

Lawrence Green Jobs Working Group meeting

December 4, 2008

Offices of the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council

Attendees:

Jeff Beam, MIT@Lawrence

Tom Casey, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades & Lawrence Redevelopment Authority

Dennis DiZoglio, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission

Bob Halpin, Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council

Eric Mackres, MIT@Lawrence

Andrew Mente, Youthbuild Lawrence

Ted Semesnyei, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission

Helen Torres-Rodriguez, Veritas Bank

This group met in Lawrence to discuss the path to promoting the creation of green jobs in Lawrence. The agenda included discussion of what is already happening in Lawrence's green economy; a discussion of shared values and visioning for Lawrence's future; brainstorming on how to build on existing opportunities; goal setting; and establishment of concrete next steps.

Introductions

Dennis DiZoglio agreed to informally facilitate the meeting and prefaced discussion with a description of the green jobs issue as a timely concern. Energy security and prices are of increasing concern, the economy is suffering from the mortgage and financial crisis, and concerns about climate change continue to grow. The new Obama Administration has already been talking about green jobs and clean energy as a major component of its infrastructure stimulus package. Additionally, on a more regional scale, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission has recently released its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy in which clean energy and related jobs skills were highlighted as a major interest of area businesses.

The meeting began with introductions by those present that included their personal and professional interests in promoting green jobs in Lawrence. Interest in green jobs included:

- optimism about the synergy between environment and economic development
- providing opportunities for everyone to enjoy the results of green building
- being able to give back to the community, helping to build assets and increase financial literacy
- emotional attachment to Lawrence and wanting to help it become an economic engine again
- green is an opportunity to promote forward-thinking collaboration in economic development
- ensuring a role for lower-skilled workers in good-paying jobs with room for advancement
- raising up the whole city; creating good jobs and opportunities in the trades

What is happening already

Jeff and Eric gave a summary of the existing green economic activity in Lawrence referring to examples in the Green Common brochure and the meeting documents. Jeff highlighted some of the businesses, initiatives, and developments including Solectria, Powerhouse, Clivus Multrum, and the

Building Materials Reuse Center.

Vision – what are Green Jobs and what is the role of this working group?

- Workforce development needs of green jobs may or may not be that different from other workforce initiatives
 - green jobs, as a quickly developing sector, provide a unique opportunity because of their scale and cross-cutting benefits
 - There is more work to be done on both understanding the workforce needs of developing a green city and green businesses as well as a clearer vision for what green jobs mean for the development of the city
 - cataloging the green sector may prove challenging, because, as with the “creative economy,” green businesses and programs are amorphous and include a range of activities
- Green has a large role to play in the developing rebirth story of Lawrence: from a dirty industrial city left behind to a contemporary green visionary and leader
 - Lawrence is poised to capitalize on the green boom because its age, quality of building, density, and opportunity for reuse make it an ideal site of industries interested in smart growth, locating near transit, and adaptive reuse.
 - Incentives for clean energy in Massachusetts law and regional interest in green make the Commonwealth an attractive environment for green businesses who have a ready-made market. Lawrence may be able to develop a similar environment and incentives for industry incubation and agglomeration
 - New and dynamic nature of the green industry means that their business models are changing rapidly and may be able to accommodate innovative forms of workforce development

Opportunities – How do we build on existing assets and what do we want to accomplish?

- *Energy audits/energy efficiency retrofits* provide a great opportunity for money savings and job training
 - The Energy Service Company (ESCO) model has been both a successful business model and implementation technique for efficiency
 - partnering with or creating a community-based ESCO could ensure that money saved would be kept locally as long as the investment was guaranteed and the efficiency measures worked.
 - Challenges of scale, implementation and ESCO motivation exist when you talk about residential retrofits instead of commercial and industrial, where ESCOs typically work.
 - To create a community ESCO in Lawrence may require gaining legal status and a special agreement with the city, an existing organization could also take on the retrofit task
 - legal requirements such as 30B may make an agreement for a community-wide retrofitting difficult
 - Entry level jobs in retrofitting would be a great opportunity for youth employment
 - Perhaps there are companies in Lawrence already who would be interested in job training to develop implementation at economies of scale
 - Existing community efficiency retrofit initiatives such as the Cambridge Energy Alliance and Milwaukee Energy Efficiency are possible models for Lawrence

- Existing local projects like weatherization of municipal buildings such as the Senior Center and Lawrence Community Works' Union Crossing development are concrete opportunities to incorporate green jobs
- The Green Communities Act and other recent Massachusetts legislation mandates a new model of efficiency implementation requiring “least cost procurement” of energy, meaning that utilities must implement all cost-effective efficiency.
 - Harvey Michaels, professor at MIT, is working with NSTAR and National Grid to develop community-based models for efficiency retrofits, Lawrence has been seriously discussed as a potential pilot site
- New Bedford has undertaken a energy efficiency auditing and retrofitting program including a youth development component
- Community Action Councils, also know as CAPs and CITs have had money for weatherization in the past – Lawrence and Lowell both have CAPs – Charles Lopiano works at the Lawrence CAC
- *developing a local green professional network* may help increase opportunities for innovation among local green, or potentially green, businesses
 - Many existing Lawrence businesses can transition into green businesses
 - pathway and practice of transitioning to a green business needs to be further defined. Finance of working capital for transition costs may be a major barrier.
 - People at the meeting represent a very diverse group of interests who could work together to brainstorm, synthesize and work with their network to implement or improve a green demonstration or leadership initiative
- *The Building Materials Resource Center* has been funded through a grant received by the Lawrence Community Development Department
 - the center will provide materials that can be used for green building, including LEED credits for local and reused materials, and perhaps provide economies of scales for small local businesses
- *Existing businesses* like Quincy Vale's Powerhouse could provide a green jobs and community development synergy. Quincy would be willing to locate a plant in Lawrence if there were demand for 20 or more Powerhouses. The city could order this many and create jobs, fill vacant lots and provide affordable housing.
 - The disposition process for vacant lots in the city is complicated, but at the very least the city could require green building and energy efficiency standards for the lots
- Lawrence Redevelopment Authority has money to invest in the Arlington neighborhood that could go to use for green initiatives

Next Steps and Leadership

The group decided to pursue two tracks of actions and goals for the green jobs initiative:

1. *Building a green community*

- *Creation of a casual venue for green-interested networking*
 - “Green Drinks” (www.greendrinks.org) is a popular locally-sponsored, casual networking event that exists in cities across Massachusetts and the world. The Working Group will help to organize a regular Green Drinks-like event in Lawrence to create more opportunities for collaboration among green-interested Lawrence residents.
 - The first Lawrence Green Drinks-type event will be organized for January or February

- and may be centered around a presentation on energy efficiency retrofit efforts such as the Cambridge Energy Alliance
- The Green Drinks event and other interactions will be an opportunity to recruit and allow the emergence of self-selected participants to join the action-oriented Working Group – particularly business leaders
- Dennis DiZoglio, Ted Semesnyei, Bob Halpin and Joe Bevilacqua at the Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce with support from Jeff Beam will work to identify an invitation list from members and a NAICS code search and organize the event
- *Continued meetings of the Green Jobs Working Group*
 - Future meetings of the group should be structured around a specific topic or opportunity for collaboration. These could include discussion with government officials, business owners and community groups about their needs and challenges. Likely topics for the first few meetings include the opportunities in section 2 below.
 - The next meeting of the group will likely be in February
 - Members of the working group with support from Eric Mackres will explore specific opportunities to identify the topic of discussion and organize the next meeting
- 2. ***Creating momentum around specific green opportunities***
 - Small teams will coordinate with support from Eric Mackres to pursue further information about and determine prospects for collaboration on individual green initiatives.
 - *Energy Audits/Energy Efficiency Retrofitting* – Bob Halpin will contact Charles Lopiano at Lawrence CAC; Tom Casey will contact a union associate who works with Cambridge Energy Alliance; Eric Mackres will talk to Harvey Michaels about MIT and utility efficiency collaboration in Lawrence; Frank O'Connor from the City of Lawrence will also help
 - *Building Materials Resource Center* – Andrew Mente, Bob Halpin and Frank O'Connor, City of Lawrence will contact the Center to begin a conversation (Contact: Andrea Ryan, Harvard)
 - *Powerhouse* – Bob Halpin will talk to Quincy Vale about opportunities for collaboration with the Working Group
 - *Finance and Financial literacy* - Helen Torres-Rodriguez will explore opportunities to finance the creation of green jobs and their connection to financial literacy
 - *Other opportunities* – Heather McMann and all member of the Working Group will continue to track additional opportunities including green building projects such as Lawrence municipal buildings and Union Crossing.

Prepared by Eric Mackres

