

Evidence gathering for region's 'greening'

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The gap between talking about some particular thing and actually doing it can be maddeningly long.

It's been about three years since representatives from counties, cities, a university, economic development groups and nascent businesses met to officially launch a Clean Energy Cluster, a public and private collaboration intended to create a new and growing economic sector in Northern Colorado.

Organizers saw a new segment of our economy that could become the basis for most new job growth and, better yet, identify the region as one of the world's principal hubs for clean and renewable energy research and production.

Well. Guess what? We're there.

At the Business Report, the staff has growing awareness that any story they dig up on their reporting beats these days is, more than likely, going to have a "clean and green" connection. Just look at what's made news in the past two editions, including this one:

- The relocation of a company called C-zero Inc. that develops technology that improves the efficiency and cleanliness of diesel-burning engines from Colorado Springs to Fort Collins, a clear indicator that the clean-energy sector has developed a magnetic pull.
- The move by a small business in Greeley, an Aamco Transmission franchise, to offer relatively low-cost conversion kits so that cars without the capacity to burn E85 fuel - that which is 85 percent ethanol - can line up at the "green" pump.
- Announcements in the past months of major new real estate projects all have the acronym "LEED," for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, attached to them. In fact, LEED is the four-letter word on the lips of almost every developer these days.

None of the above says anything about the two elephants in our room. Vestas Wind Systems, the Danish company that is building a Windsor plant that would put 460 people to work building 1,200 huge wind turbine blades annually, announced that it would double the plant's space and capacity.

And AVA Solar Inc., perhaps the most promising of all our "native" renewable energy companies, is poised to build its first plant on Fort Collins' doorstep, one that could be the first

of many that AVA will build, some in this region, in coming years.

Those who imagined three years ago that a new clean-energy sector could emerge in Northern Colorado have already been commended for their vision. Here's to the businesses that have made it happen so quickly.

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