

An aerial photograph of a large, calm lake surrounded by lush green forests and small settlements. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky, its reflection shimmering on the water's surface. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic, with a blue-tinted overlay.

Your Tomorrow Starts Today

A Talk on Municipal Sustainability

An aerial photograph of a large lake surrounded by green hills and a small town. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky above the lake. The text 'The Question' is overlaid in the center in a white, serif font with a subtle drop shadow.

The Question

An aerial photograph of a large, calm lake surrounded by lush green forests. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky above the water. Small houses and buildings are scattered along the shoreline. The text 'The Question(s)' is overlaid in the center in a white, serif font with a subtle drop shadow.

The Question(s)

An aerial photograph of a town situated on the shores of a large lake. The town is surrounded by lush green trees and rolling hills. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky above the town. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Where will my town be
in 5 years?

An aerial photograph of a town situated on the shores of a large, calm lake. The town is nestled in a valley, with numerous houses and buildings visible. The surrounding landscape is lush and green, with rolling hills in the distance. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky above the town, adding a magical touch to the scene. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic.

Where will my town be
in 10 years?

An aerial photograph of a town situated on the shores of a large lake. The town is surrounded by lush green forests and rolling hills. A vibrant rainbow is visible in the sky, arching over the town and the lake. The water of the lake is a deep blue, and the sky is a clear, bright blue with a few wispy clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Where will my town be
in 20 years?



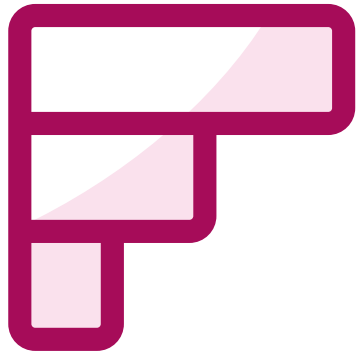
**Right now, where would you place
your community on the
sustainability journey?**

An aerial photograph of a large lake surrounded by green hills and a small town. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky above the water. The entire image has a blue color overlay.

Caring about your community
means caring about its future.

An aerial photograph of a large, calm lake surrounded by lush green hills and a small settlement. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky above the water. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The word "Sustainability." is centered in the middle of the image in a white, sans-serif font with a subtle drop shadow.

Sustainability.



**Rank the biggest barriers holding
your community back right now**

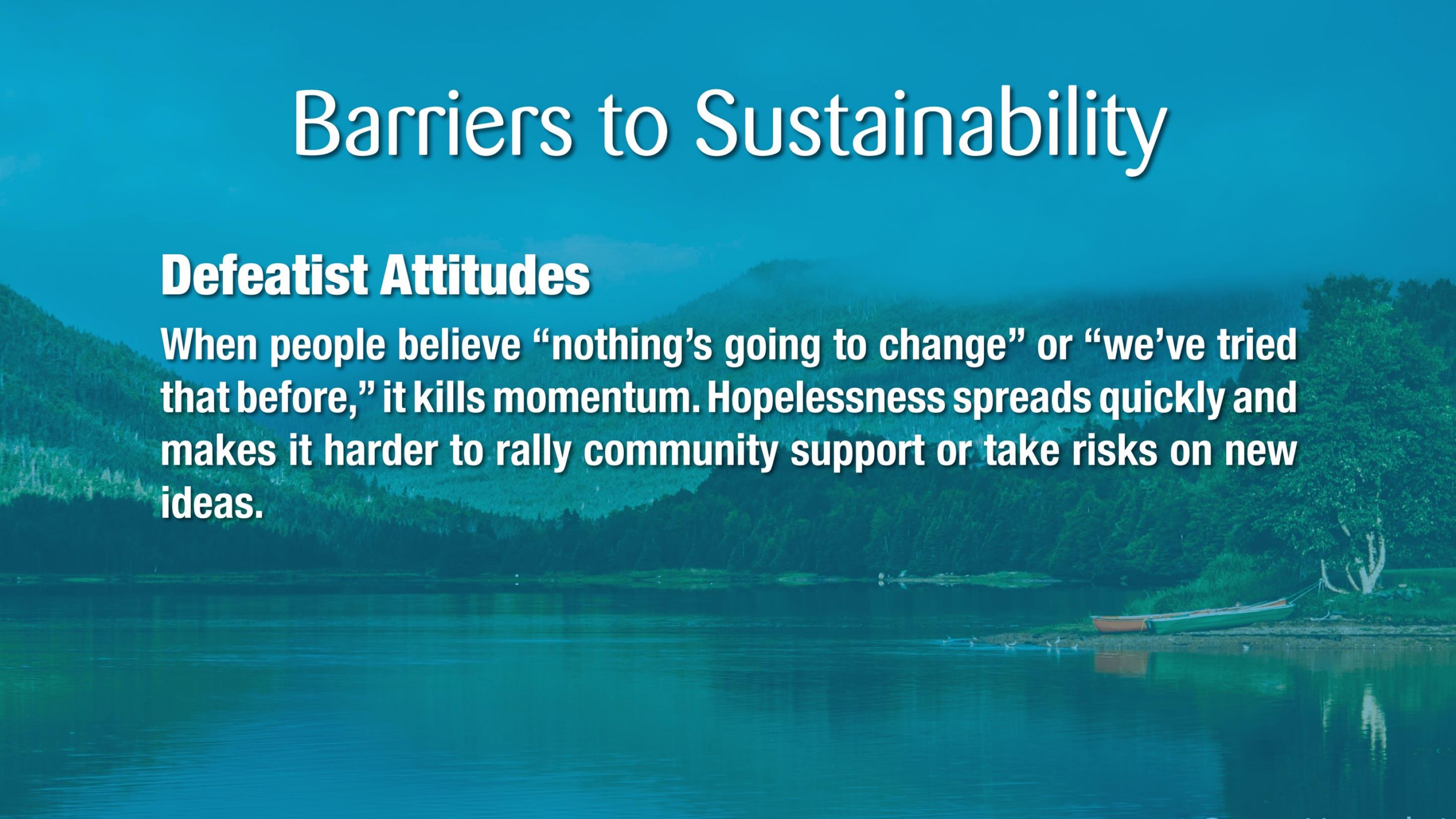
A scenic landscape featuring a calm lake in the foreground, a dense forest of evergreen trees along the shoreline, and rolling mountains in the background. A small boat is docked on the right side of the lake. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal color.

Barriers to Sustainability

Barriers to Sustainability

Defeatist Attitudes

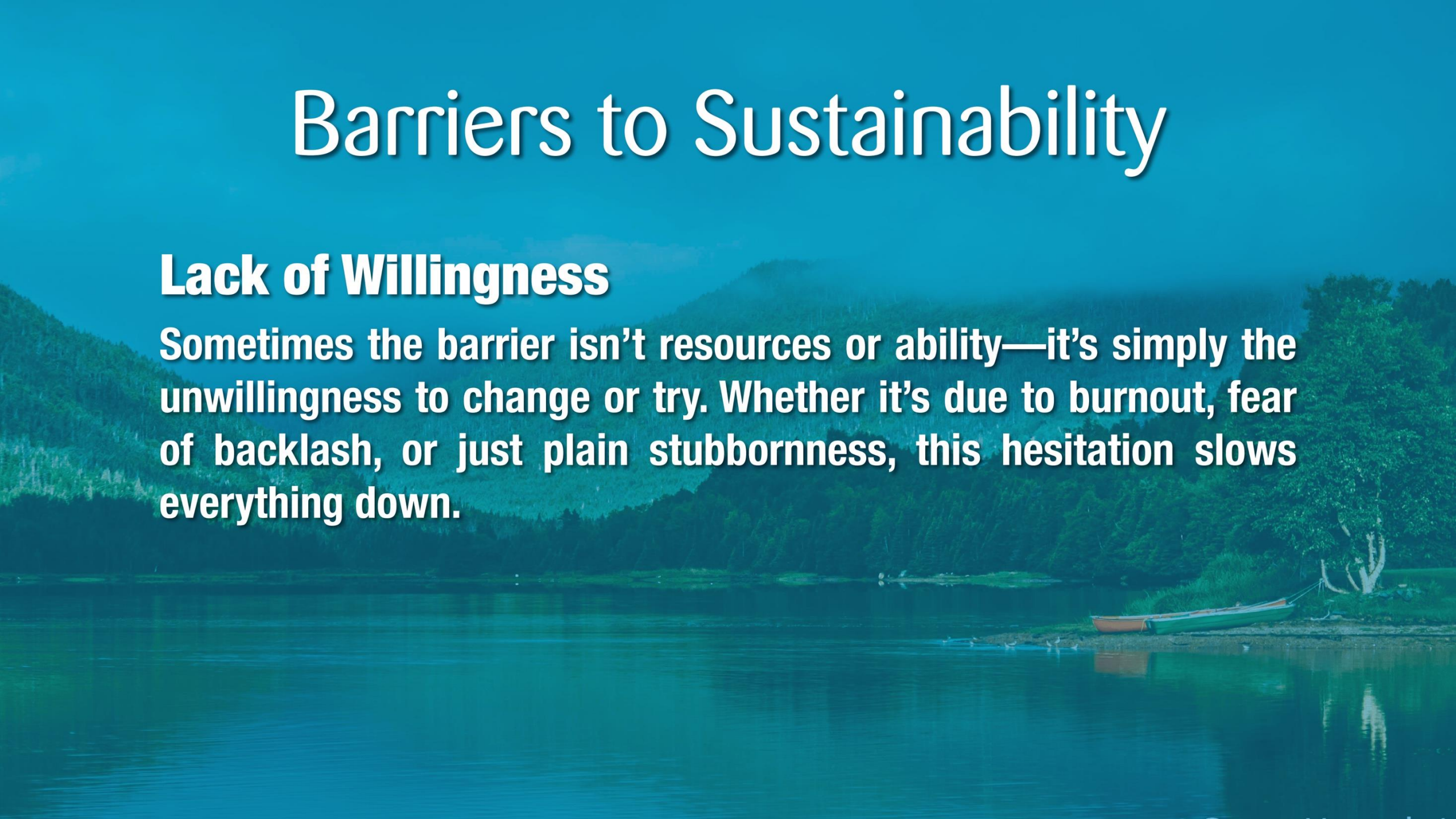
When people believe “nothing’s going to change” or “we’ve tried that before,” it kills momentum. Hopelessness spreads quickly and makes it harder to rally community support or take risks on new ideas.



Barriers to Sustainability

Lack of Willingness

Sometimes the barrier isn't resources or ability—it's simply the unwillingness to change or try. Whether it's due to burnout, fear of backlash, or just plain stubbornness, this hesitation slows everything down.



Barriers to Sustainability



Lack of Vision

Sustainability requires long-term thinking, but many councils are stuck in survival mode—putting out fires instead of planning for the future. Without a shared vision, progress is scattered and short-lived.

Barriers to Sustainability

Limited Capacity & Staff

Most towns operate with a skeleton crew. One person might wear five hats, leaving no time for strategic planning, grant writing, or new project development—let alone sustainability work.

Barriers to Sustainability

Financial Constraints

When budgets are tight—and they usually are—essential services eat up every dollar. There's often no leftover funding for things like climate adaptation, green infrastructure, or community engagement.

Barriers to Sustainability

Burnout and Turnover in Leadership

In small towns, leadership roles often fall to the same dedicated few—and they're exhausted. Constant demands, limited support, and community pressure lead to burnout, while high turnover disrupts continuity. When leaders are always starting from scratch, it's hard to build lasting progress or momentum.

Barriers to Sustainability

Aging Infrastructure

Water systems, roads, and buildings are crumbling in many rural communities. These pressing needs pull attention and funding away from innovation and sustainability planning.



Barriers to Sustainability

Volunteer Shortages

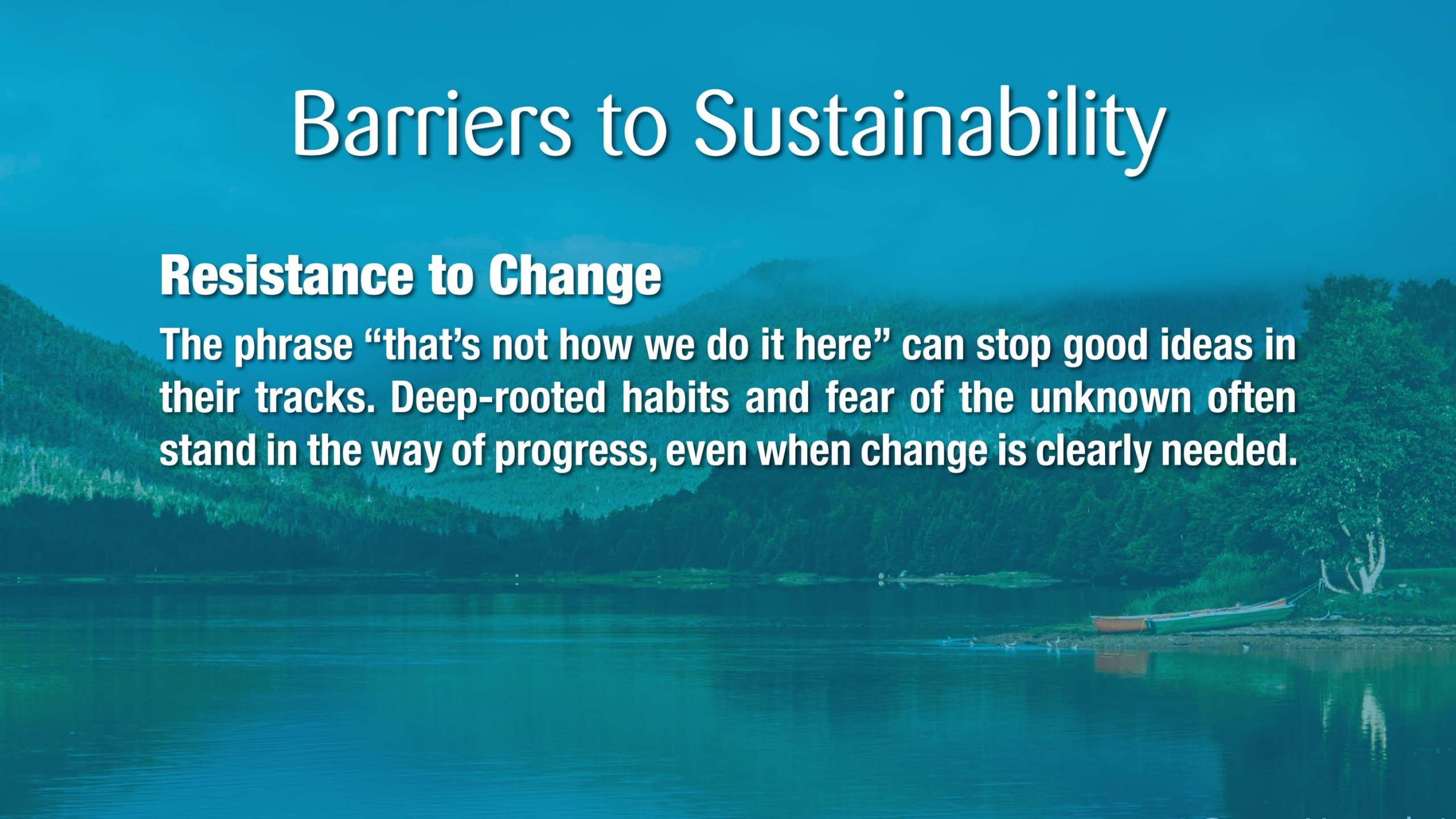
Without volunteers, community events, fire departments, committees, and even local councils start to fall apart. But in many places, the same few people are doing everything—and they're burning out.



Barriers to Sustainability

Resistance to Change

The phrase “that’s not how we do it here” can stop good ideas in their tracks. Deep-rooted habits and fear of the unknown often stand in the way of progress, even when change is clearly needed.



Barriers to Sustainability

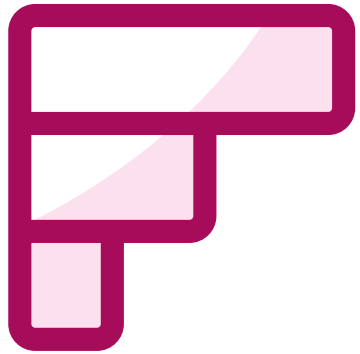
Lack of Collaboration

Municipalities often work in silos. Without stronger partnerships—between towns, with nonprofits, or with the province—it's harder to share resources, scale ideas, or take on bigger challenges together.



A scenic landscape featuring a calm lake in the foreground, a dense forest of evergreen trees along the shoreline, and misty, forested mountains in the background. A small boat is docked on the right side of the shore. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal color.

So, what do we do?



**If you could move something forward
in your community this year, what
would it be?**

Keys to Sustainability

The background image shows a coastal scene with a white boat docked at a wooden pier. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the structures. Large, dark rocks are scattered along the shoreline. The sky is a clear, light blue. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent blue overlay, which makes the white text stand out prominently.

Keys to Sustainability

Empower Local Leaders

Build capacity, avoid burnout, and foster fresh leadership.

Sustainable communities don't happen without people willing to step up. That means investing in leadership training, creating smoother onboarding for new councillors, and offering meaningful support to avoid burnout. Empowering local champions—especially youth—helps keep ideas moving and ensures knowledge doesn't leave when someone steps down.

Keys to Sustainability

Empower Local Leaders

Build capacity, avoid burnout, and foster fresh leadership.

- Start a Youth Council or invite high school students to shadow council meetings.
- Host a Leadership Night with current and former councillors sharing their experience and advice.
- Invite guest speakers on governance, finance, and climate planning.
- Offer honorariums or recognition for key volunteer roles to reduce burnout and validate contributions.
- Use mentorship pairings between long-serving councillors and new or potential leaders.

Keys to Sustainability

Plan With Vision, Not Just Reaction

Look beyond tomorrow's to-do list and imagine 10 years from now.

Rural municipalities often operate in crisis mode—fixing pipes, filling positions, and chasing deadlines. But sustainability requires long-term planning rooted in community values and realistic goals. Visioning exercises, integrated planning, and citizen engagement can shift councils from reactive to proactive.

Keys to Sustainability

Plan With Vision, Not Just Reaction

Look beyond tomorrow's to-do list and imagine 10 years from now.

- Hold a Community Visioning Session to hear what residents want for the future.
- Create a 10-Year Municipal Sustainability Plan with goals tied to housing, environment, and economy.
- Integrate climate risk assessments into capital works and infrastructure planning.
- Dedicate one council meeting every quarter to strategic and long-term planning, not just operations.

Keys to Sustainability

Collaborate to Do More With Less

Break down silos and build stronger networks.

No town should have to go it alone. Shared services, regional planning, and inter-municipal partnerships makes sustainability more achievable—especially when resources are tight. Collaboration also makes it easier to access funding and implement bigger, more impactful projects.

Keys to Sustainability

Collaborate to Do More With Less

Break down silos and build stronger networks.

- Form a shared services agreement with neighbouring towns (e.g., snow clearing, waste management).
- Create a regional housing task force to identify shared needs and access joint funding.
- Partner with local NGOs or businesses on grant applications or community events.
- Rotate regional planning workshops hosted by different municipalities.

Keys to Sustainability

Reimagine Participation

Get more people involved by making it easier, meaningful, and fun.

Get more people involved by making it easier, meaningful, and fun. Volunteer fatigue and low civic engagement are real. But people want to help—they just need a reason, a role, and the right environment. Think beyond traditional meetings: host community meals, pop-up workshops, or creative projects that reflect local culture and needs.

Keys to Sustainability

Reimagine Participation

Get more people involved by making it easier, meaningful, and fun.

- Replace one council meeting a year with a “Community Ideas Night”—food, music, and open mic-style discussions.
- Set up a community engagement booth at town events to gather input on key issues.
- Create a rotating “Community Spotlight” to highlight local volunteers and groups on social media or newsletters.

Keys to Sustainability

Build for Resilience

Invest in infrastructure and systems that can weather the storm.

From climate events to economic downturns, small towns face big vulnerabilities. Resilient communities plan ahead—investing in renewable energy, food systems, accessible housing, and infrastructure that works today and tomorrow. Sustainability isn't a luxury—it's a shield for the future.

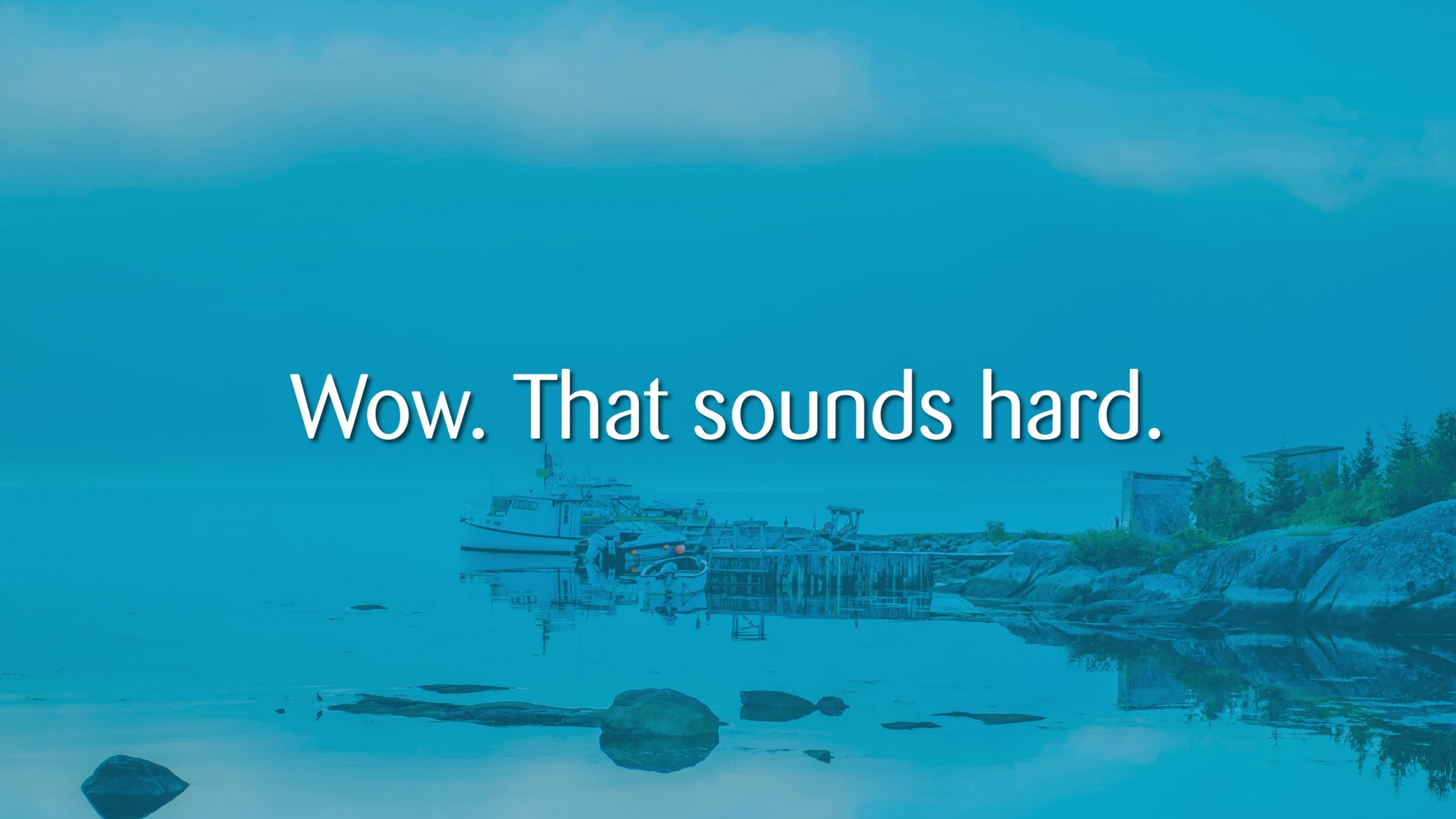
Keys to Sustainability

Build for Resilience

Invest in infrastructure and systems that can weather the storm.

- Apply for funding to install energy-efficient streetlights or heat pump upgrades in town buildings.
- Support the development of community gardens or greenhouses to improve food security.
- Work with a planner to prioritize infrastructure repairs based on climate risks (e.g., flooding, erosion).
- Include emergency preparedness and backup power plans for critical infrastructure.

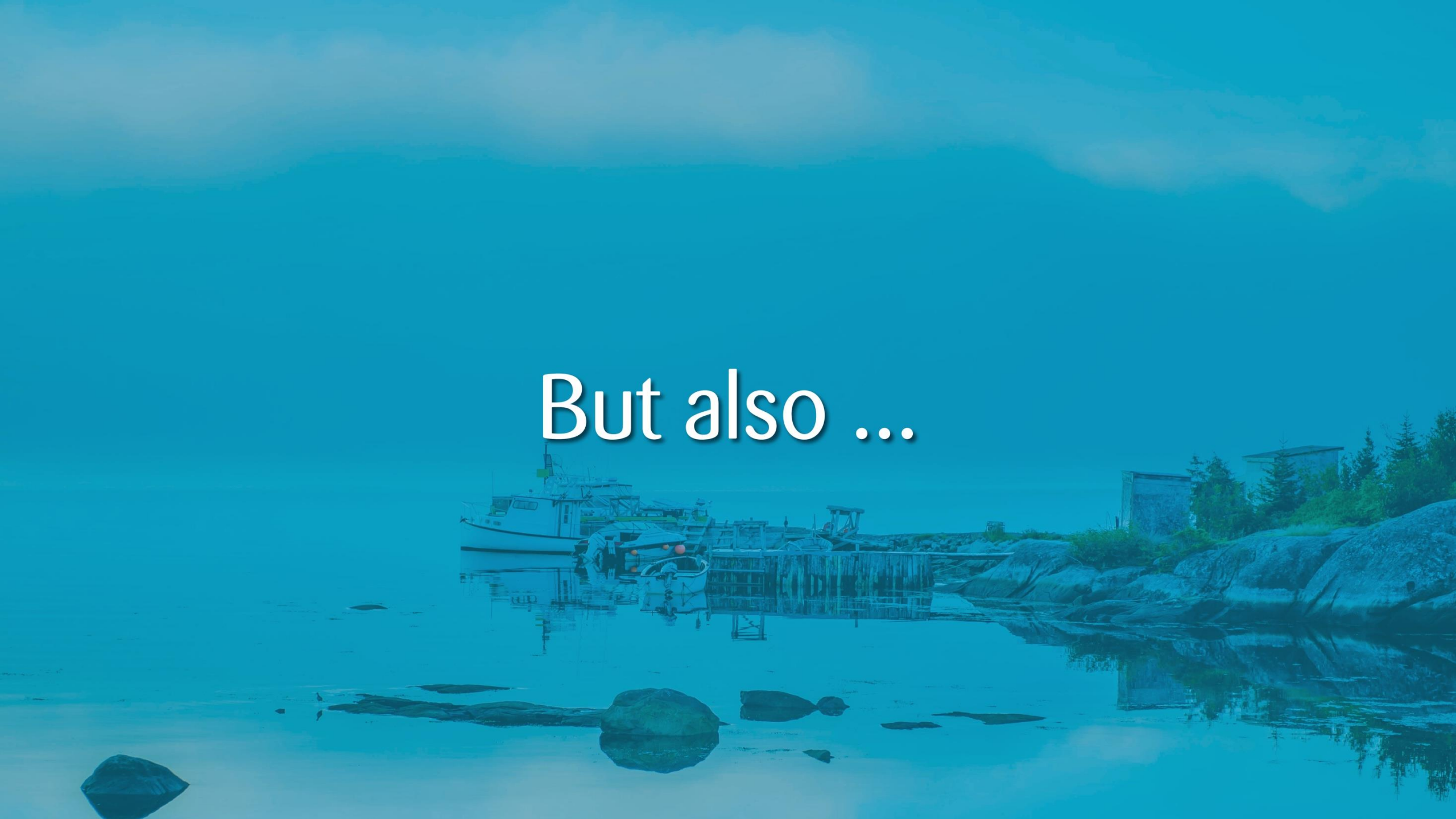
Wow. That sounds hard.



Anything worth doing always is.



But also ...



A coastal scene featuring a white boat docked at a wooden pier on a rocky shore. In the background, there is a building and some trees. The entire image is overlaid with a blue gradient. The text "We're here to help." is centered in white with a slight shadow.

We're here to help.

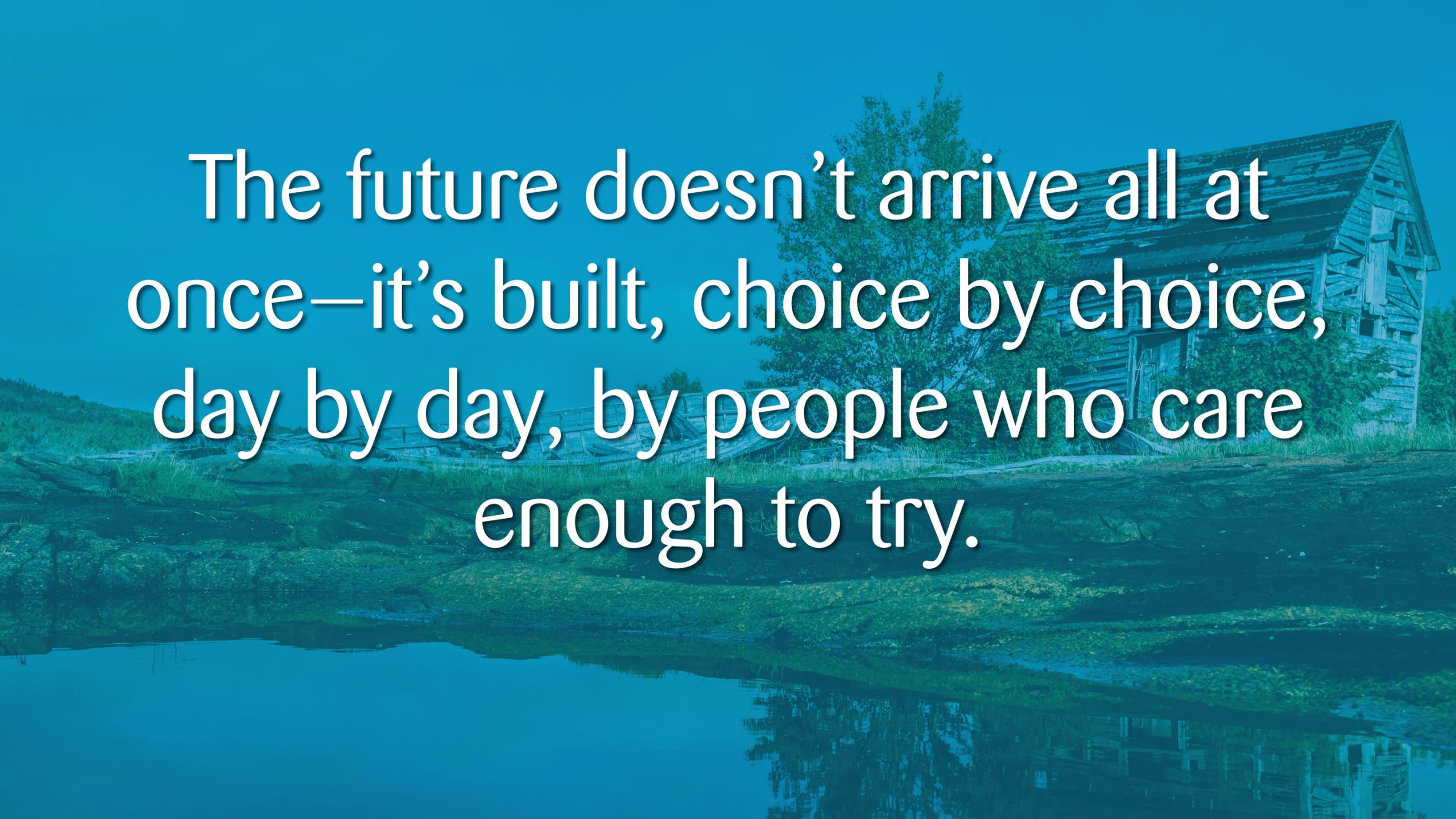


A MUNICIPAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE
**BUILDING VIBRANT & RESILIENT
MUNICIPALITIES IN
NEWFOUNDLAND AND
LABRADOR**

WWW.TOMORROWSTOWNS.CA



This is about changing mindsets.



The future doesn't arrive all at once—it's built, choice by choice, day by day, by people who care enough to try.



The Question



What am I doing to shape my town's tomorrow?



It starts today.