Aiming for Transition

The Sandpoint Transition Initiative (STI) is a local group that aims to bring the community together, develop practical solutions and improve the quality of life for everyone. The goal of this initiative is to rebuild local resilience, reduce carbon emissions and achieve independence from un-renewable energy and other resources. Solutions will involve relocation of our community’s needs. Together, these will form the backbone of a local Energy Descent Action and Sustainability Plan. This time-tabled roadmap will define the steps leading towards a life that has minimal reliance on fossil fuels and dramatically lowers carbon emissions and profits from the abundance of resources and capabilities within our communities.

Community Challenges

The two toughest challenges facing humankind at the start of the 21st century are climate change and peak oil. While the former is well documented and very visible in the media, there is a lot less public awareness around the issue of Peak Oil. And yet, the imminent decline of fossil fuel availability that Peak Oil refers to may well prevent the economic and social stability that is essential if we are to mitigate the threats posed by climate change. Transition Initiatives currently represent one of the most promising ways of engaging people and communities in strengthening themselves against the effects of these two monumental challenges. Furthermore, these relocation efforts are designed to result in a life that is more fulfilling, socially connected and resilient.

First Steps to Transition

Here are some of the steps we have been taking and planning to move this initiative forward:

• Form an Initiating Team that drives the project forward during the beginning stages.
• Raise Awareness through various events to inform the community of the potential effects of both Peak Oil and Climate Change.
• Lay the Foundations by making connections to existing complementary initiatives and existing organizations.
• Organize a Great Unleashing, a memorable event that introduces the Transition Initiative to the entire community.
• Set up Sub Groups to focus on specific aspects of local life, tapping into the collective genius of the community.
• Use Open Space, an innovative meeting technology that brilliantly encourages and captures all the creativity, intelligence and problem-solving ideas of the participants.
• Develop Visible Manifestations that show that this initiative has the determination and skills to implement practical solutions.
• Facilitate the Great Re-skillings by offering training in the vast range of lost practical skills - repairing, construction, growing etc.
• Build Bridges to Local Government to provide support.
• Honor the Elders, who may be the only people in our community knowing what a lower energy life is like.
• Create an Energy Descent Plan, a community developed roadmap with details for beginning the real work of transitioning to a life beyond oil and creating sustainable community.

Official Designation

On June 1st, 2008 the Sandpoint Transition Initiative, a local group that started in February 2008, received the official designation as a Transition Town from the Transition Network, UK. Sandpoint is the second town in the US after Boulder, CO to receive this designation. We have been focusing on letting the community know about this initiative and connecting to other groups and organizations. Since the “unleashing” of the first Transition Town, in Totnes, UK, the concept has been spreading quickly in the UK and around the world. Worldwide, there are currently 75 officially designated transition initiatives and over 600 communities thinking about it. In order to become a transition town we had to fulfill a number of criteria that are designed to ensure the success of the initiative.

Useful Resources:

Books:
• "The Last Oil Shock" by David Strahan
• "The Party's Over" by Richard Heinberg
• "Energy Beyond Oil" by Paul Mobbs,
• "Six Degrees" by Mark Lynas
• "Heat" by George Monbiot
• "The Transition Handbook" by Rob Hopkins

Movies:
• "The Power of Community"
• "The End of Suburbia"
• "Escape from Suburbia"
• "The 11th Hour"
• "The Corporation"
• "An Inconvenient Truth"

Websites:
• www.transitiontowns.org
• www.energybulletin.net
• www.realclimate.org
• www.transitionculture.org
• www.positivelysandpoint.com