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County unveils green initiatives

SAN BERNARDINO — County officials on Monday unveiled Green County San Bernardino, a series of measures to promote environmentally friendly development.

"These initiatives continue the county's proud heritage of fostering sustainable growth and responsible stewardship of our natural resources," said 2nd District Supervisor Paul Biane, who will ask the County Board of Supervisors to approve the program Tuesday.

Among the proposals the board will consider is a policy that would require all new county buildings to comply with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards, such as sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

The board will also consider incentives to promote energy conservation for builders, homeowners and businesses.

Builders who agree to exceed currently state guidelines for energy efficient homes by 15 percent and recycle construction material would receive priority processing for plan review and field inspection service, as well as guaranteed timelines.

For homeowners and businesses, the county would waive building permit fees for the installation of solar energy systems, wind-generated electrical systems, tankless water heaters and highly energy-efficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

Last week, the county settled a lawsuit by the state attorney general for failure to properly address global warming, which delayed the green initiatives announced on Monday.

"The lawsuit actually held us up from implementing our strategy for Green County San Bernardino, which could have complicated the settlement discussions with the attorney general. Therefore, we held off from moving forward until the settlement could be concluded," Biane said.

Building industry representatives voiced support for the green initiatives.

"Green building means healthier environments, economies, communities and futures for our families and neighborhoods in San Bernardino County," said Todd Tatum, president of the Baldy View Chapter of the Building Industry Association, in a written statement.

The county is also considering a proposal to launch a Web site, www.greencountysb.com, with public information on creating and maintaining green buildings, landscapes and lifestyles.