

Firm finds home in local pace of environmental change, sustainability

By Diane Dietz The Register-Guard
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Good Company's founders are intimate with cities up and down the West Coast and could have worked from anywhere, but they chose Eugene.

Why?

"I think of our community not just as a hot bed — because that has a connotation of activism — but also a bit of a brain trust," Principal Joshua Skov said.

Terms like sustainability, new urbanism and smart growth trip easily from Eugene residents' tongues, said Skov, who was raised in Olympia and lived in Los Angeles at the time the firm was formed.

"When you look at these movements or ideas that people are coalescing around, we are way head of the vast majority of our country," Skov said.

The pace of environmental change in institutions here is quickening, Skov said. The Eugene Water and Electric Board, a Good Company client, is seeking out sustainable power. "EWEB is the crown jewel of Eugene. They're forward thinking."

Bring Recycling is on the move, too. "Bring had basically become a glorified junkyard, and now it truly has transformed itself. (Director) Julie Daniels has dragged her organization into the 21st century."

Oregon, as a whole, is tuned in to sustainability, Skov said.

The University of Oregon has more bicycle than car parking. Lewis and Clark College was the first college in the nation to achieve compliance with the Kyoto global warming protocols.

"A business in Oregon is statistically more likely to understand that trashing the planet is not a path to profit but may be a path to problems. And that, maybe, taking care of the planet and people and their health may be a way to more money. You're more likely to find that here," Skov said.

Skov even likes Eugene's sometimes long-winded politics.

“When we’re in it, it seems like a long, slow — slow like cold molasses slow — series of conversations, but we’ll look back on it and realize that it was the only way to broaden the conversation and bring enough people into the conversation so that you can actually have community wide change. This slow part is the foundation for real movement later.”

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