

Futurama 2020

The Future We Want



A project of the Presidential Climate Action Project, Natural
Capitalism Solutions & Tomorrow's Company



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Background: In 1939 during the Great Depression, General Motors created a dynamic and positive vision of what America could be in 1960 – a highly mobile car-centered society. The exhibit made such a deep impression that it has shaped urban development in the United States for the past 70 years.

Now, in a different time with even more daunting challenges, America needs new hope and a new vision. “Futurama 2020: The Future We Want” (FWW) will use state-of-the-art communications and web technology to give Americans a virtual experience of what life could be like in a sustainable society, including what President Obama calls a “clean energy economy”.

The Team: The FWW project was conceived at a meeting of 30 communications and sustainable development experts hosted by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in the Spring of 2009. The project is facilitated by William Becker, executive director of the Presidential Climate Action Project. The design team includes the Chicago Field Museum, Ken Snyder of PlaceMatters in Denver, CO. and Jonathan Arnold of Arnold Imaging in Kansas City, Mo.

Concept: The project consists of three parts: an interactive exhibit being designed in collaboration with the Field Museum; a series of animations and videos that offer realistic depictions of green streets, neighborhoods, buildings, cities, rural areas and transport systems; and a highly interactive world wide web site where visitors can dig deeper into the future and participate in designing it. In addition, the web site will link designers and urban planners to practical tools for sustainable planning and design.

Venues: The FWW team is discussing several venues, including an official launch at the UN Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen this December; sustained display at the Field Museum and in several collaborating museums in the U.S. and Europe; display at upcoming national conferences of planners and city officials; and permanent exhibit on the interactive World Wide Web.

Timing: FWW will launch its web site in late summer 2009 as states and localities are beginning to invest federal stimulus funds in local infrastructure, transportation and energy projects. The team plans to introduce the

physical exhibit at Copenhagen, followed by more sustained display at the Field and other museums.

Content:

FWW's use of internet and video to convey images of the future will allow content to evolve over time as new ideas and concepts are developed by designers worldwide. The initial video and web material will contain original computer animations along with existing animations repurposed for FWW.

The exhibit will be organized to show the connection between cities, suburbs and rural areas in the future; to allow visitors to zoom in on components of those scenes; and to click for in-depth information on specific green features such as green buildings, green hotels, smart urban design, renewable energy systems, etc.

The following links lead to examples of existing animations that can be repurposed and incorporated into the exhibit and web site:

The greening of Kansas City, Kansas: <http://vimeo.com/4360553>

Zero-Carbon City at Dongtan, China: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-nCBFeTcMk>

Zero-Carbon Masdar City in Abu Dhabi:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWVsi0Utmgl>

Low-Carbon Mobility: <http://www.ultraprt.com/cms/>

New Urbanism design: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGJt_YXIoJI

Vertical Urban Farming: <http://watch.discoverychannel.ca/daily-planet/april-2009/daily-planet-april-23-2009/#clip164926>

Advisors:

FWW is advised by an informal group of sustainable development and communications experts from the following organizations: Chicago Field Museum, ARUP, MTV, WNET television in New York, the Regional Plan Association and its America 2050 project, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, PlaceMatters, Global Green, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Dakini Books, Tomorrow's Company, Natural Capitalism Solutions, Newscorp, Rails to Trails Conservancy, the SolveClimate blog, Reconnecting America and others. FWW is in discussion with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory for technical consultation. William Becker is a 15-year veteran of the U.S. Department of Energy, where he specialized in sustainable community development and renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. Ken Snyder is a nationally recognized expert cutting-edge interactive technologies to facilitate civic engagement in community planning.

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