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## The pole shift to a global green economy

By **TONY PAUKER AND MARY LYDON**

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The Mayan calendar marked the year 2012 as the end of their "26,000 year cycle." The Mayans may have been prophetic. Some have said that their culture was in tune with nature, and others have claimed the Mayan culture collapsed as they outstripped the resources of Meso-America. Today, there is a global awareness on global resources -- it ranges from the price of oil (purely driven by supply and demand) to real concern about global warming. What is clear is that by 2050, the world will be different. We may very well be living in a warmer place and drive vehicles power by something other than petroleum.

How many times have you heard the words green, sustainability, carbon footprint, LEED-certified, renewable, organic, solar powered, wind-powered, etc. this week alone? Frequently, we do not even know what these terms mean, but they do seem to be becoming part of our consciousness. A year ago, these concepts seemed on the fringe, but today they are mainstream topics of commerce and science.

The eco-fringe has been replaced by two camps rapidly converging: the world of science demonstrating the impacts we place on the planet and the entrepreneurial business world recognizing an opportunity and embracing the potential. Think about even the smallest examples -- a few years ago you could not buy canvas grocery bags, now most markets will credit you a few dimes if you bring your own bags.

There are bigger examples. Just a few weeks ago, the United Arab Emirates claimed stake to make Abu Dhabi the center of the future of sustainable energy rather than the title they currently hold as one of the world's highest per-capita greenhouse-gas emitters. That is quite a statement from a place sustained by oil; but it is also an acknowledgement that a well-capitalized creative economy responds the forces of supply (less oil) and demand (for more sustainable options). Fortunately, it has plenty of capital to invest in this endeavor. The emirate has plans for futuristic travel pods that do not require gas, solar and wind energy to power its cities and water desalination plants. Their plans for a 15,000-resident city will be approved by the World Wildlife Fund to assure it meets with their sustainability principles. No project costs estimates as of yet, but it is anticipating early move-in dates by next year, with project completion scheduled for 2016.

To support the sustainable cities of the 21st century, the Urban Land Institute, in partnership with *The Financial Times*, is sponsoring a New Sustainable Cities Award. The Sustainable Cities Award acknowledge exceptional examples of sustainable land-use models that exhibit significant new ideas and perspectives for future practice, rather than celebrating past achievements. Nominations need to demonstrate financial viability, as well as replicability and a capacity to inspire others. Seven awards will be handed out at the first-ever Sustainable Cities conference, which will be jointly hosted by *The Financial Times* and ULI in London on June 16. The Ecocity World Summit will convene the ECOCITY 2008 conference in San Francisco in April to explore re-designing around dense urban development with land uses, architecture and infrastructure for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit, powered by renewable energy. Locally, we are not ready to celebrate our successes on these fronts, but we have many potentially exciting opportunities that will set the stage for such accolades in the future.

This column has looked out way beyond our San Diego boundaries but the intention with this big look is to inspire and encourage San Diego to find and create its own sustainable vision for itself. San Diego is a fairly new city as it relates to the rest of the country, and we've always struggled with who we wanted to be when we grew up. Perhaps by aligning with the leading edge of this green pole shift, we will finally find our identity.

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*Pauker is chair and Lydon is executive director of Urban Land Institute of San Diego/Tijuana.*