

Vision for Detroit: Seeing Green



Michigan Chronicle Article January 14, 2009

In less than one week the world will witness the historic swearing in ceremony of Barack Obama, this nation's first Black President. President Obama will also be the first President to make "green" energy a significant component of his agenda. The Obama Administration is expected to spend \$150 billion and create five million new jobs over ten years in clean energy. Plans include advancing the next generation of biofuels and fuel infrastructure, accelerating the commercialization of hybrids, promoting the development of commercial-scale renewable-energy projects, investing in low-emissions coal plants, and beginning the transition to a new digital electricity grid. According to a survey conducted by Detroit Renaissance, jobs are the number one issue for Detroit voters. The Detroit area lost

over 26,000 manufacturing jobs in the past year. Most of them were in the auto industry and more job losses are expected. In these dire times having a new President who is dedicated to creating jobs can be a huge benefit to this city under the right leadership. We must position ourselves to benefit from Obama's plan to invest in job training and transition programs to help workers and industries adapt to clean-technology development and production.

The city that changed the world with the automotive manufacturing industry already has the resources needed to transition to a greener economy. We have highly skilled workers, manufacturing plants, and cutting edge technology. In the future however, the manufacturing industry that put us on the map will not exist as we know it. Instead of fearing the future we must embrace it with determination. We are well poised to attract the clean energy industry and diversify our economy.

As President-Elect Obama plans to double federal science and research funding for clean-energy projects we must work with the Governor and the rest of the region to leverage our resources. We have Wayne State University in the heart of the city, over ten other major universities within a one hour drive and Next Energy already leading the way in alternative and

renewable energy. Detroit could be a research Mecca for clean-energy.

The Detroit Three automotives are working tirelessly to increase fuel efficiency in their vehicle lines and mass-produce affordable hybrids. Much needed assistance will come with the \$4 billion in retooling tax credits and loan guarantees that have been promised to assist the auto plants and parts manufacturers. The next Mayor and City Council should work in partnership with the automakers to lobby Congress and the new Administration to bring this plan to fruition.

In a city and state suffering from the severe economic downturn we've been experiencing for years now, there is no magic bullet or panacea. No one industry will turn things around for us. In fact, our over reliance on one industry is a key reason we're facing this crisis today. The new clean-energy industry is one of many industries that can and should serve as a major factor in diversifying our economy.

But the greatest single factor that will help move this city forward, keep us stagnant or continue the downward spiral is leadership. Without leadership it doesn't matter who the President is, it doesn't matter what the demands of a new economy are, and it doesn't matter

what resources we have to meet those demands.

City leadership must have a plan to diversify our economy and attract jobs. That will require the ability to work cooperatively with key stakeholders in the automotive industry, the clean-energy and technology industry, Lansing and Washington, D.C. Leadership that can effect change through strategically and effectively leveraging our current resources is the key to realizing our vision of a better Detroit.

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