water quality, bird populations, air quality); Human populations will be decreasing, agriculture will be increasing as the demand for local produce grows; there will be fewer cars and more bikes; there will be more happiness and less poverty
- A community with low-rise accommodation/buildings centred on a protected, natural river and estuary, with protected views of the ocean and mountains, easy access to outdoor recreation facilities and local farms; ONE local government
- Water, pure, clean and available for seven generations
- Restoration of abandoned commercial, industrial sites to natural state
- Places of special ecological interest protected
- A genetically-engineered “free zone”; all Island and Comox Valley crops and produce much sought after
- Coal mining and coal bed methane were abandoned in favour of green power sources, including wave, tidal and solar
- One Spot Trail extended from Courtenay to Campbell River!
- All systems – water, food, power, drainage and sewage, air – sustainable
- All local governments established a proactive parks acquisition fund
- Comox Valley has an extensive network of dedicated bike lanes (not road shoulders) and separate bike paths and is the cycling valley of BC!
- Before inviting more people, CVRD determines that there is enough water and farmland
- Valley Farms and Community Gardens Collective is first on Vancouver Island to achieve food security certification
- Base all economic decisions on the preservation of the estuary
- TimberWest and Island Timberlands donate land for hiking trails to the community
- Building regulations changed to encourage alternative methods of building that are low-cost and natural, also incorporating regionally obtained materials
- We now have clean energy public transit
- We live in the Valley because we like as it is
- No growth is an option
- Urban sprawl curbed
- Community has a strong, healthy and vibrant population that are 65+
- People say, “You can’t close the drawbridge after you get here”, but isn’t that what drawbridges are for?
- Growth is tied to the carrying capacity of the land and our water
- Sensitive ecosystem inventory is much enhanced. None of systems is “developed”, rather the green areas are expanded
- No more expanding boundaries, build up, not out, lots of green spaces and walking trails between neighbourhoods, the estuary remains a jewel
- Forward thinking, progressive, young political leadership that leads community with heart in the “new world” – one that leads with earth’s jurisprudence
- All houses have low tech: single pane green houses on the south east side, collect rainwater, produce crops year round and improve energy efficiency of homes
- Comox Valley a model of natural farming practices with a variety of small acreage farms contributing to socio-cultural variety of the valley

- The land at Courtenay Bridge is a park for all
- If we used our brains we would be capping growth, instead of “planning by developers.” Nobody seems to comprehend sustainability, so we head for the crash
- There are now five farms using large animals such as horses and oxen (as our fossil fuel supply has no security of supply or price), and these farms pay no tax
- Comox Valley has innovative housing developments (not cookie cutter developments)
- Preserve access routes for wildlife and people with linear parks now on par with roads for cars
- Comox Valley a ‘genetic engineered’ free zone
- Preserve and use ALR – young farmers – like in England’s Land Trust areas; restore the estuary and protect all waters running into it; view the estuary as a tourist draw/local recreation draw without blocking it with buildings and development; build green, think green, limit golf course and require them to be green; limit population growth.
- Paving was ceased in 2009 as transportation greened and housing densified. Tiny winding roads thru new, small housing lots gleaned from old roads – orchards, gardens and green space, replaced over-wide roads!
- Household and business buildings capture and store water on safe surfaces. Households with gardens and native plants pay lower taxes
- Instead of talking about growth, let’s talk about regional development. An urban containment boundary would be a good place to start. The four big developments cumulatively are too big – some have to go away.
- TimberWest donates popular rock climbing area to the community
- Comox Valley reaches 60% self-reliance in locally-grown food, with 40% of farmers under 50-years old!
- Cohousing for new developments
- Parkland with bike/walking paths developed along the estuary
- The Valley retains and enhances its natural beauty, agricultural bounty, and cultural vibrancy, yet provides meaningful work at livable wages for all
- We are given comprehensive information on how to gauge our carbon footprint and are rewarded for reducing it and our water use