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THE CLIMATE PROSPERITY PROJECT

By **Marc A. Weiss, Ph.D.**

Noted urban planner Scott Polikov notes that “there is a new movement of experts who feel that sustainable economies are achievable when business interests and environmental concerns are linked.” He asserts that in today’s economic development climate, “...quality of life has now become a bottom-line factor for many business decisions.”

Global Urban Development (GUD) and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) have recently launched the Climate Prosperity Project (CPP), an initiative that builds on this premise and seeks to outline strategies for improving the bottom line—for communities and for businesses.

The CPP is a new economic development partnership focused on promoting energy independence, preventing climate change, and protecting the environment by advancing the idea that innovation, efficiency and conservation in the use and reuse of resources is the best way to increase jobs, incomes, productivity and competitiveness.

The initial phase of the project will focus on a three-part agenda: green savings, green jobs, and green profits. It aims to shift public opinion in the U.S. that climate prosperity is costly or harmful to the economy.

Since its launch, the project now includes a highly diverse public-private partnership consisting of pro-business and pro-economic development organizations such as the International Economic Development Council, ACCE, and the Urban Land Institute. The basic approach is to involve millions of people in learning about the new economic paradigm of the 21st century. The cycle of depletion of natural resources is rapidly being replaced with a system that conserves and reuses all natural and human resources, not just fossil fuels. The new system is Climate Prosperity and Quality of Life, or “Resource-Saving Capitalism.” In this approach, an area or place gets richer by getting

“greener,” and people, places, families, communities, businesses, and governments all thrive better and earn more by using less energy.

Economic development strategies need sustainability as the centerpiece. Involving many people in these state and local economic development efforts moves the debate on energy, climate, and environment from fear to opportunity. This appeals to absolutely everyone, not just to people who already care about the environment, which unfortunately are in the minority. All human beings on planet Earth care deeply about their own livelihood and well-being, and the livelihood and well-being of their loved ones, including future generations.

Currently several partner organizations are working with members of Congress to create two new competitive grant programs, one for capacity-building for Climate Prosperity Partnerships and the other for strategic planning for Climate Prosperity Strategies. In addition, GUD is working to organize a private sector investment fund that will provide working capital loans to green businesses and green development projects.

The first-ever *Climate Prosperity Guidebook* will be published in late October by the International Economic Development Council and many other key economic development, business, government, and environmental organizations. This new publication will explain to local government officials, business and community leaders, and economic developers why they should be doing these things and help teach them how to do these things most effectively and creatively.

To learn more or get involved in this initiative, feel free to contact me. ☐

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