

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Sustainable Seattle

“The city came up with this idea” said Ms. Jody Haug, of Seattle’s Ballard neighborhood, “that it would ask the residents what *they* thought should be done to make their communities better. And the first thing people said was that ‘the city *knows* what it’s going to do, why doesn’t it just tell us?’...but people started getting together, and we figured out what things were important. There would be a meeting, and you would expect everyone with their single issues to come out of the woodwork, and it would be a real hassle. But people really came with a feeling that they were working for the whole neighborhood – not just their lot, or their block, or their little pet project.”

All of Seattle’s neighborhoods, and more than 20,000 Seattle residents, have been involved in helping to implement a comprehensive plan called “Towards A Sustainable Seattle.” Out of these many interactions, new relationships are formed, sometimes in very simple ways. “In our neighborhood, Wallingford,” said Ms. Chris MacKenzie, “we use e-mail a lot, but we also have e-mail Buddies for those who don’t have access. Last week, one of our older couples was accosted on the street and an e-mail warning went out on our network. A woman who got the message went next door to tell her e-mail Buddy, and she later told me that it was the first time they had met. Now they know each other, face to face, and that makes them both feel more safe. Now the feelings are warmer.”

“In the end,” says Haug, “the neighborhood got its vision together, and the city got broken down into six sectors and now you deal with your sector person at City Hall, and odds are it’s someone you know, because they’ve been to your meetings. I remember when a person from Parks called me up and said ‘Jody, we need to sit down and talk. We need to figure out how your neighborhood plan and our Parks plan can work together.’ And I said to the guy, ‘Give me a minute, will you? I’m picking my teeth up off the floor here.’”

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