Sustainability projects begin this month in Edmonds

*Western students meet Edmonds city officials*

By Brian Soergel | Oct 08, 2016

BELLENGHAM — Don’t be surprised to see numerous Vikings in Edmonds this month.

Edmonds is the first city in the state to participate in the Sustainable Cities Partnership, a collaboration between the city, Western Washington University (the Vikings) and the Association of Washington Cities to focus and promote sustainability.

The timeline for the 11 projects was unveiled at a news conference at the college, where students met with Edmonds Mayor Dave Earling and several city directors, including Phil Williams (public works), Shane Hope (development services) Carrie Hite (parks and programs), Rob Chave (planning), Frances Chapin (recreational arts) and Patrick Doherty (community services).

Also in attendance was Keely O’Connell, who consulted with the city on the Edmonds Marsh.

Speakers included Grace Wang, academic director of sustainability at Western; WWU vice provost Brian Burton; and Michelle Harvey with the Association of Washington Cities.

Earling and the directors also attended classes to speak with students.

The sustainability project cost the city a little more than $75,000.

**First five projects**

The first five projects, according to David L. Davidson, program coordinator for the Sustainable Cities Partnership, the class, and the teachers:

- Ecological Restoration (ESCI 470, Jim Helfield and John Tuxill) will recommend methods by which Edmonds can minimize stormwater impacts upon the Edmonds Marsh.

- Campus Sustainability Planning Studio (ENVS 471, Seth Vidaña) will research the means by which Edmonds might best handle construction waste and food waste.

- Public Relations Research and Campaigns (JOUR 440, Jennifer Keller) will help Edmonds promote a downtown cultural/arts corridor.
• Computer Science Capstone (CSCI 491, Aran Clauson) will guide a cohort of students as they develop a mobile app to attract visitors to Edmonds and provide information about attractions and events.

• In addition, a fourth-year student from Western’s Huxley College of the Environment will develop new interpretive materials for the Edmonds Wastewater Treatment Plant, in fulfillment of her internship requirement.

The following projects will take place later in the academic year:

• Science and Management of Contaminated Sites (ESCI 453 and 454, Ruth Sofield) will evaluate environmental risks associated with a land parcel that Edmonds might soon acquire.

• Recreation Programming (RECR 373, Jasmine Goodnow) and Management of Recreation and Leisure Services (RECR 372, Randy Burtz) will help Edmonds chart a path toward participation in the Playful City USA program, which seeks to promote youth health.

• Disaster Reduction and Emergency Planning Studio (ENVS 476, Jonah Stinson) will analyze the impacts of rising sea level on Edmonds.

• Advanced Spatial Analytics (ENVS 422, Aquila Flower) will use GIS to modernize management of the Edmonds Memorial Cemetery.

• Greening Business Applications (MGMT 466, Craig Dunn) will assist Edmonds in fleshing out and marketing its Green Business program.

• Participatory Action Research (ANTH 454, Sean Bruna) will conduct a walkability assessment of a particular neighborhood adjacent to the downtown core.

**A benefit for all involved**

Earling told those in attendance that Edmonds is serious about sustainability and green issues.

“We are heavily entered into that whole realm,” he said. “And I think we’ve made good progress, but having the assessments of some of faculty as well as some of the students, working in Edmonds this year in particular projects, will benefit students but also the city enormously. I know that’s my expectation.”

Western and the Association of Washington Cities launched the Sustainable Cities Partnership based on a successful model at the University of Oregon seven years ago. Dozens of cities nationwide are partnering on similar projects.

Harvey, with the Association of Washington Cities, said Edmonds’ projects and those in the future look at a community’s individual needs.

“It’s not a cookie cutter project,” she said. “It looks at a community’s values and marries them to the students. You students are bringing a whole new set of tools and resources, and you’re going to build something that isn’t just crossing a bridge between the community and academia.

“You guys are going to be building a bridge that carries us forward, creating a community where you want to live, where you want your kids to live. To me, that sustainable.”