Thurston County Green Development Stakeholders Group
Stakeholders Meeting #1
February 3, 2010 - 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Thurston County Courthouse, Bldg 1, Rm. 152

Meeting Summary

Project Purpose: Thurston County seeks to engage key stakeholders to craft a regional strategy for fostering green development across the County.

Members in Attendance
Kellene Richards, Prodigy Energy Solutions
Tessa Smith, The Artisans Group
Ron Deering, Deering & Nelson
Rob Rice, Gemini Corporation
James Peterson, Lanza Premier Homes LLC
Graeme Sackrison, TCAT
Will Stakelin, Olympia Master Builders
Jonathan Richards, Prodigy Energy Solutions
Jeffrey Erwin, Jensen Kokis Erwin
Scott Bergford, Scott Homes Inc
Cory Eckert, Laupen Homes LLC
Julie McBride, Mc Construction

Staff in Attendance
Cliff Moore, Resource Stewardship
Tony Kantas, Resource Stewardship
Chris Edmark, Resource Stewardship

Agenda items:
... Welcome, introductions, meeting agenda and purpose
... Review and discuss green development survey
... Discuss items on green development matrix
... Discuss requirements of grant and collaboratively agree to a work plan
... Review draft code barrier list
... Discuss next steps and process
Welcome
Tony introduced himself and started the meeting and explained the intent and purpose of the stakeholders group. This meeting marks the first phase of finding and eliminating the barriers within county code to energy efficiency and green development. This stakeholders group is considered the subject matter experts within the local green development building industry and the code to be written and/or amended will be a recommendation that will go to the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners for consideration and eventual adoption. Tony also mentioned that the county had hoped to use the stakeholder’s expertise on ideas to get educational green development information in the Permit Assistance Center (PAC) and the county website in attempt to promote more energy efficient construction. Will Stakelin, OMB had asked if the information provided to the public would be information that all local associations have available on the subject of green development. Cliff Moore had confirmed the county would consider all information that is available.

Cliff Moore initiated a round of introductions, welcomed everyone, and gave an overview of the grant the project is being funded and how the amendments to the county building codes is a segment of the county’s overall energy efficiency conservation strategy. Cliff also mentioned that the county is positioned to receive more grant money for projects that reduce energy use, curb greenhouse gas emissions, and improve energy efficiency.

After all introductions were complete everyone agreed that today’s goal is to go through the provided material and to brainstorm the known barriers that the stakeholders had faced. There was consensus that the building code in itself did not provide a barrier and that many of the items identified as barriers in the provided building code table were to be included in the 2009 amendments to the Washington State Single-Family Residential Energy Code. Thurston County would then be required to adopt the said amendments.

Green Development Survey
A copy of the survey was provided to all members of the stakeholders group. The survey was a form of public outreach to identify barriers builders within Thurston County were facing to building green. Scott Bergford pointed out that some of the numbers within the survey did not match-up. Tony believed the findings were skewed as a result to participants skipping questions or not completely understanding the question. The information obtained through the survey will give the stakeholders a baseline understanding to the green development certification programs that the local building industry are familiar with and where they are obtaining their education on the subject of green development. The survey will also function as a resource to the type of incentives the local building industry feels that could promote more green energy efficient development. The costs of some incentives are cost prohibitive.

Code Barrier Lists (Building Code & Development Code)
A list of building & development codes were provided to all stakeholders. The stakeholders all seemed to agree that barriers lie within the building review process rather than the requirements of the code. For example, if a builder is to use an innovative green technique that has been accepted by a Green Building Certificate Program (i.e. Built Green, LEED) the applicant/builder is being required to justify how the technique meets the intent of the code by the county. Some
builders stated in some instances the plans examiner will approve a building technique that is not typically used by a builder and then the building inspector puts the construction on-hold through the inspection site visit, because the inspector is not familiar with the building technique. Chris Edmark indicated the building inspectors may not be adequately reading the approved plans.

A question would be if the county adopted a particular Green Development Certificate Program and that program recognized a particular innovative building technique, would the builder still be required to defend the technique in how it meets or exceeds the requirements of the code? The certificate programs require the plans and improvements to be reviewed by a third party peer reviewer. This subject needs to be further researched and discussed.

There was discussion to the importance that the county presents the findings of this stakeholders group to the cities within the county in hope that the cities and county administer a similar green energy efficient code. This would eliminate confusion between different jurisdiction requirements. Tony indicated that he had planned to and that it was included within the work plan.

As a starter, the group has given staff direction to research the possibilities and implications of the county adopting something that recognizes the Built Green and LEED programs with the director authorizing other programs that may arise if certain criteria are met. Also, if the builder chooses to build to a certain threshold of the certificate program, the county providing the possible following incentives:

1. The County recording some sort of document indicating the structure is “Green” and to what level of green through the certificate program. The document would then be received by all future property owners through the title report.
2. Assign the green project a case manager within the department who is responsible for ensuring a facilitated review and inspection process, helping to address any code obstacles that arise, and communicating with project teams on possible solutions that may arise. This may require some sort of pre-submission conference with the applicant, plans examiner, and building inspector.
3. The County to develop a policy & procedure for innovative techniques used by an applicant.

Other meeting observations included that all stakeholders believed that it is critical that plan reviewers and building inspectors be familiar with green building standards and technology. A matrix that contrasted building codes in effect with standards like Built Green, LEED, Energy Star, etc would be helpful to both county staff and the broader building community.

Prior to the meeting Tony spoke to Tim Dickey and Tim had stated that he thought it was prudent for Thurston County to consider the implications of renovations to existing structures. Tim also stated that there is always room for improvements in new construction techniques, immediate energy savings can be gained by changes made to existing housing. Sealing the envelope, insulating, changing out windows, replacing inefficient heating systems, etc will have
a huge impact on energy use and help those most in need. This was also echoed by members of the stakeholders group at the meeting.

Will Stakelin stated that Tim Dickey would not be able to be part of the stakeholder group as a result to other obligations and recommended Jeff Pantier, Hatton Godat Pantier to be part of the group to infill the position. All members of the group seemed to think Jeff would bring a great site development perspective in regards to green development.