

July 7th, 2009

Meeting at City Hall: Open Source, Mobile, Startups and the Portland Economic Development Strategy

by [Rick Turoczy](#)

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Remember when **Portland Mayor Sam Adams met with a bunch of startup types** a few months back? Remember when he claimed that

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he wanted **Portland to be one of the most open cities in the world?**

Well, all of those meetings with open source folks, mobile developers, Web types, tech-heavy micro businesses, coworking spaces, and individual developers was more than a lot of political glad handing. It was all part of preparing the **Portland Economic Development Strategy**—a joint effort between the City and the Portland Development Commission and the first effort of its kind since 1994.

And now, we've got a chance to see if that strategy will become a reality.

On Wednesday at 3:15, the **Portland City Council will be voting** to ratify the five-year Portland Economic Development Strategy.

Why am I telling you this? Well, **Eva Schweber has a great idea**. Since we've all got opinions on this document and we all have a stake in Portland's future prosperity, **why don't we all show up at City Hall to illustrate just how important the Portland startup community is?**

I say this because I watched the evolution of the Portland Development Commission's (PDC) Economic Development Strategy over the past few months. I have read the drafts, attended presentations to a range of business groups, from the Economic Development Cabinet, the Small Business Advisory Council to Greenlight Greater Portland. I have both seen and heard how the voices of small business and the open source tech community changed the strategy for the better.

Now admittedly, if you've spent any time with the plan, you realize as well as I do that the bulk of it focuses on playing to Portland's strengths—our leadership in sustainability and pursuing clean tech. But even with that heavy bent toward Portland's green pursuits, there are some very important sections that speak directly to the open source, Web, and mobile things you're doing day-in and day-out. Which parts of the strategy, you ask? Well, you'll find the crux of it in the **Portland Economic Development Strategy (PDF) document** begins on page 12.

It's great to hear that the City of Portland is formally recognizing that "Portland possesses a promising software cluster with firms across a range of sub-clusters, including embedded software,

web-based applications and mobile applications.” And just as important that the City realizes “One such segment is the open source software that coalesced in the Portland area.”

But I think you—and all of these other awesome Portland startup types—will find the most interesting portion of the strategy on lucky page 13.

Stimulating growth in the software cluster requires a dramatic improvement in the environment for entrepreneurs and start-up. Entrepreneurs looking to start or grow firms in Portland face disadvantages relative to competing locations in terms of access to capital and management-level talent. While the city has little control over the supply of experienced software executives, by increasing the size and success rate of the local software industry, the city can, over time, increase the depth of high level talent in the area. Furthermore, as successful firms proliferate, opportunities for software managers will increase, attracting additional talented managers to the city.

The city will work with existing associations and assistance providers, including the Software Association of Oregon (SAO), the Oregon Entrepreneurs Network (OEN) and TechAmerica, a national technology trade association, to enhance the competitive environment for emerging firms. A priority task is to increase the supply of investment capital for firms by expanding the scope and size of city and state funding vehicles, including the Oregon Investment Fund, and encouraging the investment of the alternative investment allocation from city and state managed retirement funds in locally-managed venture firms with a commitment to invest in Portland firms.

Now that the kind of talk that I like to hear coming out of the City. It makes me like your voices are actually being heard. And if we can encourage Portland to start embracing this whole startup scene, that's definitely something I can get behind.

So why not join your startup peers and show up on Wednesday afternoon?

Now, I'm not terribly familiar with the whole City Council thing. But that's okay. **Eva has also offered to chaperone us.**

I know this may be pushing some of you out of your comfort zone. It is important enough to me and Portland's small business community that I will do what I can to support those who want to show their support. I will

be waiting outside the 4th street entrance to City Hall starting at 2:45 on Wednesday. Anyone is welcome to meet me there and we can walk in as a group at about 3:05.

Sound interesting? I think it does. And I think the **Timbers Army showed what a supportive crowd is capable of accomplishing**. It would be awesome to see the Portland startup crowd pull off something similar. So hopefully, I'll see you at Wednesday at around 3:00 PM at **Portland City Hall**.

If you're thinking about showing up, please **RSVP with the City of Portland** so they know how many to expect. Can't make it but still want to show support? You can always email your comments and testimony to kmoore-love@ci.portland.or.us.