

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

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Smart Growth and Green Jobs Spark Economic Recovery

National conference examines the role of sustainability, green jobs and smart growth in reviving the economy

As President-elect Obama and his financial team begin the difficult task of implementing bold changes to speed up our nation's economic recovery, strengthen our energy, health and education infrastructures and fight global warming, we will be called upon to do our part locally. Two days after Obama's inaugural, hundreds of planners, developers, community leaders and other smart-growth practitioners will gather in Albuquerque for a national forum on innovative local approaches to economic and environmental sustainability.

The 8th annual New Partners for Smart Growth conference, running January 22-24, explores how effective partnerships can provide the political will and technical expertise needed to overcome inertia and change business as usual – and take real steps toward a greener, more economically sustainable economy.

According to the California Energy Commission, the two biggest holes in the bucket when it comes to losing dollars from our local economies are transportation, and heating and cooling our homes and offices. Both types of expenditures send dollars to outside entities and leave less money for residents to spend in their own communities. The New Partners conference will focus on local and state policies that will plug these two sources of lost revenue so that more dollars can be spent locally, leading to healthier local businesses and more local jobs..

Using Smart Growth to Reduce Transportation Costs and Create Stronger Local Economies

Based on 2004 statistics from the U.S. Bureau of Labor, the average family spent 32% of their income on housing and 25% on transportation. Those who live in walkable communities where transit is easily accessible spent 32% for housing but only 9% for transportation, leaving much more of their income left over for food, health care and other items.

A new report published by the Urban Land Institute, "Growing Cooler," finds that by building Smart Growth – that is compact, walkable, bicycle- and transit-friendly neighborhoods – we could reduce national fuel expenditures by \$24 billion in the year 2030 alone and a cumulative \$250 billion in the next 22 years. This is money that will be kept in the US and local economies rather than being sent to other countries.

Multiple sessions at the conference will address how best to move from urban sprawl to Smart Growth. This will include sessions such as "Overcoming Challenges to Infill and Redevelopment," "Land Banking as a Critical Tool in Redevelopment of Thriving Communities," "Tax Policy for Smart Growth," "the LEED Rating System for Neighborhood Development," and many others.

Growing Green Jobs and Training the Workers Who Will Fill Them

When we think of a green job, we typically think of a technician that installs solar panels or retrofits buildings with conservation measures. These are important jobs that strongly benefit the local economy.

According to a 2008 University of California report, over the past 35 years, the state's forward looking energy efficiency policies created 1.5 million FTE jobs with a total payroll of over \$45 billion, and saved California consumers over \$56 billion on energy costs. It is expected that those jobs will continue to be created as California inches toward the legislature's goal of getting 33% of California's energy from renewable resources by 2030.

However the potential for green job development goes far beyond careers related to conservation and renewable energy. We now need more experts trained to address water shortages through drought-tolerant landscape design, cooks who can prepare meals using locally produced, seasonal produce, professionals who understand the connections between land use and community health, and the list goes on.

According to a October 2008 report issued by the US Conference of Mayors ("Green Jobs in U.S. Metro Areas"), as of 2006 there were more than 750,000 green jobs in the U.S. economy. More than half of these were in engineering, legal, research and consulting. The Conference of Mayors estimates there is potential of adding 4.2 million new green jobs to the U.S. economy by 2038.

While traditional industries continue to be replaced by new opportunities, we have only just begun to tap into many of them. Transforming the economy so that it responds to the problems of the day will require the enactment of new policies at the local, state and national level and training workers to fill the jobs needed to implement the policies.

One session at the Albuquerque conference, titled "Green Jobs: Defining Opportunities in Economic Development for a Sustainable Future," will bring together a panel of experts on green jobs to identify green jobs locally, customize job training to reflect a greener economy, and identify local policies such as energy conservation and solar retrofit ordinances that create employment opportunities for graduates of green job training programs.

A related panel will look at how two communities are analyzing potential policies that create green jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions so that they can rank the various choices to maximize the sustainable return on investment.

About the conference:

The New Partners for Smart Growth conference will be held January 22-24 at the Albuquerque Convention Center. The event, hosted by the Local Government Commission, spans three days, covering cutting-edge smart growth issues, the latest research, implementation tools and strategies, successful case studies, new projects and new policies. The conference will feature 300 speakers, more than 100 sessions and 11 tours of local model projects.

Conference sponsors include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Kaiser Permanente, the National Association of REALTORS®, Smart Growth Network, and HDR, Inc. Other cosponsors also include the National League of Cities, the National Association of Home Builders, Good Jobs First and the Partnership for Working Families. For more details about the agenda, speakers, sponsors and tours: www.newpartners.org

The Local Government Commission is a 29-year-old nonprofit membership organization of locally elected officials, city and county staff, and other interested individuals. It helps local officials address the problems facing their communities and maximize their civic, environmental and economic resources. The Ahwahnee Principles for Livable Communities, developed by the LGC in 1991, helped pave the way for the smart growth movement.

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