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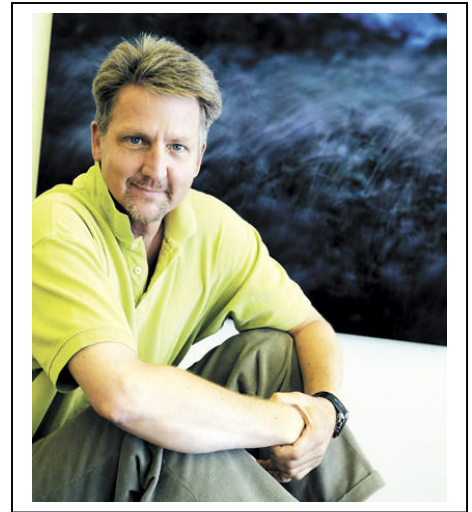
Second green chamber didn't quite make it - but may still try

East Bay Business Times - by [Mavis Scanlon](#)

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<http://eastbay.bizjournals.com/eastbay/stories/2008/06/02/focus2.html>

Stephanie Secrest | East Bay Business Times



Willi Paul of the former Green Chamber, now with Business Emergency Safety Training.

As James Carter was working at a grassroots level getting the Green Chamber of Commerce off the ground, a group of far-flung individuals with seemingly similar interests was trying to form the Green Chamber, a national organization for businesses interested in sustainable issues.

But within months, those efforts fizzled. Several of the people involved with the effort early on said there were internal disagreements about what the Green Chamber would look like and how it would be funded.

And the group also was far ahead of itself in the early days, with articles touting the chamber despite the fact that there actually were no members, no real organizational structure and no mechanism for funding or collecting dues.

"We were quick to publicize the opportunity without having a lot of finances or backing and a staff in place," said Willi Paul, a Berkeley resident who was going to head the Northern California region. "A lot of what we experienced was having a vision and rushing to get it out there - the back end wasn't there."

Still, two people who had been involved from early on say their efforts were not totally wasted.

Theckla Sterrett, president of Mountain Laurel Advertising in Charlotte, N.C., and Christopher Manning, principal of Manning & Associates Financial Services, a socially responsible investment firm in Houston, would still like to see a national green chamber of commerce move forward.

"We expect to bring it back," Sterrett said. "I've been looking for people to help me. Our goal is to help more businesses understand what it means to be green."

Credit for initially bringing the group together goes to Jon Anderson, a 26-year-old who after studying at Virginia Wesleyan College started the Urban Land Preservation Fund of America in 2005. Most of the people who initially got involved with the Green Chamber were brought together through Coop America, a Washington, D.C., nonprofit focused on social and environmental justice.

But from the beginning the virtual organization, which had attracted people in San Diego, Charlotte, Texas, Northern California and the Washington, D.C., area, had a difficult time just getting organizers together for a conference call.

While everyone was gung-ho at first, Sterrett said, it soon became clear that time was an issue for those, like Sterrett, who were managing their own businesses. It also became clear that Anderson did not have the experience to manage the organization, Sterrett and Manning said.

Anderson ended up turning over management of the nascent organization to Manning.

"I didn't realize how big it was going to get," Anderson said.

Manning said he was to be one of the people who would run the chamber.

Another disagreement centered on what type of businesses would be able to join, Manning said. The group as a whole struggled with the definition of what exactly a sustainable business was and what exactly the membership criteria would be.

If Manning were to do it all over again, he said, he would do more planning before getting so many *people involved*.