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News Flash!

For general information:

Fiona Douglas-Hamilton
S.E.E.C. LLC
Phone: 360-894-6817
Fiona@seecsolutions.com
www.seecsolutions.com

For event information:

Graeme Sackrison
President
Thurston Climate Action Team
www.olywa.us/thurstonclimateaction/index.php

OLYMPIA, WA

A first happened last Friday. Appraisers, realtors, builders, assessors, lenders and utilities sat down together to discuss the difficulties in attaching a dollar value to “greenness”. Currently, home appraisals usually don’t reflect added value for energy efficiency, recycled or up cycled materials, or innovative construction.

Thurston Climate Action Team and The Evergreen State College hosted a five-hour workshop sponsored by Northwest ENERGY STAR® Homes to examine this issue. Fiona Douglas-Hamilton of SEEC LLC, the creator of the program, did a great job facilitating this diverse group.

During the first half, participants were grouped by activity; builders, appraisers, etc. Each group had an opportunity to talk, vent, rant or otherwise express their opinion about the problem. I was interested that each group identified constraints posed by their occupational principles, statutes or regulators. One of the challenges identified is that new technologies often don’t have historical data upon which to base value.

Later, participants were assembled in mixed groups to talk about solutions and work through questions, which were selected based upon responses given earlier in an online survey. For the most part, the conversations shifted from why it can’t be done to “here’s how we might do it”.

Is the problem solved? Not yet, but all parties have a better understanding of the constraints placed on the others. A dialogue was opened. Now the trick will be to keep the conversation going. Participants agreed to a follow-up in the weeks ahead. TESC and TCAT will again host.

This is another example of the sort of behind-the-scenes work necessary to deal with climate change and sustainability. It doesn’t get a lot of press, but it moves us forward.

Graeme Sackrison
TCAT