

Red White and Green; Three Companies Making Urban American Clean Living a Thing of the Present

By Doria Zerta

From the beginning of civilization, cities have been the central gathering places of human life from which the great thinkers and innovative ideas of the world emerged. Here in the USA, the birth of our independence was set in motion in places like Boston (the Boston Tea Party), Philadelphia (the home of the Constitutional Convention) and New York (the center of commerce and financial life).

Fast forward to 2019. Inspiring and groundbreaking ideas are still sprouting from within our cities and we are witnessing a growth in urban life to a degree never seen before. For the first time in history, more people are living in cities than in rural areas, with the UN projecting that by 2050 the urban share of global population will surpass 66 percent. ⁽¹⁾

This growing urbanization has meant that cities have become the principal drivers of economic growth in the United States. With 65 percent of the U.S. population now living in cities and generating 75 percent of the nation's gross domestic product, it is no wonder that “urbancentric” companies targeting solutions for environmental problems are on the rise.

Always on the lookout for innovative decarbonization solutions, here are three companies we at USGRDCO think are worth celebrating this 4th of July :

Loop **Waste reduction simplified**

In 2015, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), issued a review of the negative environmental impacts of excessive amounts of waste in America. According to the EPA, “food and packaging account for almost 45% of the materials landfilled in the United States.” ⁽²⁾ There is plenty of information out there today to make a case for why we as consumers should be actively seeking alternatives to plastic packaging and reducing the amount of food wasted. And while a minority of individuals might be driven to go the extra mile to start shopping in package free stores, the inconvenience of adjusting daily habits prevents most of us from implementing the necessary changes.





US GRID COMPANY

Predicting the inevitability of potential inconvenience standing in the way of a mass habitual change, Loop exhibits true ingenuity and foresight. Leading brands that are often staples in the American shopping cart are being offered exclusively on Loop's platform in a waste free newly designed package. And, instead of demanding that consumers find a package free store, Loop works with its own delivery system thereby minimizing an important obstacle that might stand in the way of "going green".

Plenty **Farm to Table Reimagined**

As the population of major cities continues to grow, so does the public awareness of our responsibility to minimize our ecological footprint. The attempt to balance city life with the modern priority of rectifying years of wastefulness could seem paradoxical but in fact the two desires coexist.

Today's consumer wants it all. We want convenience and comfort and at the same time want to be able to make choices that leave us feeling good, not guilty. While farm to table has been a popular trend for many years, Plenty is reinventing the trend by introducing the idea of forest to table, an urban forest that is.

Plenty proves the validity of one of the fundamental tenets of permaculture farming, "the problem is the solution". The lack of available outdoor space for growing crops has driven this company indoors. While traditional farms depend on freezing produce in order to provide fruits and vegetables off season, Plenty's farmers grow everything indoors enabling them to control the outside elements and offer consumers fresh favorites all year round. And as a bonus, Plenty does away with pollution caused by the transport of produce from farms to cities by offering city dwellers produce grown and harvested within the cities themselves.

Volta **Charging Infrastructure Free of Charge**

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change requires a net zero emissions economy by the second half of the century. Since transport emissions account for 25% of greenhouse gas emissions, accomplishing the daunting feat set forth by the Paris Agreement must include a major transformation of the transportation sector.

Stateside, California has always led the way when it comes to making electric mobility viable and charging for electric economically appealing. It comes as no surprise that one of the most promising EV charging companies operating in the US today, Volta, was born in San Francisco. Volta is an EV charging company with a simple yet highly intelligent approach.

Capitalizing on the fact that outdoor advertising remains one of the few non-internet based opportunities for retailers to get their message in front of customers, it offers drivers the option of charging their vehicle for free. It pays for its service using advertising strategically placed on the chargers themselves.

The chargers, which are all located in highly trafficked retail and residential areas, are appealing to both advertiser and EV driver alike. The more chargers become readily available, the more likely consumers will be to purchase EVs and the more EVs grow in demand, the more the demand for charging stations will grow.



Solutions for Minimizing the Ecological Footprint

The fundamental dilemma of city living is that in the attempt to live a more convenient and comfortable life we inadvertently risk sacrificing the prosperity of the world around us. We are attracted to and crave the connectedness and cultural diversity that cities offer and at the same time understand that if we want to continue living a life of convenience we also need to start living a life of collective awareness.

The ecological footprint of cities is defined as the total amount of productive land, water and other resources needed to maintain current activities. Since cities are where the majority of the population calls home, finding solutions for the negative impact cities have on the environment is crucial.

But fear not. While cities trigger environmental problems, they also offer solutions. As centers of production, consumption and waste generation, cities and we as providers of energy and other critical infrastructure, possess the creative resource and intellect to find solutions that increase the energy efficiency and sustainability of society as a whole. Companies such as Loop, Plenty and Volta are already finding solutions for some of the problems we as a society must tackle. We hope that this 4th of July you can be inspired to check out companies like these and find ways you can take part in ensuring that America's commitment to a clean future becomes a reality.

(1)<https://www.un.org/development/desa/publications/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html>

(2)https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-08/documents/reducing_wasted_food_pkg_tool.pdf