THE MARKETING OF SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Expectations and sensitivities are changing in the industrialized countries, with an emerging awareness of the limits of advancing civilization. The challenge is to translate awareness into action. EcoSystems is developing communities (subdivisions) for sustainability. In so doing, we have learned that design participation is crucial to users' acceptance of the novel design resulting from commitment to sustainability. This paper describes experiences we have had in overcoming resistance and gaining support for sustainable development with design participation.

KEYWORDS

Sustainability marketing; fleet-miles to exhaustion; participatory design; life-style changes; parkways.

INTRODUCTION: ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

We have encountered many quaint viewpoints in the process of developing our approach to sustainable development:

"There is plenty of oil!" Economic and political commitment to wide development of solar energy technology is hampered greatly by popular and gross misunderstandings about the extent of oil and other fossil fuel resources. The term of seemingly vast proportions, "billions of barrels," is very misleading. A billion barrels might just as well be expressed as 159 trillion cubic centimeters -- the gigantic numbers would be no less impractical. So we have created simple marketing terms to explain fossil fuel reserves. For example, total fleet miles to exhaustion expresses how many miles an entire national fleet of cars can travel until national resources run out. Resources can be measured in cubic miles (cubic kilometers), dimensions that can be grasped readily.

For example, the USA, which once had about 10 cubic miles (40 cubic kilometers) of recoverable oil, now has only about 2 cu mi (8 cu km) of proven reserves (Science, 1989). Mexico has slightly more than 2 cu mi (8 cu km) of proven reserves. Canada, on the other hand, has less than 1/3 cu mi (1.4 cu km) of proven reserves (Fortune, 1990). The USA has 4% of global reserves, produces 12% of all oil, and consumes 24% of global production.