

**SustainAbility: Sustainability Roundtable 2**

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Two weeks ago this column featured the 2009 Western Colorado Sustainability Roundtable hosted by the Alliance for Sustainable Colorado with local assistance from Green Guides of the Grand Valley and Western Colorado Congress.

I wrote about many of the projects local governments have undertaken to create sustainability. Now let's look at some of the other interesting ideas that bubbled up from the cauldron of discourse.

The first task of small groups at the roundtable was to explore what efforts are in place and working. The Drought Response Information Project (DRIP), a collaboration among Grand Valley water providers and CSU Cooperative Extension, is doing an excellent job of providing information about the Drought Response Plan, the importance of water conservation and how to reduce water use. Look below this column for DRIP's educational column.

Another effective organization is the Mesa Land Trust, which has conserved more than 55,000 acres of land for local food production, large working ranches and wildlife and riparian habitat. Learn more at [www.mesalandtrust.org](http://www.mesalandtrust.org).

The availability of locally grown food and a consumer-friendly distribution network were identified as major strengths in the quest for sustainability. Contributors include the various farmers markets, Cameron Place Community Supported Agriculture and the community garden at 10<sup>th</sup> and Main in Grand Junction, as well as all other local growers and ranchers.

Another successful model is the Downtown Development Authority partnership with LiveWell Mesa County that rewards program participants who meet their goals with vouchers for healthy, local food.

Mesa State College was commended for constructing new buildings to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards and facilitating recycling on campus.

Local energy conservation and efficiency efforts are getting a boost from individuals taking energy rater courses and investing in equipment to conduct energy audits. Residential builders are building more Energy Star new homes.

Kudos were also given to GJ CRI, Curbside Recycling Indefinitely, for providing curbside recycling service to City of Grand Junction residents and staffing an innovative drop-off facility.

After identifying what is already in place we discussed what is ripe for development.

Intriguing ideas included the Architecture 2030 Plan, promoting creative home financing to encourage increased energy efficiency, taking advantage of stimulus funds for job retraining in energy efficiency and renewable energy industries and tapping into abundant local sunlight for solar power.

Special attention should be given to encouraging education and innovation for the younger generation. Perhaps the next wave of inventors will be inspired by the Math and Science Center.

Many aspects of the construction industry seem poised for sustainable improvements. One proposal involved creating a network for reuse and recycling of construction and demolition waste collaborating with current resources like Habitat for Humanity.

Builders and construction industries would benefit from additional educational opportunities about building more sustainable homes and buildings. They can also learn how to upgrade efficiency in existing structures.

Another suggestion was the establishment of a sustainable, comprehensive land use code taking into account energy efficiency, green space and open space.

Mortgage lending for sustainable development is also ready to take off.

As the conversation turned to the steps we would take to foster these opportunities, roundtable participants agreed a centralized body is needed to coordinate sustainability efforts in the Grand Valley.

We decided there is no need to reinvent the wheel since an existing nonprofit could house an organized sustainability group and utilize credible local expertise. The trick will be getting local leadership, nonprofits and local government working together.

Part of the mix will consist of setting long-term goals and implementing definable projects to foster collaboration.

Good communication, including a Web-based forum, is essential. It will also be important to use language that will garner broad-based support. The Carbondale group, Clean Energy Economy for the Region (CLEER), was suggested as a successful model.

As the roundtable came to a close, we agreed to take advantage of support from the Alliance for Sustainable Colorado for another meeting in six months. A local nonprofit is looking into serving as an umbrella organization for a centralized sustainability group. I'll keep you posted on progress.

Special thanks are in order to Kelly Landau, program assistant for the Alliance for Sustainable Colorado, who compiled a comprehensive report of this energizing event. To learn more about the alliance go to [www.sustainablecolorado.org](http://www.sustainablecolorado.org).