



Remaking the American Dream

In 2020, the 1950s-style concept of the “American Dream”—big house in the suburbs, big car, big TV, big family—no longer fits the reality of the world. More important, it no longer fits the expectations and demands of a generation brought up with dense networks, mobile connections, and a profound recognition that every action can have a significant and lasting impact on the planet, for better and for worse. A “New American Dream” is beginning to reshape aspirations worldwide. This one focuses on creativity and innovation instead of material accumulation. It’s less about leaving a footprint and more about leaving a handprint.

- One cornerstone of the new American Dream is the “zero-waste economy,” an effort to eliminate packaging and goods sent to landfills. Recycling is nearly universal, and “total life-cycle” design minimizes material components while driving frenzied design innovation.
- The restoration/remaking economy has also taken off: people everywhere are turning the broken and obsolete into the functional and dynamic. Remaking happens at every scale, from refitting old vehicles with electric or biofuel engines to the landscape scale of the Suburban Restoration Movement.
- Design has gone from buzzword to requirement across a wide range of economic and social practices. What the MBA was to the 1990s, the MBD (Master of Business Design) is to 2020.
- What pundits call the “RED Tripod” – Restoration, Efficiency, and Digitization – has greatly reduced the amount of material goods consumed. It has also driven economies of both the North and the South to re-focus production on resource efficiency.
- A key driver of all of the new dream is the declining power of the petroleum economy, made necessary by dwindling supplies and higher prices, as well as the widespread recognition of the ongoing environmental and health impacts.
- The new American Dream is much more diverse in form, moving away from earlier social and economic “monocultures.” This reflects both political necessity and an ecological perspective that diverse systems are more resilient—as well as the cosmopolitan diasporas that help shape it.
- With a more global perspective, the New American Dream balances competition with emerging nations with a global goal of carbon equity: design for efficiency promises a European standard of living for all by the end of the century

signals from 2009

The waste=resource movement, sometimes called the “urban ore” movement, reinforces the notion that we could recycle/remake/reuse much more of our physical environment than we are accustomed to. In some areas, the urban ore movement is actually taking on something of a hip aspect. At TriplePundit, they’re calling it “lifestyle trash.”



URBAN ORE:
URBANORE.YPGUIDES.NET/



“It’s like Reuters or Bloomberg for the other economy” is how founder Eric Poettschacher describes Shapeshifters net. The idea is that what is commonplace in one location could be precious on the other side of the planet. The users and the players in this economy are “creatives,” broadly defined. Monks in Bhutan finding feathers to make hats from a stagehand in LA. A Canadian game designer finding a game concept in an ancient Maori folktale. Often they are located in areas that are not fully connected to the internet so there may be a correspondent who posts on their behalf.



SHAPESHIFTERS:
WWW.SHAPESHIFTERS.COM

what it looks like in 2020



At the heart of the New American Dream is a cradle-to-cradle commitment that touches everyone's lives—and measures inputs and outputs at all levels. While companies have their own recycling dashboards, these measures aggregate up to community measures of inputs and outputs. Waste management has become one of the biggest cost centers—and one of the key policy drivers—for communities. In this world, city managers may well see monthly statements like this one, that serve as their own dashboards for community management.

The water and energy costs of cradle-to-cradle processes are the focus of improvement goals


Simulations help visualize material input and output streams and their impacts on the community's economic, environmental, and social health

Monthly Materials Impact Report - August, 2019

Waste sent to landfill:	938 metric tons
Waste sent to bioremediation:	22 metric tons
Metals recycled:	1811 metric tons
Plastics recycled:	949 metric tons
Paper recycled:	284 metric tons
Total Material Waste Stream:	3116 metric tons
Total Material Waste Stream, 08/2018:	3822 metric tons
Water use:	157,503 cubic meters
Water use reflects estimates of water inputs in material production.	
Water reclaimed:	5,573 cubic meters
Net Water Use:	151,930 cubic meters
Net Water Use, 08/2018:	166,420 cubic meters
Products entering city:	5233 metric tons
Products leaving city:	184 metric tons
Estimated portion of city income derived from non-material services:	42%

Congratulations! Springfield has a 20% lower materials footprint than neighboring cities of similar size (~75,000 citizens), and qualifies for a Low-Impact Discount on waste removal services. Maintain this margin, and each month the discount will improve by 1%!

[Ellen -- well done! --Francis]

 **Pacific Waste and Recycling**
A Handprint, Not A Footprint

Pacific Waste and Recycling is a state-regulated for-profit entity dedicated to reducing material impacts on our environment. PWR policies are controlled by the California Material Resources Board and the Public Utilities Commission.

Waste Cycle Simulation August 2019

Water Cycle Simulation August 2019

Material Impact Simulation August 2018-August 2019

Waste recycling in the U.S. is a public utility, managed at the state level

Cities compete for rate reductions based on comparative footprints. These rates drive policies on everything from local business licenses to citizen waste reduction incentives.



how to live this scenario: try one or more

Start with the numbers

What new measurements does your organization need to track to thrive in this scenario? Who will be responsible for tracking them and what new processes will emerge to collect, aggregate, and interpret them? Think across your supply web: how will the numbers you need change the way you manage suppliers? When consumers are also part of your input stream, how will your relationships with them change? How will you inspire them to meet their numbers?



Imagine that you had to make every decision you make today—or this week—based on these new numbers.

Explore new value propositions

What is newly valuable to your consumers in this world? If “bigger, better, new, and improved” was part of the old American dream, what are the marketing buzzwords for your product in the new dream world? What is the “handprint” of your product or service—how does it enhance personal expression, a do-it-yourself ethic, or a citizen sensibility? What processes do you have in place to build this sensibility into every new product, service, and customer interaction?



Review your marketing materials. Imagine the changes you would make for this world. Imagine the way these changes would change everything you do today or this week.

Redesign innovation

What are the design imperatives in this world? What if every product and service needed to meet certain human-environment interaction standards? Who would set those standards? Who would win by taking the leadership in creating new human-environment interaction frameworks? How would you build new choice architectures—designs that encourage good choices—into your products and services?



Look around you as you go through the day, or the week. Imagine that you live in a world where human-environment interaction is designed to create a cradle-to-cradle world. Talk to your colleagues about what would be different about everything you see, touch, and do.

Apply for RED certification

In a world where restoration, efficiency, and digitization are the rules for winning, what are new opportunities for your organization to win? How can you embed restoration in all your processes throughout the organization? What new efficiencies can you create in materials use and reuse? What can be digitized to support reduction, reuse, and recycling? What form does that digitization take?



Imagine that you're applying for RED certification. Score your staff, your organization, and your products and services on how well they meet the challenges of restoration, efficiency and digitization. Create a little scorecard or diary and carry it with you through your day for next week.