

11-20-2009

Interview with Bruce Walker, BPS, 2009 (audio)

Bruce Walker

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Portland State University Oral History Project

Interview Index

INTERVIEWEE: Bruce Walker – City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, Solid Waste & Recycling Manager

Interviewer: Zachary Hathaway

Date: November 20th 2009

Location of Interview: Ecotrust Building, Northwest Portland

Research Assistant: Angie Cirello

Interview Series: SUSTAINING NORTHWEST LANDSCAPES & COMMUNITIES
Recording Equipment: DIGITAL RECORDER (WINDOWS MEDIA AUDIO FILE)
WITH AN EXTERNAL, OMNIDIRECTIONAL MICROPHONE

Time	Notes
:50	What brought you to Portland?
1:00	Graduate of University of Oregon
1:07	Love and work
1:19	First job in recycling - 1980
1:28	Education background
1:35	University of Oregon Political Science major
1:41	Community politics and environmental classes
2:03	Graduated in 1977
2:13	How did you get involved in your current work?
2:30	Began work during first Earth days in the early 1970s
2:44	Environmental club in high school - inclined and interest
3:20	Involvement in UO environmental community
3:30	Burn paper - bad idea
4:16	Burning failed
4:35	Bring recycling job post grad
4:50	Worked in Lincoln County on 1 year grant
5:10	Portland jobs
5:25	1987 started job with City of Portland
5:45	How do you define sustainability?
6:00	Strong environmental base, more environmental protection and green building
6:30	Recycling popular activity participated in the United States.
7:00	Social and economic issues
7:30	Who will build green buildings if uneconomical?
8:00	How do you gauge progress with sustainability?
8:50	First thing people learn in green business - job world becomes more

	specialized
9:25	Sustainability connects different elements, better than ecological.
9:50	Challenging issues in north and northeast Portland and recycling trucks
10:30	Garbage and recycling trucks
10:57	Put in standards
11:00	Is reuse a good thing in terms of trucks?
11:33	Truck replacement strategy
12:17	Genesis comes from equity issues, show as example for others.
13:20	Portland water bureau - looking at plan
13:48	What do you do and what are you in charge of?
14:00	Staff management, report to bureau manager, customer service, planning
15:10	Don't provide service, but manage it - make sure haulers are following rules.
16:00	Some repeating but also new projects
16:19	Could you tell me about how PSU's Commercial Recycling Project relates to Sustainability?
16:50	15th year, ongoing project - relates directly to economic and how much we charge or service.
19:00	Show data about what is being thrown out
19:34	Haulers can't tell you
19:53	Accurately reflects what is thrown out, very valuable tool in keeping rates lower
21:10	Economic recession and its affect on the recycling market.
21:32	Late fall showed a big drop in values of markets
22:04	Rate model - account for value of recyclables haulers collection
22:26	Prices dropped - tough for haulers
23:02	Projected rates - reward customers for more recycling reduces customer bill
23:47	Lower markets equals less revenue in system leading to higher customer bills
24:20	Markets are still in recession
25:00	Paper most recycled product
25:45	Tell tale sign in recession - more cardboard means more retail goods being brought
27:30	Markets currently flat and low
28:00	Challenges of getting people to recycle
28:35	We can do better - 75% goal set by city council
28:55	challenges - affectively communicating with the community
31:00	Food compost - expansion desired
31:20	Working with metro to find site
31:50	How does socioeconomic status affect recycling rates?
32:05	Research is right, lower status leads to more challenges
33:13	Working with community groups to be more active
34:46	Reaching out to Spanish and Russian communities
35:15	Has comingled recycling boosted recycling rates?

36:00	5% increase in recycling, garbage is down 10%
36:17	People are consuming less and recycling more.
37:17	Hopeful that there will be a better appreciation for durable goods
38:30	Consumer culture and changing behaviors
39:01	Tangible links to people's behavior - looking beyond recycling to carbon foot print and city interaction.
40:30	Lifestyle changes
40:50	Status of every other week trash collection
41:00	Compost element of recycling program, mostly business
41:42	Compost facility not in Oregon
42:00	Expanding compost program to include food waste
43:00	San Francisco example
43:22	Spring 2010 - Move green cart with food compose to weekly pickup, garbage every other week.
45:00	Plan for collection of household toxic waste curbside.
45:20	Next phase of challenging materials - drop off sites don't work because of driving.
46:45	Need to look at different model, more convenient - returning materials to retailers, bottle bill
47:53	What do you see as the future of waste management?
49:12	Less trucks on the roads, hard to recycle items
50:20	European approach, federal level governance
50:55	Green Dot Program
52:40	Embarrassing some cities don't have curbside programs
53:15	More involvement in local programs