

Glenmore to serve as living laboratory

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Excitement is building in the Glenmore Valley, which is about to become a living laboratory for UBC Okanagan researchers. UBCO's research services office is going through a stack of sustainability proposals by faculty, with up to four of them each qualifying for \$10,000 in funding. An announcement is expected this week. Projects would begin in the spring and continue throughout the summer, with presentations in October on the results.

In this pilot project - a partnership with the city - faculty, students, staff and the community will work together on social, environmental, economic and cultural initiatives and programming.

Leanne Bilodeau, UBCO's director of sustainability operations, and Michelle Kam, with the city's policy and planning department, brought members of the Glenmore Valley Community Association up to speed on the history and timeline last week.

The association is acting as a liaison between researchers and valley residents who are interested in bike paths, for example, said association president John Harling, who formerly taught at Okanagan University College.

"It could be a whole gamut of things that they are interested in. This is a totally new venture, they said, so we're going to learn a lot as it progresses. Out of this, there may be future work with other communities in the Kelowna area."

When he first heard about the grants, his initial reaction was: "I think it is a fantastic thing because I know there's a difficulty in how the university interrelates to the community out there. Co-operation between the two can only be good."

Sustainability is a motherhood word that covers a wide range of activity, he said, such as the mechanics of social interaction in the absence of a Glenmore community centre, safely getting children to and from school, community gardens at the back of UBCO, species at risk (declining populations of amphibians) along Brandt's Creek and wildlife corridors co-existing with roads.

The sustainable community development grant program was created by UBCO provost and vice-principal Alaa Abd-El-Aziz.

"This new grant is a testament to the strong commitment our faculty, staff and students hold towards community engagement - and building meaningful partnerships leading to sustainable solutions that enhance our collective future," he said.

The Glenmore area was chosen as a living laboratory because of the area's diversity of old and new housing, mix of residential and commercial properties, demographic mixture and demonstrated sense of community involvement.

The partnership could address key areas of interest, such as water use, garbage collection, transit connections, green space and neighbourhood esthetics, added city manager Ron Mattiussi.

"One of the goals of the city is to build strong and sustainable neighbourhoods that foster healthy community living and lifestyle," he said.

"The city is striving to find ways to focus more of our policies and programs at a neighbourhood level. This new partnership allows us to leverage the university's expertise to apply and evaluate emerging best practices in sustainable living and stewardship, and bring that into our communities."

"True transformation depends on engagement with the broader community - citizens, businesses, institutions and the university working together toward shared objectives," said Bilodeau.