

## **Summary of November 8, 2005 SBI Roundtable on Healthcare**

On November 8, 2005, representatives from the healthcare industry met for a roundtable discussion on how to grow and support the local industry. Sponsored by Mayor Kitty Piercy's Sustainable Business Initiative, participants included hospital administrators, physician's groups, and clinics.

Bob Doppelt began by leading a discussion of preliminary findings on practitioners' vision and suggestions for growing the industry. This was followed by a presentation by Neha Patel from Oregon Healthcare Without Harm (OHWH), a regional branch of an international organization that helps healthcare organizations and practitioners address the unique issues of sustainability as associated with the healthcare industry. A summary of her comments follows:

- Healthcare Without Harm is a joint venture between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the American Hospital Association. It is a voluntary program, where organizations sign on as partners in addressing the goals of the organization.
- OHWH holds quarterly roundtable discussions in Portland bringing together diverse members of the local healthcare industry to discuss common issues of sustainability; they've had a number of successful operational changes in several facilities, as a result.
- Healthcare is a far-reaching industry that goes far beyond providing healthcare services – it includes facility construction and operational management, use of toxic chemicals, waste generation, food services, energy and resource use and more; decisions and trends affect communities from a local scale to a national and global scale.
- Thirty Oregon hospitals are currently members of OHWH; several facilities are implementing green building measures with one LEED certified facility in Newberg, OR.
- On a local level, hospitals can form “green teams” – a cross-section of departments that develop goals and actions for applying sustainability principles.

Ms. Patel answered questions.

- The Green Guide for Healthcare is a guide for facilities that uses a similar type of standards as LEED certified buildings but is geared specifically to the healthcare industry.
- Momentum in Portland grew out of a conference put on by Healthcare Without Harm and co-sponsored by local hospitals several years ago.
- As hospitals in the local Eugene community relocate and build new facilities, this creates a unique opportunity to include green building and other sustainable practices that does not come often to a community on such a large scale.
- OHWH does not currently work with medical group practices specifically, but with sufficient interest it could.

After the OHWH presentation, roundtable participants discussed these and other issues; the main topics and ideas follow:

- While networking between professionals is helpful, competition within the industry often prevents it.
- It's difficult for smaller health care organizations to make sustainability-oriented changes, but with the lead of the two major hospitals, smaller organizations could and

probably would follow.

- While the initial costs for sustainability measures are often high, the long-term savings—both monetarily and environmentally, can be dramatic.
- The social equity aspect of sustainability in healthcare is very difficult – on the one hand hospitals do quite well helping the under-insured, yet at the same time language barriers and other issues regarding adequate access to information make this a major issue locally and nationally; 20% of Lane County residents alone lack medical insurance.
- Sustainability is not yet a “front-burner” issue for most providers and facilities.
- Waste stream audits indicate that 50% is recyclable but there is currently no market; 15% is compostable.
- Organic food is not a priority in food services but it is a possibility.

#### Suggestions:

- Commit to waste audits as first step in identifying the nature of what wastes are generated
- The City could provide assistance through incentives for green building and landscaping, streamlined building codes
  - Systems development charges do not support energy-efficient practices; e.g. a low-flow toilet is charged as much to install as a conventional one, yet costs more to purchase.
  - Revise the systems development charges to consider measurable consumption instead of numbers installed.
  - Remove barriers to green building within the city code; replace with incentives.
- The City could help identify markets for healthcare waste streams.
- Developers and architects need further education on benefits of sustainable practices.
- Local collaboration toward group green purchasing could help change national suppliers’ practices and products.
- Make a presentation to the local chapter of the Oregon Nurses Association - the most effective efforts in Portland have come about as a result of suggestions from nurses.
- See what facilities currently have green teams and support renewed action.

#### Next Steps:

- Support efforts of the United Way’s 100 Percent Access Coalition in addressing social equity issues; an existing organization
- The Lane County Medical Society could become more involved to help bridge gaps between practitioners.