

[10 green building incentives in 2010](#)

June 4, 2010

By Nick Hartrich, Green Building & Smart Growth program manager for Sustainable Connections

Sustainable Connections members in the design and construction industry across Whatcom County have accomplished a great deal in the past several years which has placed us in a national leadership position for green projects for a community our size.

As I reported in the BBJ in 2009, an initiative called the “Five/12 Agenda” was launched with the city of Bellingham to build on the private sector commitment to green building. The “Five/12 Agenda” started with in-depth interviews from over 60 industry professionals to uncover the most promising opportunities to remove government barriers and create incentives. With that information in hand, we developed a partnership with Planning and Building Services to identify which five changes, that have community and industry benefit, could be implemented in the next 12 months. Together we experienced some small victories and decided to work for larger victories this year in what we are calling the “Ten in ’10 Initiative.”



Ten green building incentives in 2010. Simple in design yet detailed in implementation and by the end of this year, Bellingham is going to be seeing a significant increase in governmental support to encourage green building and sustainable design. We are proud to present the full list of 10 identified barriers and incentives, with some detail provided for a few. Please read and consider how these measures might affect your business and contact us with suggestions for improvement.

Green Bin-Bump Up

Starting in March 2010, the city of Bellingham’s Permit Center launched a seven-month pilot program to encourage and support green building projects by reducing building permit review time for certified green projects and assigning them to a new Green Project Review Team. Projects that qualify for BuiltGreen 4 & 5 Star or LEED Gold equivalent will be bumped to a seven-day review. One contractor (John Nelson, Northwest Framing & Finish), was the first to engage in this process and was energized by his four-day permit!

Transportation Mode Shift Incentive

Supporting development in our urban areas (downtown Bellingham, Old Town and Samish Way Urban Villages, etc.) is an efficient, high-quality-of-life way to house, employ and transport a strong and growing community. This incentive targets a reduction in transportation impact fees

for development that takes place in targeted urban areas and for projects that encourage alternative transportation modes: bicycle, bus and car share.

Snapshot of all Bellingham's "Ten in '10" Incentives

- Green building bin bump-up pilot
- Construction waste pilot
- Transportation mode shift incentive
- Subject-to-field-inspection permit
- Sustainable water management program
- Green roof initiative
- Compilation of public/private utility incentives on city's green Web page
- Staff training for review and inspections of green building methods
- Advanced Materials and Methods (AMM)

Leadership and inspiration throughout Whatcom County

Our local government agencies are quickly becoming among the regions strongest and most influential champions of sustainable infrastructure and urban planning.

Whatcom County implemented the region's first "fast track" permitting process for green building projects and certified the Whatcom County Courthouse under LEED standards to save taxpayers over \$160,000 in operating costs each year. City of Bellingham Public Works employees are integrating the most advanced low-impact development systems into our public streets, bike lanes and sidewalks; they are developing rainwater catchment solutions and launching living roof initiatives; the building department is crafting advanced methods to construction practices that support innovative design while overcoming jobsite demolition by seeking zero-waste incentives; our planners are thinking creatively to develop economic drivers that spur urban redevelopment while creating an integrated design review process that streamlines our most healthy and resource-efficient buildings. Above all, a strong municipal leadership is striving to integrate a more proficient and effective government agency.

In early May, I was fortunate to present at the King County GreenTools Government Confluence. And while that's a mouthful, think of it as a 300-level college course on creating sustainable communities by building sustainable government. In front of 250 of Puget Sound's leading mayors, elected officials, public works, building services and planning staff, Bellingham and Whatcom County green building program success stories rose to the top, again and again. As you well know, good ideas are contagious and many attendees approached me to note their specific interest in starting programs based on our local initiatives.

Thanks to both the private and public sectors who have been involved in these initiatives to date. Your investment of time and experience is paying off. We have a strong foundation to build from, but to take full advantage of this opportunity, we'll need continued involvement from those in the core and new involvement from a broader group of interested parties. Please contact me with your ideas, challenges and success stories.

For more details about Sustainable Connections' Green Building & Smart Growth program and its Ten in '10 Initiative, visit www.sustainableconnections.org, e-mail to nick@sconnect.org or call (360) 647-7093 ext. 107.