

Eugene Mayor Piercy's Sustainable Business Initiative
Summary of Progress to Date
February 23, 2006

Overview

In April of 2005, the Sustainable Business Initiative began with a brainstorming meeting involving over 60 community members. In June, a sixteen-person Task Force was formed and this group has met monthly since that time. A Technical Advisory Committee, made up of over 50 members, has also met once, and many of the members have participated in or observed roundtables and community meetings that occurred from September 2005 through January 2006.

Twelve initial roundtables have taken place on the following topics: green building; education and technical assistance for local businesses; reuse and recycling; financing and funding for sustainable businesses; biofuels; renewable energy; natural and organic foods; sustainability in public education systems; sustainable healthcare; natural products; sustainable forest products; and the bicycle industry.

In November 2005 the SBI Task Force held a meeting with the Eugene Chamber of Commerce, in December met with the Institute for Sustainable Ethics and Economics, and in January 2006 met with representatives of the Building Trades Council. In December 2005 a Town Hall meeting was held with community members, and in February 2006 a second Town Hall was held involving area high school students and members of the community, and meetings were held with the Neighborhood Leadership Council and representatives of the environmental community.

As a result of these meetings and events, even before the Task Force has developed its recommendations for the City Council, a number of activities and processes have been stimulated. Some have been a direct result of the SBI roundtables, while others have grown out of community discussions on issues that parallel efforts of the SBI.

Roundtable/Industry Specific Efforts:

- Staff from the City of Eugene joined with members of the Cascadia Green Building Council to hold a meeting to discuss how to increase and coordinate public education and technical assistance for local contractors and other building professionals.
- Members of the Natural and Organic foods industry have met twice to develop a local association. The goal is for the association to coordinate educational efforts and provide support for those in the industry trying to improve their own sustainable operations.
- Members of the Natural Products industry met to discuss formation of a local support and networking association and a second meeting is planned in late February.
- A group of Renewable Energy companies met to discuss ways to increase opportunities for training professionals and ways to educate the public on the benefits of using renewable energy.
- A group of contractors and builders agreed to meet to discuss forming a local networking mechanism to promote green building.

- Lane Community College organized a meeting of local school districts and government agencies involved with education and offered to help support and coordinate efforts to expand education for sustainability opportunities, develop curriculum, train teachers, and possibly hire a local sustainability coordinator that could help all school districts.

Community-Based Efforts

- The President of ShoreBank Enterprise Pacific met with representatives of the Eugene financial community in February to discuss the possibility of becoming involved in the local area and increasing non-bank funding for sustainable community development.
- A group of community members who produce events throughout the region gathered to discuss progress they have already made around sustainability, Zero Waste goals, networking and availability of biodegradable food service products. They presented a list of recommendations for the SBI Task Force to consider that would assist their efforts.
- A group met in January with Roger Ebbage from the Northwest Energy Education Institute at Lane Community College, who volunteered to create a website that will serve as a clearinghouse of information on all of the sustainable business activities in the local area. A document was developed and circulated outlining the purpose, format and content of the website and Roger is beginning to work with students to design and deploy the site.
- Shawn Winkler-Rios, director of the Lane Micro Enterprise Program, met with a group interested in assisting low-income individuals to start businesses in the sustainability sectors and is now determining how to establish such a program.
- Terry McDonald of St. Vincent de Paul offered to establish a retail outlet at the Aurora building in downtown Eugene for local sustainable products and to serve as a possible incubator space for start-up businesses.

Public Education

- SBI co-chairs Rusty Rexius and David Funk published an Opinion Editorial in the Register Guard describing the purpose of the SBI and what sustainable business practices and jobs entail.
- The SBI has been mentioned on or the subject of a number of TV and radio news spots over the past months.
- Jerry's Home Improvement offered to add sustainability-focused workshops to their already established How-To educational efforts.
- The Neighborhood Leaders Council (NLC) offered to begin publishing articles on what area residents and neighborhood organizations can do to promote sustainable practices within their community regions.