

Green push could create more jobs

The San Bernardino Sun

Sept. 27, 2007

Newspaper Editorial

In a sense, Wednesday's report from the Milken Institute on job creation and retention confirmed what we already knew: The Inland Empire is adding jobs at a phenomenal pace. Milken's study ranked the Ontario-San Bernardino-Riverside area No. 3 among 200 large metropolitan areas in the United States.

The study also showed that the new jobs on average are better jobs than the area has had in the past and, best of all, that there is still plenty of potential for further improvement. That potential growth is in the high-tech sector.

Our metropolitan area ranked fourth in the nation in the growth of wages and salaries over a five-year-period. The three areas ahead of it are all much smaller population centers located in Florida.

Ontario-San Bernardino-Riverside's lowest ranking among the nine evaluation categories is the one that points to its potential: This area ranks only 130th in its concentration of high-tech industry.

By comparison, the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale metropolitan area is 109th in overall job creation and retention rankings, but 25th in high-tech concentration.

As Ontario City Manager Greg Devereaux said after comparing this area to the Orange County of 20 years ago, "Best of all, we haven't even reached the mature phase of our growth." Clearly, the creation and importation of high-tech companies holds the promise of building an even stronger local economy.

That's why we're excited about the Green Valley Initiative, an effort involving more than 100 Inland Empire leaders to forge a new identity for the region. Quoting a Point of View column that appeared on this page earlier this month, the group seeks for the inland Empire "a new role as the nation's leader in green technologies, green development, alternative transportation options and an enhanced quality of life for everyone who lives here."

Green technology is indeed a high-tech economic sector with great potential that the Inland Empire could make its own.

"If we can create jobs for the new economy, environmental sciences and green technology, we can capitalize on the global importance of sustainability," Ali Sahabi, president of SE Corp. /Dos Lagos, said at a Green Valley Initiative meeting in August. "We as a region have an opportunity to be leaders."

The group includes many other heavy hitters, including legislators, San Bernardino and Riverside County supervisors, mayors, leaders of Cal State San Bernardino and UC Riverside, environmental groups, chambers of commerce, the San Manuel band of Mission Indians and many others. They promise concrete plans in October “designed to stimulate a green-technology economy and enhance our overall quality of life.”

We’re confident that the region will continue to attract companies and jobs, including many in the high-tech sector.

A sustained, coordinated effort by local leaders to nurture a concentration of green technology companies could ensure a place near the top of the Milken Institute rankings for many years to come.

##