

# TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

## **More than a brand**

May 27, 2008

Tallahassee Democrat

Green means innovation and reduction

A growing number of businesses and institutions say they've gone green, and many are touting their newfound environmental awareness.

Ideas vary in the marketplace of ideas and commerce about what "green" really means, and as our community and country shift from wasteful to waste-reducing over the next several decades, so will notions of sustainability.

But clearly the transformation — in both thinking and practice — has begun. Whether one's motivation is primarily to save the planet or start a green company that makes bundles of money is largely irrelevant. People on all ends of the philosophical and political spectrum recognize that the free market and the innovation it spawns are critical to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Last week Gov. Charlie Crist sent a strong signal to venture capitalists that Florida was eager for investments to generate innovation, including green business and technology.

Legislation that he signed on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange allows almost \$2 billion in state pension money to be invested in high-tech and growth industries in Florida, and that certainly includes companies committed to energy-related innovation.

That's good news for the whole state, and also the Big Bend, a region sorely in need of economic diversification and ripe for the growth of green business and energy efficiency in all respects.

Quite a bit already is under way, but there is potential for much more. This week, for example, Marpan Recycling's new multimillion-dollar operation on Woodville Highway officially opens for business. Owner Kim Williams saw both need and opportunity in an enterprise that recovers construction debris, old furniture and scrap metal and sorts and recycles roughly 70 percent of it.

In the public sector, the city of Tallahassee has undertaken a comprehensive green initiative ([www.talgov.com/green.cfm](http://www.talgov.com/green.cfm)). Earlier this year, Tallahassee became only the second city in Florida to receive a Green City Local Government Standard Award for environmental stewardship from the Florida Green Building Coalition.

Today, Leon County is scheduled to consider an expansion of its own efforts, with a long-range plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in county-government operations. The goal: an 80-percent reduction by 2050.

"What we're doing, in my view, is leading by example," County Commissioner Cliff Thaeil said. "I'm envisioning that once the county gets its act together, we can encourage individuals, businesses, neighborhood groups and others to take the green pledge."

The green revolution is probably more precisely an evolution, and these local events and strategies are all part of it. The objective is environmental responsibility, obviously, but also economic sustainability. High energy costs simply aren't affordable over the long run, and developing clean, efficient technologies and strategies is in everyone's interest.

*Copyright ©2008 Tallahassee Democrat. All rights reserved.*