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CREATING GREEN JOBS

OPPORTUNITIES GROWING BOTH WIDER AND DEEPER

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As energy security, green building and the "local first" consumer ethic move closer to the mainstream of economic culture, it is no longer so controversial to suggest that environmental benefit and job creation can go hand-in-hand. There is strong supporting research, from Michael Porter's studies of environmentally advanced competitive economies to Eban Goodstein's detailed review of the popular and academic debates in *The Trade-Off Myth: Fact and Fiction About Jobs and the Environment* (Island Press 2000). Consider:

- **Job Jolt:** *Repowering the Midwest*, and similar regional studies around the country, consistently point to net job growth from a shift away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and conservation—jobs in power generation, transportation, building, and more (see box below).
- Recycling-based industries create jobs for laborers, tradespeople, scientific and technical personnel and

managers. The Institute for Local Self-Reliance, reviewing pilot projects in recycling-based industries in inner city environments, estimates that a city of 100,000 could create 200 good manufacturing jobs just by pushing the resource recovery of a typical urban waste stream to the highest realistic level and developing industries to reuse and recycle building materials, textiles, electronics and other high-volume items.

As the urgency of dealing with climate change is better understood, the work to be done is getting clearer. Work is the stuff of economic development. The scale of this work is large. Climate protection is not just a niche opportunity for a few energy companies. Energy hardware, fuels and services, plus conservation strategies, are needed, of course. And so is a revolution in the design and construction of buildings and infrastructure. In major materials-intensive industries like construction, it is more and more essential to use local and recycled-based materials that can be obtained with less energy.

Natural cooling systems like green roofs are giving rise to whole new industries. These trends create opportunities for more facilities like the green technology center now in development in Sullivan County. Cutting fossil fuel use

also means sharply reducing the import of goods from afar that can be produced locally, especially essentials such as food.

The arena of economic opportunity, therefore, is the meeting point between environmentally advanced industries, and locally-oriented development and marketing strategies. A snapshot of three large industries illustrates the potential for many others.

Tourism

Eco-tourism is one of the fastest growing subsectors in the U.S. economy's largest industry. Though it may sound exotic, it is not just about glamour treks or primitive camping. Eco-tourism includes research "vacations" such as Earthwatch Expeditions, and human development resorts such as Omega Institute—programs with replication potential.

But the power of eco-tourism, for impact and scale, is in the transformation of existing tourist-oriented develop-

the region's artists and developers get together on a larger scale—imagine!

Construction

As the industry greens, so do the jobs of architects, project managers and laborers, suppliers, landscapers – and the vast supply chain that provides building materials and services. Building green is a systemic approach that sharpens skills in the trades and is beginning to be seen as a profitable growth area. Voluntary guidelines are now in use in institutions as diverse as SUNY campuses and New York City government. A sign of recognition is the November 8 conference at Hudson Valley Community College on work force training for renewable energy industries, produced by the Interstate Renewable Energy Network.

Healthcare

The seventh largest industry has also, ironically, been one of the most toxic, with high reliance on mercury, vinyl, and other problem materials. The Green Guide to Health Care, collaboratively developed by architects, regulators and health care spokespeople, provides clear guidance on greening health care buildings. Health Care Without Harm, an international movement, is working with hospital systems on toxics replacement, waste minimization, healthy indoor air quality, local food procurement and more—aimed at making hospitals true high-performance healing environments, and all health care jobs part of the sustainable work force.

The hard part, of course, is to move from the abstraction of possible jobs into a job-creation strategy. Economist suggests that the economists might actually be ahead of the politicians on this need. But climate protection—which can be a driver for eco-industrial development more generally—is beginning to pick up steam politically.

New York Congressman Maurice Hinchey has introduced solid legislation in the House. A number of area mayors are part of the forward-thinking U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement. Over 250 mayors around the country have made a commitment to move their cities into an advanced energy future, fighting sprawl, and expanding green space from forests to roofs. These leaders include the chief executives of Albany, White Plains, Mt. Vernon, Irvington and New York City. Endorsed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, they are working together to establish a new energy base, new approaches to buildings and transportation—and the jobs that these advances create.

They are joined by large-scale initiatives of educators around the country under the banner of "Focus the Nation." Finally, "clean energy and good jobs" is the agenda of an ambitious national coalition of business, labor and environmental groups known as the Apollo Alliance. Apollo has developed a Ten Point Plan for good jobs and energy independence (see above):

In the Hudson Valley, these possibilities have not yet given rise to a regional economic strategy. But—if the heat continues to be on—they could.

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RECOMMENDED RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

- Pew Center for Climate Protection – www.pewclimate.org
- NY Apollo Alliance – www.urbanagenda.org/nycapollo.htm
- Apollo Alliance – www.apolloalliance.org
- Sustainable Business online – www.sustainablebusiness.com
- U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement – www.seattle.gov/mayor/climate/
- Focus the Nation – www.focusthenation.org
- Sustainable Hudson Valley – www.sustainhv.org



Maria Reidelbach's Gnome on the Grange Mini-Golf at Kelder's Farm

ment to capitalize on heritage and nature, promote longer and lower-impact stays, and soften the boundaries between tourists and locals in communities like the waterfronts of Hudson, Kingston, and Beacon. A recently opened business in Ulster County—Maria Reidelbach's Gnome on the Grange Mini-Golf at Kelder's Farm—shows the potential. The beautiful and simple course relies on mulched gardens, veggie patches, waterfalls, and other purely natural features put together with an artful eye. If

Summary of "Job Jolt" Projected Benefits for Re-Powering the 10-State Midwest Region (over and above a "business as usual" baseline)

	By 2010	By 2020
Energy Efficiency Job Creation	85,900 jobs	140,900 jobs
Renewable Energy Job Creation	36,800 jobs	68,400 jobs
TOTAL JOBS	120,700 jobs	209,300 jobs
Energy Efficiency Economic Growth	\$ 7.1 billion	\$12.7 billion
Renewable Energy Economic Growth	\$ 3.7 billion	\$ 6.7 billion
TOTAL DOLLARS	\$10.8 billion	\$19.4 billion

Source: JOB JOLT – The Economic Impacts of Repowering the Midwest: The Clean Energy Development Plan for the Heartland, an economic study by the Regional Economics Applications Laboratory for the Environmental Law & Policy Center.