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Experts are bullish on some regional stocks

Atticus Lowe
VICE PRESIDENT, WEST COAST ASSET
MANAGEMENT
VENTURA



Atticus Lowe holds a “mediocre” outlook in general for stocks in 2006 but believes excellent opportunities, such as alternative energy companies, do exist.

Companies on the leading edge in the solar, wind, fuel cell and clean coal technology sectors of the energy space bear risk but could produce a pop next year, Lowe, a vice president with Ventura-based West Coast Asset Management, stated in his report on the market.

Founded by Lance Helfert and Kinkos Founder Paul Orfalea, West Coast manages \$350 million for its clients.

Lowe said most companies have dramatically improved their balance sheets

and have large amounts of cash, a positive note for 2006. He also said the dollar will weaken over the long term and favors companies with multinational revenue streams, tangible assets and a strong competitive advantage.

For savvy investors, Lowe said he thinks private equity firms will continue to take advantage of cheap money and aggressively pursue buying publicly traded companies.

Potential shocks to the market in 2006 include higher oil prices, Lowe said. He said excess capacity is scarce and global demand is rapidly rising, leaving little room for disruptions such as terrorism or political instability.

Among companies poised for a turnaround, Lowe likes Microsoft, Wal-Mart, Pfizer, Heinz, Johnson & Johnson and Anheuser-Busch, which he said are all trading at historically low valuations.

