**Developing the University Eco-District**

**Thursday October 29, 2009 8:30-10am**

**Portland State University, Smith Memorial Union 228**

This event co sponsored by PSU’s Center for Academic Excellence and the Office of Finance and Administration brought together more than 200 community members, students and faculty to discuss ways the Eco-District pilot will begin to engage a larger community of faculty, students and surrounding community members.  This was an initial conversation that began with a brief presentation from Rob Bennett, Executive Director, Portland+Oregon Sustainability Institute and Mark Gregory, Associate Vice President for Finance and Administration. The second phase of the event focused on a discussion between Tim Smith, SERA Architects, Heather Spaulding, Outreach Coordinator for Sustainability and Research and Jennifer Allen, Associate Professor, Public Administration. These three panel members creatively considered how community partners, students and faculty might become involved in the development of the PSU Eco-District. During the third phase of the event participants were asked to write their “lingering questions” and ideas for how we might facilitate broad community engagement on note cards. The note card comments have been transcribed here.

**Lingering Questions**

What is your relationship to the Central Portland Plan?

Do you hope to influence it and how?

Are you thinking about a Transportation Management Plan for the Eco-district?

What role does OSC play?

How does the Eco-district touch you?

I’ve written a draft of a PreK-20 Portland sustainable school located inside Eco-district that is a public partnership with PPS and PSU.  It integrates a professional development school to leverage PSU presence Ed/Ed Leadership and Arts & Sciences faculty and students  [petti@pdx.edu](mailto:petti@pdx.edu)

If this project is successful, I can see the Eco-district as a model for sustainable development to which the world can aspire.  I can then see the attractiveness of the Eco-district leading to gentrification of the neighborhood.  So my question is:  How can gentrification be avoided in the short term and long term and how can the Eco-district give advantages to the rich, poor, and in between?  - Shawn Petoche

Timeline for decisions?

How can I be a part of flow mapping?

How will proposals be funneled, evaluated and implemented?

Do the structures exist?  If not, how can I participate in developing those structures?

In what ways does a Pre-K – university educational endeavor fit within and reinforce the fabric of an Eco-district?

Joseph Johnpoll (HS assistant Principal)

[johnpollj@nclack.k12.or.us](mailto:johnpollj@nclack.k12.or.us)

Under strategies, why is there no strategy (or sub strategy) that is about social sustainability, community engagement and well-being/resilience?

Must factors measure community resilience?  Kristen Magis

If we clear our minds of social conditioning regarding our surroundings, what things come up as resources that we can maximize and systems to which we can connect our newfound resources?

What is the wildest idea for community education? Why not do that?

How can we put together a timeline for the Eco-district?

What could/would be the milestones for such a comprehensive project? Jennifer Sharp PSU FAP

How would an Eco-district touch me?

What can/will be done to mitigate the potential effects of gentrification resulting from an Eco-district improving property values?

PPS is the second largest land owner in the city.  How can they be integrated systematically into the Eco-district?

I can see the concepts taking off when solid neighborhood models are developed.  Associations will be key.  How will governance be legitimized? [ron.petti@pbsenv.com](mailto:ron.petti@pbsenv.com)

What specific areas need to be researched?

How do potential researchers/designers connect with funding/administration?

Who decides what final systems are implemented in the Eco-district?

Who decides the direction of the research and how can students be involved in this process?  Andreu Ferrero [andreu@pdx.edu](mailto:andreu@pdx.edu)

How are we going to make Eco-districts profitable?

How do students get involved in the planning stages?

How were the proposed Eco-districts chosen?

How are we going to make sure that Eco-districts are benefiting our diverse population?

How can we make Eco-districts as inclusive as possible?

In building this smaller Eco-district, how are we going to actively reach out to the greater Portland area?

How can Eco-district involve diverse demographics?

How can accessible/understandable language be used to ensure all residents to understand what is meant by “Eco-district” and “sustainability”?

What are some things I can do as a PSU student to aid engagement?

I live in Lake Oswego and the bus system is little to nonexistent.  What can we do to extend the bus system to smaller towns outside of Portland?

How can we overcome the social perceptions of failure?

If something doesn’t work as expected it still may have a value of lesson learned.

Once an Eco-district is created, how will future inhabitants (people coming into the system) be able to integrate into a system that is different than where they had been – in terms of habit of thought and their roles as active contributors to the Eco-district?

How do we create/change society’s everyday thinking to make an Eco-district?

If we hope to make ALL market goods/services local (regress back to “local subsistence mode”) will the pros of eliminating transaction costs via commercial trade outweigh the cons of having a less-diversified, non-capitalistic marketplace?  Will we be able to change our psychology and modern consumer or production habits?

It still feels too top down.  I am looking forward to hearing more about the engagement piece, as well as the education pieces: displays about what’s going on throughout the district as things are developed.

This concept seems division heavy.  How is it spread across PSU? How or what tools are given to these Groups?

What about other stakeholders like PCC or other communities?

Why not start a scholarship program like McNair but around sustainability or the Eco-district?

How is professional faculty (or non-instructional employees) engaged in this concept?

How does a citizen opt in? What about other staff on campus opting in?

How is the commuter student engaged? How are the PSU values articulated to perspective students? Incoming freshmen? Then how is it maintained / continued?

Groups of students seem small, so how do we engage more? What are the plan and talking points for us as faculty?

How do you ensure you don’t lose the small “community” elements in the process? (food carts, corner markets, bars, shops, etc)

Logistical issues – infrastructure requires major investment of money, materials and time (e.g. district energy).  How might ideas of “adaptive management” help to create systems that can expand/contract as needed?

Is there a place for the development of a transportation district within the Eco-district or does that muddy the waters? (The report on downtown businesses desire for more parking was disheartening).

Is there an update on the public unveiling of the Montgomery street plan? It was mentioned early in the presentation, but without context – are we already on the road to implementation? What opportunities does it provide?

How does an Eco-district affect visitors and commuters? Would they know? It can’t be a nuisance.

Would there be opportunities for entrepreneurial small businesses? What unforeseen needs may a robust Eco-district require?

What would be the best way to interact with private, non-engaged landowners? Those who are very I, Me focus.

How do we make sure students and stakeholders are involved in the design of Eco-district projects?

As green and sustainable expenditures are still seen as “luxury” add-ons, how do you persuade those who may be affected by the economic downturn that this is a program they should invest in?

What is the need for or purpose of boundaries/governance?

Why don’t these group forums discuss any new specific technologies and research projects?

How will goals, plans, and objectives be communicated within the university?  How will this extend to the whole Eco-district?

In the library: Which operational issues and academic issues will be affected?

Whenever you create an “us” you also create a “them” What are the ways to include other parts of the city in this process? What benefits are there for North Portland, outer SE, etc?

Where did Rob find the inspiration for Eco-district? What models are out there?

University funding for research, instruction and development?

What is the cultural bottom line?  What jobs or processes will be set in place to ensure a significant & distinct cultural identity for the district(s)?

Soft flows build engagement and understanding for the citizens within the Eco-district.  Up to 30% of the hardware (buildings, roads, structures) will need to be removed, not refit.  How will this soft flow engagement help identify and educate the residents of the Eco-district about the difficult hardware decisions that must be made?

PSU has much hardware that is not properly maintained or monitored, but not enough staff.  How can students be organized to help identify and remediate the maintenance and monitoring?

Try framing this as an organism (with cells, organs, limbs, brain) that has issues and positives.  Each district is an organ, each organ has cells.  The organism is the city or urban zone.  Some parts are healthy; some parts are sick and will take time to heal.  How do we identify and connect/fix the sick parts?

How does the university provide the incentives necessary to move teaching innovations into the community?

What faculty development needs should be addressed to support the Eco-district project? (e.g. VG research, Case study, partnership development)

How does the university address the realities of larger class sizes – and the movement to larger classes – with the pedagogical and curricular ideas being put forth today?

Since PSU is advocating an Eco-district is there an incentive to close streets to combustion engines in the Eco-district?

Timeline for the steps

What’s being done to address/ensure the ecological goals of the districts?

What’s being done to create synergies between the Eco-districts?

Based on the current understanding of Eco-district – how could I work with or be involved with it?

I would love to spend time researching and developing wildlife habitat and aspects of ecosystem function (ties in with current research) Very exciting!!!

-implementation of changes, facing challenges in zoning laws, enforcement of neighborhood “regulations”…Leslie Bliss-Ketchum  [blissket@pdx.edu](mailto:blissket@pdx.edu) graduate student in Environmental Science Program

In what ways can we integrate the Eco-district into current curriculum in:

Service learning

P-20 education

LECL program

The Graduate School of Education is already involved heavily in garden partnerships with Portland Public Schools.  We could use this relationship as a PSU model.

I live away from downtown closer to the Lloyd district, but already see that the PSU area has a stronger draw on me than it once did.  Walking down Harrison south from 4th Ave the other day, I was suddenly out of the city, surrounded by greenery, light traffic, and beautiful walking alleyways.  If PSU is becoming like that, I’m here!  For the market, for lunch, for the theater, and for showing it off to out of town visitors.  And I’ll try to be coming on foot.  –Jane Wilcox NE Portland

The Eco-district is exactly the sort of idea I came to be a part of.  I can see myself initially involved in the small things such as attending charettes and other meetings but would love to make working in the Eco-district a major part of my education through internships, research and extra-curricular involvement.  When possible, I’ll also be encouraging professors to utilize the questions and challenges presented by the project in their curriculum.

It was mentioned that our population includes 27,000 students.  My thought is that this particular demographic has a rather high turnover.  How do we build a stable, resilient community with such a turnover?

The whole project means a world of opportunity for me.  The most basic positive addition to my life is an access to a wealth of resourceful vocabulary that will help engage me as well as enrich, edify, educate, empower and nurture my exploration in comprehending this life, my place in this world and the many systems/processes with which I am involved or surrounded.  Hopefully, after direct hands on experience with the project and through developmental networking, I will be able to gain a vast understanding rooted in multiple perspectives.  I will be able to begin to transfer that knowledge to those less apt to gain access to these crucial instruments and vessels to improving our inhabitance, our co-inhabitance, and our basic way of life.  Jon Hurst SLS [jthurst@pdx.edu](mailto:jthurst@pdx.edu)

Eco-district covenants like the Peacock Lane’s decoration covenant?- composting, run-off water diversion to use in district, etc.  Who sets the enforceability?

What would be the roll of staff?  There are a lot of us.  Would the district include us or ignore and then dictate to us?

With old buildings like Neuberger, how do we fix the uneven heat flow that has some offices and classrooms so cold people have to wear their coats all day while others are warm enough people take off as much as possible?

That situation works into the question of heat exchange between buildings mentioned.  If building A is, on average, needing to loose heat and building B, on average, needs to gain it, how do you determine whether to do the exchange within each building or between buildings?

The Eco-district would touch me:  I could involve students in a project that would develop a baseline map of historic properties and archaeological resources.  I’m teaching a class in spring 2010 called Public Archaeology and could start this project then.

To assist me: It would be great to have some funding for a teaching assistant

Main values of history and archaeology applied to the district:

1. The actual lessons we could learn about how the past neighborhood “worked”
2. Social capital from getting students involved/engaged is learning about our place.  Much research shows connecting people with history makes them care about that place more

Virginia Butler Anthropology [butlerv@pdx.edu](mailto:butlerv@pdx.edu)

What is the “neighborhood”?

How does this intersect w/ existing corridors of innovation (Davis St, OMSI/OHSU)?

How to maintain flow adjacencies to larger community and central city plan priorities (social networks)?

Can this connect with the “creative grid” concept as it overlaps with the Private/Public partnership (PNCA)?

How does this maintain an asset based, bottom-up frame that is reflexive, resilient, and not a rigid institutional initiative?

What is the Venn diagram between 3E’s, PSU and neighborhood quality/vitality, especially around prosperity?

The way in which I’m curious/interested in this project is through adjacency: I work in the cultural sector, in a micro-district (the brewery blocks at the armory), connected to PSU by transit.  I’m very interested in how arts/culture can play a generative role on the social capital side of this concept.  Art organizations are natural conveners that can animate questions and connections around change, community, action and ideas,  specifically around linking the “eco” piece to the other “E’s” that need to be considered in the concept of neighborhood civic ecology connections:

Affordable housing in downtown. Cultural vitality Flow

We’ve mentioned internship opportunities for students but what kinds of direct opportunities are there for recent graduates to get involved with the Eco-district.  How can we retain the knowledge that we are sending out into the world?

What scales of development will be required in these Eco-district/micro-districts to sustain them?

As a community development major, I am excited to see Community Development students practicing engagement within their extended campus community, researching the process of public participation as the Eco-district develops, and studying how the interests, talents and resources inherent in our community are being tapped for this process

How will individual projects be coordinated and how will resources be consolidated/made available to students, to spur the innovation and harness the energy and enthusiasm of students?

**Facilitators to Aide Engagement**

As a student of PSU I can see the Eco-district serving as an outlet for opportunity and education.  I would like to be engaged in this project as much as possible, and I hope that it can be integrated into the curriculum of my program.  My major is Community Development, and my primary interest is sustainable housing, so I can see the Eco-district presenting very useful opportunities to my future professions.  My hope is that opportunities for student involvement are available and not reserved for only experts and professionals.

Inundate future PSU students through elementary, middle, and high-school based forums and workshops.

A social sustainability network needs to integrally involved in this initiative

Our office (facilities and planning) started a compost system this year.  We use the trash company compost pickup bins that are on campus.  This has been successful and it is an act that connects us more to our “place” in the district.  I would like to see more composting done around campus linked to our local gardens.

Having worked on the Lloyd district study with the design team (Mithun Interface, KPFF, and Walsh) six years ago, it seems that it would help people to understand what an Eco-district looks like if parts of it were distributed, even though it was more residential/business oriented.

I would want to live in one because it would connect me with other people who shared values of environmental, economic and social sustainability.  It would support healthy habits, lifestyles and relationships.  Facilitate -> social opportunities -> fun and informal!

Eco-districts have great potential to improve student achievement in public K-12 (PPS) schools through community gardens, increased access to nature, and development of young stewards of the environment

To efficiently move the process forward, the key elements to be measured:

Educational Involvement

 |…………………….Energy: Reduce, Alts

 |…………………….Waste: Solid, Toxic, Building, Organic

 |…………………….Water & Atmosphere: Capture, Clean, Reduce C02

 |……………………. Landscape: Growing Centers

Can the district offer support pathways to waste / water / atmosphere?

Engineering student groups – EWB-PSU

Network of sustainability focused student group leaders

Neighborhood outreach coordinator

Potentially I would design and research the Eco-district systems, organizing students to further invoke the university in this process.

As student liaison for social sustainability, I believe one aspect to invite engagement and interest for creating sustained involvement is through relationship building across student groups/clubs, to identify a shared value, trust and community.  I like the idea of incorporating social science perspectives in the effort of creating behavioral change

Being a student in the university Eco-district I see myself getting involved in projects at the university that provide me with the new and useful skills to help the city bring this idea to fruition.  Here at PSU we can pioneer those jobs and education that focus on sustainability for the whole world.

More community workshops including student lead workshops?

More focus on the “soft infrastructure” of communities and how social networks and social capital play into the concept of Eco-district – ALL citizens/residents, regardless of expertise or education, can participate in conversations about how to build, expand, create more social networks within communities – involving as many people as possible will increase a sense of agency and ownership and commitment!

More yield signs, less stop signs.

Close certain streets to motorized vehicles

I think the extension of street cars to towns outside of Portland will help create a more sustainable mode of transportation.

1. How to participate.

a. Introduce concepts of public health management plans and utilize emergency preparedness into Eco-district.

b. Study mental health of Eco-district. Do rates of depression decline with more engagement? Catherine Thomasson MD [thomassonc@comcast.net](mailto:thomassonc@comcast.net)

I hope that this project/process helps me recognize new ways of thinking.

I am not assuming that we can achieve a goal or arrive at our desired destination.  I am expecting that we will learn how to improve our thinking, problem solving abilities, and visionary targets.  It will be a building process and way finding journey.  We can lead others to follow in our footsteps.

I think there could be focus groups that discuss what community members see as needed in their communities, i.e. more accessible transportation options, public gathering spaces, etc.

No stop lights saves cycler energy, yield signs

I think a community garden would be a good facilitator to aid engagement in our Eco-district. In my 3 years at PSU I have felt a lack of community.  I see that PSU is trying to transform itself into a “traditional” college rather than a commuter school and a garden would be a good place to start to give PSU an identity.

Numerous charettes – sharing of information/networking (publication, website, meetings)

Incentives for interdisciplinary collaboration – grants, etc.?

1. As a community partner, I would like to be engaged in collaborative research with student groups AND classrooms – looking through the lens of neighborhood engagement and applying the civic health index created by NCOC.net to ensure over-all health.

2. I also bring the opportunity for national service involvement, which I am eager to explore more fully.

Ridesharing opportunities – community engagement

Options for all stakeholders

How does it touch my role?: The university needs to look at its infrastructure and provide support facilities for improving energy efficiency on campus.

What do we need – PSU needs to fund an energy manager position within FAP and provide resources to support that position.

How do you see that you can touch and be touched:

-Educating self on different projects and initiatives in development and application

-Look at personal habits that are affected by the district of the neighborhood

The connection between library sustainability group and the Eco-district through the university.

Money

Include engineers.  This was not disseminated to the engineering college, and I saw no engineering staff or representatives included.

Improvements to work environment: cleaner environment, H2O, air, land, etc.

More breathable space.

-Good map(s) of Eco-district -Library as a distribution point of service for information about Eco-district -Library as learning center & social interaction center.   –Kimberly Williams-St. Clair PR coordinator PSU library 5-4552 [wilsons@pdx.edu](mailto:wilsons@pdx.edu)

I’m interested in the FIT concept/program.  I heard that Germany is in the forefront of creating buildings that generate enough energy for individual building use (via solar, wind, etc) and some buildings are even able to generate excess energy that they then sell back to the energy company.  Thus the building is not only sustainable but also “earns $” for the owner.

Eco-districts have the potential to influence, teach and inspire communities to become more sustainable and efficient.  Whether you live or work in a district or are simply aware of its positive contributions, it can have tremendous sustainable influence.

* 1. How involved:

As a teacher – I could bring in students from my environmental sustainability and environmental problem solving classes.  They could collect baseline data for now and measuring over time, look at flows through the system.

As a researcher I would study the animal community’s use of urban habitat patterns and measuring how reflective these are of surrounding habitats, and why.  I would especially help plan for ways that different types of organisms can safely get to and leave these habitat patches: examining and increasing landscape permeability (habitat connectivity)

2. Lingering questions.