

Direct Actions

The vast majority of the community must take direct and adequate actions for change to occur. Our culture, however, is structured to ensure it perseveres over any attempt to change it by keeping us fearful, numb, blind, and just comfortable enough to guarantee the inertia for actions against it remain staggeringly high. Even when presented with a vision for a better life, when given a framework and strategies for change, and when the motivation for change is well understood, it does not necessarily mean that people will take actions that work toward change. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, well-meaning people will be highly inclined to rely upon implausible solutions to our problems or will be blind to obvious actions, all to keep their worldview, and subsequently their culture, intact.

To overcome this strong resistance to change, the community must become acutely aware of our problems, understand that many others are working to solve those problems, and make opportunities for change readily available. Through a myriad of actions taken by individuals, city government, and businesses, this awareness and infrastructure for change can permeate the community and help every individual regardless of their financial situation or life path.

Action Categories

Actions are divided into three categories:

- **Change Use or Source of Energy** describes simple, one-time actions that conserves energy, uses energy more efficiently, or generates energy from renewable sources.
- **Change in Habits** describes relatively easy actions that can be done during the course of a day that saves energy and adds resiliency to the community.
- **Change in Lifestyle** has the greatest positive impact as these actions typically reframe the way we live to be more humane and work within the structure of nature.

Individual Actions

Personal empowerment and long-term commitment comes from gathering information, coming to conclusions, and then acting on those conclusions. It is sometimes best to avoid recommending specific actions for change in order to invoke this sense of empowerment and personal responsibility. At other times, making specific recommendations can help individuals get over the proverbial “hump” to see the possibilities. In either case, people want to be in command of their own destiny, and each person’s unique situation and life path must be carefully considered before recommending specific actions.

	Change Use or Source of Energy	Change in Habits	Change in Lifestyle
Energy generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy renewable energy from your utility company • Request an energy audit and implement suggestions • After inefficient appliances, lights, and computer equipment wear out, replace them with efficient Energy Star Certified models • Install solar panels for electricity and/or hot water and heating • Weatherize home • Lower water heater temperature • Unplug or sell second refrigerator/freezer • Check and fix refrigerator seals • Regularly clean and maintain heating and cooling systems • Vacuum refrigerator coils • Wrap water heater with insulation blanket • Set up computer equipment to automatically turn off • Hire a lighting designer to reduce number of fixtures by maximizing lighting effectiveness • Apply window film to reduce solar heat gain • Replace inefficient or broken windows with energy-efficient windows • Install a thermostat timing device 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid use of toaster or hot hairdryer • Unplug electronics when not in use • Turn off lights when not in use • Mow lawn less frequently with gas-powered mower • Use a hand-push reel mower • Shovel walks instead of using a snow blower (or hire out the work) • Do not use leaf blowers • Line dry clothes • Lower thermostat a few degrees in winter and raise it in summer • Pre-heat oven for only bread-baking • Open window shades rather than turning on lights • Use task lighting rather than lighting an entire room • Use ceiling fans in place of air conditioning • Wash clothes in cold water • Avoid buying products and food with high-energy inputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleep when it is dark
Water collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fix leaky faucets and toilets • Convert toilets to use less water • Install aerators on faucets • Install low-flow showerheads • Install low-flow sink faucets • Install water-efficient toilets • Replace sprinklers with drip irrigation or soaker hoses • Install a rain barrel for garden watering • Install a cistern to supplement domestic water • Plant native and drought-tolerant plants • Place plants with similar watering needs together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace baths with showers • Take short showers • Capture and use warm-up water for house plants and toilets • Do not water lawn • Turn off water when brushing teeth • Wash large amounts of food in bowl of water rather than running water • Water non-edible vegetation with used water (grey water) • Use laundry balls instead of detergent to eliminate second rinse • Wear clothes several times before washing • Wash clothes with a full load • Do not pre-rinse dishes for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bathe less than once per day

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dishwasher • Run dishwasher with a full load 	
Food production		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat less meat • Buy local food • Buy fairly traded food • Buy sustainably-grown (organic) food • Avoid buying food with high-energy inputs (like bottled water and soda) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant a vegetable garden or community garden • Store and can food • Commit buying only regionally grown food (within 500 miles)
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tune up vehicle per maintenance schedule • Remove extra weight from vehicle • Convert vehicle to run on electricity or a renewable fuel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep tires properly inflated • Drive slightly slower than the speed limit and accelerate gradually • Park further away and walk • Turn off car if idling longer than 30 seconds • Bundle several errands into a single, well-planned trip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ride mass transit, bike, and/or walk • Telecommute as often as possible • Carpool • Car-share or join a car co-op • Work close to home • Do not fly • Vacation regionally • Commit to a low (<3000 miles) yearly car driving budget
Urban planning and land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install a rain garden • Plant a living hedge fence rather than a wooden fence • Plant native plants • Cover bare ground with mulch or a native ground cover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace lawn with native prairie (or lawn alternative) to reduce mowing and create habitat • Use compost as lawn and garden fertilizer • Leave grass clippings on lawn for fertilizer • Avoid chemical herbicides—spot-treat weeds and/or use natural herbicides • Replace chemical pesticides with an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program 	
Building design and housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrofit home for passive solar heating • Plant trees to shade home • Plant shrubs and trees to block north wind • Install awnings over sun-exposed windows • Hire a green interior designer/architect/builder for new construction and renovation • Use light-colored paints on exterior walls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use natural, low-toxic, and renewable building materials • Use recycled building materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrofit home for multi-family use • Live with relatives or friends • Rent rooms to tenants • Reduce air conditioning and stay with friends during extreme heat or cold • Build minimally-sized new homes (1000 square feet or less) • Install a green (vegetative) roof • Start a home co-op
Consumption patterns		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy products locally • Donate or exchange usable products • Buy from companies with a stated commitment to environmental stewardship • Buy products made with recycled content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy used clothes and products • Buy only necessities—eliminate recreational consumption • Share appliances, tools, and yard equipment with friends and neighbors (or rent them) • Share books and movies with friends and neighbors (or rent them) • Commit buying only regionally created products (within 1000 miles)
Waste management and recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use individual rechargeable batteries and/or products with rechargeable batteries • Reuse wrapping paper or wrap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy bulk food in reusable containers • Repair existing clothes and products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy only biodegradable or recyclable products and packaging

	<p>gifts with newsprint or use reusable bags/boxes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace harmful (toxic) cleaning products with natural materials • Buy harmful (toxic) cleaning products in small quantities and buy more only when they have run out • Properly dispose of all toxic cleaners, chemicals, and products • Buy non-aerosol sprays • Buy unbleached and/or chlorine-free paper products • Buy non-toxic markers and pens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take reusable cups to fast-food restaurants • Use cloth bags for shopping • Use reusable water bottle—do not buy bottled water • Use shaving soap instead of canned shaving cream • Recycle everything possible • Compost kitchen scraps, napkins, and yard waste • Print double-sided and print on blank second side of paper • Print using the size reduction feature to fit two pages on one • Refill printer cartridges • Remove your name from unwanted mailing lists • Reuse envelopes by carefully opening them and overlaying address • Do not wash toxins into storm drains • Check and clear storm drain openings • Do not mow grass clippings into the street • Divert run-off water from vehicle washing into lawn 	
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get loans at local banks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use community dollars • Buy and request local products and services 	
Governmental cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask government officials to institute energy-saving practices in their buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and vote for representatives who increase the sustainability of the community • Contact and meet with representatives about sustainability issues • Attend city council and other government meetings 	
Artistic expression		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy and promote local art and music 	
Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead by example—openly encourage sustainable living practices • Learn the intrinsic value of local plants, wildlife, and ecosystems • Learn the full lifecycle and contents of products and food • Ask questions—be critical • Regularly go to the library and peruse different topics • Replace watching television with more engaging activities 	
Health		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly donate to public health care organizations • Eat whole, non-refined foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise regularly • Maintain appropriate body weight • Stop smoking
Personal fulfillment and spirituality			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to taking regular time for personal reflection
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove backyard fences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join a social group or club • Join or create a neighborhood association • Attend community events • Help neighbors with yard work • Coordinate neighborhood and block parties • Invite neighbors to meals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to being engaged in the activities of the community • Constantly give freely of your knowledge, time, energy, and wealth • Increase family size through adoption

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plant a garden and observe nature in action
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