

The Future We Want: Sample Storyline

The following are samples of the voiceover narratives that will accompany animations and videos in *The Future We Want* exhibit and its companion web site:

Entrance:

As visitors enter the exhibit, they will be greeted by a 3-minute video featuring an introduction by President Barack Obama (invited).

President Obama from the Oval Office: Welcome. This is President Barack Obama.

Visual shifts to apocalyptic scenes from *The 11th Hour*. The President: Most of us have seen the movies and TV specials depicting the world we will create if we fail to meet the important challenges of our time: global climate change, energy crises, more pollution, and critical shortages of food, water and other resources. This is not a future we want.

Visual shifts to computer animation flyover of a green city. The President: We have it in our power to create a future we DO like – a future in which we have learned to live in harmony with the environment, in which our cities are safe and green, our air and water are clean, and every person of every age has access to the resources he or she needs. In this future, we will have to live with the climate changes we have already set in motion, but we will have taken the action necessary to bring climate change under control. We will have created affordable, sustainable and beautiful places to live, learn, play, worship and work...

Video shifts to clips from *GM Futurama Pavilion at 1939 Worlds Fair*. President Obama: Back in 1939, when America was in the depths of the Great Depression and a world war loomed on the horizon, General Motors sponsored a pavilion at the New York Worlds Fair. It was called “Futurama”. It used the latest communications technology at that time to give Americans a glimpse of a better life – a society in which highways and cars would give us mobility we had never before known. It was a dynamic vision of hope and possibility.

Scenes of modern-day traffic jams, air pollution above cities, cloverleaf freeways, parking lots, gasoline price signs, soldiers at war, etc. President Obama: That vision had such an impact that it has influenced how we have shaped our cities and built our transportation systems for the past 70 years. We have indeed become a mobile society. But now we know the dangers of imported oil and greenhouse gas emissions. We know the cost of sprawl and the lost time and productivity caused by traffic congestion. We know how air pollution threatens public health, and that millions of Americans live in communities where the air contains dangerous levels of carcinogens. Those are prices we cannot afford and need not pay for our prosperity. We need a new vision to guide us to the future.

Visual returns to Oval Office. The President: What will our world be like if we create the future we want? What will it look like and feel like? What will our homes, our farms, our streets, our cities and our transportation systems be like?

Video returns to flyover of future city animation, gradually descending to street level. The President: The answer to those questions depends entirely on us. I believe our world will be not only clean, healthy, secure and prosperous, but beautiful – a society in which we achieve both a high-quality environment and a high-quality life. We are capable of making a world in which nations have lifted their people from poverty and despair, while protecting and preserving the Earth’s natural systems.

This future won’t create itself. We need to work at it. Each of us needs to become a designer and a builder and a green-collar worker to build a nation in which we build a new and lasting prosperity that meets the challenges of the 21st Century.

Point of view goes to a Main Street scene with light rail, pedestrians, trees, people at a sidewalk café, storefronts, etc. President Obama appears on the sidewalk and concludes: For the next few minutes, let’s step into the future together and discover what our clean energy economy will be like. This new world is within our reach. Welcome to *The Future We Want*.

Interior:

As they step into the exhibit, visitors encounter three high-definition video screens, large enough visitors feel as though they are part of the images the screens show. Initial images are a city, a suburb and a rural area, from a 30,000 foot perspective. High-speed rail lines link these areas. Solar and wind farms dot the countryside. The city and suburbs are surrounded by green space and sprawl has been stopped.

A pedestal with touch screen technology is positioned in front of each of the three screens. Visitors can use the screen to point and click on specific green features, triggering computer animations and videos that provide more detailed information.

In addition, visitors can zoom from the aerial view to a ground-level view of the details within each scene – for example, a new urbanism streetscape in the city, green buildings, a methane-capture operation at a landfill, a bio-refinery in the rural village, a large wind installation in a farm field.

Written or narrated information on some specific features would be as follows:

Green Buildings: Today, researchers and builders around the United States are creating “zero-energy buildings”. Over the course of a year, these buildings produce as much energy as they use – or even more. In effect, our homes, schools, office buildings – all new buildings, in fact -- will become power plants.

Zero-energy buildings produce no net emissions of the air pollutants blamed for global climate change. They will be made from recycled and recyclable materials and designed to virtually eliminate waste during construction.

Refrigerators, dishwashers, water heaters and other appliances are super-efficient, using very little energy. Most roofs will be covered with solar panels that heat water and produce electricity. Other roofs will feature light colors to reflect sunlight and reduce the need for air-conditioning. Better yet, we'll have "green roofs" covered in vegetation, making a small contribution to carbon sequestration and a big contribution to energy conservation.

Outside, our yards will be landscaped to prevent water waste and to guide summer breezes and block winter winds to reduce our heating and cooling costs. Lawns may become an artifact; instead spaces around buildings will more often be dedicated to vegetable and flower gardens.

Neighborhoods: The neighborhood of tomorrow will look and feel quite different from our neighborhoods today. Research is already underway at the U.S. Department of Energy on how we will build carbon-neutral neighborhoods – neighborhoods that no longer leak energy dollars or create the type of air pollution that results in global climate change. We'll see more trees and natural areas that provide shade, reduce the health risks of heat waves and lower air-conditioning costs. Walkers and bikers will enjoy safe and convenient paths. Streets will be narrower to slow down neighborhood traffic so that there are fewer accidents. We may see more front porches that encourage neighbors to sit outside and socialize with one another. We'll see farmers markets, parks, neighborhood gardens.

Transportation: Those of us in the industrialized world enjoy a level of mobility unimagined a century ago – but the methods we're using provide that mobility have serious downsides. Our transportation system depends almost entirely on petroleum, 70 percent of it imported from other nations. The carbon dioxide emitted from our cars, trucks, trains, airlines and ships are one of the main causes of global climate change. The American Lung Association reports that today, one of every 10 Americans lives in an area where air pollution is a health threat. Much of that pollution comes from the fossil fuels burned for transportation.

The watch-words of tomorrow's transportation system will be "clean and convenient mobility". Forget those long lines at airport security. More of us will take ultra-modern high-speed rail between cities on trains that travel in excess of 200 miles an hour. Forget those long hours of gridlock on our city streets. More of our cities will have light-rail systems, electric buses and efficient ways to move people from place to place. We'll spend less time sitting in traffic and more time to do the things we like.

Cities will feature extensive walking and biking trails, encouraging people to be more active. Neighborhoods will be designed so that almost everything we need is a 15-minute walk away. We will still have cars, if we want them. But they'll be smart vehicles powered by electricity and non-polluting fuels. At work, school and shopping locations, we'll be able to plug our electric vehicles into recharging stations, linked to solar and wind electric generators. We'll be able to eliminate many trips completely by working, studying and accessing essential services from home or from local offices linked to their headquarters with high-tech communications equipment. In short, our cities will be built to move people and goods, not just to move cars.

The cities of tomorrow will provide mobility not only for people, but for other species. Because of global warming, species are migrating northward to live in the temperatures at which they are most comfortable. Urban wildlife corridors will allow that migration to occur unimpeded – an accommodation that may help save some species from extinction.

Cities and Villages: Today, 80 percent of our global warming pollution comes from cities. More people around the world now live in cities than in rural settings. That trend will continue in the future, putting more pressure on our urban areas to be safe, clean and livable. Many of the new ideas and technologies featured in this exhibit – zero-carbon homes and neighborhoods, ultra-modern transportation systems, for example – will help cities and villages meet that standard.

In the years just ahead, cities will become collections of villages. In other words, neighborhoods will be designed to make sure that essential services, from shopping to schools, are within walking distance. Pleasant mixed-use neighborhoods will develop around light-rail systems that move us quickly and safely from place to place. We will see much less space used for streets, parking lots and other parking structures; we'll see much more space dedicated to community gardens, urban forests and green spaces that provide not only recreation and wildlife habitat, but that keep us cooler and safer from heat waves. Abandoned lots and unused industrial sites will be reclaimed and put back

into use so that our cities use space more efficiently, with none of the sprawl that destroys farmland and forests.

We may see the farm come to the city. Engineers and designers are planning skyscrapers with vegetables as their tenants -- vertical farms with food grown by aquaculture. Other skyscrapers will produce their own energy with building-integrated solar panels; still others will use their exterior surfaces to grow algae for biomass energy.

We will see more efficient use of space with denser clusters of homes and other buildings. But higher density will not mean crowded spaces. Urban housing will be beautifully designed, with room for parks and plazas, outdoor cafes and many places for people to gather or to find quiet respite.

Cities of the future already are being designed and built in the United States and around the world. One example is Greensburg, Kansas, a town that was destroyed by a tornado in 2007 and now is rebuilding to become the greenest community in the United States.

Rural America: Rural America soon will become America's major supplier of green energy and carbon sequestration services – the farming and forestry practices that capture and hold carbon dioxide emissions and keep them from entering the atmosphere. Those practices include low-till agriculture and intelligent management of woodlands.

Farmers will earn new income by harvesting the wind and sunlight to produce clean energy. More income will come from dedicated energy crops such as switchgrass, used to produce clean biofuels. Farms and rural communities will harvest methane gas from animal and municipal wastes, giving themselves free fuel while preventing one of the most potent of greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere.

Locally owned bio-refineries will process energy crops to produce biofuels and related products that are made from petroleum today. And our farms will use advanced irrigation techniques, where irrigation is needed, to conserve precious water resources.

The farm of tomorrow will not be an extractive enterprise that depletes the soil. More of our crops will be perennial; more of our agricultural will be prairie farming. The core of the nation's farm policy will be to restore and preserve our vital soil and water resources.

The World: Creating a sustainable future is a global challenge of massive proportions. More than 2 billion people in the world today lack access to clean water or electricity. About 25,000 people – one person every three and a half seconds -- die every day of hunger or hunger-related causes. Most of them are children. For these billions of people, the cities of the future could be places of squalor rather than places of opportunity.

One of the most important questions facing us today is this: How will nations lift their people out of poverty in ways that does not cause greater environmental destruction, including the use of fossil fuels that cause global climate change?

The international challenges go beyond poverty. How do we end the destruction of the world's forests – the lungs of the Earth that are so vital to capturing and storing carbon emissions? How do we save the world's oceans, now endangered by global warming, over-fishing and many other threats from human activity? How do we prevent the massive extinction of species that already has begun because of climate change and our encroachment on habitat?

We have entered an age in which all of the people of the world depend on one another. The greenhouse gas emissions in China may cause flooding in the American Midwest. The emissions in Denver, Colorado, may have an impact on the future of Africa. We all share the oceans and the atmosphere. We all have a stake in their health.

The Future We Want already is being conceived and designed around the world. The first carbon-free city, called Masdar City, is under construction in Abu Dhabi. Masdar City will be home to 40,000 people when it is finished – and will have absolutely no cars. It will be powered by solar and wind power and will use 80% less water than conventional cities of its size. Near Shanghai, China, another city of the future -- a carbon-free metropolis for more than half a million people, called Dongtan – has been designed (but not yet built).

To answer all of these challenges, leadership from the United States and other developed nations is critical. We are the nations with the resources to help end poverty on the one hand, and environmental devastation on the other. We are the nations with the moral responsibility to act, because we are responsible for most of the carbon that is in the atmosphere today and already has begun causing damages that will continue for the next 1,000 years.

And among the developed economies, the United States may have the biggest obligation of all. It is the nation most responsible for past emissions. It is the most innovative of the world's nations, the place the rest of the world looks to for leadership.

If the world's problems seem too big for us to make a difference, they are not. We have the talent and the ability to create *The Future We Want*. Now we need the political will – and the commitment from every citizen to do his or her part.

Fulfillment:

As visitors are about to exit the exhibit, they come upon a “fulfillment” area. It contains features that allow them to act on what they've just seen and to obtain additional information about what they can do to help build *The Future We Want*. Features might include:

- a) Another City of the Future map that displays all of the icons from the exhibit, allowing visitors to see again those they like or want to review
- b) A final video that brings the future home by showing a computer rendition of what the City of Chicago will look like when it incorporates more of the sustainable design features described in the exhibit. The narrative will talk about the future as a positive, exciting prospect if we all work to build it. It will emphasize the importance of individual action – that everyone needs to help.
- c) A feature that allows people to send additional information to their e-mail addresses, including:
 - a. Web sites for further exploration and design
 - b. Steps on becoming a builder for the future we want
 - c. How to become an architect, with links to visual preference surveys, design tools and other content on The Future We Want web site.
- d) A “Future We Like Lab” that invites visitors to do the following:
 - a. Create 30-second videos, to be posted on You Tube, on what they want the future to be like. (The Boston Museum of Science did this with a web cam and computer.)
 - b. Display a holographic image of a future building, vehicle or other visual by pointing a bar graph at a camera.
 - c. Send a personalized e-mail to the leaders of each visitor's choice, urging them to help create **The Future We Want**, including bold action at the Conference of Parties – 15 at Copenhagen (the international conference in December 2009 to reach a global agreement on climate change).

- i. Members of Congress
 - ii. President Obama
 - iii. United Nations leaders
- d. Vote on the ideas they liked the best in the exhibit.
- e. Sign up for e-mails on future exhibits, upcoming events and opportunities such as a student design competition now in the works.