

2009 Kansas Planning Sod Buster Award

Nominee: Bob Courtney - Olathe, KS

Application: Explanation of Criteria

On behalf of the City of Olathe, we would humbly like to recognize Bob Courtney for the 2009 Sod Buster Award. Mr. Courtney consistently demonstrates support and a clear understanding of planning in the public arena and throughout our growing community. Bob undoubtedly represents the more non-traditional role as a highly active and effective citizen, as well as neighborhood leadership. He defines civic engagement, public service and is truly making a difference in our community.

Most recently, Bob has been a key participant in the City's Comprehensive Plan Update currently underway. Not only is he an appointed member of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC), but has actively been involved in numerous stakeholder meetings throughout the process, leading discussions amongst the various community boards and committees he serves. Bob's high level of influence and understanding of the planning process provides a great deal of consistency and communication within various segments of our community.

Earlier this year, the City of Olathe was recognized by the Kansas State Historic Society as the first Certified Local Government (CLG) within Johnson County, Kansas. The persistence and dedication of Mr. Courtney contributed in a very large way to this community achievement. In addition to establishing a local preservation ordinance, Olathe recently appointed their first Historic Preservation Board (OHPB) members in February 2009. As president of the local historical society, local historian and neighborhood leader, Bob Courtney was at the top of the list of applicants ready to tackle this new community endeavor.

Bob certainly has a passion for local history, and as previously mentioned, he continues to plan for the future by preserving the past. Bob is very involved with the Olathe Historical Society (OHS), the Mahaffie Foundation, the Olathe Heritage Committee, and recently the City's Sesquicentennial Committee in 2007.

As president of the OHS, he partnered with the Olathe Chamber's Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB) to develop a self-guided tour of nearly 40 Olathe historic sites. The Historic Tour of Olathe is offered in a full-color brochure that is designed for a walking or driving tour of Olathe, and offers participants descriptions of the historic sites featured within the brochure, including homes, churches, DAR markers, nationally registered historic sites and parks.

The City's Original Town Enhancement Plan (OTEP) was established in efforts to increase citizen participation and revitalize the older areas of the city. Bob Courtney has been involved in this ongoing planning effort since its inception in the late 1990's. The plan identifies revitalization programs and partnerships for six (6) neighborhoods that comprise the City's Original Town. One of those neighborhoods is Central Core – Bob and Lila Courtney's neighborhood. As members of the Central Core Neighborhood Committee (CCNC) they have

actively worked to develop a Neighborhood Action Plan for their area, as well as initiating a handful of neighborhood driven programs and projects including the highly successful Downtown Community Garden. Bob and Lila are also Neighborhood Watch Captains and members of the Original Town Executive Committee.

Additionally, Bob has been a constant energy regarding downtown redevelopment in the community. He was highly active in the downtown master planning process and establishing the City's Envision Olathe Downtown Plan. He continues to work with various agencies, departments and divisions to coordinate redevelopment efforts and plan implementation. He currently serves on the Downtown Public Projects Coordination Committee, Santa Fe Streetscape Advisory Committee and the Olathe Arts Alliance through the City's Downtown Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit. Most recently, Bob is working very closely with the project manager on the streetscape project to ensure consistency with the community's rich history. Many of the aesthetic elements of the project are historical in nature; historic pictures and storyboards will also be implemented in order to preserve the past, including much fabric lost due to Urban Renewal.

Besides his various volunteer efforts, Bob is currently employed with the Olathe Unified School District 233 as the District's Energy Manager. During his 16 years of service as the Energy Manager, the school district has earned no fewer than 15 Energy Star Awards for efficient buildings and has saved nearly \$15 million in utility costs. His expertise regarding sustainability and the environment is yet another element of planning that he is able to provide. He currently serves on the Chamber's Sustainability Committee and his resume of accomplishments is quite impressive.

This gentleman truly exemplifies outstanding leadership in the community by advancing and promoting the cause of planning in the public arena. Quite honestly he is a staff or team member's dream—if every planner could be so lucky to have a “Bob Courtney” in their back pocket! He is knowledgeable, innovative, influential, effective, well respected among peers and ready to forge ahead. Bob continues to lead and educate his fellow citizens and colleagues through the planning process, in both the public and private sectors.

Bob's fingerprints are all over the local planning community including, but not limited to the City of Olathe, Johnson County, Olathe Chamber of Commerce, and the Olathe Unified School District. He is highly respected in our planning community and has a no-nonsense reputation of rolling up his sleeves and diving into projects for the sake of making our community a better place to live, work and grow. Bob Courtney exemplifies the qualities and criteria recognized by the Sod Buster Award, and we certainly thank you for your time and consideration of this nomination in advance.

List of Active Boards & Committees

Nominee, Bob Courtney

City of Olathe Boards & Committees -

Olathe Comprehensive Planning Committee
Olathe Historic Preservation Board
Central Core Neighborhood Group
Original Town Executive Committee
Olathe Community Garden Committee
Downtown Public Projects Coordination Committee
Santa Fe Streetscape Advisory Committee
Olathe Heritage Committee (City Manager)
Olathe Emergency Management
Olathe Arts Alliance
Neighborhood Watch Captain

Olathe Chamber of Commerce Boards & Committees -

Chamber Sustainability Committee
Convention & Visitor's Bureau
Leadership Olathe

Olathe School District Standing Committees -

Bond Task Force
Safety Committee
Crisis Management Team
Alumni Committee

Other -

Olathe Historical Society – President
Mahaffie Foundation
Sesquicentennial Committee