



ARE WE CRAZY?

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Events of the last few years have caused me to reconsider deeply the principles we currently accept which bring the future of our communities into existence.

I feel it is time for us to undertake a true re-visioning of our local communities, to open new possibilities, and to shed patterns that we now see don't work. It feels time to look at the rules that govern our communities from a different viewpoint. The well-being of other people and other life is as essential as our own. An economics that discounts the future and consumes our resources is not the right economics to bet our lives on. And equity, compassion, and openness can create a profoundly different future for us all.

Many of the practices our communities have come to follow make no sense to me when looked at with post-9/11 eyes:

- Why do we allow billboards advertising more consumption and economic centralization, when the real issue is equity? Why do we have billboards in our communities to urge visitors to spend the night somewhere else?
- Why don't we require "living wages" in our communities when all jobs that are not tied to our location have been exported elsewhere in the world? Even if requiring visitors to pay full costs of their services cut tourism by a few percentage points, many would consider both fair wages and slower growth to be a benefit. Why should low-wage workers have to subsidize others?
- Why do we promote debt - allowing 18% or more interest on credit cards, when other places limit rates to much less? Why do we promote public debt - financing roads and public facilities by issuing "bonds" that double the ultimate cost, rather than paying as we go?
- Why do we allow selling goods in odd sizes and with "99¢" prices intended to deceive us and make comparisons difficult? And advertising that centralizes production and increases prices of many products by 20%? Why are we concerned about "family values" but allow an economics that discounts our families' futures?

- Why do we excuse corporations and the wealthy from paying their fair share of taxes to support needed services? Our country is no poorer than 30 years ago. But inequality has soared, taxes have been shifted to the middle class, and we suddenly "can't afford" public services.
- Why do we plunge our nation deeper into debt to make war on other people to gain control of their oil? All we've gained is skyrocketing gas prices and oil company profits.
- Why do we say we don't believe in magic, but assume that our finite world can continue to support exponential growth in our numbers and appetites? When growth is devouring a third of our entire economic output while decreasing the quality of life in our communities, why are we afraid to stabilize the size of our communities?

Each of our communities has already pioneered new patterns. Put together these are important elements of a web of life which is sustainable, rewarding, and transformative to our lives.

- Cannon Beach has pioneered ecological wastewater treatment, banned billboards and franchise businesses, and implemented recycling and transit innovations.
- Manzanita has received awards for green building, energy efficiency, and recycling programs.
- Nehalem's regional sewage system has demonstrated the radical benefits of debt-free operation.
- We have an influx of creative young people wanting to try good things.
- All of our communities are coming up with valuable ideas to make housing again affordable for residents.
- People are beginning to seriously consider what changes are necessary for our living patterns to be sustainable.

We *CAN* transform our communities to restore heart to our relationships, to allow the vulnerability and intimacy needed for deep relationship and health, to give meaning to our lives, and give our children a future worth living for in a place they love. What is required is not single changes, but a *web* of *interactive* actions and policies that support deeper and more life-enhancing values. I'll be using this space to hopefully start some good community dialog on some of these possibilities.

A world based on equity, security, sustainability, responsibility, giving and sacredness is both possible and filled with ever-greater wonder. It begins at home. We have the resources, the vision, the experience, and the commitment to bring a new future into existence. We need only to come together, share our dreams, and merge the successful experiences that we share. Join us!!!