Thurston County Green Development Stakeholders Group
Stakeholders Meeting #2
March 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
Jeff Pantier, Hatton, Godat, Pantier
Kellene Richards, Prodigy Energy Solutions
Jeffrey Erwin, Jensen Kokis Erwin
Rob Rice, Gemini Corporation
Graeme Sackrison, TCAT
Cory Eckert, Laupen Homes LLC
Barrett Burr, Polar Bear Construction
Ryan Cuoio, Sunset Air
Kristi Carlson, Sunset Air

Staff in Attendance
Terri Thomas, Public Works
Chris Edmark, Resource Stewardship
Gene Widmer, Assessor
Dennis Pulsipher, Assessor
Tony Kantas, Resource Stewardship

Agenda items:
- Welcome, introductions, meeting agenda and purpose
- Review and discuss Potential Green Development Incentives and the County Recognizing Green Certification Programs
- Discuss Potential Electric Vehicle Charging Guidelines/Standards
- Discuss Construction Site Recycling
- Discuss next steps and process
Welcome
Tony introduced himself and started the meeting with a round of introductions and briefly updated the group who were not at the previous meeting of the stakeholders believing the first step should be the county recognizing green certification programs specifically Built Green and LEED and the county providing some sort of incentive to the applicant if they choose to build to the standards of the green program.

Green Certification Program and Incentives
A memorandum was provided to all stakeholders at the meeting. The memo described a possible process of the county reviewing a green project. Tony asked the group if the county should recognize any other green program other than Built Green and LEED. Kellene Richards stated that the NAHB (National Association of Home Builders) program should be added to the list. It is a nationally recognized program and like Built Green, verified at all levels. Agreement by the group was based on the fact that NAHB is a third party verified program.

Tessa Smith corresponded via email on the subject and believes the Passive House Institute of the United States (PHIUS) should also be recognized by the county as a green certification program. The program represents some of the most stringent energy performance standards to date. It can be significantly less expensive than programs like LEED to administer and conduct, with a substantially better return on investment in upgrades for energy performance. Tessa stated that Passive House is popping up all over national publications and public interest has been overwhelming. She currently has three Passive Houses in design development as well as emails pouring in from her website everyday with people asking questions about it.

Scott Bergford commented via email and believes that the Energy Star certification program should also be recognized. Although Energy Star is primarily an energy efficient program, they are getting more and more into “green” development. It is third party verified, and claims their standards result in a home being at least 15% more efficient than a code built home.

Based upon stakeholder comments and demonstration, the draft green policy will be written to recognize the Built Green, LEED, NAHB, Passive House, and Energy Star certification programs. All of which require the project to be third party verified by a certified professional within the said program.

The memorandum also listed the following three incentives: recording green projects, green project manager, and an innovative building technique database, as they were discussed at the previous meeting.

Recording Green Projects
Graeme Sackrison and Rob Rice expressed their concern that the public and the department should not be responsible for the expense of the recording and that it should be given to the applicant to record at the time of title, to eliminate the $62 first page recording fee. Everyone seemed to agree that the applicant should be responsible for the recording. There was discussion amongst the group of what should be recorded, by whom, and when the recording should take place.
Kellene Richards stated that recording documents that state RESNET ratings, HERS modeling, and ACH testing ties into Department of Ecology’s (DOE) E-Energy scale that is up-coming. It is a value added item for the homeowner and realtor. There are some indications that the DOE E-Energy scale is intended to be a requirement in selling new or existing homes. The recording puts a test that has a value in excess of $500.00 to the homeowner on file for easy future access. The new DOE E-Energy scale is a blend of HERS and RESNET, so this information validated by a third party verifier has potential value to future property owners.

Cory Eckert brought up the point that he has experienced his clients needing to move into the dwelling prior to the third party verifier signing off on the final construction. This creates a dilemma as a result to the building inspector needing the verifier to sign off for the certificate program to issue the certificate of occupancy, if the application was submitted to the county as a green project.

There was discussion amongst the group to provide a 90-day window of time for the builder to submit the green certification to the county after final occupancy was granted by the county. If the builder had not provided the certification to the county within the 90-days, the builder would not be given preference as a green builder when the builder submits the next time. The recording would be optional and the applicant would be accountable for the recording.

Green Project Manager
Jeffrey Erwin pointed out the importance in establishing a green review team within the review departments in addition to the assigned project manager. The “green team” could include a plans examiner, building inspector, and staff from roads, health, and planning departments. Staff from the green team would routinely review all green projects and be included in all possible green development educational opportunities. This would also create a connection between the applicants and county staff for future green projects.

The memo provided to the group included some potential options to review a green development proposal and incentives to the applicant if they choose to build green through a recognized green certification program. Rob Rice affirmed his concern of green projects being reviewed with priority over projects that were not green as a result to both applications requiring the same fee.

In order to promote more green energy efficient development, incentives need to be provided to the applicant to encourage them to build green. Providing an accelerated permit review for a typical building permit should not be a dramatic difference in time for a review of a building permit. Typically, a land use or a site plan review permit has been completed and approved by all review departments prior to the building permit being submitted. Traditionally, the land use and site plan review process is the time consuming component of development. Different type of incentives are appropriate for the land use and site plan review process, as stated by Jeff Pantier and mentioned later in this summary.

Dennis Pulsipher and Gene Widmer of the Assessor’s Office were present at the meeting and expressed their interest in their department being notified of green building. The Resource Stewardship Department already sends reports to the Assessor’s Department on all construction.
If the green building attribute could be coded as such in the permit tracking system (Amanda), the Assessor would be aware that the construction is green through the reports.

**Innovative Building Technique Database**

Everyone in attendance seemed to believe the categorized database would be a great resource to staff to ensure a collaborative review between the reviewer, inspector, and applicant. The database will also act as a great educational resource to future applicants and staff who review innovative green techniques that are not ordinarily seen in the building industry.

The database would include the general idea or concept, but not the calculations, engineering, or other information that may be owned by someone as a result to laws pertaining to property rights.

**Standards to Electric Car Infrastructure**

A copy of the City Seattle Electric code was provided to all stakeholders. The code section requires new residential construction to dedicate the space needed to charge a vehicle. Thurston County does not administer an electric code, but could regulate such a requirement through a land use code. Most of the group seemed to think the space is already provided in the breaker box and garage. It was also mentioned that the green building certification programs give credits for installing the needed infrastructure to charge a vehicle.

Staff has invited Joe Lambrix with Plug In Olympia to join us at the April 7, 2010 meeting to discuss the local demand and future of electric vehicles.

**Job Site Recycling**

Terri Thomas gave a detailed overview of Thurston County’s transfer station (WARC) and solid waste program, and handed out brochure information on the subject. Thurston County does not operate as a hauler, but owns the transfer station. If a mixed load of trash and recyclables goes to the WARC, it is destined for trash because the WARC is not a sorting facility or recycling facility, just a transfer station. The WARC contractor does pull out large, marketable pieces such as wood or metal, but it is a small percentage. If a load of untreated wood is brought in without other materials contaminating it, this will go straight to the wood recycling pile, at a much lower rate.

Haulers will take materials to other facilities if requested. You will need to make sure the load meets the requirements of the destination. If the material is from a demolition site, there needs to be some certification for lead and asbestos. Ask the hauler for a receipt to make sure it has not gone to trash.

Recovery One in Tacoma accepts mixed loads of construction or demo debris. Their recycling rate is significantly lower than the county’s trash rate. The hauler will charge more for transporting to Tacoma, but depending on the load size, it is still often cheaper. The Thurston County trash rates have recently increased considerably, so it provides additional benefit to recycle the construction material in a proper location.
Job site recycling will be further discussed at the next meeting along with representatives from the cities and people involved with the recycling industry.

Other Discussions
Jeff Pantier suggested that the group consider reviewing some of the development codes that hinder developers from designing their projects with less environmental impacts without going through the variance process, for instance narrower roads to encourage less impervious surfaces. In addition, to revisit the cluster subdivision ordinance, this would cluster lots that would normally be divided into 5-acre lots through the large lot process. A normal large lot subdivision includes roads and driveways throughout the property. The intent of the cluster subdivision is to provide for residential development in rural areas in a way that maintains or enhances the county's rural character; is sensitive to the physical characteristics of the site; retains large, undivided parcels of land that provide opportunities for compatible agricultural, forestry and other rural land uses; protects sensitive environmental resources; facilitates creation of open space corridors; and minimizes impacts of road and utility systems.

It may also be worth discussion to provide density bonuses and/or increased height requirements within the high density zones of the urban growth areas, if a multi-family structure is built in accordance with a green certification program. Cottage housing may be another avenue to provide an incentive of density bonus within the urban growth areas. A cottage housing development typically provides a smaller threshold to the size of a dwelling that can be built with a result of more affordable housing and less pervious surface.