

How green is our valley

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Opinion Piece

For years, the Inland Empire has been taking bold steps toward establishing green neighborhoods, green businesses and lifestyles within its boundaries. The Riverside County Multi-Species Habitat Plan, city of Riverside's Green Building standards enacted in June, and the hundreds of green-friendly businesses and programs already here – representing renewable energy sources, alternative fuel vehicles and building materials – all serve as proof that we are on our way to defining a new vision for San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

San Bernardino County's vote last week to approve four "Green County San Bernardino" initiatives is another indication of that movement, and we applaud it.

The momentum is significant on a regional scale, and has been inching its way forward to the point where we are now on the cusp of taking giant steps required for a regional effort called the Green Valley Initiative. It is a dual-county economic development plan designed to stimulate a green-technology economy and enhance our overall quality of life for everyone who lives here.

Since June, more than 100 key leaders and community representatives from throughout the Inland Empire have been meeting and planning the steps required for a regional effort called the Green Valley Initiative. It is a dual-county economic development plan designed to stimulate a green-technology economy and enhance our overall quality of life.

Concrete plan will be finalized in early October, reflecting the work and insight of literally dozens of stakeholders: from 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 sector. For more information, or to get involved, visit www.GreenValleyNow.org

Why is our community the place for this new growth to happen? Consider what we already have and the potential we have to grow in a positive direction:

- Unprecedented growth and land availability: 2 million new residents moving here in the next 15 years.
- Infrastructure: Proximity to interstate freeways, rail, international airports and ports already exist and can support businesses here.
- Education: 27 colleges and universities in the area, many with research and programs in areas important to these green technologies.
- Established industries: Kramer Junction Solar Farms, Heliostat thermal electric farm in Barstow, Palm Springs Wind Farms, Salton Sea Geothermal Farm, Phoenix

Electric Car company in Ontario and the Waste to Energy plant a Romoland, to name a few.

- Market demand: The Southern California region is particularly receptive to environmental concerns, providing a large consumer base for green industries moving into the region.

We encourage everyone to get involved in these very important – and growing – movements in the Inland Empire. Opportunities are limitless; the potential rewards are boundless.

The opinion expressed has been endorsed by Assemblywoman Wilmer Armina Carter; Paul Biane, chairman of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisor; John Tavaglione, chairman of the Riverside County Board of Supervisors; Albert Karnig, president of California State University, San Bernardino; William Carney, president/CEO of Inland Empire Economic Partnership; State Sen. Gloria Negrete McCleod; Jane Block, Riverside Land Conservancy; Ali Sahabi, president/CEO of SE Corporation/Dos Lagos; Congressman Joe Baca; Hardy Brown, publisher of Black Voice News; Pat Morris, mayor of San Bernardino; and Ron Loveridge, mayor of Riverside.

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