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Sustainability is the word

By [Steven Friederich](#) - Daily World Writer

Friday, March 16, 2007 11:20 AM PDT

DAILY WORLD / [KATHY QUIGG](#) Jason Robertson, consultant from Olympia speaks to community and business leaders at a conference Thursday at the Rotary Log Pavilion.

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Refine. Revise. Refocus.

What exactly?

All of Grays Harbor.

Sound like a gimmick?

Not to the 100 or so business and community leaders who met Thursday morning to ponder what it takes to create

"sustainable" business and community development. Essentially, that means an economy and quality of life that complement each other.

For about a year now, the push for some kind of united Harbor effort to create a more environmentally-friendly, sustainable Grays Harbor

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has been spearheaded by the folks at Grays Harbor Paper LP, which has carved a niche selling 100 percent recycled paper while producing less waste.

The idea Thursday was to stimulate the transition into an action plan.

"We have these goals and we don't really have a true foundation for them," added David Quigg, the marketing director of Grays Harbor Paper.

Jason Robertson, of Barney and Worth, a strategic planning consulting firm from Olympia, led the community in the town hall-style meeting.

Robertson said what the Harbor needs to do is envision what it will look like by 2020 and set the goals it needs to get there.

Grays Harbor Paper has held several local forums in the past year to introduce the community to the notion that this area can be a leader in the movement to meld environmental values with traditional economic values, with the result being a more livable community that attracts more sustainable development and more people to the area.

The consensus of the group Thursday was that Grays Harbor Paper should to continue its leadership role.

"And we're willing to carry the backpack for a little bit but we need some help," Quigg said.

Robertson turned the heat up a notch further, noting that "sustainability isn't just environmental, it's community sustainability."

People's attitudes about the Harbor need to change — both externally and internally, the group said.

That means staying out of books such as the one published earlier this year that included Aberdeen among the worst places to live in America, community leaders said.

"We need to get over the image of 'woe is me' and it starts right now with us," said Lisa Scott, the City of Aberdeen's development director. "This needs to be a desirable place to live and build a family."

"As bad as it can be here, is as good as it can be; we still love it," Quigg said. "And we're going to run into sourpusses but I say 'Get on board or get out of the way.'"

After about an hour-long presentation from Robertson, Quigg and others, the 100 or so people broke up into smaller groups to figure out what kind of actions need to be taken.

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"As kind of an outsider looking in, I think the first impression that you get driving into Aberdeen and Hoquiam, is that it needs improvement," said Casey Roloff, the developer behind the Seabrook development at Pacific Beach. "It's very depressing for someone who doesn't know the area."

Roloff and others suggested that communities adopt new signage, put in benches, flower boxes and generally spruce things up.

"The extreme makeover probably isn't possible but if you do more of a cosmetic makeover, then I think it will lead somewhere over a period of time," Roloff said. "I think you need to design this place around walkability, too. That's what we're trying to do at Seabrook. People don't want to just be in their cars."

"I know we (in the banking community) could find some low-cost funding to help business owners improve the exterior to their facades," said Dennis Long, the CEO of the Bank of the Pacific. "I know we can do that. We would be glad to do that. Because if the community gets better, we win in an indirect way."

"We are vision challenged in Grays Harbor," stressed Tami Garrow, the CEO of the Satsop Development Center.

And, sure, Garrow said, all of the usual suspects — the government, non-profits and community leaders should be involved, but the vision has to get deeper into the community. "We need to talk to somebody other than ourselves, if you know what I mean."

Besides image improvement, Montesano Mayor Dick Stone said care should be taken so that despite whatever growth does happen, the area's natural beauty isn't sacrificed.

"What is it that makes this God's country and what do we want to do to maintain it?" Stone said.

So after three hours of discussing, debating and talking — was anything accomplished during Thursday's conference?

Speaking for the group, County Commissioner Mike Wilson said he likes to think so.

"I don't think we're going to have much of a problem (getting this action plan done), to tell you the truth," he said. "I think because of the partnerships we have, I think we're going to spread that cost out so everyone can afford to do this."

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