

National League of Cities, Green Cities Conference Portland Oregon

April 18 – 21, 2009
Metro Convention Center

SUMMARY AND TAKE AWAY IDEAS

The integration of sustainability concepts into planning and city operations is widespread across the country. Several recent books provide reference materials. The City of Portland with its merging of the Planning and Sustainability Bureaus (departments) manages an extensive website with hundreds of reports, concepts, plans and action measures.

The U.S. Green Building Council and American Institute of Architects are adding to the LEED certification program with LEED-Neighborhood Development this summer, 2009.

ICLEI has an existing product for estimating local government and community carbon emissions, called Local Government Operations Protocol, in wide use across the country. The product uses electricity consumption and vehicle miles traveled to give a broad analysis of sources of emissions. <http://www.icleiusa.org/programs/climate/ghg-protocol>

ICLEI is coordinating the consensus development of a new tool, STAR Community Index, for use in developing community (broader than just a city government's operations) sustainability plans, rollout 2010. <http://www.icleiusa.org/star>

The software program, iTree, is available free from the U.S. Forest Service and estimates the values of urban forests for a community. www.itreetools.org, www.fs.fed.us/ucf

The City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services and Bureau of Transportation have many 'green' programs underway from which we could borrow design standards and experience evaluations. See reports on two field trips below.

Local food sourcing makes sense for citizen health, business growth, and energy conservation. A plan will need to encompass a relatively large area in order to feed the entire population of an urban community. See Berkeley CA energy descent plan for a discussion.

Coordination of transportation and land use planning at the metropolitan and/or regional scale is a nationwide trend. See first workshop, Monday April 20.

In the interest of saving paper, a paper copy is with the conference materials in the mayor's office: it is 7 pages and lists the people who spoke and what they spoke about. Links are provided. I expect to receive a memory stick in the mail with all the presentation materials shortly. The field trips are documented in more detail because there are no PP.

Detailed Report by Kate Jackson

Signed in 5 p.m. Saturday April 18.

Materials include conference guide, memory stick (to be mailed), and zippered briefcase made from recycled plastic bottles by EcoSmart.

I purchased three books: In Defense of Food by Michael Pollan, Who's Your City? By Richard Florida and Toward Sustainable Cities by Mark Roseland. Also ordered Douglas Farr's book "Sustainable Urbanism: Urban Design with Nature" from amazon.com because Powell's at the conference ran out of copies.

Video of conference can be purchased from: nlctv.org

Exhibit Hall: about 60 vendors, materials I collected will be in a folder with the conference program in the mayor's office.

Carbon offsets for the conference were achieved by purchasing two biodigesters to install at Idaho dairy farms.

Mobile tours, Sunday April 19.

Morning tour: Ecosystem Restoration of Stephens Creek

Host: Bureau of Environmental Services (Public Works)
Ann Nelson, Casey Cunningham, Tom Lipton, Jennifer Goodridge

The City has done two major restoration projects on Stephens Creek. At its confluence with the Willamette, a segment of unneeded Big Pipe was removed, the banks restored and much planting done, with major collaborative input from a group of houseboats residents moored just offshore from the spot. Photos available, I'll post them online and provide a link upon request.

City website located at: <http://www.portlandonline.com/bes/index.cfm?c=46964&a=192593>

At the upstream end of the creek, a private-public project evolved from the fact that the City owned a wetland, a section of street and a parking lot were superfluous and a developer bought an old property and wanted to redevelop the site. Lots of buried stream channel was brought to the surface and 'daylighted'. A segment of street was removed and replaced with a surface storm water treatment system that treats runoff from a number of paved business lots on a nearby boulevard.

The City's wetland is an open space between existing homes, an apartment complex and a new housing development. The new housing development includes senior affordable housing, as well as market rate townhouses and condos. The landscaping within the housing project incorporates the newly daylighted stream segment. The new curb, gutter and sidewalks on two sides of the development are 'green streets': curb cuts bring stormwater in to the parkrow, which is planted with grasses and other low plants that filter the runoff before discharge to Stephens Creek. Also the roof runoff from the new buildings

drains into a series of stepped basins that water the landscaping before flowing into the storm drain system.

More information about both projects should be at the city website. Look up Headwaters Apartments on Tryon Creek: I've not had much luck yet, sorry. The BES also encourages and supervises the installation of ecoroofs, green roofs.

Green Streets: <http://www.portlandonline.com/bes/index.cfm?c=44407>

2005 Watershed Health Plan: <http://www.portlandonline.com/bes/index.cfm?c=38965>

Afternoon tour, Bureau of Transportation, Maintenance Operations, Sunderland Recycling Facility

Host: Jill Jacobsen, Program Manager

<http://www.portlandonline.com/transportation/index.cfm?c=35730>

The City Transportation Department bought a farm in 1996 to establish the recycling facility. The budget comes from 'saved cost': it costs \$1.5 million to operate the facility, but offsets \$3.2 million in saved costs for materials that need not be purchased commercially.

Portland Street Maintenance operates the facility to recycle waste concrete and asphalt, sift 'street sand' for reuse in ice management, and composts leaves collected from streets and from drop-off depots. The construction wastes are crushed to 1 inch size and re-used as part of new asphalt mix, up to 20% of the mix. 'Street sand' is crushed basalt used in place of part of the ice melting chemicals in the winter: the sand is picked up after the ice melts and is sifted and stockpiled for reuse as street sand.

The Department has an extensive program of leaf pickup in the fall from City streets. The City also operates depots where property owners can drop off yard leaves. The facility composts the leaves over about 8 months. The finished compost is used throughout the city's own landscape maintenance activities. Some commercial landscape firms buy the compost at \$16 per yard.

Runoff from the composting requires sewer treatment due to high nutrient content. Runoff from the crushing operation is discharged to a Columbia slough side channel after running through a bioswale and settling pond. The City has a NPDES permit for that discharge.

Only the leaf sweepings are composted. Street sweeper sweepings contain too much junk and gravel. Storm drain cleanout is also too silty and contaminated to compost.

The homeless camp, Dignity Village, is located on the facility site.

General session opening Sunday afternoon at 3:30

Sam Adams, Mayor, welcome.

Speaker: Doug Farr, LEED architect, Farr Associates. Chicago. Book: Sustainable

Urbanism: Urban Design with Nature.

Mayor Adams welcomed more than 700 attendees from 49 states, D.C. and nearly 300 cities to Portland for a weekend of warm sunny weather. He announced the release for public comment of a draft revised Climate Action Plan, which is notable for adding food security as a component. Portland also has received a U.S. Department of Energy award as a Solar America City.

Mr. Farr spoke to the subject of integrating sustainability concepts into urban planning. An open space or park becomes stormwater management and geothermal heating-cooling system as well. Not just large cities can benefit from sustainable planning. He described several projects in Chicago, but focused on a project in Normal Illinois. Normal's 10-acre downtown was redeveloped in 2000 to LEED standards, with a set of mixed use commercial residential buildings, stormwater treated in two concentric circles throughout a park system, and rain water stored underground in an abandoned cistern. The project was a three-way partnership between the city, a not-for-profit, and a private developer. He also described BedZED, a zero net energy housing project in South London, England. He notes that building design can account for 63% of energy savings in buildings and that the remaining 37% requires behavior, or conduct, changes.

Farr stressed that both our road designs and our built environment standards must change to integrate sustainability goals. LEED-ND, LEED for Neighborhood Development, builds on the recognition of the LEED brand for green buildings, and expands the focus to address multiple buildings, the associated infrastructure and entire neighborhood scale developments. He expects the LEED-ND standard to be finalized later this summer. In his book, "Sustainable Urbanism", 2008, he references a joint publication of the Center for New Urbanism and Institute for Traffic Engineers: "Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities", 2006. (see ITS.org). LEED was developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, which can be found at www.usgbc.org.

Farr recommends reviewing local codes for impediments to higher density and mixed use development. He also recommends adopting the 2030 Architecture Challenge. The Congress for New Urbanism is holding its annual conference in Denver beginning June 10, 2009.

Monday, April 20, 2009

ICLEI breakfast: comments by Michael Armstrong, Portland Sustainability Manager, and Lynne Barker ICLEI STAR pgm under development, see greenplaybook.org.

General session

Governor Kulongowski welcomed us in person.

Home Depot Foundation is sponsoring the Sustainable Cities Institute at \$40 million per year.

Panel

Elinor Ginzler, livable communities strategies/Office of Social Impact, AARP, D.C.

Christine McEntee, CEO American Institute of Architects, aia.org

Art DeMuro, Venerable Group, Portland. Historic preservation guru.

Venerableproperties.com

Ginzler spoke of the importance of housing and mobility for all, not just seniors. Walking safely is key. Demography is destiny: by 2030, 62 million age 50 years plus is double now. How will the older get around without a car? Focus on outcomes, performance, not checklists.

McEntee remarked that the AIA offers regional design assessment teams and charette support free of charge to local communities. AIA adopted a policy in 2005 recommending that all buildings be carbon neutral by 2030. *don't call it climate change, call it energy savings and vibrant economy, less pollution less fear.*

DeMuro: Remember that older bldgs meant to last, are often efficient with light and air because hvac not available, embodied energy, local materials, High ceilings. *Don't knock profit motive*: White Stag preservation redevelopment project. Tax revenues increase with increase in value. Investment increases around a pilot project.

First Workshop

I attended Common Ground: A Regional Approach to Sustainability

[Adam Hanks attended Developing Your City's Sustainability Plan]

James Brooks, NLC internatl pgms, moderator

Ed Peterson, drcog (Denver region council of govts) and Lakewood Colorado council, Metro vision long term plan. 1997, 2005, 2007. Coordinate land use and transportation Denver area doubling by 2035!! UGB plans aim for 25% increase in density, mixed use urban centers, fasttraxks light rail voter approved, multimodal transportation, parks and open space, preservation focus areas for open space and habitat, freestanding community buffer areas, air quality-reduce vmt.

Tom Jacobs, Tjacobs@marc.org, Dir Env Pgms, mid-America Regional Council, Kansas City Missouri: bi-state area 9 counties, 120 cities, Missouri and Kansas rivers, 2 million people. at beginning people were risk averse. Yet many drivers for change. Institutional capacity constrained. Fear of adaptive mgmt in face of uncertainty. 'Commit, conserve, collaborate, communicate, create' to become America's green region
KC area riparian setbacks recently added: purposes include water quality, flood mgmt, fish habitat, open space

Good is not perfect: Boulder as workplace but people can't afford to live there despite it's progressive density and reputation.

Question about regionalism: drcog created Mile High Compact. Linking land use and transportation. Yes, recognize there will be unintended consequences. Engage in respectful conversations. Yes disagreement still exists: Jefferson County has not signed

the compact yet.

Equity piece of the sustainability triangle often shortchanged. Focus on jobs, affordable housing, redevelopment can include many leveraged dollars for housing.

All regions have challenges, members will be affected by others' decisions. All have different answers. Don't let perfect be the enemy of the good. Regional govt provides opportunity for elected AND staff interaction and respect and compromise. Start where you agree. Build the relationships. About human needs. Respectful society. Capacity for needed services.

Afternoon Workshop

I attended Calculating Emissions

Adam attended Connecting the Dots, Sustainable Land Use Planning

Calculating emissions

Henrietta Davis, Cambridge MA NLC enr (energy, environment & natural resources, a standing committee of NLC), moderator

Dr. Tim Foresman, Cities Go Green, Portland: Dr. Susan Solomon, of Montreal protocol, new report that says change now irreversible. Know the science to counter the skeptics: Aikido transition from what happens anyway to what needs to happen.

Amy Shatzkin, Yale school of Forestry masters in mgmt. Spoke about the Local Govt. Protocol, Climate protection: mitigation, adaptation. Pick one year to inventory. Protocols: internatl march 2008; climate registry sept 2008; community (carb) later 2009 Community broader than city govt. Think about including the employee commute miles. Use electric bills, vmt (vehicle miles traveled) to estimate emissions from buildings, vehicles, and utility operations.

In Cambridge 80% is in bldgs; surprised themselves, not the typical 30/30/30...

Susan Millhauser, Lake Oswego sustainability planner, came from Com Dev. Dept. Smillhauser@ci.

City population, 36,000, 350 emps, 2002, Mayor was Judi Hammerstad, in their case water/sewer biggest single eCO₂, pumping cost, not green electricity.

Use more than one year for data in case big account missed. Used 2000 paper statements and electronic 2006. Did not have commute data. Statewide electric vehicle infrastructure project participant. Inventory has helped prioritize projects. Identify electricity use by dept and they'll start saving.

\$142,000/yr savings with LED in street lights

Can use eecbg \$\$\$ for planning: Eecbg.energy.gov

People ask what are ghg? 5 minute video, YouTube MIT students and carbon.

Tuesday April 21, 2009

General Session:

Lynne Barker, ICLEI, Seattle described the development of a consensus program of common goals and performance measures for community sustainability, called the STAR Community Index. (<http://www.icleiusa.org/star>) Being created in the same style as the

LEED standard was within the architectural field, multiple committees, vetted drafts, etc. Roll-out late 2010. *'Green jobs are jobs that provide living wages.'*
Aaron Lande, U.S. Green Building Council, usgbc.org, LEED-ND:
http://www.usgbc.org/Docs/News/ND%20ANSI_010709.pdf

Morning Workshop One

Green Your City: Trees and Parks

Moderator Matt Zone, Cleveland Ohio Council, NLC Energy, EENR Committee
David McAllister, Portland city nature mgr, Portland 2004 forest plan new dept: city nature.
Used iTree. 4:1 dollar value of forest services to budget. Neighborhood tree liaisons.

Discount on stormwater bill if plant trees. Volunteers plant trees. 92 neighborhoods could have their own tree mgmt plans. Sacramento Utility has a 24 year old tree planting program for public and private property.

Richard Dolesh, chief public policy natl recreation and parks association DC, federal funding for parks on bills, brownfields money often flexible. Data on parks use: count your park visitation. Rdolesh@nrpa.org

Susan Mockenhaupt, usfs urban and community forestry DC, iTree tool for assessing urban forests. Get this tool!! www.itreetools.org, www.fs.fed.us/ucf

Morning Workshop Two

Local Food for Local Development

Moderator Nancy Carter, Charlotte City Council, North Carolina

Margaret Brennan-Tonetta, Rutgers New Jersey Ag Expt Station. Economic development: business incubation. Built a food processing facility. Helps farmers dev added value products. Look to inheritance planning by farmers to keep land in production.

Deborah Kane, Ecotrust Portland Oregon. www.ecotrust.org/foodfarms/ Toolkit online: www.Localfoodnetworks.net. (Thrive and its food connection publication are part of this network.)

'Fresh' thinking around local food and farms, export will remain part of the equation. Fork ready farm to school case study.

Heike Mayer, Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech. Described the origins of the Slow Food Movement in Italy, and Transition Town movement in England, and spent most of her time describing the Cittaslow movement in Germany. Heikem@vt.edu, cittaslow.uk

Closing panel of mayors

Mayors Adams, (Portland 396,000), Ralph Becker (Salt Lake City 165,000), Ellen Moyer (Annapolis Maryland 30 or 60k?), Mary Hamman-Roland (Apple Valley Minnesota 50,000). Mayor Mary noted that true conservatives value sustainable practices because they save money and reflect efficiency. Salt Lake City and Utah's history of self reliance lends itself directly to sustainability efforts. Regional cooperation essential. Mayor Adams noted Portland's reputation for a culture of 'robust public dialogue' and DOING things; the City has set high expectations with its Climate Action Plan, with a new draft out for comment, and the 17th Annual BEST (Business for an Environmentally Sustainable Tomorrow) Awards.

Overall, the mayors noted that much can be motivated and achieved by civic engagement: volunteer work groups, businesses, non-profits, chambers of commerce, universities, citizens all value the community spirit and value of working together to identify needed efforts and organize to make them happen; true grass roots activity.

Someone mentioned the need an icon for energy efficiency and clean air like Smokey the bear promoted fire safety.