

Oakland Tribune

Serving Oakland for 134 years

Ushering in era of green jobs that earn green

■ Oakland celebrates unveiling of landmark career-creation program

By Kelly Rayburn

STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — Mayor Ron Dellums and Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Oakland, were on hand in West Oakland on Monday to unveil the Oakland Green Jobs Corps, a new job-creation program officials are hoping to grow in Oakland and, potentially, across the United States.

The Green Jobs Corps aims to lift people



Dellums

"This is a very elegant idea — elegant in its simplicity," Dellums said. "The simple

idea is: fight pollution and fight poverty simultaneously. ... If you tie the unfinished business of poverty to the new challenges of global warming, you are not training and employing people for obsolescence. You are training them for the future." The program — for now — is modest in its reach. It relies on \$250,000 from the city to train 40 young adults for jobs with solar firms and green-construction contractors. But officials said they hope to build on

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what has already been accomplished.

Dellums said he hopes Congress will include a green-industry component in an economic stimulus package federal lawmakers could put together after the Nov. 4 elections.

Lee, meantime, spoke on a bill she introduced Aug. 1 to boost green-job training and environmentally friendly development, and to establish a Metro Area Green Institute to benefit green initiatives in urban settings.

Lee said that even with everything going on in the financial world and in Washington, D.C., she's optimistic Congress will invest in a burgeoning economic sector.

"We want the federal government to buy in to what is taking place here in Oakland, Calif.," she said. "This is critical, because then, once the federal government buys in, I believe our nation can see that it can be done. It can be done. We must go green."

Lee pledged to work hard to get the legislation through the House and eventually signed into law.

Dellums said he was hopeful that U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., would sponsor similar legislation on the Senate side.

An aide to Boxer said the senator has sponsored a number of green initiatives and supports Lee's bill in concept, but has not introduced companion legislation at this point.

The Green Jobs Corps grew from a model developed by Raquel Pinderhughes of San Francisco State. It was subsequently championed by the

Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and the Oakland Apollo Alliance.

Dellums' office requested funding for the program, which was approved by a council committee in the summer. The \$250,000 grant was given to a team made up of representatives from Laney College, the Cypress Mandela Training Center in West Oakland and a workforce-development organization, Growth Sector.

The program includes training in green construction techniques, solar installation and energy efficiency and a number of Bay Area businesses have signed on to help with the training and, potentially hire people when they complete the program.

Elected leaders who attended Monday's event — Dellums; Lee; Assemblymembers Loni Hancock, D-Berkeley, and Sandré Swanson, D-Alameda; Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson; and City Councilmembers Nancy Nadel (Downtown-West Oakland) and Jane Brunner (North Oakland) — praised the young men and women going through the program.

One participant, Olivia Caldwell, 27, of East Oakland, said she is learning a lot about construction, but that, to her, the program is about more than steady work. It's also about future generations.

"This is not just for me, but it's for my daughter," Caldwell said. "I don't want to leave the world in disarray. And by me being a future builder and learning how to build green, I'm giving back to my community and giving back to my world."

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