

## Start Recycling

what do you have? aluminum cans, motor oil

where are you? zip or address, city, state

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# Six Gotta-Be-In Industries for Eco Change

by Raquel Fagan

Want to make a splash in the global Green Space beyond your home recycling bin? Ready for a career change? Looking to put your money where your mouth is and choose a degree that will get your foot in the door? The following industries are **where it's at** if you want to make change on a global scale and keep the the environment in mind.



With growing populations and food scarcity issues, responsible agriculture is more important than ever. - blog.americanfeast.com

## 1. Soup's On: Food and Farming

When it comes to farming, it boils down to a return to the basics. No matter what the argument is, at the end of the day, you have to be able to use the soil from last year to grow the food for next year. Now, debating how that is best accomplished, the most cost-effective methods and the healthiest route to take is where the real discussion begins.

Some say the secret to success lies in smaller farms that are closer to home, sustainable agriculture practices, [organic](#) local finds and specialties and seasonal goods. However, there is a lot to figure out if that's the road you decide to take. Beyond farming practices and urban planning for farmland, there are issues of labor shortages, buyer demands and market competition (that mega-store on the corner can often sell their produce a whole lot cheaper than the small, organic family operation down the road). Needless to say, long gone are the farming days once so simply displayed in Grant Wood's classic painting "American Gothic."

### Recommend follow-up:

- [Richard Alsina Fulton Center for Sustainable Living](#) - Wilson College
- [Sustainable Agriculture](#) – Sterling College

## 2. Plug and Play: Information Technology (IT)

It should come as no surprise that IT is among the industries of desire, especially since it is has been a part of every dream job list since the mid 80's, but this time we really mean it. IT and Green go together like the Captain and Tennille. If anything can make a huge difference in a short time span, technology can. So much so, that one of the first things President Obama did when he began campaigning two years ago was talk about pushing the government into the

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21st century by using technology, and his pledge to create the first-ever Cabinet-level Chief Technology Officer echoed that.

In addition to the U.S., Japan also believes in the power of technology to help solve the problem. They developed a council dedicated to discussing the role of technology and its position in solving environmental issues.

IT companies themselves have been taking on these issues for some time, but often confine it to hardware like energy-efficient monitors, computers and [data systems](#). Others are taking it further. Now is the time to get involved if you want to be a part of the Green IT scene.

**Recommend follow-up:**

- [IBM](#)
- [U.S. Department of Energy](#)

### 3. We Built This City: Planning and Land Use

Most of us take our cities for granted. They are huge structures that take years to build and hundreds of people to operate. They grow and change like living organisms, just like the people they house. Because of this, the industry of planning and land use is the future of how we maneuver the livable land we have left. In fact, of the 2.3 billion acres of land within the U.S., only 3 percent of it was dedicated to urban use in 2002. This restricted amount must be considered in terms of sustainability, space and resources.

In 2008, [SusatinLane.com](#) took a look at what cities were doing just that, and ranked them based on "park percentage per total city land area (from the Trust for Public Land) as well as a sprawl ranking developed by Smart Growth America in a 2002 study of US cities." They also reviewed accessibility and consideration for pedestrian and bicycle usage, as well as mass transit. The results were as follows:

1. New York, NY
2. San Francisco, CA
3. Portland, OR
4. Boston, MA
5. Albuquerque, NM
6. Austin, TX
7. New Orleans, LA
8. Denver, CO
9. San Diego, CA
10. El Paso, TX



Urban planning's role in resource utilization will only continue to grow in importance. - arch.nus.edu.sg

If you live in these cities, or have visited them, you understand the important role space planning and sustainability play.

If your heart truly beats to a green drum, city planning will give you the fulfillment you're looking for. Leaders in this industry promote growth, while considering global ramifications in energy use, air pollution and resource allocation.

**Recommend follow-up:**

- [The Earth Institute](#) - Columbia University Center for Sustainable Urban Development
- [Department of City & Regional Planning](#) - University of California, Berkeley

#### 4. If You Build It: Design and Construction

Green building has moved beyond bamboo flooring and low-flow shower heads. According to Dennis Wilde, president of [Gerding Edlen Sustainable Solutions](#), the concept of sustainable building has expanded "to include 20-minute living and sustainable neighborhoods that enrich lives by incorporating mass transit, retail and housing, green spaces and public art, innovative energy and water solutions, and even greener lifestyle options."

When thinking of sustainable building, most people today know about LEED certification, even if they don't know what it stands for. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System was developed in 1998 and provides a set of standards of environmentally concise building practices in the U.S.

Spanning every major city and small town, construction and home improvement are part of daily life. Sustainable building is no longer a trend but an industry - with good cause. The building industry accounts for a large chunk of resources used and maintained within our country. In the U.S., according to [LEED](#), buildings account for:

- 72 percent of electricity consumption
- 39 percent of energy use
- 38 percent of all carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions
- 40 percent of raw material use
- 30 percent of waste output (136 million tons annually)
- 14 percent of potable water consumption

**Recommend follow-up:**

- [U.S. Green Building Council](#) - Online Courses and Workshops
- [Environmental Design and Construction Magazine](#)

#### 5. Happy Trails: Eco-Travel Industry

Good with people and love to travel? Thought about being a flight attendant, but the thought of having to watch the in-flight movie over and over again gotcha reaching for a barf-bag? There is a middle ground - and it won't cost you as much in carbon offsets.

[Eco-tourism](#) is considered to be the fastest growing market in the tourism industry, representing 11.4 percent of all consumer spending. And it's not stopping there. Eco-tourism is growing worldwide at a rate of 5 percent each year.

Get your foot in the door at an agency, get some experience and then look for opportunities to grow with larger organizations. The more knowledge and interest you have about environmental issues and eco-tourism, the more opportunities you create. You can start your own small agency, work for a city or a country's tourism department or even get a position within a large company helping clean-up their own traveling policies. The possibilities are endless.

**Recommend follow-up:**

- [World Tourism Organization](#)
- [The International Ecotourism Society](#)
- [American Society of Travel Agents](#)

## 6. Get Connected: Energy and Renewables

As renewable energy becomes more and more of a household word, the concept of energy being generated from natural or alternative resources (sunlight, wind, corn, etc.) seems more attainable every day. In fact, according to the Renewable Energy Policy Network, in 2006, "about 18 percent of global final energy consumption came from renewables, with 13 percent coming from traditional biomass, such as wood-burning. Hydroelectricity was the next largest renewable source, providing 3 percent (15 percent of global electricity generation) followed by solar hot water/heating, which contributed 1.3 percent."

What once seemed like future-speak is now a daily occurrence for some. Leading renewable energy companies such as [Sharp Solar](#) and [Vestas](#) have built successful businesses on alternative energy and are leading the industry in consumer-based systems. With talk of a "Green Collar" revolution on its way, and a shift in the energy department's focus from nuclear weapons to alternative energy, this field is about to see some funding changes. Put on your shades, here comes the sun!

**Recommend follow-up:**

- [Renewable & Clean Energy Graduate Program in Ohio](#)
- [University of Dundee in Scotland](#)
- [The University of Nottingham in England](#)
- [The University of Ulster in Northern Ireland](#)
- [The University of Jyväskylä in Finland](#)



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Raquel Fagan is Executive Editor of Earth911.com.

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- [8 Ways to Reduce Your Carbon Footprint During the Shortest Month this Year](#)

This story is part of Earth911's "Green Eight" series, where we showcase eight ways to green your life in various areas. Between the cold, condensation and lack of daylight, February, the shortest of winter months, can sometimes feel like it ...



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