

Energy, Housing, Water

Why planning them together changes everything

Communities do not experience life in silos. A family that cannot afford to heat their home is dealing with an energy problem, a housing problem, and a health problem at the same time. Integrated planning means looking at energy, housing, water, and economic development as connected systems and designing projects that serve multiple priorities at once.

THE COST OF SILOS

What happens when systems are planned separately

Duplicated infrastructure costs

Separate site assessments, road access, and grid connections for each project. Coordinating can significantly reduce shared costs.

Missed funding opportunities

Many programs now prioritize projects demonstrating integrated community benefit. A solar project that also reduces housing costs scores higher than a standalone installation.

Community fatigue

Every project running its own engagement process means leadership attends meeting after meeting covering similar ground.

Solving one problem, creating another

New housing without an energy plan increases energy costs. An energy project that ignores housing growth may be undersized within years.

The opportunity

When energy, housing, and water are planned together, each project strengthens the others. An energy project becomes the foundation for affordable housing. Water treatment becomes viable because the energy source is already planned.

IN PRACTICE

What integrated planning looks like

Start with shared priorities

Before any project is scoped, identify the most pressing needs across sectors. This can be a set of agreed priorities, not necessarily a formal plan.

Design projects to serve multiple priorities

Instead of "What is the best energy project?" ask "How can an energy project also improve housing affordability, support employment, and contribute to water infrastructure?"

Coordinate timing

If housing and energy are both in planning, coordinating timelines means shared site assessments and engagement. Even if one moves faster, designing together avoids costly retrofits.

One governance body sees the whole picture

Not centralizing all decisions, but ensuring someone can see the connections and flag opportunities or conflicts early.

SIDE BY SIDE

Two approaches to the same community

A community with three priorities: unreliable energy, a housing shortage, and aging water infrastructure.

| Siloed approach | Integrated approach |
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| Three separate studies, each with its own consultant | One integrated assessment covering energy, housing, and water |
| Solar designed for grid export only | Solar sized to power housing and water treatment, surplus to grid |
| Housing built without energy efficiency standards | Housing designed to near-passive standards informed by the energy plan |
| Water treatment dependent on diesel | Water treatment designed around the solar supply |
| Three separate funding applications | Coordinated strategy where each application reinforces the others |
| Three projects, each meeting one need | Three interconnected systems, lower overall cost |

GETTING STARTED

Steps toward integrated planning

1. Map your current projects

List every active and planned initiative. Note which ones might affect or benefit each other.

2. Bring your teams into the same room

Have people working on energy, housing, and water present their work to each other. Identify where coordination would create value.

3. Ask the integration question early

Before scoping any new project: What other priorities could this serve? What other projects could affect or be affected by this one?

4. Coordinate your funding strategy

Reference connected work when applying for funding. Funders want to know their investment is part of a larger, coherent plan.

Working with Unify Partners

Our approach is built around integrated planning. If you are working on projects that feel siloed or want to explore how your initiatives connect, reach out at unifypartners.ca.