



Barstow joins regional 'green' group

Partnership between cities, private developer's nonprofit pursues environmental projects

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BARSTOW • Barstow became one of almost 30 cities in the Inland Empire to join a coalition that aims to bring more green economic development to the region.

The City Council voted Monday to support the Green Valley Initiative, a group of cities, counties and agencies in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties coordinated by the nonprofit Green Institute for Village Empowerment, an organization founded by green developer Ali Sahabi.

The final vote was unanimous in favor of backing the initiative, after some of councilmembers expressed initial concerns that joining would force the city to put restrictive requirements on businesses, or would necessitate creating a new position on the city staff.

Councilman Tim Saenz, who expressed some reservations about joining the initiative Monday, said Tuesday that he changed his mind after finding that involvement in the initiative is voluntary and does not carry a fee. He said, however, that he would also like to see the city look at joining more-established groups, like the U.S. Green Building Council.

City spokesman John Rader said the city's hope is that as the federal and state government implement laws to accelerate green industries, Barstow will be in a position to take advantage of the development opportunities. Particularly, he said the city hopes to market the Barstow Industrial Park to manufacturing and logistics companies that specialize in green technologies.

Rader said the city also hopes to incorporate renewable energy technologies like rooftop solar energy into new buildings.

"It is easier and less expensive to implement green technology into new development, which the City of Barstow has plenty of space for, versus retrofitting — an advantage for our region versus regions that are already built out," he said.

One of the city's most ambitious green technology projects to date is the \$2.3 million liquefied natural gas and compressed natural gas fueling station that opened on West Main Street in the fall of 2005.

Deniene Husted, a spokeswoman with the Green Valley Initiative, said one of its most significant accomplishments has been completing a comprehensive economic development study that qualified the region for federal project funding through the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration.

The study, which outlined a program of development through renewable energy and green technology, was approved by the development administration in October 2008. The initiative's mission is two-part, to attract green businesses and to educate consumers about conservation, Husted said.