

## Arizona hoping green initiatives will blossom into new jobs

by **Betty Beard** - Jan. 5, 2009 12:00 AM  
The Arizona Republic

While the nation waits to see how environmentally friendly President-elect Barack Obama's proposed stimulus package will be, Arizona's economy already is greening up.

Signs of change include a green chamber of commerce, an upcoming green-job fair and a major green-building conference.

The state already has about 50 buildings built to strict energy-efficient standards.

Big companies such as U-Haul International Inc. and the Dial Corp. are researching ways to become more Earth-friendly. Trucking companies are switching to more-fuel-efficient rigs.

The Greater Phoenix Economic Council, an economic development group, says a growth in green companies, especially solar, is among the best ways to diversify the state's economy and reduce its reliance on housing construction.

Obama's economic stimulus plan is expected to be "greenish" because of his interests in the environment and promoting

less reliance on fossil fuels.

Such a stimulus package, analysts say, could include putting unemployed construction or manufacturing workers to work making and installing solar systems or wind generators, weatherizing homes or conforming existing and new buildings to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. But it remains to be seen how many green projects would be seen as "shovel ready" and economically stimulating enough to get into the final multibillion-dollar plan Obama is expected to propose to jump-start the economy.

### Green jobs

The Center for American Progress, a Washington, D.C., think tank, has proposed a \$100 billion green-economic-recovery program that could create 2 million jobs while helping increase energy independence.

Researchers at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst estimated that Arizona, based on its population and share of the gross domestic product, could get about \$1.9 billion of that and net 37,234 new jobs. The jobs could be in fields such as mass transit, building retrofitting, smarter or more efficient electrical grids, wind power, solar power and advanced biofuels.

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does, the green economy appears to be swelling already. But it's not easy to assess its size or potential since it is so broad.

Many existing jobs could be considered green, such as those in recycling, wastewater treatment, bicycle sales and light rail. Many others can turn green with retraining, such as carpenters and plumbers who learn how to install solar systems or weatherize homes, or architects who learn how to design energy-efficient buildings.

Still other jobs are new and green, such as the growing number of people with titles like manager of sustainability.

Challenger, Gray and Christmas Inc., a Chicago online-employment company, advises college-bound students to look at careers in the environmental, ecology and alternative-energy fields because they could create significant jobs, maybe even rivaling those created in the 1990s dot-com era, or the housing boom of the early 2000s.

A recent survey of 3,259 hiring managers by CareerBuilder.com and Harris Interactive found that 13 percent of the companies plan to add green jobs in 2009, compared with 10 percent in 2008.

Arizona State University's new School of Sustainability has about 400 undergraduate and graduate students and expects to grow

to 1,500 to 2,000 in four years, said Director Charles Redman.

Brigitte Bavousett, a Chandler resident who last month received the first ASU master's degree in sustainability, has held several jobs as a consultant while still a student. She senses a big future in sustainability, an overarching and developing career that includes environmental protection, minimizing wastes and maximizing the use of resources, especially people.

"I think there's a lot of new jobs out there," Bavousett said. "Some corporations have already been appointing managers of sustainability or sustainability officers, just to have that title in place.

"One of the companies that contacted me last spring was experiencing that. 'I have this title now, and this is new to me,' they said. 'Can you come in and help us learn this?'"

The Greater Phoenix Economic Council has determined one of the best prospects for economic recovery in Arizona would be to expand solar companies and jobs. It plans to lobby the Legislature this month for incentives.

Barry Broome, GPEC president and chief executive officer, said it's important for the state to look beyond "greening" up existing jobs and to create new jobs.

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"Putting solar panels on houses in Arizona will basically boost roofing jobs. It won't create new jobs, per se," he said.

"The fix on Arizona's economy is to move it away from housing. . . . We're as dependent on housing as Michigan is on automotive."

## Green initiatives

Efforts to change the economy are under way.

The GreenSummit Expo and Conference was so successful in 2007 that it was expanded in September and drew about 100 vendors. There's a new Phoenix chapter of the Arizona Green Chamber of Commerce, which drew about 400 people to its inaugural event Nov. 18.

A Green Collar Career Fair and Expo is planned Tuesday. Anne Marie Sonnier, job developer at Arizona Women's Education and Employment Inc., said one goal is to educate people that green jobs don't just mean installing solar panels or weatherizing houses but could include working in finance, human resources or some other section for a green company.

In November, Phoenix will host the U.S. Green Building Council's Greenbuild International Conference and Expo, billed as the world's largest conference and show

dedicated to green building. An estimated 30,000 building professionals are expected.

Mara DeFilippis, a financial planner and founder and CEO of the new Phoenix chapter of the Arizona Green Chamber of Commerce, said she also is seeing more businesses turning green, such as printers specializing in soy-based inks and a hotel switching to solar-water heaters.

Redman said the ASU School of Sustainability gets three to four e-mail inquiries a week from small to medium-size companies asking for advice on how to become more environmentally responsible and sustainable, and to learn more about carbon footprints.

A carbon footprint is a rough measure of the amount of greenhouse gases a company or individual contributes to the atmosphere.

Graduate students have been hired to help the Dial Corp. assess the long-term effects of its cleaning products. Bavousett is working with U-Haul International Inc. to study ways to reduce its carbon footprint by getting involved in reforestation.

## Green Collar Career Fair and Expo

**What:** Companies and government agencies will offer information on existing and future careers in alternative energy and

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environmental sectors.

**When:** 9 a.m. to noon Tuesday.

**Where:** Travis L. Williams Family Services Center, 4732 S. Central Ave., Phoenix.

**Information:** Anne Marie Sonnier, job developer, Arizona Women's Education and Employment Inc., 602-223-4348, [www.awee.org](http://www.awee.org).

**Outlook for green-collar jobs**

Concerns about global warming, fears of high gas prices and President-elect Barack Obama's interest in a "greenish" economic stimulus program are likely to increase demands for green-collar jobs.

However, it's too early to say whether these jobs will pay more, said Charles Redman, director of Arizona State University's School of Sustainability.

"If the demand is greater than the number of qualified people, they (workers) could get a premium," he said.

**Green jobs could include those for:**

- Environmental engineers.
- Specialists in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design building designs.

- Solar-panel installers and technicians.
- Corporate-sustainability managers.
- Building retrofitters (electricians, carpenters, insulation installers, etc.).
- Mass-transit workers (from laborers to civil engineers).
- Workers at more-efficient electrical grids (computer software engineers, installers, repairers, etc.).
- Wind-power workers (engineers, steel workers, machinists, truck drivers).
- Advanced biofuels workers (chemists, agricultural workers, truck drivers).

Sources: Center for American Progress/Political Economy Research Institute at University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Challenger Gray and Christmas Inc.

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