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Portland Mayor Sam Adams wants Portland to be a “hub for open source”

by [Rick Turoczy](#)

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Portland Mayor Sam Adams opened the second day of **Open Source Bridge** with a keynote calling for increased collaboration

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between the City of Portland and the open source community.

Why? In hopes of making Portland the “hub of open source” and—in a bit of throwing down the municipal open source gauntlet—vowing to “out open source” **Vancouver, British Columbia, which has recently declared itself a completely open city.**

“Bottom line: the city government has unnecessarily been closed in proprietary software and has been a a laggard in using open source software,” said Adams. And he wants to see Portland change that.

Given that he was presenting to an open source conference, one has to ask: was this just political grandstanding?

Not likely. While he might not qualify as a hacker, Adams is tech savvy. He **started a pirate blog** for interacting with the public while he was a Portland city commissioner. He’s been a proponent of more open city. And he’s dutifully picked up **Twitter** as a way to better interact with his constituents.

“Let me see if I can Twitter and give my speech at the same time,” said Adams as he started his talk. “If I have long dramatic pauses, you’ll know why.”

Seeking collaboration

Adams challenged the local government to pursue more openness, specifically because it is central to the idea of democracy. Sharing information and gathering feedback are critical to the democratic process. Why should technology be any different?

And he pointed to the need for the city to be a “laboratory to continue to push local innovation for open source.”

But he **urged the open source community to step up to the challenge** as well—by creating a more cohesive organization with whom the local government can communicate. Echoing a similar challenge he brought up when he **met with Portland open source, mobile, coworking, and tech startup types**.

Mike Rogoway at *The Oregonian* said it best.

But he also called on the open source community to do a better job of organizing itself and communicating with those outside the technology field to demonstrate the scale and opportunity that Portland's open source community presents.

“Your industry needs to improve as well,” he said.

The distributed nature of the independent coders, small developer shops, and user groups, Adams highlighted, makes it difficult for public entities to engage with “the open source community.” And that’s something that needs to be fixed if the collaboration between government and open source is going to work. He asked the open source community continue to gather with events like Open Source Bridge and to continue to organize as an entity so that the government knows how to better work with an community.

“Portland is known in very positive ways for its open source efforts,” said Adams. “We think the partnership with open source will be to the benefit of both parties.”

I’m confident that the open source community can heed this call. And I can’t wait to see what Portland and the OS community can do—together.