

Living Lightly on the Earth—in the City

Daily Habits

- ✓ Eat lower on the food chain: less beef, more grains. Consider a vegetarian diet. Try working towards it by starting with one or two meatless days a week. Seek out in-season fruit and vegetables from your own bioregion.
- ✓ Walk or bike when possible. Find a car pool. Use mass transit for longer distances.
- ✓ Think before you throw something away. Lots of things (such as plastic bags, glass jars, paper, aluminum foil, and envelopes) can be used more than once.
- ✓ Always carry with you a plastic bag for picking up litter.
- ✓ Recycle newspapers, office paper, plastics, bottles, kitchen metals, motor oil, and anything else recyclable in your area.
- ✓ Donate clothing and other items you no longer need to thrift shops or clothing bins.
- ✓ Carry your own “precycling kit”—cloth napkin/hand towel, cup, eating utensils, and string or canvas bag—to avoid using throw-away products provided by merchants.
- ✓ Limit the use of chemical household and garden pesticides (use fly swatters and biological pest controls). Use natural cleansers, such as vinegar, baking soda, and water, rather than synthetic chemicals.
- ✓ Take all hazardous wastes (such as acid drain cleaners, old flashlight batteries, leftover paint, used motor oil, pesticides and herbicides, and other petroleum products) to a disposal center.
- ✓ Compost yard and kitchen wastes if you have the space to do so.

Shopping

- ✓ Avoid excessive packaging. Check recycling codes on plastic containers; if they’re not recyclable in your area, try to find alternatives, such as bringing your own reusable containers and shopping bags.
- ✓ Avoid fast food, except salad bars. Fast foods are inefficient in terms of energy usage and generally bad for your health. Avoid highly processed foods.
- ✓ Join a food co-op. Support groups that encourage local agriculture and organic foods. Check the Yellow Pages or call a local environmental group to find food co-ops or farmers’ markets that come weekly to city streets or parks.

We do not escape complicity in the depletion of natural resources by placing ourselves at the far end of the supermarket chain as anonymous consumers.

—Kurt Hoelting

- ✓ Avoid cosmetics and other products which involve animal testing. (Call the manufacturer’s 800 number to find out.)
- ✓ Think before you buy. Buy for the long term. Buy in bulk, buy local, buy direct.
- ✓ Whenever possible, buy products made from recycled materials, such as paper.
- ✓ Buy energy-efficient refrigerators, air conditioners, and other appliances
- ✓ Buy biodegradable products and reusable containers.
- ✓ Buy used and reconditioned products. Better yet, don’t buy at all: Rent, borrow, share, or barter.

Housing

- ✓ Install energy-efficient lighting, such as compact fluorescents. Your local utility may provide helpful information and services. Turn off lights when not in use. Buy “green” electricity when possible.
- ✓ Install water-saving shower heads and faucet aerators.
- ✓ Use stairs rather than the elevator; if there are too many flights, take the elevator part way and walk the rest.
- ✓ Keep your appliances in good working condition. Vacuum the condenser coils of your refrigerator regularly.
- ✓ If your toilets have individual tanks and the flush is too vigorous, consider reducing the volume of water in the tank by adjusting the float or displacing water with plastic containers filled with water. When renovating, install the new ultra-low flow toilets.
- ✓ Fix leaks promptly. Use water conservatively. Save rinse water and use it to flush the toilet and water house plants.
- ✓ Learn where your water comes from; learn how vital your watershed is to the life of the city, the earth, and the spirit.
- ✓ In cold weather, plug air leaks around windows and doors. Check door seals. If your apartment is overheated, rather than open windows, ask the building superintendent to adjust the heat. If the thermostat is under your control, turn it down at night or when you leave the apartment. Using sweaters indoors also saves energy.
- ✓ In the summer use shades and awnings to block sunlight, and use fans instead of air conditioners whenever possible.

Other Ideas

- ✓ Use funnypapers for gift wrapping.
- ✓ Support candidates who are ecologically sensitive with votes and with money and time for their campaigns.
- ✓ Join organizations such as Quaker Earthcare Witness; similar local, state, or regional Friends groups; the Sierra Club; the Audubon Society; Friends of the Earth; Earth Island Institute; Greenpeace; the Natural Resources Defense Council; Planned Parenthood; the Nature Conservancy; the Planet Drum Foundation; or a local grassroots organization.
- ✓ Search out a local or regional ecumenical environmental organization. Plan to be active in at least one organization.
- ✓ Observe closely the wildlife in your neighborhood—birds, butterflies, squirrels, bees. Help to provide habitat and sustenance for them in your yard and by supporting local parks. Work to create more green space, including neighborhood gardens in vacant lots.
- ✓ Plant a tree, a bush, a wildflower. Or adopt a tree or bit of open space to observe and take care of. Learn to know this adopted space as a part of divine creation.
- ✓ Help educate your neighbors and, especially, your children. Share with others at work the values and importance of environmental concerns.
- ✓ Work on the establishment and enforcement of antipollution laws and laws that reward conservation, e.g. insulation, solar power, etc. Promote gasoline taxes to generate revenues for transportation alternatives, conservation incentives, and/or environmental enforcement.

The human community and the natural world will go into the future as a single, sacred community or we will both perish in the desert.
—Thomas Berry

- ✓ Consider a livelihood that contributes directly to ecological sustainability.
- ✓ Report noise and air pollution and street hydrant water leaks to your local department of environmental protection.
- ✓ Begin telling success stories, helping others discover their eco-passions, and encouraging even the smallest actions.
- ✓ Don't watch TV shows and films promoting values that threaten our common future.
- ✓ Attend a spiritual or cultural celebration that enhances global sharing and understanding.
- ✓ Seek ways to invest in environmentally responsible companies, as through socially responsible mutual funds. For a copy of *Green Money Journal* call 509/328-1741. Call the Social Investment Forum: 202/872-5319.
- ✓ Remember that you're not alone—There are others out there who share your frustrations, your anger, your guilt, your desire to lead a more sustainable, spirit-led life. Seek them out.

Further reading

Engwicht, Dwight. 1993. *Reclaiming Our Cities and Towns*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.
McKibben, Bill. *Hope, Human and Wild*. 1995. St. Paul, Minnesota: Hungry Mind Books.
James, Sarah, and Torbjörn Lahti. 2004. *The Natural Step for Communities*. Gabriola Island, B.C.: New Society Publishers.

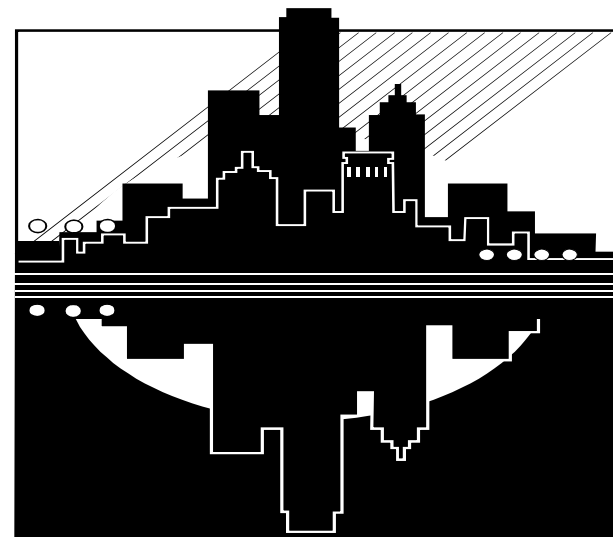
Quaker Earthcare Witness

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Simplicity as Spiritual Exercise series

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Eco-Tips

“A new way of being in the world is beckoning.”

—Kurt Hoelting

**We concentrate in this flyer on what I “can do,”
not on what *they* “should do.”**