



An environmentally sustainable New York City brings with it the prospect of economic benefits and good, green collar jobs. For sustainability to generate widespread prosperity, a green collar job must be more than simply a job in an environmental field. Green collar jobs must provide family sustaining wages, safe working conditions, and chances for advancement.

Green collar jobs present a new opportunity for equitable economic development. They allow workers to contribute to the health of their communities. The majority of green collar jobs in New York City involve transitioning existing infrastructure to greater sustainability. They cannot easily be outsourced.

Over the next two decades, New York City will become home to an anticipated one million new residents. But New York City's stretched and aging infrastructure, overburdened electrical grid, and limited open space are not even meeting current need.

Economic inequalities and environmental degradation are interconnected. As we address environmental problems, tremendous opportunities also exist to advance economic justice and prosperity across the city. Fundamental to these opportunities is the growth of a green collar workforce that will spur transition not only to a greener, but also a healthier and more socially equitable New York City.

What is a Green Collar Job?

A green collar job is both 1) a job in an environmental field that contributes directly to preserving or enhancing environmental quality and 2) A good job — one that provides family-sustaining wages, safe working conditions and chances for career advancement.

Green collar jobs offer:

- ▶ Benefits (including pensions and health care, and paid sick leave).
- ▶ Safe working conditions.
- ▶ The right to organize.

Long-term job security and decent wages also mean that green jobs can offer pathways out of poverty for the jobless and underemployed in low-income communities.

Green collar jobs:

- ▶ **Range from low-skilled, entry-level jobs to high-skill, higher-paid jobs.** They offer opportunities for advancement in both skills and wages.
- ▶ **Re-train current skills.** Improving a building's energy efficiency may require new technology and techniques, but the jobs involved are rooted in traditional engineering and construction skills.
- ▶ **Promote local employment.** While brand new industries and occupations will be created, the bulk of jobs required to transition New York City into a clean energy economy involve transforming and upgrading existing infrastructure. Improving an existing building's energy efficiency, replanting an urban park, or cleaning up a contaminated piece of land simply cannot be done elsewhere.

Green collar jobs are found within the sectors of the new green economy, such as: energy, transportation, urban forestry, environmental monitoring and remediation, and green product development. Green collar work can include building retrofits, green manufacturing, green roof installation, park maintenance, building construction and maintenance, brownfield remediation, recycling, hybrid vehicle maintenance, energy management, and others.

The Pressing Need for a Green Collar Workforce

PlaNYC 2030 is a set of 127 initiatives introduced by Mayor Bloomberg to create a 'greener, greater New York.' PlaNYC 2030's sustainability initiatives are expected to create new jobs, ideally green collar jobs. Recent estimates indicate that at least 420,000 direct jobs will be needed to implement the plan. Add to this existing sustainability and efficiency programs and it becomes clear that there is a great need for a trained green collar workforce.

Yet, the City's current workforce development and training system does not adequately prepare New Yorkers for these jobs:

- ▶ Contractors are forced to turn down dozens of retrofit projects, because they cannot find the trained workforce to meet their growing demand.
- ▶ The City continues to be plagued by persistent unemployment and underemployment, particularly in low-income communities of color. Recent reports found that nearly 50 percent of African-American men in New York City are jobless¹ and young people 16 to 24 years of age are being left behind altogether. Many of these communities are also at greater risk of environmental stress.

A well-trained green collar workforce could deal a double blow to these challenges by:

- ▶ Addressing environmental sustainability demands.
- ▶ Creating new job opportunities.
- ▶ Providing pathways out of poverty for communities traditionally burdened by environmental harm.

How is Urban Agenda Helping?

Urban Agenda, as convener of the NYC Apollo Alliance, has built a working coalition with business, labor, advocacy, workforce development, and environmental justice organizations. In addition, Urban Agenda benefits from its close working relationship with the NYC Central Labor Council (CLC) and the knowledge and reach of the CLC's 400 affiliated unions representing 1.3 million workers.

To address the lack of a coordinated workforce development plan Urban Agenda is spearheading the Green Collar Jobs Roundtable: a multi-stakeholder campaign initiated in 2008 to mobilize the City to prepare New Yorkers for green collar jobs. The Roundtable will chart a green jobs workforce development roadmap and make recommendations on practical implementation areas such as:

- ▶ Connecting with employers.
- ▶ Training curricula.
- ▶ Job certification.
- ▶ Leveraging existing workforce development resources.

Additionally, in 2007, Urban Agenda published a report that looks at job opportunities and challenges in improving energy efficiency in existing buildings, one of New York City's largest, fastest growing and most promising sectors. ***Growing Green Collar Jobs: Energy Efficiency*** analyzes the jobs necessary to upgrade, maintain and manage energy efficiency in the built environment, as well as offers an advocacy agenda of specific, practical, policy and program recommendations to make the City more sustainable.

¹ http://www.cssny.org/pubs/special/2004_02labormarket.pdf

About Urban Agenda

Urban Agenda is an action-oriented public policy, research, and advocacy organization dedicated to building a socially, economically, and environmentally just New York City. It advocates policies and programs grounded in strategic research and supported by strong coalitions of unions, business, and the community.