

Green promoters eye growing inland markets, share views

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By Jamahl Peters

A Corona nonprofit organization has taken up the task of promoting green technologies and sustainable practices in the Inland Empire.

The Green Institute for Village Empowerment established the Green Valley Initiative, a regionwide sustainable economic development and quality-of-life plan supported by major stakeholders from Riverside and San Bernardino counties, tribal and county governments and agencies, universities, school districts, utilities, businesses, cultural and environmental groups that have been meeting since June to develop a plan to bring green businesses to the area, create jobs and improve quality of life.

Corona-based Dos Lagos Developer Ali Sahaba founded the Green Institute for Village Empowerment, or GIVE.

"His inspiration got the two counties thinking about this," said Woodward Clark, senior executive advisor for the Green Valley Initiative and University of California, Riverside professor. "Four months ago they formed a group and three committees to take action in this area." "Those committees met and come with some recommendations."

The committees look to address the expected population growth in Riverside and San Bernardino counties over the next 15 years by creating green opportunities and jobs said Daniel Cozad, chairman of the policy and sustainable approaches committee.

The committee will identify and review best practices, ordinances, regulations and incentives that could be implemented throughout the region.

The policy and sustainable approaches committee suggestions include setting up a bi-county jurisdiction that would include water, waste, energy and transportation in terms of green issues and job-creating avenues.

The sustainable economic development committee will identify sources of public funding, private investment and incentives.

The green brain trust/education committee canvasses educational institutions in Riverside and San Bernardino counties for environmental, green and sustainable qualifications and content and identifies businesses and technologies that may be attracted to the program.

"We couldn't believe the intellectual capital that already exists in the region; so many university, colleges already in the sustainable issues," Clark said.

The colleges and universities taking part in the program are California State Polytechnic University in Pomona, Claremont McKenna College, Palo Verde College, Pitzer College,

Pomona College, University of Redlands, University of California Riverside and Victor Valley College.

The committees presented its recommendations at a Green Valley forum Oct. 22 in Ontario.

The Green Valley Initiative garnered interest from state Department of Conservation Director Bridgett Luther, who announced plans to fund a new recycling program in the two counties that could be used as a model for the rest of the state.

The forum featured several speakers including State Secretary of Business, Transportation and Housing Dale Bonner; Southern California Edison President John Feilder and California Secretary of Resources Mike Chrisman. A recent survey by the Institute of Applied Research at California State University, San Bernardino of 1,500 respondents showed that 93% of Riverside and San Bernardino County residents believe the region's leaders need to balance quality of life with economic development.

The Green Institute for Village Empowerment is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing philanthropic and education efforts that expand sustainable communities and promote a better quality of life.