



L.A.'s `green' economy has a long road ahead

By Mary Leslie

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In the race to become the nation's central hub for the "green tech" revolution, Los Angeles maintains a distinct advantage. Beyond the sunshine to generate solar power, Los Angeles displays a number of characteristics that make it ripe to serve as the next Silicon Valley for "green-tech" - from world-class research universities and a large high-tech work force to a government that is incentivizing investment in sustainable energy.

But our position in this new economy will not be established automatically - and our region's political, [business](#) and academic leadership have a small window of time to capture this nascent industry and bring it home to Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles Business Council has spent the past several years working with local business executives and policymakers to create opportunities and incentives for clean-tech industry to grow in Los Angeles, emphasizing the need for a strong partnership among our region's business, government and academic institutions.

On Friday, we hosted a major summit on sustainability at the Getty Center to bring the leaders of these spheres together and prompt serious discussion that will result in unified action to build a real green economy in Los Angeles. In anticipation of this event, we have outlined five principles that will be essential for this effort to succeed.

First, there must be public and private sector collaboration. Government can provide a favorable regulatory environment for clean-tech and offer the investment of public dollars to develop industries but must include the private sector to encourage competition and innovation.

As a case in point, the recently introduced Green Energy and Good Jobs for L.A. Act, as originally written, bypassed private-sector participation in major green investment by the city by requiring installation of solar panels on commercial, industrial and institutional building rooftops by only Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, thereby excluding private-sector energy developers and restricting building owners' rights to seek competitive rates for solar installation.

Earlier this month, at the request of LABC and other business groups, the L.A. City Council agreed to an amendment that would allow for private-sector participation in the solar plan. The final LADWP program and other future publicly funded green development efforts should follow in the spirit of this amendment and include the private sector.

Second, Los Angeles must develop a long-term strategic plan to leverage the billions of dollars that will be invested over the next 10 years to drive the local green economy. While many cities, counties and states are developing plans to attract green industry, we have no comprehensive strategy to maximize our return on this investment.

Third, we must do a better job of quantifying and marketing the inherent competitive characteristics that Los Angeles offers to green companies.

Fourth, Los Angeles should make the investment in the technologies as a means of attracting green industry. Specifically, the region should optimize its energy efficiency efforts as well as the development of sustainable power supplies, including wind power and solar installations, working with the technology providers we seek to attract.

Fifth, our efforts must go beyond power generation and include indoor environmental quality, water conservation and green development initiatives as part of the sustainability efforts being undertaken in Los Angeles.

In the midst of the worst economic crisis in a generation, our region has a unique opportunity to become the next Silicon Valley for what will inevitably become just as prominent an industry - green technology.

However, transforming Los Angeles' potential into a reality will require more than slogans or wishful thinking - our public, private and academic sectors must come together, now, taking unified and determined action to make L.A. the next green capital of the world.

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