

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The report offers a blueprint for achieving the SDC’s 2020 sustainable economic development vision: To solidify Portland as an internationally renowned metropolitan community, where an extraordinary cross-sector partnership showcases the “Portland Way” — sustainability, collaboration, innovation, and passion.

SIGNS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Growing media coverage, focus groups, surveys and public interest make it clear that our region’s citizens and businesses are eager to get engaged in sustainability. Yet people consistently say they need more information on “what they can do” and “what really matters”. To help answer these questions, the Sustainable Development Commission launched the “Signs of Sustainability” project, a sustainability report card for Portland and Multnomah County.

Members of the SDC selected fifteen Signs of Sustainability in collaboration with dozens of experts representing government agencies, non-profit organizations and businesses. Unlike traditional policy-oriented indicators, the Signs of Sustainability were selected based on their distinct ability to encourage specific behavior by individuals and businesses. Many cut across topic areas to encourage behaviors that offer multiple community benefits. For example:

Sign of Sustainability	Issues Affected	What people can do	What businesses can do	Data?
% Urban Forest Canopy coverage by neighborhood over time	Land, air & water quality, community engagement	Individuals and neighborhood associations work with non-profits and government to increase the urban forest canopy	Plant more trees on their property, support neighborhood planting efforts	Yes
#/% of kids that walk & bike to school	Children’s health, air & water quality, emissions, community engagement	Promote walk/bike to school with own kids	Walk/bike to school week sponsor	Yes
# of farmers markets/% of food dollars spent there	economic health, human health, emissions, air & water quality, community engagement	Shop at markets on a regular basis	Help create neighborhood centers where markets can locate	No

Many of the Signs of Sustainability draw on data that is already gathered by government, educational or non-profit entities in the community. Yet approximately half of the Signs currently lack definitive or consistent data. Additional research is needed to complete the Signs, including many that represent areas of interest critical to community well being—such as the farmer’s market measurement shown here, or a measurement of the percentage of dollars spent with local businesses. In the coming year, the SDC will develop community partnerships to solidify data for some of the priority Signs that currently lack information.

The Signs of Sustainability will be communicated to citizens through a comprehensive multi-media campaign. There is significant potential to implement this campaign in conjunction with other campaigns currently under development at a local and regional scale. The SDC will analyze the options for partnership with local media outlets and other cities.

NEXT STEPS

In March 2007, the SDC held a retreat to reflect on the group’s progress and to develop a plan for the coming year. The group refocused its vision and priority areas and determined that sustainable government operations, building a sustainable economy, and communicating with citizens and businesses will remain the key focus areas. In the coming months, the SDC will use the results of the retreat to develop and refine a workplan.

FOR MOR INFORMATION

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