

imagineCALGARY Transition Team Field Trip Report

April 26- May 1, 2007

Summary

In late April the imagineCALGARY Transition Team traveled to the state of Oregon to visit several communities in the hopes of learning more about their processes, successes and challenges. The trip included a site visit to the cities of Eugene, Portland and Hillsboro. In all three centres the Transition Team was able to meet with senior officials of the municipal government as well as tour the city. In Hillsboro, the Transition Team also attended the annual Town Hall meeting, where the Hillsboro Vision Implementation Committee reports back to the community each year on their accomplishments towards the vision.

- All of the centres are facing similar challenges to those that imagineCALGARY is currently facing or has faced in the past. Some of the prevalent challenges are around:
 - Translating vision into action
 - Maintaining momentum from an engagement process into the implementation
 - How to engage hard to reach potential Partners
 - When/how to engage the broader community
 - How to align initiatives – either existing or emerging – with the Vision
- With these similar challenges, there were some prevalent themes that emerged in this kind of work and are important for the imagineCALGARY Partnership to consider:
 - Build on and recognize existing work that is being done that already aligns with the Vision. As Erik Jensen from Hillsboro said, “It incorporated things that were already happening. The Vision affirmed these things.” Mayor Piercy from Eugene stated the importance of affirming and applauding these initiatives and build on that foundation.
 - Creating a sense of collective responsibility and action is important. While Erik Jensen described the City of Hillsboro as a Partner that was the “800 pound gorilla in the room”, the great success of Hillsboro 2020 has been the broad community ownership of the Vision. The recognition of the significance the role of the municipal government has to play is important, but the discussion and buy-in has to go beyond this.
 - Engaging and communicating with the community is important. In both Eugene and Hillsboro, there were efforts to keep the public aware of positive steps that were being made towards sustainability. In the early stages of implementing Hillsboro 2020, this did not happen and created a “dark period” of awareness in the community.
 - This is extremely complex and difficult work. It requires a constant building of processes and structures and a commitment to continuous learning.



April 27 – Eugene

Meeting with Mayor Kitty Piercy and Mary Walston, Manager of Council, Public and Government Affairs

- www.eugene-or.gov

This meeting was to discuss how to progress sustainability initiatives in a municipal context. Eugene has initiated a number of sustainability initiatives within their municipal government and with groups in the community. Mayor Piercy has been recognized as a leader in sustainability and was recently profiled in U.S. Mayor, a publication of the United States Conference of Mayors.

Mayor Piercy

“We are popping in all kinds of places”

On sustainability

- One of the major tensions around sustainability is how people eyeball the same issues everyone cares about
- When Mayor Piercy took office, she “ramped up the conversation that was happening already” surrounding issues of sustainability. At the time, the conversation was primarily on environmental issues, but she built on that and broadened it to a community dialogue on sustainability
- It’s important to affirm and applaud all the work that has been done before and built on this foundation
- It is very important to celebrate the heroes that are doing things in the right direction – whether it is the local utility company or Staples

Sustainable Business Initiative

“Don’t wait for us (the City).”

Mayor Piercy initiated a five-step process to establish a sustainable development strategy for the Eugene community. The process resulted in a number of recommendations – for the City, the private sector, non-profits and other public institutions.

- This group focused on building the economy in “a Eugene way” that reflected the local strengths of the community
- An important step was to build on the foundation of members of the business community that “get it”. This way, the message of sustainability and its benefits can be carried out to other business people by folks that speak their language.
- While the previously mentioned point is important, it’s also important to bring people that are skeptical of each other together to understand each other’s view (see the first point under Mayor Piercy).
- In the 2 years of the Sustainable Business Initiative, the co-chairs of the SBI Task Force have gone on to become chairs of the local Chamber of Commerce. This has resulted in the Chamber attempting to move this sustainable business agenda.





- With the idea of celebrating the heroes, local radio has given free PSA's to all for a recognition of businesses that are moving in the right direction.
 - Mayor Piercy made the point that in order to not turn people off if they didn't believe that a business was sustainable, it was phrased in a way that said these business were "on the road" to sustainability and praised their efforts that way.

Within the City of Eugene

- The City is developing an internal Office of Sustainable Development
- The City now has a Sustainable Development Commission – a policy advisory body to Council and the City Manager
- Leadership is key – the Mayor and City Manager are committed to sustainability
- The City is looking at a green procurement policy
- The City has an Internal Green Team looking at environmental initiatives
- They are just beginning to grapple with the social equity aspect of sustainability and know it will be difficult.

April 27 – Eugene

Meeting with Bob Doppelt, Director, Resource Innovations, University of Oregon Institute for a Sustainable Environment. Author of *Leading Change Toward Sustainability*.

- <http://ri.uoregon.edu/index.html>

This meeting was to discuss the process of building the imagineCALGARY Partnership with Mr. Doppelt and how his experience could inform some of our work. His book has been a great tool for the imagineCALGARY Transition Team and focuses a great deal on change within organizations, so would be beneficial for imagineCALGARY Partners looking to implement the Targets within their organization's mandate.

- The ultimate goal is to shift mindsets. The Targets in the imagineCALGARY Plan are a great way to do this. Building on existing successes is an important first step.
- "Fast is slower, slow is faster." When looking at shifting community systems towards sustainability, it is often more beneficial over the long run to determine meaningful steps rather than rushing to just do something.
- When looking at the collective action piece, it would be very informative to use systems mapping to determine where the most powerful intervention points are. (*Note: this approach was used in the development of the imagineCALGARY Targets.)
- When discussing sustainability with businesses look at the entire value chain and discuss sustainability in this context. This will help identify the most vulnerable parts of the chain and look at how to make it more resilient – a key aspect of sustainability.
- Sometimes, in order to get people to focus or act, you have to create a crisis. This can create the conditions to get people or organizations to consider change.





April 30 – Portland

Meeting with Lisel Wendt, Neighbourhood Engagement Director and Elizabeth Kennedy-Wong, Policy Manager in the Office of Mayor Tom Potter.

This meeting was to discuss the processes of imagineCALGARY and VisionPDX. Portland is a member of the PLUS Network and members of imagineCALGARY have now connected at 3 peer exchanges. As VisionPDX is currently developing their vision based on the input of 13,000 Portlanders (Calgary's record is still safe!), much of the morning's discussion was sharing imagineCALGARY experiences. There were a number of similarities between Calgary and Portland in that many processes are happening simultaneously and Portland is struggling how to integrate all of these. One such integration challenge was with a recently approved Children's Bill of Rights.

“This will be a translation that existed before the language was created.”

- This was mentioned regarding the already created Children's Bill of Rights and the community Vision, which has yet to be finalized. This is an interesting quote that certainly applies to all the great work that is *already* happening amongst the imagineCALGARY Partners as it relates to the Targets in the Plan. Tying in with what Mayor Piercy of Eugene said, it is important for Partners to recognize all the things that are already heading in the direction of the imagineCALGARY Plan and build on that foundation.

“Shamelessly use each other's momentum.”

- With a variety of Partners looking to use VisionPDX to further their work in that direction, it is important to share in the successes and use that momentum to create further success across the range of Partners. Obviously, with 43 community Partners to date, this is a point that resonates clearly with the work of imagineCALGARY.



April 30 – Hillsboro 7th Annual Vision Town Hall Meeting

Attendance of the Town Hall Meeting to observe how this event which has many parallels to what has been proposed for imagineCALGARY.

- <http://www.hillsboro2020.org>
- Meeting is held annually as a means for the Vision Implementation Committee (VIC) to report back to the community about what they have accomplished in meeting the vision in that year.
- Held in auditorium of civic centre on a Monday evening from 5-8pm
- Light refreshments were set up throughout the evening
- Program requires 30-40 volunteers to successfully run this program, 50 volunteers are needed if child care is included.
- Event is not conducive to children, so have provided child care
- The meeting is advertised each year through 57,000 flyers, door-to-door mail outs, banners hung throughout the city plus radio, newspaper advertising
- Attendance has been rising steadily with over 500 people last year
- This year attendance dropped to 150
- Attendance included representatives from county and state government

The Vision Town Hall featured a number of elements. These included:

- Open House – Partners were at displays that outlined their actions in the past year towards the Vision. This is equivalent to the “trade show” concept that the Conference Action Group proposed for the imagineCALGARY Conference.
- Performances from a local high school vocal group
- Welcome from the Mayor
- Presentation by the Chair of the Vision Implementation Committee – A list of activities and accomplishments by the Hillsboro 2020 Partners.
 - Of the 147 actions listed in the plan, 115 are “in motion” – either in progress or are complete.
- Showcase presentation: Hillsboro 2020: Sustaining Our Environment
 - The Executive Director of SOLV (Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism) spoke about a wide variety of initiatives that Hillsboro 2020 Partners were undertaking to address the Vision Focus Area of “Preserving the Environment”.
 - “This is a night where we can rededicate ourselves. This is *my* community and it’s *my* responsibility to make it better.
- Community Discussion – a forum for citizens to ask about the Vision and what is happening in their city.
- Presentation of the Hillsboro 2020 Awards





- Outstanding Individual
- Outstanding Organization

May 1 – Hillsboro

Meeting with Erik Jensen, Project Manager for Hillsboro 2020.

In their 7th year of implementation, Erik was able to speak from extensive experience of attempting to implement a community vision. While there are some differences between both the cities of Hillsboro and Calgary and our respective processes, there is a great deal to learn from their experience. Some key elements of Hillsboro 2020:

- Vision is driven by the Vision Implementation Committee, consists of 25 people with the mandate to implement the Vision 2020
- Actions are divided and led by Lead Partners and Secondary Partners, lead partners have taken that role on because their organization plays a significant role in executing the action
- The VIC, as a whole, can make minor changes and revisions to the Vision – other considerations for changes and amendments are made once a year for new actions and every five years for reviewing strategies
- VIC is required each year to hold Town Hall meeting to report to community. Are also required to report to Council, which constitutes their formal accountability

What has worked

- Public participation and ownership
- City Council & City Manager support
- Community-wide implementation
 - Maintaining action in the community has been key. As John Coulter, the Chair of the VIC said, “that has been a key to our success. Mayors come and go. Aldermen come and go. This will continue because this comes from the community.”
- “Living document” concept
 - Regularly scheduled reviews of the document to keep it relevant
- Vision Implementation Committee (VIC)
 - This group
- Staffing
 - This involves “creating the space” for action to happen. “We’re providing the car, they (the Partners) are providing the fuel. This wouldn’t work without the leadership of the VIC and action by the Partners.”



Challenges

- New model of working together
 - This has been a continual challenge.
 - Creating a new way of doing things requires patience, perseverance and an ability to learn as you go
- Vision Implementation Committee structure and membership
 - The determination of membership and structures for how to work together.
- Major revisions/updates
- Lead Partner leadership transitions
- “out of the box” actions
 - The first 2-3 years, the majority of activities were focused on what Partners were already doing. Now they are in a stage where new types of actions – either independently or collectively – need to happen. This becomes more challenging.
- City staff ownership
- Maintaining momentum

Steps in the process

- The first steps of action were to recognize what was already working. “It incorporated things that were already happening. The Vision affirmed these things.”
- After the initial push to create the Vision, Erik described a “dark period” for the first 2-3 years where the public face of the project was less prevalent while the Partners “went to work”. Coming out of that, they recognized a need to re-establish a public presence. Through a Speaker’s Bureau, Hillsboro 2020 Awards and Branding, they began to gain recognition again.
- When asked if that “dark period” was needed or if they would avoid it if they could do it again, Erik felt that they would stay on the public’s radar screen.

