



New American Dream Launches “Carbon Conscious Communities”

A year ago, the Center for a New American Dream launched its Carbon Conscious Consumer (C3) campaign, urging individuals to take personal steps to cut their carbon footprints. The campaign moves into a new phase this year. In 2008, “C3” will stand for “Carbon Conscious Communities” as the campaign shifts to helping entire communities meet carbon reduction goals. To accomplish this, New American Dream’s Responsible Purchasing Network will work directly with six government agencies to implement carbon-cutting responsible purchasing strategies.

Carbon Conscious Communities grew out of the observation that many communities had publicly pledged to sharply reduce carbon dioxide emissions, but lacked practical strategies that would allow them to fulfill those pledges. New American Dream was in a unique position to offer guidance through its Responsible Purchasing Network (RPN), which will step in to provide technical assistance enabling state and local governments to take concrete steps to achieve large-scale reductions in carbon emissions.

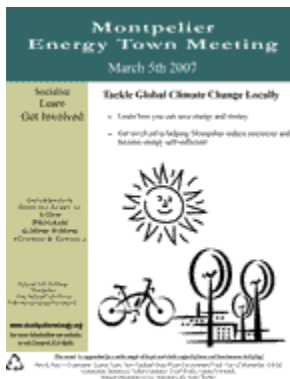
The initial phase of the C3 campaign was launched in mid-2007. That effort challenged individuals to take personal steps each month to reduce their carbon emissions. The steps were designed to be simple, achievable, and habit forming—and to drive home the point that individual steps do have an impact, especially when individuals feel they are part of a collective force for change.

For C3’s second phase, the emphasis shifts to helping governments show leadership and act as catalysts for even bigger change. To kick off the campaign, New American Dream initiated a competitive application process to identify partner communities. Assistance to each jurisdiction will be tailored to specific local needs, with customized outreach programs designed to obtain community support for official efforts and engage citizens in changing their own behaviors.

Over two dozen jurisdictions responded to the request for proposals. In the end, six were chosen to pilot the effort. The first two to come on board were the State of California, acting through its Department of General Services, and the City of Montpelier, Vermont.



The State of California has a proven commitment to environmental purchasing, with a number of State orders focusing on climate issues, and a strong Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program. RPN will help California update and expand the state’s Best Practices Manual for Environmentally Preferable Purchasing. Specifically, California has asked RPN to help them enhance state procurement of environmentally preferable goods and services by developing a methodology for the State to evaluate, compare and specify environmental standards and certifications (i.e. ‘eco-labels’) in state contracts.



For Montpelier, RPN will be helping the city make progress toward its ambitious long-term goal of an 80 percent carbon reduction. Montpelier’s efforts are boosted by a core of active, participatory, green-thinking citizens. The city has established a “Montpelier Energy Team” (MET) that recently launched a program to help homeowners and small businesses reduce the use of home heating oil and propane by offering \$125 vouchers for home energy audits. New American Dream will work with the city to increase participation in the voucher program, and will help develop consumer resources concerning energy efficiency and carbon reduction. In addition, RPN will provide workshops and consultation to the City on other self-identified

high priority issues, such as lighting.

For the final four jurisdictions, New American Dream decided it could create the most leverage by choosing a cluster of governments centered around its Metropolitan Washington, DC home base. New American Dream chose to work with the District of Columbia, through its Department of the Environment, and three adjacent counties—Fairfax Co., VA, Howard Co., MD, and New Dream’s home county of Montgomery Co., MD. Details concerning New Dream’s assistance to these four jurisdictions are still under discussion.

In all six pilot jurisdictions, New American Dream’s work with individuals will continue, as New Dream Community activists provide citizen support for these efforts and encourage neighbors to make their own contributions to cutting local carbon emissions. Hopefully, the leadership these forward-thinking governments show on this issue will inspire individuals—who will in turn support more government efforts to establish sustainable, carbon-cutting practices.