

Is the City of Dallas Really Going Green, Or Just Talking Till It's Blue in the Face?

By Alexa Schirtzinger in [News You Can Actually Use, Actually](#)

Thursday, Jul. 2 2009 @ 11:19AM

The city of Dallas has made much of its efforts to "build a greener city" ... which means what, exactly? That, more or less, was the question posed earlier this week during a confab at the downtown Dallas library during a program billed as a dialogue on the "green economy," a catchphrase that's become increasingly popular but **is seldom well-defined**. According to Cyrus Reed, the Sierra Club-Lone Star Chapter's conservation director, that's because a green economy isn't necessarily a defined thing; rather, it's a tailored version of how a city plans to move forward.



"It depends on the local context," Reed told Unfair Park before his presentation began. "You need to figure out what your niche is."



Alexa Schirtzinger
Sierra Club's Cyrus Reed

Reed kicked off the dialogue -- the last of a year-long series sponsored by the University of Texas-Dallas's [Institute for Urban Policy Research](#) -- by outlining the federal funding likely to become available to cities that take steps in the direction of sustainability. First, there's the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which includes millions of dollars for green building, weatherization and renewable energy. Reed said that Texas all by its lonesome has received

more thsn \$700 million for energy-efficiency projects. There's also the more controversial American Clean Energy and Security Act, also known as Waxman-Markey, a wide-ranging bill aimed at curbing carbon emissions through a cap-and-trade system that last Friday **passed the U.S. House of Representatives**.

But how much federal money a city like Dallas gets -- and how effective that money can be -- is in part contingent on Dallas' commitment to using it for green initiatives.

Pamela Tate, the CEO and president of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, says Dallas needs to work on connecting the idea of a green economy with the actual reality of retraining and educating its workforce.

"It is true that there's all this new money [available]," Tate said, "but there may be a gap between the training and the installation."

Tate's organization helped the city of San Antonio recast itself as a green economy by designing different career paths -- everything from technicians (green plumbers and electricians) to designers, managers and communications experts. Tate says Dallas is growing in a whole rash of different sectors at once -- health care and education services, manufacturing, construction, air transportation and many others -- which means a lot of options for greening our economy.

"If you want to be successful, you have to link economic development with environmental sustainability," Tate told the audience. "The two can coexist and benefit each other."

Still, she stressed that Dallas not stop with its current basic environmental

Search box with "Search" button and "Blogs Only" checkbox. [Advanced Archive Search >>](#)

Most

[Recent](#) [Commented](#) [Viewed](#)

[Virtually Speaking, a Three-Dimensional Tour of "A Sustainable City Block for Dallas"](#)

[As Rainbow Lounge Raid Story Spreads Across Country, the First Interview with Chad Gibson](#)

[From the Spider Hole to Lewisville to SMU, Most Likely, the Journeys of Saddam's Pistol](#)

[Last Night at the Fair Park Fourth, the Smell of Patriotism and Pyrotechnics In the Air](#)

[In Rockwall, Gov. Rick Perry Spills Some Tea](#)

[More Recent Entries...](#)

Slideshows



[Fourth of July Sparkman Club Parade in North Dallas](#)



[Fireworks at the Fair Park Fourth](#)



[Edible Weirdness at the Southwest Foodservice Expo](#)

[More Slideshows >>](#)

Twitter Updates

How Saddam Hussein's pistol could go from Iraq to the Oval Office to SMU
<http://is.gd/1oOAu> 31 minutes ago

Congrats to our own Jesse Hughey - 15 mins, 16 corn dogs. Only in America!
<http://twitpic.com/9cavl1> 1 day ago

Celebrating the 4th @libertinebar tonight, full of patriotism and corn dogs. Contest begins at 7 1 day ago

RT @cityofate: You could have a shot o' somethin'

Navigation menu with checkboxes for Weekly, Music, Promotions, Dining, Dallas After Dark, Events. Includes a "Subscribe" section with an "E-Mail Address" field and a "Go" button.

- ### Now Click This
- DOMA Showcase Tickets
 - Artania Show
 - Facebook
 - Ad Index
 - LikeMe.Net
 - Virtual Job Fair
 - MySpace
 - Flip Book

- ### Free Classifieds Dallas, TX
- buy, sell, trade (5,325)
 - musician (1,174)
 - rentals (6,026)
 - jobs (2,138)
 - adult entertainment (11,824)

PERSONAL OF THE DAY
[More Personals >>](#)

programs, things like weatherization and energy efficiency improvements, which provide jobs but perhaps less forward-looking ones than creating a niche in sustainable service industries.

"Everybody's going to do energy efficiency," Tate said. "You have to do that; it's the first pillar of green. But that is just step one."

After Tate presented, Eric Griffin, the interim director of the city's Office of Environmental Quality, explained to the group of around 35 attendees that his office's goal is a "more transformational" sustainability plan to look at the city's long-term future.

"Green jobs -- I don't believe that's a niche market," Griffin said. "It's not new; we have green jobs all around us right now."

Between 1998 and 2007, Griffin said, green jobs grew almost three times as fast as traditional jobs did. What's more, they often pay 10 to 20 percent more. Griffin explained Dallas's initiatives to green itself (and take advantage of federal money): the green building ordinance, set for implementation this October; retrofitting buildings to allow for sustainability; and a weatherization, job training and community development program for low-income neighborhoods called the **Dallas Sustainable Communities Initiative**. Where that came from, Griffin said, was one eternal economic demand: Show me the money.

"Frankly, energy efficiency, 'green' ... that hasn't resonated in the community as a whole. We're looking at dollar savings in your pocket," Griffin said. "How can we save you money in your home, and also reduce emissions?" It may not be a quick transition to the greenest city on earth, but it's a start.

Related Content	
Related Stories... Strange and Passionate Emissions From Yesterday's EPA Cement Kiln Hearing June 18, 2009 As Rainbow Lounge Raid Story Spreads Across Country, the First Interview with Chad Gibson July 6, 2009 Virtually Speaking, a Three-Dimensional Tour of "A Sustainable City Block for Dallas" July 6, 2009 Last Night at the Fair Park Fourth, the Smell of Patriotism and Pyrotechnics In the Air July 5, 2009 Turning the Restaurant Business Inside Out at the Southwest Foodservice Expo July 3, 2009	More About... Dallas Pamela Tate Cyrus Reed Science and Technology Green Business

1 comment(s) / [Post a Comment](#)

Brown Bess says:

I hope some of this money makes it into South Dallas, one of the "greenest" part of the city already. Name a neighborhood more reliant on mass transit, who recycles more, who knew energy prices were too high even when the rest of us didn't?

Posted On: **Thursday, Jul. 2 2009 @ 1:22PM**

cool at [@LeeHarveys](#) just like [Girl Drink Drunk](#)
<http://is.gd/1IOyp> 3 days ago

DPD pledges zero tolerance for fireworks this 4th
<http://bit.ly/VZPvO> 3 days ago

Subscribe to RSS

Receive e-mail updates

Monthly Archives

- Categories**
- [Arts \(123\)](#)
 - [Bible Girl: The Unfair Park Religion Column \(71\)](#)
 - [Business News for People Who Don't Read Business News \(434\)](#)
 - [Buzz \(13\)](#)
 - [Cool Stuff That Doesn't Fit Anywhere Else \(59\)](#)
 - [Cover Story \(74\)](#)
 - [Crime and Punishment \(269\)](#)
 - [Dish \(243\)](#)
 - [Edumication News \(178\)](#)
 - [Events \(29\)](#)
 - [Famous People are Idiots, Most of the Time \(52\)](#)
 - [Fashionable News for Fashionable Readers \(141\)](#)
 - [Film \(76\)](#)
 - [Free Stuff! Free Stuff! \(7\)](#)
 - [From the RTF Department \(437\)](#)
 - [Generally Bad Ideas \(31\)](#)
 - [Girl on Top \(62\)](#)
 - [It's Gettin' All Political Up in This Piece \(608\)](#)
 - [Local Music \(389\)](#)
 - [Media \(550\)](#)
 - [Memo from The Boss \(12\)](#)
 - [Music \(248\)](#)
 - [News You Can Actually Use,](#)