

Green Cure-All

By Gavin Newsom and William K. Reilly

Clean technology — an emerging business sector that encompasses environmentally friendly and economically sustainable energy, water, transportation, building and a host of other goods and services — is an idea whose time has come. Unassailable in its simplicity, unparalleled in its scope, clean technology is an elegant solution to many of the economic and environmental challenges we face in cities across the nation — and around the world.

Examples of clean technology include water-efficient equipment, alternative-fuel vehicles and recycled building materials. As a rule, clean technologies are competitive with, if not superior to, their conventional counterparts. And these renewable technologies offer additional benefits: They contribute to energy independence, promote environmental conservation and provide healthier workplaces and neighborhoods.

Record-setting oil prices, growing awareness of global warming, and finite supplies of fossil fuels and other natural resources make clean technology more relevant and more compelling every day. It's no coincidence that clean technology has risen to the sixth-largest investment category in the United States and Canada (venture capital investments in clean technology rose to \$520 million in 2004, according to clean technology research and publishing firm Clean Edge) — behind information technology, software, biotechnology, health care and telecommunication.

In San Francisco, we've embraced clean technology because it's a natural next step in our proud tradition of environmental leadership. We're home to one of the largest alternative-fuel municipal fleets in the nation, we boast one of the highest recycling rates for a major U.S. city (67 percent), and we recently became the first city in the nation to enact environmentally friendly purchasing legislation.

Voted the most sustainable city in the country, San Francisco naturally attracts innovative, environment-minded businesses. Add to this the Bay Area's progressive political leaders, top-notch academic institutions and rich venture capital opportunities, and it's clear we're an ideal setting for incubating and developing new environmentally friendly technologies.

San Francisco is also blessed with natural capital that uniquely positions the city to lead in clean technology. Our strong tides, high winds, constant ocean waves and abundant sunshine provide a ready supply of renewable resources. The city's tidal power potential alone is enormous, with more than 400 million gallons of water moving through the Golden Gate each day.

In order to harness San Francisco's various strengths, we are announcing today the formation of a Clean Technology Advisory Council. Building on the overwhelming success of similar biotechnology efforts that attracted industry leaders, the council is charged with promoting the city's clean technology vision and attracting clean-technology businesses to make their home here. Start-ups and other small businesses will be a particular focus of the council because their growth will bring in revenue and jobs. In addition to communicating the many benefits of doing business in San Francisco, the council will also be able to sweeten the deal with payroll tax credits for clean-technology companies based in the city.

San Francisco businesses, political leadership and city government joined to forge a clean technology vision for our future. We believe clean technology is more than a solution to the many challenges we face — we believe it serves as a model for a new way of thinking about business and for creating partnerships that result in healthier communities and stronger economies. We don't think we're overstating the case when we say that clean technology is setting us on a path toward a more peaceful world.

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