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Green Economy Innovation Hub

An exciting vision for sustainable economic growth and community-scale resilience to climate change is emerging in the tri-state region, centered in Brattleboro, Vermont. Spurred by the closure of the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant, a local initiative has emerged to replace those lost jobs with employment in the fields of green building and resilient design.

Since 2007, the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) and Southeast Vermont Economic Development Strategy (SEVEDS) has led an investigation to assess existing assets that could fuel economic development in the tri-state region, including Windham and Bennington Counties in Vermont, Cheshire County in New Hampshire, and Franklin County in Massachusetts. This team has identified a unique cluster of green building assets across the region that includes recognized national leaders in research, product development, manufacturing, and design and construction of high-performance buildings and communities. Now with over half a million dollars in federal and state investment, a “Green Economy Innovation Hub” is being pursued to unite these assets and build a hub of sustainability and resilience that will serve as a model for other rural communities nationally and internationally.

The effort has already successfully engaged industry leaders, including:

Antioch University: The home of the Center for Climate Preparedness and Community Resilience.

Bensonwood: A national leader in sustainable, high performance timber framing construction.

The Resilient Design Institute: A national nonprofit dedicated to advancing the practice of resilient design for buildings and communities.

Green Mountain Power: The Vermont utility currently partnering with Tesla and exploring innovative storage and microgrid technologies.

Foard Panel: A manufacturer of highly efficient, structural insulated building panels.

World Learning: An international development educational organization with programs in 60 different countries.

With the participation of these organizations and many others, the Green Economy Innovation Hub Initiative has developed an integrated approach to spurring growth of green economy industries, rather than focusing on a single segment. Financial institutions have been engaged to help remove barriers to residential deep energy retrofits, as well as develop a mechanism to channel social impact investment funds for resilient, community-scale projects. Educational institutions have been connected together for the first time over a common interest in developing curriculum centered on green building. Organizations and individuals with international contacts have been recruited to establish relationships and open pathways to allow developing countries facing challenges brought by climate change to leverage the ideas and innovations that will be developed in this tri-state region.

Once launched, this Innovation Hub will attract an even broader range of talent, financial capital, manufacturers, consulting firms, and visitors who want to be at the leading edge of the green building and resilient design movement. Meanwhile, the region itself is also investigating ways in which it can become a demonstration project of the highest green ideals.

The process of identifying business specific business opportunities is moving forward with broad regional participation, led by BDCC and SeVEDS. Partners in the initiative include, Vital Economy, BuildingGreen, Inc., and the Resilient Design Institute.

Outcomes by the end of 2016 will include:

- Assessment of up to four (4) niche markets where regional assets and knowledge can successfully compete nationally;
 - Development of up to 12 high-value business opportunities for existing companies in the region or entrepreneurial start-ups;
 - An assessment of finance, insurance, appraisal, and policy solutions that can overcome barriers to investment in resilient, sustainable, and high-performance built environments;
 - A comprehensive vision for expanding and promoting the tri-state region's reputation as the place to do work related to green building, resilient design, and sustainable communities;
 - Creation and launch of a detailed implementation roadmap for this national center of excellence.
- If you would like to become involved in advancing these ideas for generating a community-scale model for sustainability and resilience, please contact:

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Members of the Green Economy Innovation Hub leadership team include:

Alex Wilson	Founder of BuildingGreen, Inc. and Resilient Design Institute
Michael Knapp	CEO and Partner of Green River Software
Nadav Malin	CEO and President of BuildingGreen, Inc.
Dan Yates	President of Brattleboro Savings & Loan
Bill Murray	Berkley & Veller Greenwood Country Realtors
Dr. Cary Gaunt	Director of Campus Sustainability, Keene State College
Robert Stevens	Founder and President of Stevens & Associates
Andrew Dey	Chief Operating Officer of Unity Homes
Janice Warren	President of One Report