



DINA TITUS



LANCE KIRK



IRWIN MOLASKY



STEVE RYPKA

NEVADA'S GREEN LEADERS

BY CINDI R. MACIOLEK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM K. DECKER
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Green is the word nowadays, and Las Vegas is making its way to the forefront of environmental activities. As we start the new year with commitments to being the best that we can be, here's a salute to four local residents who long ago resolved to make green living and sustainability an essential part of their lives – and ours.



Dina Titus

DINA TITUS IS OFTEN KNOWN AS SENATOR, HAVING REPRESENTED THE PEOPLE OF SENATE DISTRICT 7 IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE FOR NEARLY 20 YEARS AND SERVING AS SENATE MINORITY LEADER SINCE 1992. HOWEVER, MANY LAS VEGAS RESIDENTS DON'T REALIZE SHE'S AN ACADEMIC AS WELL. FOR THE PAST 30 YEARS, DINA TITUS, PH.D., HAS TAUGHT AMERICAN AND NEVADA GOVERNMENT AT UNLV. SHE'S A STRONG ADVOCATE FOR EDUCATION AND SENIORS, BUT SHE ALSO HAS A SOFT SPOT IN HER HEART FOR THE ENVIRONMENT. HER SUCCESS WITH RECENT LEGISLATION TO PROTECT RED ROCK CANYON FROM ENCROACHING DEVELOPMENT IS JUST ONE EXAMPLE. RENEWABLE ENERGY IS ALSO HIGH ON HER LIST.



WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY ON GREEN LIVING?
I like to take a broader approach. Sustainability is not just about the environment. It has to do with the cultural and societal aspects of life and the economy. The main idea is to leave the planet better than you found it. That way, you can get what you need and want from it, and the next generation can also get what it needs without destroying the planet. Some people look at the desert and see nothing. If you really look, you'll see that it's worth protecting. We need to change public perception.

“THE MAIN IDEA IS TO LEAVE THE PLANET BETTER THAN YOU FOUND IT.”

WHERE DOES THE GOVERNMENT FIT INTO THIS?
Government has responsibilities, but it hasn't gone far enough yet. Until private industry becomes more competitive, the government

needs to provide incentives such as tax incentives, net metering and portfolio standards for renewable energy. We started with legislation in this direction, but unfortunately, we've had to pull back a bit. It's a learning process. We'll continue to push forward legislation because it needs to be done. The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) must become more renewable-energy oriented. The Nevada Development Authority (NDA) needs to attract renewable energy companies, but also companies that supply products to those businesses. That will give Nevada a vertical structure for renewables in the state.

WE LIVE IN A DESERT. WHY ISN'T IT REQUIRED THAT EVERY NEW HOME MUST BE BUILT WITH SOLAR POWER?

First of all, we live in a time when power comes too easily. Rates go up, and people just accept it. The power company is a conservative, traditional utility. It's easier to do the same thing the same way. The time, trouble and money required just haven't been worth it to people. Home builders have been opposed to it because it adds cost. Commercial tax incentives have

been better than residential so far. Right now, only a limited number of people qualify for net metering programs. If you have solar power, your overflow energy goes back to the grid and the utility company gets the green credits and sells your power. If individuals could get paid for all their excess energy and keep the renewable credits to sell on the open market, it would be more worthwhile and more of an incentive to use solar power on a residence. Building solar into homes from the outset would also be more affordable than adding it later because the cost could be built into the mortgage and paid over time.

WHAT IS THE BEST EXAMPLE OF GREEN LIVING IN LAS VEGAS?

We've made great strides in green building. Seven of the 10 largest LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) projects in the country are happening on the Strip. Organizations and environmental groups are becoming more politically active. UNLV has a sustainability center. And, UNR offers an engineering program with a minor in renewable energy.

Steve Rypka

A LOT OF PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE GREENER LIVES, AND STEVE RYPKA HELPS THEM TO DO JUST THAT. THROUGH HIS COMPANY, GREENDREAM ENTERPRISES, INC., RYPKA CONSULTS WITH BOTH BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS TO IDENTIFY WAYS TO IMPROVE OVERALL SUSTAINABILITY. RYPKA IS A CO-FOUNDER OF THE U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL - NEVADA CHAPTER, AND CURRENTLY SERVES AS PRESIDENT OF SOLAR NV. HIS SOLAR-POWERED HOME HAS BEEN FEATURED ON VALLEY TOURS, AND HE CAN BE SEEN DRIVING AROUND TOWN IN HIS HYBRID AUTOMOBILE. IN HIS SPARE TIME, HE SHARES HIS KNOWLEDGE WITH SCHOOL CHILDREN AND ENTICES THE GREEN LIFESTYLE BY BAKING COOKIES IN HIS SOLAR OVEN. HE'S LOWERED HIS CARBON FOOTPRINT BY 75 PERCENT, AND HE BUYS OFFSETS OF RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR THE REST. HE'S EVEN BEEN KNOWN TO FOREGO A TRIP IN ORDER TO KEEP HIS CARBON FOOTPRINT IN LINE.



WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY ON GREEN LIVING?
The idea of green living is a holistic approach. The real benefits come from the cumulative effect of a lot of small decisions that we make on a daily basis. Change is constant in nature, and we need to consistently choose a path that heals the earth. We're in a planetary crisis right now, and climate changes affect every single life force on the planet. In order to make intelligent decisions, we need a 10,000-year plan, looking at the long-term ramifications of what we do.

WHAT CAN LAS VEGAS DO TO LEAD GREENER LIVES?
From a commercial standpoint, the adoption of green building practices on a large scale is critical. We're already seeing that with several construction projects on the Strip. On an individual basis, there are also a lot of options, including use of Energy Star appliances, being water wise and not wasting anything – especially energy. Just changing our eating habits can have a huge impact on our carbon footprint. A meat-based diet has a higher contribution to

greenhouse gases than a vegetarian one. For the least cost and greatest impact, change your diet. I love being a vegetarian.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST STRUGGLE TO GET PEOPLE TO THINK GREEN?
Education is by far the most important. You can't get people motivated if they don't understand the problem. We have to overcome the inertia of a society where everyone has been raised with an unlimited supply of energy and other resources. We're hitting the limits on some of those supplies, and most people aren't even aware of it. Nearly everything we do is based on fossil fuels. Just imagine our world without them. Las Vegas has a huge opportunity on a global scale to be a leader. The city is recognized worldwide. We need to generate the momentum to move the city in the green direction and be part of that change.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF GREEN?
Green living is really about sustainability, and sustainability creates resiliency in communities.

“LAS VEGAS HAS A HUGE OPPORTUNITY ON A GLOBAL SCALE TO BE A LEADER.”

It brings back true relationships with your neighbors, imbuing interdependency at a human level. It includes pure native vegetation that requires practically no water, and developing local food production. We need to minimize the effects of quarterly profit and loss statements and election cycles and maximize the effect of all we do to protect the biosphere. We need to be financially responsible, as thinking human beings who make rational decisions rather than just as “consumers.” I'm trying to train myself to appreciate what I have right here and now.

Irwin Molasky

AS CHAIRMAN OF THE MOLASKY GROUP OF COMPANIES, IRWIN MOLASKY HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN BUILDING MILLIONS OF SQUARE FEET OF COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES IN THE CITY. HIS NEWEST CONTRIBUTION IS MOLASKY CORPORATE CENTER IN DOWNTOWN LAS VEGAS, ONE OF ONLY 150 BUILDINGS IN THE WORLD THAT CURRENTLY HAVE ACHIEVED LEED GOLD CERTIFICATION BY THE U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL. THE BUILDING SPORTS PHOTOVOLTAIC CELLS FOR SOLAR POWER, HEALTHY PAINTS WITHOUT VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS (VOCs), NO SMOKING, LOTS OF GLASS TO BRING IN DAYLIGHT, LOW WALLS TO SEPARATE OFFICE AREAS ALLOWING LIGHT TO PASS THROUGHOUT THE BUILDING, BAMBOO FURNISHINGS AND WALL COVERINGS, AND RECYCLED MATERIALS INCLUDING SHREDDED BLUE JEANS FOR INSULATION AND RECYCLED STEEL. IT'S A HEALTHY BUILDING FROM THE GROUND UP, AND IT WILL USE OVER 30 PERCENT LESS ENERGY THAN A COMPARABLE NON-GREEN BUILDING.



WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY ON GREEN LIVING?

Building the Molasky Corporate Center as a green building was both a philosophical and practical decision. It's the right thing to do. We live in a country that is much too dependent upon foreign oil. We have to build better cars and better buildings that are more energy efficient.

WHAT DOES LAS VEGAS NEED TO DO TO BECOME GREENER?

Everyone needs to become more involved, including the legislature. Although many people are aware of the need to be green, very few people are actually doing something about it. It's not cheap to build a green building. Molasky Corporate Center cost an extra \$8 million, and we don't get a nickel more on our rent. However, you can't put a price on people's health and the additional energy savings we'll enjoy. The economics don't always work out, but in a green building, people are healthier. They have fewer colds and there's less employee turnover.

“IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.”

HOW CAN A THRIVING, GROWING CITY LIKE LAS VEGAS MAINTAIN ITS GROWTH WHILE REDUCING ITS CARBON FOOTPRINT?

There's currently \$40 billion in construction on the Strip. We can't lose sight of the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of jobs involved. New properties will bring over 100,000 jobs. Those employees will need housing, bankers, butchers and so on. We can't put up artificial restraints or those jobs will go away. We have to make wise choices.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST STRUGGLE TO GET PEOPLE TO THINK GREEN?

I don't think it's a struggle, it's a matter of education. There are many simple things that people can do to reduce their energy usage. Get compact fluorescent bulbs, recapture water for landscaping, install blinds on windows that reflect heat. You don't have to do everything, you just have to do something.

Lance Kirk

LANCE KIRK IS A CO-FOUNDER OF THE U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL (USGBC) NEVADA CHAPTER. WHEN HE WAS STUDYING ARCHITECTURE AT UNLV, GREEN BUILDING WAS PART OF THE CURRICULUM, THOUGH IT WAS NOT AS COMPREHENSIVE AS THE PROGRAM IS TODAY. HE OPTED TO FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY, AND AS HE BEGAN TO SEEK OUT RESOURCES HE DISCOVERED THERE WASN'T A CENTRAL SOURCE FOR THOSE WHO WERE INTERESTED IN SUSTAINABLE DESIGN HERE IN LAS VEGAS. HE BECAME INVOLVED WITH THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS (AIA) AND QUICKLY FOUNDED THE AIA LAS VEGAS COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT (COTE) TO EDUCATE ARCHITECTS AND THE COMMUNITY ON THE BENEFITS AND REQUIREMENTS OF GREEN BUILDING. THAT LED TO HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH THE USGBC. HE'S CURRENTLY AN INTERN ARCHITECT WITH LUCCHESI GALATI, PARTICIPATING IN THE DESIGN OF MANY GREEN BUILDING PROJECTS IN LAS VEGAS. ONE OF HIS PET PERSONAL PROJECTS IS REFURBISHING HIS OLDER HOME TO BE MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT WHILE UTILIZING GREEN RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN THE LOCAL MARKETPLACE. HE WANTS TO SHOW PEOPLE HOW EASILY IT CAN BE DONE JUST BY MAKING WISE CHOICES.



WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY ON GREEN LIVING?

My focus is on sustainability. Green building is only one aspect. Sustainability is a way of life. The old perception is of tree huggers and people living in yurts. The perspective is now bigger, dealing with the social ramifications that go beyond the building. We all have different degrees of being less bad, but how do you regenerate and give back? We need to think in terms of nature. It gives and takes and there is no waste.

WHAT IS THE BEST THING LAS VEGAS RESIDENTS CAN DO IN TERMS OF LIVING GREEN?

Education is probably the most important. People aren't aware of what to do or where to go to learn to live a sustainable life. Sustainability is a philosophy that has you rethink how you do things. It's a massive mind shift to a holistic approach. We're not tuned into that. We live in an era of immense power consumption and status. Sustainability doesn't mean you have to give things up. It's symbiotic. There's a relationship with regard to everything. The Springs Preserve is a great resource for people to learn how to make positive changes in their lives.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR HOME PROJECT.

I live in an older home that definitely needs to be updated. Many homes built after 1998 are Energy Star efficient. However, homes built before then need to be retrofitted. They need better insulation and newer windows. They also need to have updated equipment installed for heating and cooling. You can't do anything about orientation of the house, so you have to make changes where you can. Many of these items can be pretty costly. I'm attempting to refurbish my house using items off the shelf to prove that anyone can do it. I want my house to stand as a definition of environmentally friendly.

WHERE DOES THE IDEA OF GREEN LIVING GO FROM HERE?

Embracing and accepting green as a positive, wonderful contribution will benefit everyone in the long run. We need to think more about everything we do. Most people don't take longer than a five-year view when it comes to building development, when in fact the building will probably last at least 20 if not 50 years or more. We need to make better decisions. Then we'll get better results. □

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