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Interview with Garrett Moon, The Commons Project, 2010 (audio)

Garrett Moon

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PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW INDEX

INTERVIEWEE: Garrett Moon

Interviewer: Rayne Walter-Young

Date: August 3, 2010

Location of Interview: Garrett Moon's office in NW Portland

Research Assistant: Shivon Van Allen

Interview Series: SUSTAINING NORTHWEST LANDSCAPES & COMMUNITIES

Recording Equipment: DIGITAL RECORDER (WINDOWS MEDIA AUDIO FILE) WITH AN EXTERNAL, OMNIDIRECTIONAL MICROPHONE

Time	Notes
0:00:31	How long have you lived in Portland? About two years, went to school in Bellingham, Washington at Western Washington University
0:00:50	What brought you to Portland? The Commons building project made him stay, originally came here since his brother is located here
0:01:08	I see you received your degree in Computer Science from Western Washington University and your degree in Sustainable Design in Architecture and Planning from Fairhaven College, and now you are engaged in the Living Building Challenge. How did this progression come about? Had not originally planned on making a career in computer science, brother had interest in sustainability, Garrett ended up creating his own unique degree at Fairhaven that encompassed his computer science interests with sustainable design, was not an easy process
0:02:48	On you website, "The Commons", you address the three main goals you hope to accomplish, one of these being "to design and develop a home for two families to create community together." Can you explain the dynamic or type of community you hope to create by establishing a multi-family home? American culture does not celebrate family, the Commons is trying to bring the brothers and their parents together, trying to reestablish the value of the multi-generational experience
0:04:01	Another goal mentions at "the Commons" is "to study, learn, exemplify and contribute to the knowledge of sustainable design and dwellings." How would you

	define sustainability? A system that can be continued forever, the Commons is not truly sustainable in relation to all the inputs into the project
0:05:33	In accepting the Living Building Challenge you have committed yourself to developing the greenest building possible with the information and resources available. How do you assess or gauge progress towards sustainability? The Living Building Challenge has specific goals, the Challenge does not offer guidelines but rather criteria for sustainable building, points are awarded for sustainable carpet but no points for not having carpets, the Challenge was taken on partially because the brothers' efforts in building the Commons were already meeting those criteria
0:07:10	How do you blend sustainability and aesthetically pleasing design? Building sustainable limits how "cool" or "modern" design can be aesthetically because many of those designs are not sustainable in terms of Portland's climate and proximity of building goods
0:08:25	Can you describe an incident or element during the planning stages of the Commons that you found difficult to deal with? Material weight in relation to the locality of building materials, materials must be available locally, have to approach vendors about what products they can supply or create, very challenging aspect of the project
0:09:55	Are the local vendors willing to meet the needs ask by the Commons project? Many companies are not willing to meet the needs since generating these new products and service will not open a big market for the companies since the Commons is a single, independent project – "just two guys and their house" Is the Commons a "squeaking wheel"? Yes, the demands and interest of the project are making a small difference.
0:11:04	What unforeseen problems or roadblocks over the course of the actual development process have you encountered? Processing all black and gray water on site, must work within city and state laws on water use, working with the city for the site to potentially become a water pilot project that would lead to developing new water use laws
0:12:20	Are there plans for gardens at the Commons? Rooftop gardens could become part of the solution for water treatment at the site but there are big health issues

	associated with that
0:13:13	I have read that you will be incorporating dirt or earthen floors in the bedrooms and plan on installing a composting toilet. What persuaded you to use these more natural/traditional house wares? Earthen floors create thermal heat meaning less heat is needed to heat homes, compostable toilets use a lot of energy and reduce water load, want to not be involved in the Big Pipe project
0:14:40	Can you describe a moment during the planning or development process that was particularly motivational or enjoyable for you? Meeting people on the street who are exciting about the project, on the other side generally neighbors dislike construction their neighborhood
0:15:25	What are your proudest achievements with respect of the Commons? Doing the project at all, project turned out being a lot more work than anticipated, parents have provided help
0:15:55	Please describe a typical day onsite at the Commons. There is no such thing as a typical day, his brother Dustin does the day-to-day construction, the Commons is typical construction site save for recycling aspect
0:16:45	How has the People's Co-op been involved in the Commons? The co-op gave away the building material from the house that was on the lot prior to the building of the Commons, certain materials were able to be reused by community members
0:17:31	Very prominently posted outside of the construction area is a detailed sign describing the ideals behind the construction as well as methods. What motivates you to participate in full disclosure regarding your construction concepts? Building own home, big goal is to educate community, used a way to potentially generate sponsorship, so that others may know about the project
0:18:13	Are there any future projects you have in mind once the Commons is completed? Would like to be involved in future sustainable designed projects, no specifics mentioned