

CITY OF VENTURA

CITY MEMORANDUM

Date: July 7, 2009

To: Rick Cole

From: Joey Briglio

Subject: Green Economy Work Group

Group Participants: Rachel Morris, Todd Collart, Dale Jaedtke, Tea Silvestre, Dr. Robert Taylor, Joe Yahner, Brian Randall.

Facilitator: Joey Briglio

The Green Economy is the rapidly growing billion-dollar industry that includes renewable energy sources, organic products, green buildings, alternative fuel vehicles, and other similar goods or services. However, it is more than that. The Green Economy also deals with the need for existing businesses to redesign their business strategy, production methods, and daily operations in order to create less environmental impact but still increase profit margins. The Green Economy breakout session at the Economic Summit focused on how organizations can capitalize on this expanding economy and how we all play a role in creating a sustainable economic infrastructure for Ventura.

The Green Economy breakout session led to the creation of 12 action items, 9 of which were assigned to this working group. In order to understand each action item, form a working plan, and prioritize, the City created a Green Economy Work Group. Participants of the work group defined the action items, identified the underlying issues and solutions, as well as prioritized the items by necessity, time sensitivity, and importance.

Green Economy Action Items

Green Business

3.1	Voluntary Green Business Cert. Program
3.2	Chamber of Commerce Green Speaker Series

Voluntary Green Business Certification Program

Discussion

The working group agreed that a Green Business Certification Program would be a valuable tool for our business community. The program would offer businesses the ability to market their efforts toward “going green,” as well as challenge

others to become more environmentally friendly and efficient. This would help promote Ventura as an environmentally sensitive and conscious City, which in turn, could be a key to attracting other green businesses to our area.

At the meeting it was stated that the City's Environmental Services Office had already begun taking steps toward drafting a green business certification program prior to the Economic Summit. Todd Collart, of Ventura's Sustainability Council, also commented on his organization's efforts toward creating a similar program for businesses. The working group felt that if the City facilitated the program, then its future financial uncertainties could possibly affect the program's longevity. Additionally, the minutes of the Economic Summit have Council directing Staff to consider the possibility of having the Chamber of Commerce run the program. However, the working group was cautious to agree with such an idea as they felt as though the Chamber may lack the time, finances, and expertise needed to maintain such a program. A non-profit third-party facilitator was also discussed.

The group believed that the program should be based on objective and clear criteria in order to keep the process as consistent and simple as possible. There was some discussion on having the program go beyond just "green" and encompass the full spectrum of sustainability – namely social equity. However, several members noted the difficulty of creating objective criteria to measure social equity. The group also mentioned the idea of having the Chamber work toward creating some sort of educational workshop or class that provides businesses information and education on becoming a socially responsible and equitable business.

Finally there was an idea to create an "Advisory Board" for the program that would be made up of several organizations (i.e. C4, Chamber, City, VCCOOL, Sustainability Council). This collaboration could be used as a sounding board for certification processes, program criteria, and/or fee creation.

Recommendation

The Green Economy Working Group recommends that the City of Ventura Environmental Services Office continue working toward completing their Green Business Certification Program. The Environmental Services Office should also collaborate their efforts with other local organizations and business groups.

It is also recommended that the Chamber of Commerce create educational opportunities for businesses to expand their knowledge on Social Equity and other related issues. The working group recommends that the Chamber of Commerce create a "Green Liaison" position at the board or director level. This position would be the Chamber's representative for all things related to green business and education.

Chamber of Commerce Green Speaker Series

Discussion

The working group understands the educational value of the Green Speaker series. The series would allow business to learn more about the economics behind “going green,” as well as create networking opportunities.

The working group mentioned Ventura College’s Career Academy Speaker Series and the possibility of creating a partnership with the proposed Chamber Green Speaker Series. The working group suggested that the Chamber look at collaborating with other organizations, in addition to the college, in order to create greater networking opportunities, more events, and a broader spectrum of speakers.

Recommendation

As previously mentioned in the Green Business Certification recommendation, the working group recommends that the Chamber create a “Green Liaison” position at the board or director level. The liaison should then be tasked with collaborating with organizations such as Ventura College, Green Building Council, VCCOOL, CAUSE, and other similar organizations to create a Green Speaker Series.

Green Projects and Funding

3.3	Capitalize on Stimulus Funding —apply for \$ —Synergy with other matching opportunity —Emphasize local jobs
3.7	Move to getting off the Grid

Discussion

The working group agreed that the City has already made progress in capitalizing on the federal stimulus funds. In June, the City submitted an application to the Department of Energy requesting over \$1 million through the Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant program. These funds are part of over \$2.7 billion in formula grants made available to local governments, states, and Indian tribes through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The City’s application included the following projects:

- Install a 300-kilowatt solar electric system at the City Hall building.
- Install a 18-kilowatt solar electric system at Fire Station 5.
- Retrofit over 600 existing streetlights with new energy efficiency lighting technology.
- Replace an old, inefficient air conditioning system at City Hall.

- Provide free energy efficiency lighting and equipment retrofits for Ventura non-profits that maintain a facility.
- Conduct a community-wide greenhouse gas inventory and develop a comprehensive reduction strategy.
- Provide no cost permit and inspection fees for residential solar installations.

In addition, these grant monies will be used to leverage an additional \$2.8 million from other private and public funding sources to fund these projects.

Recommendation

The working group recommends that the City of Ventura continue its efforts to obtain as much stimulus funding as possible.

Green Job Creation and Incubation

3.4	Adopt a policy for Clean/Green Tech Pilot Program (Demonstration Projects)
3.5	Green Business Institute w/ VC –Green Job Training /Incubator –Tie in with Trade Association Training
3.6	Gray Water Policy (research in 90 days)

Discussion

The working group found these action items to be of highest priority. The group discussed the possibility of having the City draft a policy that would permit demonstration projects for innovative green technologies on City property or within existing City facilities. The policy would promote Ventura as a leader in green entrepreneurship, as well as an incubator for green ideas. In addition to this policy, the group discussed the possibility of having additional pilot programs permitted on private property.

Rachel Morris, of VCCOOL, suggested that the City research ways to allow residents the ability to attempt environmental projects and concepts on their own property. These projects could include things like gray water system implementation, alternative construction materials for buildings (i.e. earthen), and rainwater circulation systems. The group understood that it may be difficult and possibly violate certain state or federal standards in order to alter building standards, planning ordinances, and other City codes, but believed that it is worth researching the prospects.

Dr. Bob Taylor, of Ventura College, mentioned that the College is working toward offering green job training as part of their Business Institute. He suggested the possibility of having multiple environmentally friendly demonstration projects as part of the institute. The group agreed that a “Green” Business Institute is critical for our City. It would offer local trade and business people the tools and education needed to take their company and/or skills into the Green Economy.

The group envisioned the Green Business Institute collaborating with the local trade associations and similar supportive organizations including, but not limited to, the Chamber of Commerce, City of Ventura, VCREA, County, Tri-Counties Building and Construction Trades Council, Green Building Council (C4), VCCOOL, CAUSE, and the Sustainability Council. Collaboration is vital to this institution's success not only because diversity of expertise is necessary but also because internships and apprenticeships will need to be established in order to give students opportunities beyond the classroom.

The working group agreed that offering demonstration projects coupled with a Green Business Institute would give Ventura a step-up in the new Green Economy. The two items can work synergistically to create jobs, show case new technologies, and educate our working class.

Recommendation

The working group recommends that the City of Ventura take a three-step approach with regard to the adoption of a demonstration project policy:

- Step 1 - Draft and adopt a policy that would allow pilot programs and demonstration projects for "Green Technology" on City property and in City facilities.
- Step 2 - Adopt a policy for the interpretation of existing City codes and ordinances that would favor environmental methods and projects. The intent of this policy would be to have City discretion lean more in favor of environmental stewardship and less environmental impact.
- Step 3 - Research ways to allow residents the ability to attempt environmental projects and concepts on their own property, and figure out the feasibility of allowing projects like gray water systems.

The working group also recommends that both the City and Chamber assist Ventura College in whatever capacity possible in order to help with the creation of a Green Business Institute. The City and the Chamber should look at how they can provide integrated internship and apprenticeship programs for people who attend the institute.

Smart Growth

3.8	Promote Green Building and Smart Growth -Reduce Parking Reqs. -Support Public Transit
3.9	Promote Secondary Dwellings and shared housing

Discussion

The working group felt that the City was already working through these actions items. The group pointed to the City's recently adopted Downtown Form Based Code and the 2005 General Plan. Both documents speak to smart growth principles such as Transit Orientated Development (TOD), transect planning, and infill development.

With regard to secondary dwellings, the City already allows second dwelling units on properties that meet specific development criteria.

Recommendation

The working group recommends that the City of Ventura continue its efforts to promote smart growth and sustainable development.