

Small Wonders

A Report of the Center for Small Business and the Environment

How the Creative Drive of Entrepreneurial Small Businesses is Combating the Recession, Creating New Jobs & Economic Growth, Solving Energy Problems, Fighting Global Warming and Protecting the Environment

by Byron Kennard with Elaine Pofeldt

Summary

Small Wonders documents how small business – the engine of the U.S. economy – has become a powerful driver of environmental protection, a profoundly constructive and important development. The report describes a new world of green entrepreneurship teeming with fresh ideas and innovative solutions.

Until now, this world has been almost hidden from public view because it consists of countless little companies, not the Fortune 500; of budding start-ups, not national brand names. This is a *decentralized* world, jam-packed with businesses so diverse and so dynamic they are hard *even to see*, let alone track.

Now, as American society struggles with devastating challenges to its business institutions and social support systems, the time has come to unveil this astonishing new world, to see it as a whole. From this perspective, green entrepreneurs can be seen as potent agents of social change, working to usher in:

- **A technological revolution** by generating countless green innovations in agriculture, energy, housing, and transportation – innovations creating new jobs and economic growth and laying a foundation for the post-industrial economy;
- **A cultural transformation** by providing millions of Americans with products and services, ranging from green cradles to green graves (literally) that make more sustainable lifestyles possible – a shift in values that younger generations of Americans are embracing as *the desirable way to live*. (The report lists 101 different ways that small businesses serve this huge, growing market.)
- **A green recovery to the recession** by creating a flurry of new jobs and innovations. That's how small businesses led recoveries in the last five recessions. This time, the report predicts, small businesses will lead the recovery by creating *green* jobs and *clean energy* innovations, leading to a green entrepreneurial boom.

Small Wonders urges the U.S. to mobilize the transformational power of the green entrepreneurial economy to pave the way to a better, more prosperous future.

Beyond this, small business – half of the economy – has a huge impact on the nation's energy use, consuming one-half of all energy used for commercial and industrial purposes, of which a third is wasted through inefficiency.

Small Wonders describes scores of successful models, technologies, and programs whereby small-business owners are reducing energy use *profitably* through increased energy efficiency and use of small-scale, on-site renewable energy technologies (micropower). Most of these models are widely replicable. Actions to spur such replication are recommended.

Politically, most small green businesses are not yet organized as a group or unified in a way that gives them a lot of clout in state capitals or Washington, DC, but that's changing. Here again small green businesses are powerful change agents. As their voices are raised, the terms of the debate are changing. It's no longer the stale "economics versus environment" formulation, but a new debate that pits efficiency against inefficiency and superior new technology against outmoded technology.

Green entrepreneurs, it turns out, are especially credible advocates for the interests of the rising post-industrial economy. They're not utopian visionaries but real business people running real risks to obtain real profits and create real jobs.

Small Wonders closes with recommendations that will smooth the path for green entrepreneurs and speed them on their way. Specifically, it recommends a plan the Obama administration can use to mobilize small business on behalf of the clean energy economy.

The report will be released on June 10, 2009. It will be available on SmallWondersReport.org.