

The Green Valley Initiative: a sustainable economic platform

Guest Editorial

By Ali Sahabi, President & CEO, SE Corp.;
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University, San Bernardino;
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Economic Partnership;
Supervisor Paul Biane, County of
San Bernardino;
Jane Block, member, Riverside Land
Conservancy; and
John Withers, board member, Santa Ana Regional
Water Quality Control Board

E. Bonner and Mike Chrisman also participated in the meeting and expressed their support for the initiative.

The Green Valley Initiative has already begun:

- Attracting the attention of green-tech companies interested in relocating to our region. So far, we've heard from more than a dozen.

- Identifying funding and capital sources.

- Cataloging our region's green assets to identify existing resources and opportunities for expansion.

- Bringing together our colleges and universities to share resources and ideas to create a green brain trust.

- Signing on municipal, county and tribal governments as Green Valley Jurisdictions committed to incorporating sustainable land-use and green building, business and purchasing programs.

The Green Valley Initiative's next steps include rebranding our region, attracting green-tech employers, and coordinating policy and educational sustainability initiatives.

Some will say that we aren't ready for such a committed effort to sustainability; they will say that our regional power brokers don't want to upset the status quo.

But the fact is that most of our region's most powerful are already on board. And they

were smart to do so.

That's because more than 93% of Riverside and San Bernardino County residents believe that the region's leaders need to balance quality of life with economic development, according to a recent study conducted by the Institute of Applied Research and Policy Analysis at California State University, San Bernardino.

For years, the visionaries among us have quietly cultivated efforts to establish green neighborhoods, green businesses and sustainable lifestyles within our region.

The Riverside County Multi-Species Habitat Plan, San Bernardino's Green County initiatives, cities that have adopted the Building Industry Association's California Green Builder program, and the hundreds of green-friendly businesses - representing renewable energy sources, alternative fuel vehicles and building materials - all serve as proof that we have a foundation upon which to build a sustainable future for San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

For more information, or to get involved, visit www.GreenValleyNow.org ■

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Consider our strength: We boast a \$77 billion economy that rivals many states in the nation. We are the economic engine for the State of California.

Consider our challenge: We are growing at an unprecedented rate, with 2 million new residents projected to move here in the next 15 years. If our infrastructure is already at the breaking point, what will it look like down the road?

Now, envision a region where we can each work near where we live. Envision a sustainable economic model where land-use policy, economic development and quality-of-life considerations are in balance with one another.

Inland Southern California is poised to become the nation's hot-bed for renewable energies, recyclable materials, green building technology and innovative infrastructure options. Together, we can establish a booming economy driven by a shared dedication to sustainability. It's all part of a regional effort we call the Green Valley Initiative.

An overview of the Green Valley Initiative's accomplishments to date and a sustainable economic development roadmap was unveiled at a community meeting on Oct. 22.

It reflects the work and insight of more than 400 regional leaders from business, mayors of cities to county supervisors, environmental groups, financial and economic development experts, representatives of the region's cultural and educational institutions, community members and leaders from our local Native American tribes.

It was during this meeting that Bridgett Luther, director of the California Department of Conservation, announced that our region will host the state's pilot recycling program due to the region's existing green efforts, including the work of the Green Valley Initiative.

State cabinet members Dale

