

INNOVATION VALLEY (ivalley.org)

Green jobs for Lawrence: keys to the future

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VALLEY PATRIOT GREEN COLUMNISTS

At the recent economic development conference hosted at the NECC Haverhill campus, I was asked a most compelling question: "If you had a million dollars to spend in Lawrence, how would you spend it?" I promised the inquisitor that by the end of the meeting I'd have an answer, and I did.

The conference was titled Green, Clean and Sustainable: Economic Development for the 21st Century. It was convened and hosted by Congresswoman Niki Tsongas and the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council. Its goal was to help grow green industries and associated jobs in the 5th District of Massachusetts. It included local industry executives, community leaders, and professionals in economic development. Speakers included Ian Bowles, Secretary of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Rick Hess, President and CEO of Konarka, and Maggie Super Church, Project Manager for the \$75 million Union Crossing redevelopment in Lawrence.

Job creation was a central theme at the event, as you might expect, but at this forum the emphasis was on "green collar jobs." Green collar jobs are loosely defined as jobs in the clean technology, renewable energy, and energy efficiency sectors of the economy. More specifically, however, and more germane to the question, green collar jobs are mid-level, high-paying jobs that are the backbone of the emerging economy. They are the manufacturer, technician, assembly and service positions of tomorrow.

According to the recent publication "Green-Collar Jobs in American Cities: Building Pathways Out of Poverty and Careers in the Clean Energy Economy," green jobs are "the kind of family-supporting jobs that once anchored the American middle class, but (instead) in the industries of the future: industries like wind turbine manufacturing, solar panel installation, energy efficiency retrofits, and green building."

Green jobs are also particularly well suited for urban revitalization. As the report continues, "Many American cities are already putting people to work in these jobs, investing in new transit systems, energy efficient buildings, and other projects that improve the quality of



PHOTOS: COURTESY

life for local residents and make our cities cleaner, greener, and more livable."

Knowing what I do about Lawrence, the answer thus became clearer than the Hope diamond - invest in Green Jobs training. If I had one million dollars to spend on Lawrence, I would use it to garner three million more in matching federal, state, and private funds to raise a total of \$4 million for the nation's largest commitment to urban green jobs creation. Lawrence would be the prototype city for green jobs training. And why not? The city is the ideal candidate for this type of major initiative.

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Green-Collar Jobs in American Cities

In case you think this is a pipe dream, think again. In a few years the funds for green jobs training will be flowing like a river. Federal and state programs have already been enacted, and Lawrence needs to act now to be an early recipient. At the federal level, the Green Jobs Act of 2007 was passed into law as part of the Energy Bill of 2007. The federal Green Jobs Act authorizes \$125 million per year to create an Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Worker Training Program. The act will provide money to states through five separate programs administered jointly through the Department of Labor and the Department

of Energy. These programs include the National Energy Training Partnership, the State Energy Training Partnership Program, and the Pathways Out Of Poverty Demonstration Program. The act authorizes support for job training in a range of new industries, including: energy efficient building, construction and retrofits, renewable electric power, energy efficient vehicles, biofuels, and manufacturing that uses sustainable processes and materials.

At the state level, Governor Deval Patrick and House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi are united behind a \$100 million

energy bill that includes \$2.5 million per year for workforce development in the clean energy sector. This bill compliments other initiatives for a green economy that necessitate appropriately trained workers in the Commonwealth. For example, Governor Patrick's Leading By Example Executive Order calls on the design and construction industries to make "Zero Net Energy" buildings a standard in Massachusetts and requires that all new state buildings over 20,000 square feet be LEED certified and have a twenty percent better energy performance than today's standard. This will

significantly boost jobs in the green building and renewable energy systems sectors.

Other states and cities have also gotten the religion. One of the innovators in this arena, Newark, is sporting its Green Collar Apprenticeship Program (GreenCAP). This is a partnership of private industry, trade unions, the municipality, and vocational schools, to help create green collar jobs in the construction industry. Students will receive on-the-job training in construction projects and respective trade programs. Upon completion they will receive a HVAC, plumbing or electrical trade license and a Green Certificate showing they have worked on a green construction project.

In Oakland, the Green Jobs Corps provides similar hands-on training in vocational skills essential for the green economy and also provides a 6-month paid internship in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and green construction projects. Like Newark, the Oakland program is a partnership with unions, vocational education, the municipality and private developers. Similarly, Los Angeles is developing a Green Career Ladder Training Program. All of these programs target "hard to employ" urban populations. They seek to offer "pathways out of poverty" by creating high-paying and safe jobs in emerging industrial sectors that will make our cities clean and vibrant.

Lawrence should act aggressively to be an early adopter for Green Jobs training in Massachusetts. If I were a planner, I would learn from the national prototypes already underway and convene meetings immediately with respective stakeholders to see how a comprehensive city-wide program in green jobs training through hands-on work in building retrofitting, renewable energy, and other germane new industries could be enacted promptly. A total budget of \$4 million, raised from an initial \$1 million seed fund, could probably train and certify up to 1000 of the city's young workforce. I believe this would make Lawrence the global leader in green jobs training investment. It would retrofit the city, attract employers and provide meaningful employment for an entire generation. That's money well spent.

[If you would like to join a discussion on this topic, please visit the Innovation Valley website at www.ivalley.org]



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The Innovation Valley initiative seeks to help stimulate economic growth and quality-of-life enhancements in the Merrimack Valley. Every month we will report on innovative businesses, practices, and ideas that are helping to make Merrimack Valley the place to be. Look for our article in print media and online at www.ivalley.org.

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