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Green Works

Phila.'s green task force holding series of forums

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Philadelphia's Green Economy Task Force has formed some unusual alliances as it furthers its goal of creating thousands of green-collar jobs.

Almost 150 groups, ranging from technology companies to construction firms to nonprofits, have worked with the task force so far.

"It's a collaboration of unlikely bedfellows," said Green Jobs Coordinator Kate Houstoun. "It's kind of a tribute to the unique opportunity of the green economy. You need that spectrum because the green economy is broad. It requires a vast array of interests and talents."

The task force is spending the summer learning how to use those talents. It is hosting a series of forums as part of its Emerging Industries Project that are aimed at developing working relationships with the various industries.

The first forum, held in early June, invited manufacturers to discuss how the city can help to facilitate green opportunities in their fields. In upcoming months, the task force will host representatives from the fields of construction, demolition and waste recycling.

Houstoun said that the Emerging Industries Project gives her agency a chance to listen to local groups and determine what it will take to make Philadelphia's green economy successful.

"We can't get anything done if we're not listening to each other," she said. "We have to work quickly to assess our needs."

The task force was established in early 2008 following an inspirational speech by green jobs advocate and presidential adviser Van Jones.

"A lot of people were moved by his message," Houstoun said. "They realized that committing to creating green jobs was a triple win: help the environment, create jobs and reduce the cost of living."

A year-and-a-half later, the task force is reorganizing to accommodate its growth, forming a number of new committees.

For example, Diane Cornman-Levy, the executive director of the **Greater Philadelphia Federation of Neighborhood Centers**, will help foster youth involvement and education, a component the agency only recently began to address. She

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will also develop a job training program that uses the city's coalition of community centers.

"Community centers are points of engagement for workers and employers," she said.

Houstoun said the task force's busy summer should position it to begin helping unemployed workers by autumn. She is intent on meeting Philadelphia's goal of doubling its number of green jobs by 2015.

"It's been an incredible alignment of resources and political will," Houstoun said. "We're very focused."

Clean on the roof

The Bridge Business Center in Bristol recently installed rooftop clean-energy system as part of its ongoing renovations.

Seven gas-fired micro-turbines will help to power the 50,000-square-foot building, which will house offices, classrooms and research facilities.

The project was one of the first in the area to receive funding from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The additions were paid for with a \$1 million grant from the [Pennsylvania Energy Development Authority](#).

Additional energy-saving installations planned for the building include an electric chiller, absorption chiller and a cooling tower.

[Keystone Redevelopment Group](#), the center's developer, predicts that the turbines will create more than \$2 million in energy savings over a 10-year period.

— Adam Cancryn

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