

Greener pastures in our future

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Newspaper Editorial

We hope the first family-home community in San Bernardino County run on solar panels will mark the beginning off a trend. Hal Woods, president of CenterStone Communities, showed off three model homes last week at Harmony at CenterStone Estates, a new-home development in Fontana. His company will install 2.3-kilowatt photovoltaic systems on all 56 new houses there.

The houses will have not only solar panels on the roofs, but also electric meters that spin backward when the house's system produces more electricity than its residents use, drought-resistant turf and irrigation systems ad high-efficiency toilets, among other "green" features.

The developer draws financial incentives from the California Energy Commission's New Solar Homes Partnership, which provides tiered assistance for projects that are more energy-efficient than standard new homes.

Fontana was also the location a month ago when Gov. Schwarzenegger joined Southern California Edison officials and local politicians to announce a plan to install 65 million square feet of solar panels on commercial building rooftops in Southern California. Edison said the panels would power 162,000 homes.

That press conference took place on the roof of a 600,000-square-foot distribution center owned by ProLogis. The company will lease the rooftop to Edison, which will install and maintain panels to produce two megawatts of solar power, enough to serve about 1,400 households.

The new residential and commercial applications of solar energy production add momentum to the efforts of the Green Valley Initiative, a coalition of regional movers and shakers whose aim is to make the Inland Empire greener in its practices and land-use decisions and at the same tie a center for green industries and jobs.

A Green Valley Summit will be held Thursday through Sunday as part of the So Cal Builders Expo at the Ontario Convention Center.

Billed as being "about the future of the Inland Empire as a global center for green technology and environmental sciences," the summit figures to provide a lot of information for builders and developer, entrepreneurs, investors and others interested in green tech businesses.

There will be everything from big-picture discussions of the economic future of green industries, with people like state Treasurer Bill Lockyer and public policy expert Woodrow Clark II, to workshops on solar residential installations and edible landscapes.

.Go to www.greenvalleynow.org for more information and to register to attend the summit.

Especially now that we are all seeing firsthand the future of oil prices, working to make the Inland Empire a center for green technology makes more environmental and economic sense than ever.

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