

Local News

SUSTAINABLE SERVICE

City employee promotes green building

Mike Broomfield is working with the state to develop green building codes

By [Vickie Aldous](#)

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While some people want Ashland to be a leader in sustainable building, city of Ashland Building Official Mike Broomfield wants to make it easier for all of Oregon to join in the green movement.

Broomfield has been sharing his knowledge of sustainable building as Oregon works to add green provisions to state building codes.

"Let's be as involved as we can in developing state green standards," he said. "It's not a contest to see who can be greenest. We want to conserve resources statewide."

State building codes are the rules that govern how buildings are constructed. Ashland is required to adopt state codes, but can add on some of its own rules and use alternative rules in some cases.

For years, many people have had concerns that state building codes aren't environmentally friendly. For example, the plumbing code was viewed as too restrictive when it came to using "gray water," Broomfield said.

Gray water is water that has already been used for purposes such as washing.

The state now allows people to reuse gray water for non-potable uses such as flushing toilets. To help the public, the city of Ashland publishes information about alternate methods allowed by the state on the city's Web site, Broomfield said.

Ashland was a leader long ago when it adopted a solar access code locally that bans new buildings from casting such big shadows on existing properties that access to the sun is blocked.

"I'm trying very hard to have that be part of the state's new solar building code," Broomfield said.

Ashland is also ahead of the state because it has a local demolition ordinance that governs the demolition of buildings. The state has no demolition code, he said.

People who want to tear down buildings in Ashland must show the project meets various criteria. If they have certain amounts of materials, such as lumber, steel or concrete, they must show how the

material will be reused or recycled, Broomfield said.

Ashland has not only added on its own green building rules, sometimes it borrows from alternate codes when those prove to be more environmentally friendly. Provisions from the International Existing Building Code adopted here allow architects to use historic materials from buildings, such as bricks.

The Oregon code doesn't allow use of such material, although the state does allow some choice when it comes to picking methods from the state code or the international code, Broomfield said.

Another aspect of the international code used in Ashland allows historic buildings to meet requirements for second floor alternate exiting by providing fire escapes, he said.

"It gives us some better tools when dealing with historic buildings. Keeping historic buildings intact is part of sustainability," Broomfield said.

For builders, keeping track of existing codes and changing requirements can be daunting. To help them, Broomfield answers their questions and regularly invites code experts to Ashland to give presentations.

Those efforts, combined with his work to help develop new state codes, recently netted Broomfield the Oregon Building Official Association's 2008-2009 award for Outstanding Service.

"I think this exemplifies the respect for Mike's efforts, dedication and leadership on local and state-wide building issues," Ashland Community Development Director Bill Molnar said in a statement.

Broomfield got the same service award for 2000-2001, and also won the 1994 Oregon Building Official of the Year Award, among other accolades.

With more than 20 years of experience with the city of Ashland under his belt, Broomfield said he is a strong believer in having Ashland be involved with the development of state codes.

"To me, it's exciting. I still have passion for doing it," he said.

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