

Meeting Summary and Proposal

Sustainability Website Design for Eugene and the Surrounding Area

Thursday, January 12, 2006

Lane Community College SBDC

On January 12, 2006, twelve people representing local governments, private companies and institutions of higher education met to discuss the parameters of a proposed sustainability website for the local community. In attendance were: Steve Dignam, Lane Council of Government, Lynne Eichner-Kelley, City of Eugene energy analyst, Deborah Brewer, EWEB, John Mitchell, EWEB, Amanda Nobel, Eugene Planning and Development, Roger Ebbage, LCC Northwest Energy Education Institute (NEEI), Sarah Grimm, Lane County Solid Waste, Scott Pope, Sustainable Wealth Management, Marian Hoffman, Intern with Kelly Osborn, Permit Review Manager City of Eugene, Marsha Miller, Division Manager, Building and Permits Services City of Eugene, Ray Neff, UO Intern; Bob Doppelt, UO Resource Innovations and SBI Coordinator.

The meeting began with a description by Bob Doppelt and Roger Ebbage of how the idea of a community website emerged. One of the most common themes heard from local businesses and citizens at SBI roundtables and community meetings is the need for an easily accessible source of comprehensive data about sustainable business practices and products. People have consistently said they want:

- To know how local governments or other experts define sustainability for various goods, services, and practices (e.g. what does green building mean?)
- Case studies of organizations that have implemented sustainable practices or produce sustainable products.
- Ways to self-evaluate their own or others practices and products to know if they meet sustainability criteria (e.g. LEED Standards or Natural Step Principles)
- A list of local and regional producers and suppliers of sustainable products and services
- A list of financial resources such as loans, grants, tax incentives (e.g. OECD and city funds, green CDs, socially responsible funds) available to those desiring to invest in sustainable practices and products.
- Information about permits and planning processes

Roger Ebbage explained that he is volunteering to construct and host a website with this information at the Northwest Energy Education Institute (NEEI), which is located at Lane Community College. Roger feels this would be a great project for students who could set up and manage the site at very low costs. Roger would do this as a benefit to the community. A discussion then ensued about the goals and content of the website.

Website Goals

It was agreed that the website would serve and have information pertinent to the entire local area, not just the City of Eugene. Six goals for the website emerged from the discussion, which are to:

1. Educate businesses and the public about what sustainable practices and products involves.
2. Provide information and checklists for self-evaluation of sustainable practices and products
3. Provide tools, information and resources to help interested parties expand and deepen their sustainability practices and improve their products and services (e.g. through links to other site and possibly an "ask an expert" link that would send email questions to people designated within various public agencies for response).
4. List resources (e.g. local suppliers, distributors, funding options, tax incentives, government agencies involved with sustainable development etc.)
5. Help local companies promote themselves through a self-populating listing system (similar to the method used by the Portland Office of Sustainable Development on their website)
6. Promote the local area as a desirable place to locate a sustainable business and list services available from local economic development agencies for sustainable businesses thinking of locating here.

Website Design

A discussion about the design of the website led the conclusion that the site should be organized so that users can search by practice/product and by organization/individual type. For example, separate pages would include information on each of the practices/products/issues listed below. At the top of each of these pages a menu of options would be listed such as "consumers", "business", and "government" that would provide targeted information on each practice/product for each of the groups.

Practices/products/services/issue pages would include:

- Organic and natural foods
- Green building
- Biofuels (ethanol and biodiesel)
- Renewable energy (solar hot water, solar PV)
- Reuse and recycling
- Sustainable healthcare (facilities and operations)
- Natural products
- Finance and funding for sustainability
- Education and technical assistance for local businesses
- Sustainability in K-12 and higher education
- Sustainable secondary wood products
- Bicycle industry
- Water resources
- Relocation and economic development services

Endorsements, Co-Sponsorship and Funding

A question about the type and number of organizations that could co-sponsor and endorse the website was then discussed. The group felt it would be important for local and state government agencies to demonstrate their support for the website by listing their names and logos on the homepage, and possibly making a small annual contribution to cover the

cost of the website host. Concerns were raised about the number of co-sponsors that were listed on the home page, especially private and non-profit organizations that may want to be listed. For this reason the group decided to limit co-sponsorships to government agencies (including UO, LCC etc). Private and non-profit organizations can get themselves noted by listing themselves on the self-populating list on the website.

Governance and Oversight

Roger asked that a steering committee composed of representative from each of the co-sponsors be formed to provide oversight for the website. The group would ensure that the contents and format are supported by the co-sponsors and provide consistency over time. They would meet annually or twice a year at most.

Website Marketing and Promotion

The group felt that a good deal of marketing and publicity would be needed to let the community know about the site. For this reason each of the local government co-sponsors would be asked to publicize the site in newsletters, on their website and through other means. A question arose about how people without web access could get the information. People said that the library should be told about the site and people can be encouraged to go there to get on line. A small brochure with some of the basic information found on the website may also be developed provided that the co-sponsors agree to pay for it.

Timing

Roger said that it was probable that the website could be up and running by June 2006, provided that all of the key local government agencies sign off on this proposal in the near future.