



Forget the Fog and Smog, San Francisco Goes Green

From Water-Powered Elevators to a Solar Stadium, City Leads Nation in Global Warming Fight

By **BRIAN ROONEY**

SAN FRANCISCO, May 8, 2007 —

This is the first city in America to ban plastic shopping bags. The 2.5-acre roof of the new California Academy of Sciences will be covered with 1.7 million plants—a "living roof," they call it. And the baseball stadium is getting solar panels to help power the scoreboard for Barry Bonds' home runs.

These efforts have spawned a locally produced cartoon show, "The Unsustainables," that pokes a little fun at the difficulties of going green while encouraging people to do it.

The fog town is becoming the green city, possibly leading the country in efforts to find and use new sources of energy.

Why San Francisco?

It's partly the weather, where it's often sunny but never freezing, so the climate is a laboratory for solar and other alternative energies. And this city in the past 30 years has become the place where desire for change, technical innovation, and enormous sums of money ready to invest in new forms of energy all come together.

Just a few miles south of here, in Silicon Valley, is where the computer and Internet revolutions were hatched.

"Last year, the venture capital funding for green or renewable technologies was something like \$1.5 billion," said Ray Lane, managing partner at the investment firm Kleiner, Perkins, Caulfield & Byers. "This year, it will be \$3.5 billion."

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom said, "The history of this city has always been one of not just dreaming but doing. It's been the city that's wanted to lead by example and be on the cutting and leading edge of so many social movements and justice movements. And when it comes to environmental stewardship, we've been doing it for the past 15 years."

Green Signs All Over Town

Many places one looks, one sees evidence of the greening of San Francisco. The roof of the San Francisco Zen Center is covered with solar panels, and the city recycling center has solar power, as well.

The Public Utilities Commission plans to build what it describes as the most energy-efficient building in

the United States. Its new offices will have solar panels built into the skin and wind-powered turbines hidden in the architectural features.

The building will provide 40 percent of its annual power needs while recycling some of its own water and powering the elevators with water pressure.

"It's absolutely essential for government to establish the benchmark for responsible environmental design," said Tony Irons, deputy general manager of the PUC.

Even the Episcopal Cathedral has seen the light, and it comes in the form of energy-efficient, corkscrew-shaped fluorescent bulbs in use throughout the church.

The cathedral makes every effort to conserve energy, and plans to install solar panels, but it also has a national ministry that sounds like a utility company—Episcopal Power and Light.

The Rev. Sally Bingham encourages churches across the country to conserve energy and preach the green message to their parishes. It's a religious issue, she said.

"God calls us to be the steward of creation," Bingham said. "And we can't just continue business as usual or we're no longer the stewards of creation, because we're ruining it."

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