

# *Toward a more sustainable Seattle...*



**Presented by: Steve Nicholas, Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment**  
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“If I knew the meaning of life, would I be sitting in a cave in my underpants?”

# My goals today...

- ▣ Give you a sense of Seattle's ever-evolving sustainability initiative(s)
- ▣ Reflect on approaches that seem to be working – and give examples
- ▣ Do whatever I can to help Denver shape its program
- ▣ Learn as much as I impart – if not more!

# Some context: origins

- ☐ **1992:** City adopts 1<sup>st</sup> Environmental Action Agenda; 1st embraces concept of sustainability
- ☐ **1993:** 1<sup>st</sup> “Indicators of Sustainable Community” report published by nonprofit Sustainable Seattle
- ☐ **1994:** “Toward a Sustainable Seattle”
  - City’s 1<sup>st</sup> Comprehensive Growth Management Plan
- ☐ **2000:** Office of Sustainability & Environment created

# Some context: size & structure

## ☐ “Nimble” arm of Executive Department

- Direct report to Mayor
- Seat on Mayor’s Cabinet

## ☐ Model(?): coherent decentralization

## ☐ Integrating mechanisms:

- Environmental Coordinating Committee
- Growth Management Sub-Cabinet
- Mayor’s Urban Sustainability Advisory Panel

# Some context: mission and MO

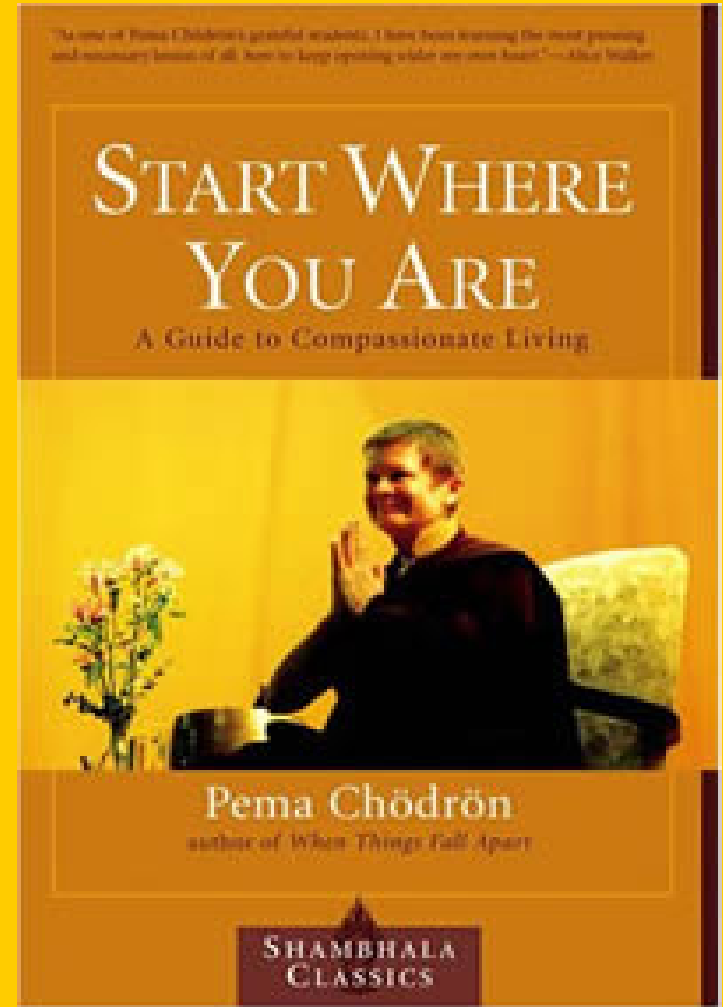
- ▣ Promote environmentally sustainable practices by City government and in community at-large
- ▣ Put sustainability into action (vs. words)
- ▣ Be an aggressive force for integration
  - Be the keeper of the strategic framework
  - Be on the look-out for integration needs/opportunities
- ▣ Identify and fill gaps, partnership opportunities
- ▣ Piggy-back (vs. pile on)
- ▣ Sharpen communications (toward one voice)

# Three approaches that seem to work...

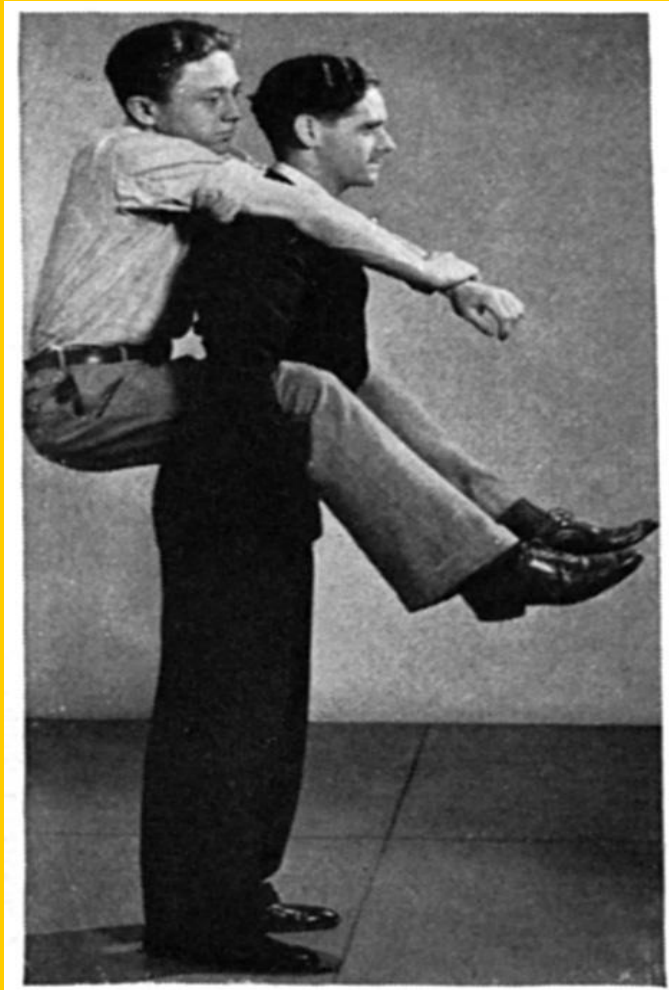
- ▣ Start where you are
- ▣ Piggy back (vs. piling on)
  - or...Integration, Integration, Integration!
- ▣ The Partnership Imperative

# Start where you are...

- ☐ Work from the inside out...succeed...expand
- ☐ Accumulate results, credibility, experience
- ☐ Create models – and spillover effects
- ☐ Examples:
  - Sustainable Building Program
  - Clean Green Fleet Program
  - Climate Protection Initiative



# Piggy-back (vs. piling on)



- ☐ Find the flow – and go with it...
- ☐ Doing what we already do – but doing it “more sustainably”
- ☐ Examples:
  - Natural Drainage Program
  - Green Affordable Housing Guide
  - Sustainable Purchasing Program

# Integration, integration, integration

☐ Just say no to compartmentalization

- #1 barrier to governance for sustainability

☐ Examples:

- Sustainability coordinators in most major departments
- Parks' Sustainable Development Scorecard

# The Partnership Imperative

- ▣ By definition, sustainable development is about partnerships -- across issues, sectors, jurisdictions
  - It's huge
  - It's about silo-busting
- ▣ Example (internal):
  - Sustainable Business Initiative
- ▣ Example (external):
  - Green Seattle Partnership



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