

Business Leadership Council Summary of March 8, 2007 Meeting

The inaugural meeting of the Business Leadership Council demonstrated the growing awareness of the concept of sustainability as key to the long-term prosperity of the state's business community and Hawaii as a whole. The meeting was also a cautionary tale as many voiced concerns about the challenges ahead in implementing sustainability.

ACTUS EXAMPLE

The experiences of Actus Lend Lease, as detailed by Michael Bellaman, CEO of Lend Lease Retail and Communities USA, were an excellent starting point for the conversations of that followed. Many of the examples he shared were echoed by the audience, including the usefulness of a "sustainability scorecard" for management and employees that defined measurable benchmarks. Actus' sustainability report was also discussed as a useful tool for a company to publicly define its sustainability goals and progress.

Of note in the sustainability report was the section about the 8,000 solar-powered homes at Schofield Barracks, which is the largest solar powered community in the world.

DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is often equated with environmentally friendly practices such as recycling, water reclamation and energy conservation. However, the concept of sustainability is far broader, encompassing markers such as:

- Workforce development – more workers are needed and constant training is required to stay competitive in the 21st century global economy
- Job creation – need to create living wage jobs
- Economic diversification – the visitor industry and military spending continue to drive Hawaii's economy. Will
- Education – a high performing education system (both public and private) is critical
- Affordable housing – workers need places to live.
- Transportation – reliable and timely transportation systems are needed to alleviate gridlock and give people more time with their friends and families.
- Carrying capacity of the state – how many visitors and residents can our islands maintain?
- Communities – Hawaii's spirit of aloha makes it special. How do we preserve the bonds of friendship and openness in our communities that underpin the loha spirit?

Clearly, a definition of sustainability is needed that encompasses these critical factors. Only then will the discourse about sustainability expand beyond "green" issues.

It was agreed that against the backdrop of the broader definition of sustainability, each company needs to develop its own definition and implementation strategy.

Suggestions for Definition

It was recommended that the definition embrace the concept of enhancing the present so that future generations can enjoy the same quality of life.

CHAMPIONS

It was recognized that sustainability needs internal champions both within individual companies and external champions to the community and the media. Actus' example was helpful – the company has sustainability champions in each division and work group.

Kanu Hawaii

This is a nonprofit group of Hawaii residents in their 20s and 30s that has launched an initiative to educate people about the importance of individual actions to achieving a sustainable Hawaii.

It was suggested that the group is an appealing champion, and their work could be taken to scale by business and labor groups.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

A greater exchange of information is needed by companies, particularly strategies for garnering employee buy in on sustainability initiatives. The Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii has offered to recast its Environmental Affairs Committee as a Sustainability Committee to aid in this.

PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

There was consensus on the need to educate the stakeholders, the media and the public about sustainability through a public awareness campaign.