

An aerial photograph of a large, calm lake surrounded by lush green forests. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky, its reflection shimmering on the water's surface. Small towns are visible along the shoreline, nestled among the trees. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic, with a blue-tinted overlay.

Your Tomorrow Starts Today

A Talk on Municipal Sustainability

CONFERENCE TRADE SHOW AGM 2024
CHARTING THE COURSE
7-9, GANDER, N.L.



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The Sequel



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The Sequel

with less Majumder



An aerial photograph of a large, calm lake surrounded by lush green hills and forests. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky, its reflection visible in the water. Small settlements with white buildings are nestled along the lake's shores. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

The Question

An aerial photograph of a large, calm lake surrounded by lush green forests. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky, its reflection visible in the water. Small settlements with white buildings are nestled along the lake's shores. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

The Question(s)

An aerial photograph of a coastal town, likely in Alaska, showing a large body of water (Kachemak Bay) and surrounding green hills. A vibrant rainbow is visible in the sky, arching over the town. The text "Where will my town be in 20 years?" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font with a slight drop shadow.

Where will my town be
in 20 years?

An aerial photograph of a coastal town, likely in Alaska, featuring a large body of water, green hills, and a small settlement. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky above the town. The image has a blue color overlay.

Where will my town be
in 10 years?

An aerial photograph of a coastal town, likely in Alaska, showing a large body of water (Kachemak Bay) and surrounding green hills. A vibrant rainbow is visible in the sky, arching over the town. The text "Where will my town be in 5 years?" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font with a slight drop shadow.

Where will my town be
in 5 years?

An aerial photograph of a large, calm lake surrounded by lush green forests. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky, its colors reflecting on the water's surface. Small clusters of houses and buildings are visible along the shoreline, nestled within the greenery. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic, with a blue-tinted overlay.

Caring about your community
means caring about its future.

An aerial photograph of a large, calm lake surrounded by lush green hills and forests. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky, its reflection visible in the water. Small settlements with white buildings are nestled along the lake's shores. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

Sustainability.

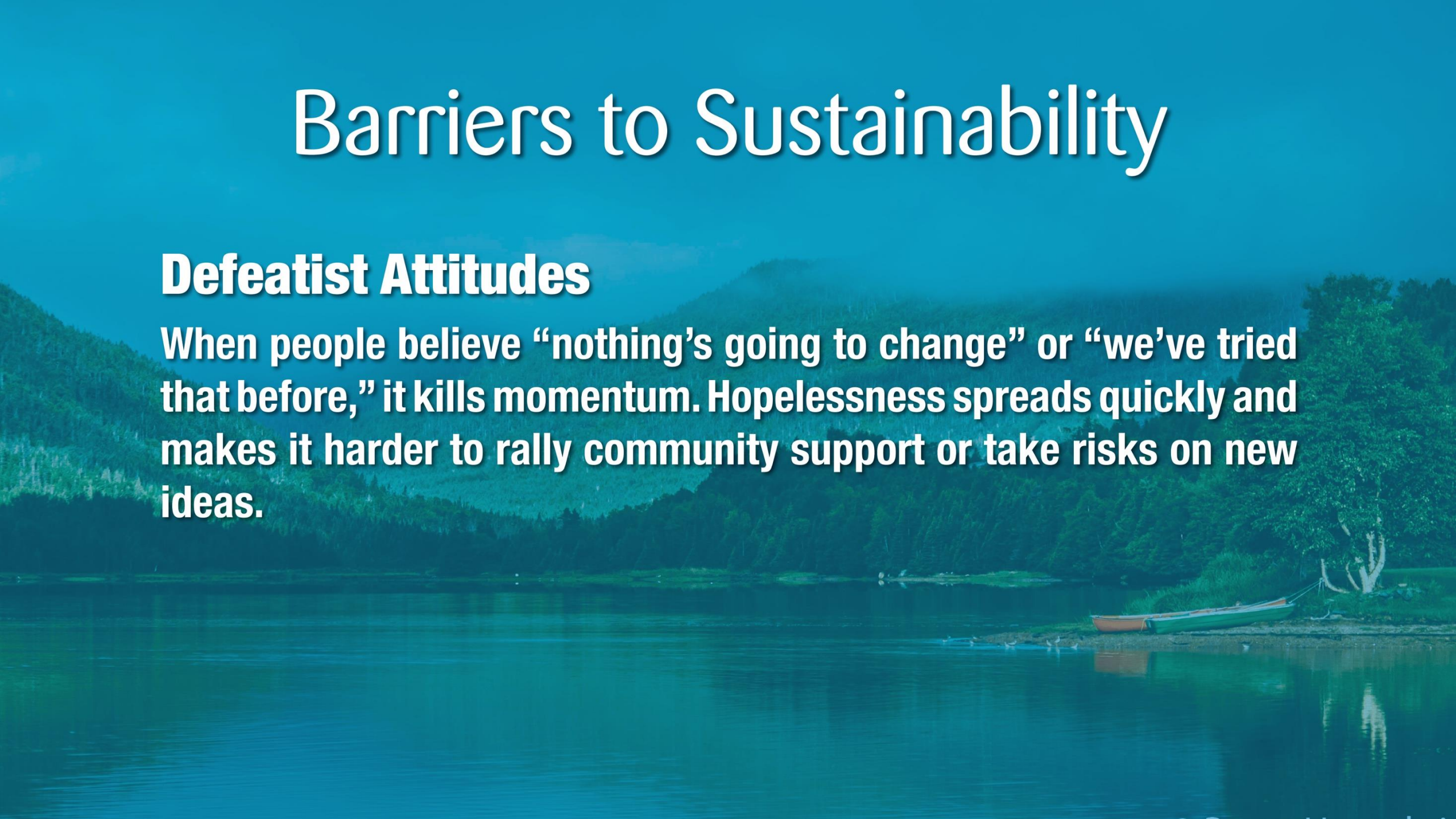
A serene landscape featuring a calm lake in the foreground, reflecting the surrounding environment. The middle ground is dominated by dense, green forested mountains. On the right side, a small boat is moored near a rocky shore with some trees. The entire image is overlaid with a blue gradient, and the text "Barriers to Sustainability" is centered in a white, serif font.

Barriers to Sustainability

Barriers to Sustainability

Defeatist Attitudes

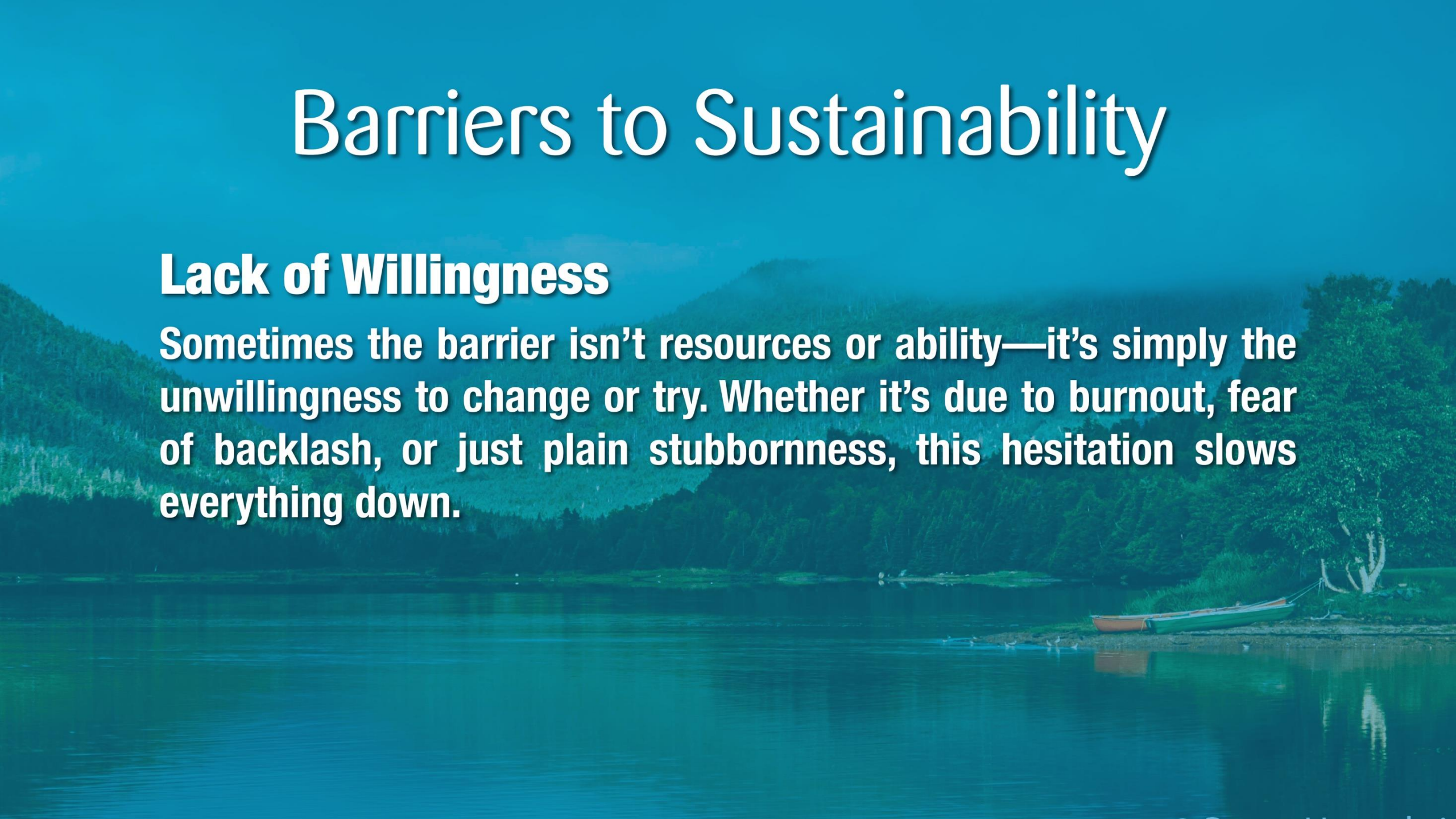
When people believe “nothing’s going to change” or “we’ve tried that before,” it kills momentum. Hopelessness spreads quickly and makes it harder to rally community support or take risks on new ideas.



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

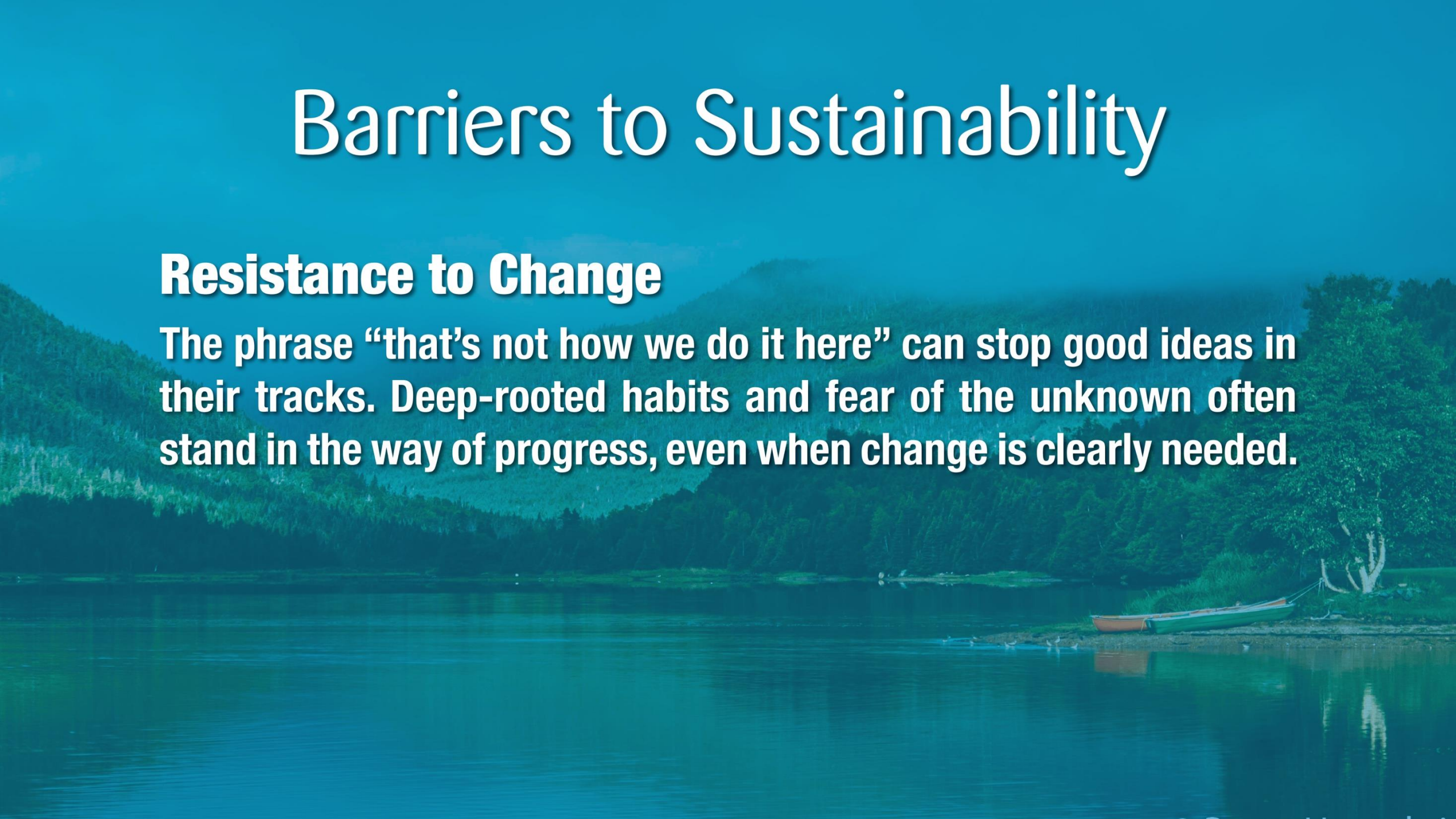
Without volunteers, community events, fire departments, committees, and even local councils start to fall apart. But in many places, the same few people are doing everything—and they're burning out.



Barriers to Sustainability

Resistance to Change

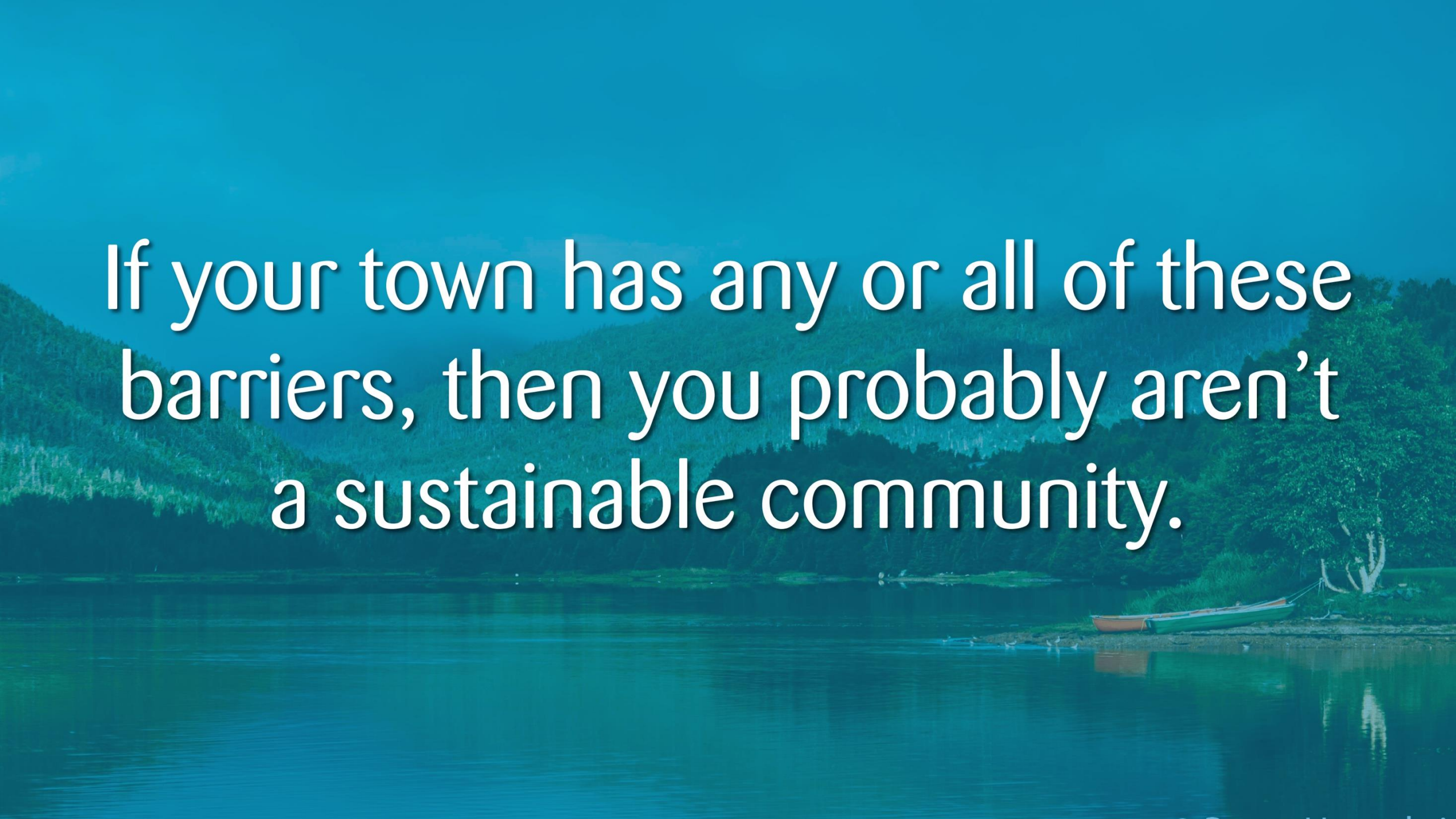
The phrase “that’s not how we do it here” can stop good ideas in their tracks. Deep-rooted habits and fear of the unknown often stand in the way of progress, even when change is clearly needed.



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.

The background of the image is a scenic landscape. It features a calm body of water in the foreground, reflecting the sky and the surrounding greenery. In the middle ground, there are dense, forested hills. On the right side, a small boat is moored near a rocky shore with some trees. The overall color palette is dominated by various shades of blue and green, creating a peaceful and natural atmosphere.

If your town has any or all of these
barriers, then you probably aren't
a sustainable community.

A serene landscape with a calm lake, forested mountains, and a small boat on the shore. The scene is bathed in a soft, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The mountains in the background are covered in dense green forest, and the lake's surface is still, reflecting the surrounding scenery. A small, light-colored boat is moored on the right side of the lake, near a rocky shore. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

So, what do we do?

Keys to Sustainability



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 make 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.

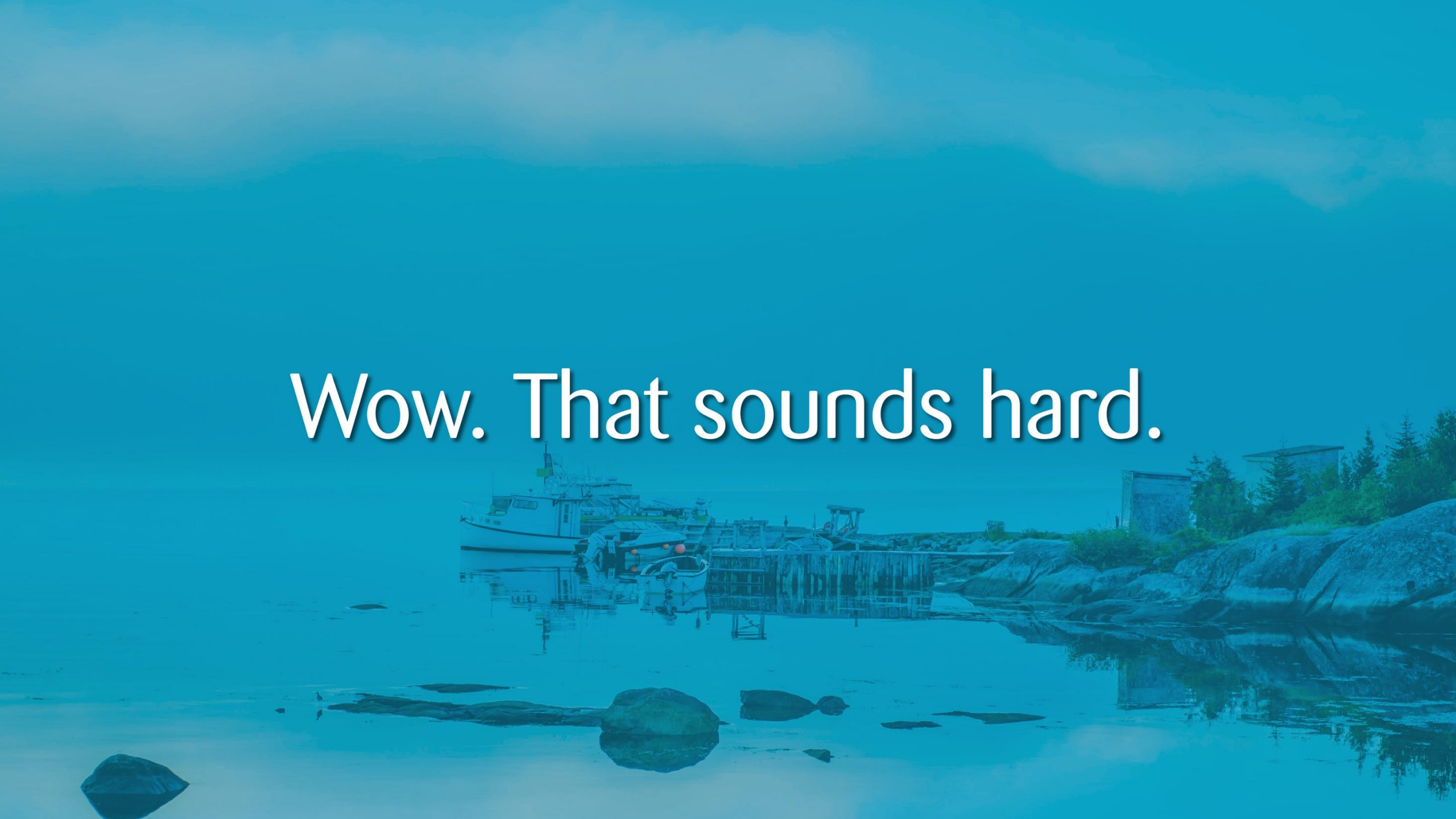
Keys to Sustainability

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.

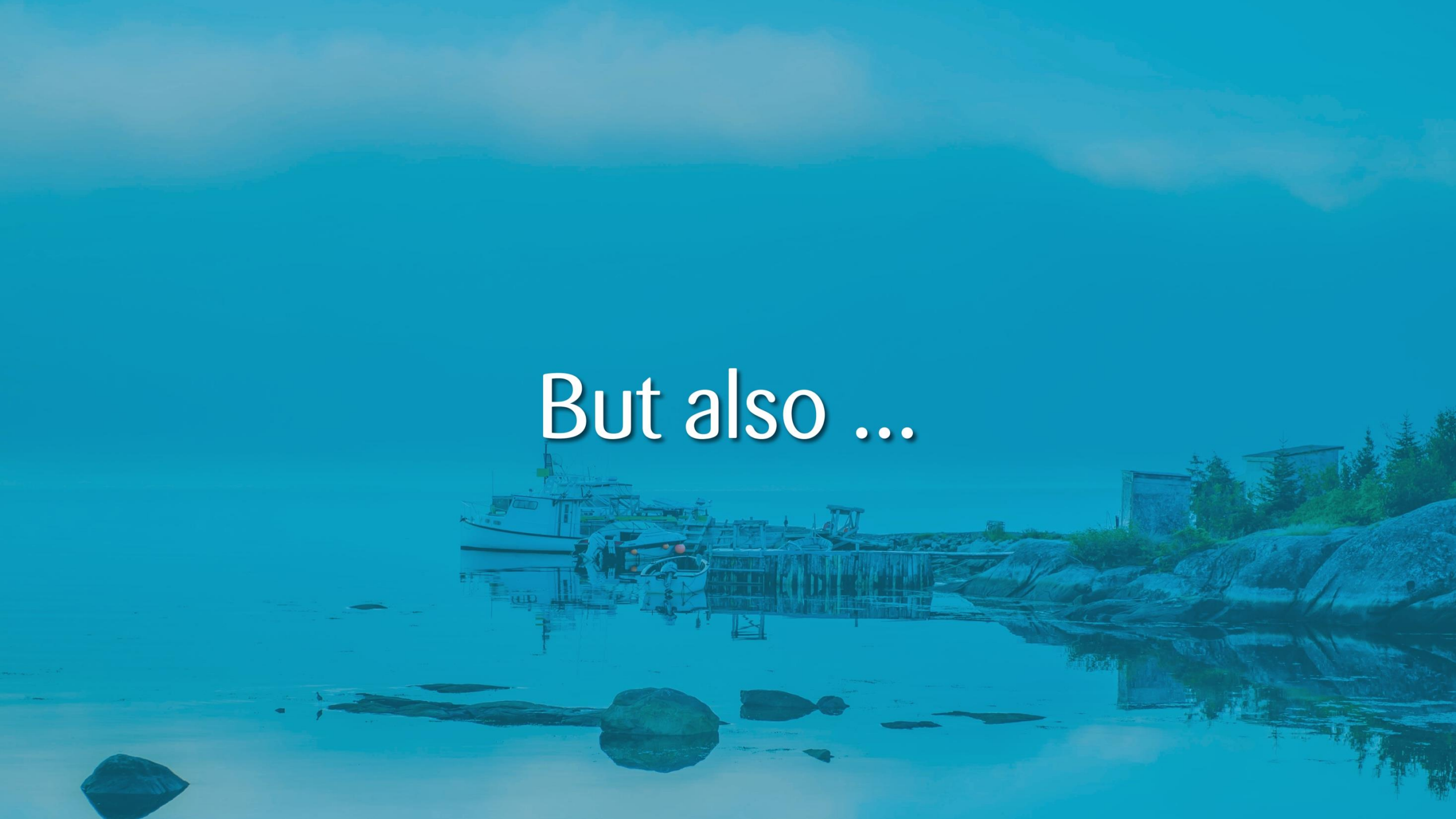
Wow. That sounds hard.



Anything worth doing always is.



But also ...



We're here to help.

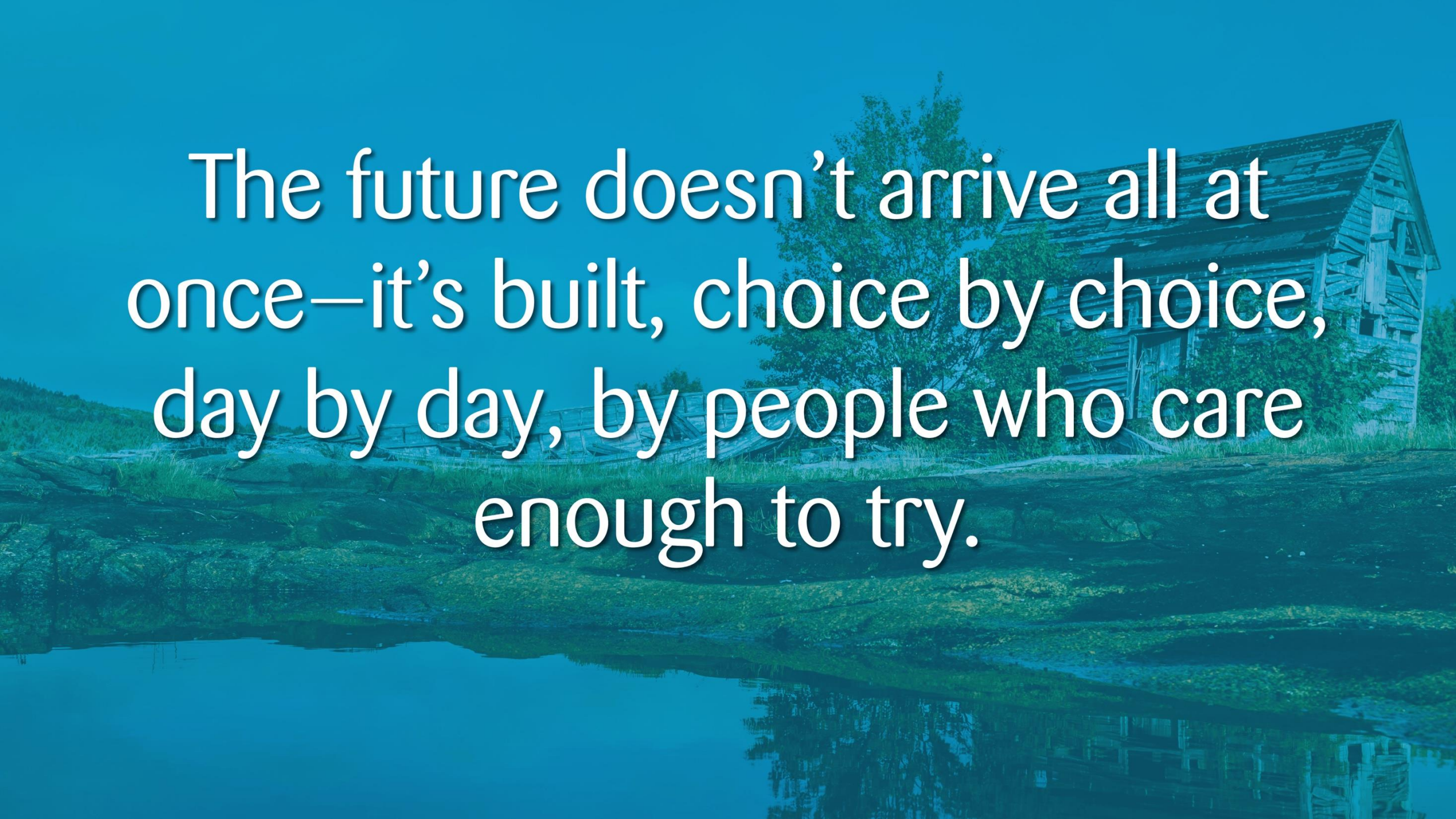


- A municipal sustainability initiative for Newfoundland and Labrador
- Five Streams: Climate Action, Food Security, Heritage & Arts, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Built Environments
- Helping municipalities build vibrant, resilient futures
- Webinars, resources, and support for innovation and growth





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.

A photograph of a dilapidated wooden building and a boat on a rocky shore, with the text "The Question" overlaid. The building is made of weathered wood and has a steep, gabled roof. It is situated on a rocky bank next to a body of water. A small boat is visible in the background, partially obscured by the building. The water is calm, and the sky is a clear, pale blue. The text "The Question" is written in a large, white, serif font, centered over the image.

The Question



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

A photograph of a dilapidated wooden building, possibly a barn or shed, with a steep, shingled roof. The building is situated on a rocky, moss-covered shore next to a body of water. A small, weathered boat is partially visible behind the building. The scene is reflected in the calm water in the foreground. The text "It starts today." is overlaid in the center of the image.

It starts today.