

SUSTAINOVATE WINTER TERM:

A Comparative Analysis of Sustainable Innovation In Chicago and Amsterdam

January 11- 29, 2010

Application Deadline: November 9
<http://www.foresightdesign.org>

OVERVIEW

This January, Foresight Design Initiative invites 8-10 people on an experiential foray into the complex and challenging question of how to innovate more sustainable cities. In Chicago and Amsterdam, participants will examine and compare how energy, waste, water and transportation systems; the built environment; and business, educational and government entities are evolving in response to the demands of climate change, population growth, and consumption. Through site visits, meetings with leaders in the field, continuous analysis of the surrounding environments, readings, and group discussions, participants will witness innovation in planning and practice.

Sustainability is a set of values that intersects social, environmental, and economic issues. Modifying urban environments to become more sustainable requires a unique set of tools, skills and perspectives. Using these two cities as our laboratories, Foresight's *Sustainovate Winter Term* exposes participants to current developments and fosters the application of critical analysis, systems perspective, teamwork, and visual thinking—empowering participants to become more effective leaders.

Founded in 2003, the Foresight Design Initiative has grown into an important hub for sustainability-related consulting, design, education. Foresight practices a user-centered, collaborative and systems-based approach to developing insight about and innovating solutions to a variety of challenges. Sustainovate Winter Term is an outgrowth of the organization's highly-regarded 8-week pre-professional summer program on sustainable design and innovation now entering its 8th year.

OBJECTIVES

The program's objectives include:

- 1) *Broaden Perspectives*: incorporating an international vantage, expose participants to a range of approaches to sustainable innovation;
- 2) *Deepen Knowledge*: through a comparative analysis of forward-looking projects, highlight advantages, limitations and different strategies and initiatives;
- 3) *Develop Leadership*: focusing on methods of analysis, inquiry and practice, deepen and sharpen confidence, skills, and knowledge base

COURSE STRUCTURE

This program is a fast-paced, field-based experience. A typical day will include one to three site visits, a guest speaker, and discussion. This emphasis on fieldwork allows for maximum exposure to innovations and perspectives.

SITE VISITS

In both cities, we will visit sites relating to green building, resource conservation, recycling, urban planning, carbon reduction/climate change, transportation, and local food/agriculture.

PRESENTATION

Throughout the course, participants will keep detailed notes on and drawings of their observations and experiences. Participants will have the opportunity to collaborate on an article and related information graphics that relay their comparative analysis of design and innovation within the two cities. The program will culminate with a session to share concluding findings and reflections.

READING LIST

The reading list will draw from a variety of diverse and multidisciplinary sources. The initial selections below are tentative.

- *False Flat: Why Dutch Design is So Good* (Aaron Betsky)
- *Nature's Metropolis* (William Cronon)
- Articles TBD

TIMELINE

NOVEMBER 9: Application Deadline

NOVEMBER 13: Participants Announced

DECEMBER 4: Tuition Due

JANUARY 6: Program begins with reading assignments

JANUARY 11: Program begins in Chicago

JANUARY 22: Participants travel to Amsterdam

JANUARY 29: Program concludes in Amsterdam

HOUSING AND FOOD

Participants are responsible for providing their own housing in Chicago. Foresight can help facilitate arrangements for potential home stays (with volunteers) and at the Stone Soup Cooperative. In Amsterdam, we will recommend reasonably priced hostels and guest lodges. Participants are responsible for the cost of their lodging and food.

COST

The cost of the program is \$1,000. Participants are responsible for covering their travel to and from Chicago and Amsterdam, public transportation within the cities, housing (we expect most participants can find housing in Chicago, with the assistance of Foresight, at no or very low cost), food, and all other related expenses.

PROGRAM LEADERS

DIRECTOR'S BIO

Peter Nicholson has a deep knowledge of and wide connections to the sustainability movements in both Chicago and Amsterdam. While living in the Netherlands during the late 1990's he began his immersion in sustainable design, attending and presenting at several conferences, fostering international contacts, and reading voraciously. Since then Peter has retained close ties to the Netherlands, having returned many times. Upon his return to Chicago, he started a consulting and design studio, and founded the Chicago Chapter of the International o2 Sustainable Design Network. It quickly became one of the network's most active units and is now incorporated as the Foresight Design Initiative. In 2006, the Chicago Chapter of the United States Green Building Coalition recognized Peter's educational work with their "Natural Leaders" Award.

At Foresight, Peter has consulted on and initiated a diversity of forward thinking design projects. His clients have included government agencies, nonprofits, and management consulting and design firms, in addition to self-generated undertakings. In demand as a speaker and moderator, Peter has presented to numerous conferences, chambers of commerce, professional associations, and local design schools, including visits back to the Institute of Design. He has moderated the panel discussions at Foresight's popular Chicago Green Drinks gatherings for the past six years. Through these activities, he has become considered one of the best-connected sustainability professionals in the Chicago area.

Realizing the crucial need for experiential educational opportunities in sustainability and design and the lack of comprehensive educational programs on the topic, Peter created the first Sustainovate session (previously known as the Urban Sustainable Design Studio) in January 2003. "It's the kind of program I wish existed when I first became interested in sustainability and design." This month-long undertaking was hosted annually for four consecutive years through 2006, when an 8-week summer program was established.

Peter received his undergraduate degree from Oberlin College and his grounding in User-Centered Design as a Masters of Design student at the Institute of Design at the Illinois Institute of Technology. Prior to establishing Foresight, Peter held positions as an administrator, editor/writer, communications director, designer, and project manager in the corporate and non-profit sectors. In 1995 he co-founded the Eos Orchestra, an innovative classical music ensemble based in New York City, and produced its first multidisciplinary event, the highly acclaimed Music of Paul Bowles Festival.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR'S BIO

Amanda Medress joined the staff of Foresight in August 2009. A graduate of Oberlin College's highly esteemed Environmental Studies (under Professor David Orr) and Creative Writing programs, Amanda brings a diversity of well-honed talents to Foresight. At Oberlin, Amanda co-founded the Student Experiment in Ecological Design, the first house in America to monitor its carbon footprint in real time. The project earned Amanda the Joyce Gorn Memorial Prize for excellence in environmental work and a front page of the New York Times.

In addition to her passion for sustainability, Amanda is an experienced writer and has authored and illustrated an environmental children's book, *Quaid McQueen, Trash Machine*, and published travel non-fiction and satirical fiction articles. As a certified conflict resolution practitioner, Amanda has arbitrated over a dozen mediations and facilitations at the Oberlin College Dialogue Center, which treats issues through a social justice lens.

APPLICATION

Foresight seeks self-motivated applicants who are resourceful and creative problem-solvers. No previous sustainability experience is required to apply. Return your answers electronically, along with your résumé, to amanda@foresightdesign.org by November 9. We may request to arrange a 30-45 minute phone interview.

1. What about life in your immediate surroundings/community personally impacts and bothers you? What are the underlying causes of this issue, and how might one arrive at a solution?
2. The Sustainovate program benefits from participants with eclectic experiences, capacities, and passions. Illustrate (in the manner you choose) what qualities, talents, skills and/or experiences you bring.
3. What sustainability-related issues do you find most engaging and/or urgent? What interests you about them? What barriers and opportunities do you see?
4. Describe one positive and one negative team experience in which you participated. What distinguished the two?
5. Have you ever travelled internationally before? If so, what did this experience teach you about the nature of travelling?