

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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Mayor Vincent C. Gray and U.N. Environment Programme Announce District Will Be North American Host City for World Environment Day 2012

*'Unite For A Sustainable D.C.' Will Bring Together the D.C. Community in Support of
Sustainability Efforts and Activities*

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – Mayor Vincent C. Gray and officials from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) today announced that the organization has named Washington, D.C., as the North American host city for World Environment Day (WED) 2012. With the regional theme, “Unite for a Sustainable D.C.,” UNEP invites area residents and organizations take part in energy-efficiency and sustainability activities during the six weeks linking Earth Day on April 22 and WED on June 5.

Mayor Gray’s office and the District Department of the Environment (DDOE) will work with partners that include UNEP’s Regional Office for North America, the D.C. Public Schools, local businesses, Earth’s Natural Force and other non-profit organizations to galvanize the D.C. community into action.

“By its 1987 U.N. definition, the word ‘sustainable’ means to ‘meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs,’” said Mayor Gray. ***“In other words, our resources are finite. We must do everything we can to protect the interests of our children, our children’s children and beyond. Through our Sustainable D.C. initiative, the District has been moving forward with purpose to ensure our city is the greenest in the world. We are honored and proud to be selected as the North American Host City for WED 2012, as it is the perfect platform to unite the city around its successes and future goals.”***

This year, the overarching international WED theme is the “Green Economy.” The UNEP-led Green Economy Initiative aims to foster investment in green sectors and to fully value the Earth’s natural resources.

A key way that citizens and businesses can help create a green economy is through business efforts to promote energy efficiency. The WED 2012 celebration will highlight this link by focusing on energy efficiency, sustainability and the important role residents play in their local communities in these efforts.

“The District of Columbia was chosen as the North American host of WED 2012 not just because of the work that the city has already done for sustainability, but also because of the city’s plans for the future,” said Amy Fraenkel, Director of UNEP’s Regional Office for North America. “I am excited to see how WED will help link local and global actions — particularly in the lead-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development or Rio+20.”

Planned activities that highlight the regional theme, “Unite for a Sustainable D.C.,” will include the following:

- The District will be signing a **Green Economy pledge** with an array of international embassies at the end of January to show a united commitment to a green economy and sustainability.
- The **International Children’s Painting Competition on the Environment** will engage local students in a global art contest that addresses why environmental protection is important. Sponsored by UNEP, the Japan-based Foundation for Global Peace, Bayer Corporation and Nikon, the competition has been held annually since 1991 and has received over 3 million entries from children in 150-plus countries.
- Elementary and high-school students in the District that participate in **Energy Patrol programs** will receive energy education and assessment training that they can use to assess how their school uses energy. During WED, this program will expand to include additional D.C.-area schools and students.
- WED will offer the opportunity to **forge linkages** between the District of Columbia and Brazil, the global 2012 WED Host Country.
- Mayor Gray will present his **2012 Sustainability Awards** to local individuals, schools, organizations and businesses just prior to WED, recognizing efforts to build a greener, more sustainable future for D.C.

UNEP and District leaders invite the entire DC community to participate in these activities, and to develop others in support of this United Nations day.

“The District will be looked upon as a leader in sustainability and green issues. Serving as the North American host for WED 2012 will bring attention to what D.C.-area residents, schools and businesses are already doing to help preserve our environment,” said Allen Burriss, CEO of Earth’s Natural Force and WED Host Committee Chair.

Already a leader in green building, job creation, and energy assistance, D.C. is engaged in a robust collaborative process to make the city the greenest in the nation. The Sustainable D.C. effort is touching every aspect of natural and indoor environmental protection and provides an optimal network for spreading the word about WED 2012 activities.

Notable existing programs within the DC Department of the Environment include free energy audits and weatherization assistance, the Energy Patrol program, the Renewable Energy Incentive Program, and “Skip the Bag, Save the River” which has reduced disposable bag use in the District by 60 percent since it started in 2009. The city implemented the first large-scale bike-sharing program in the United States and 50 percent of District trips are taken by public transit, walking or biking.

Those interested in becoming sponsors of WED 2012: Unite for a Sustainable D.C. or becoming a partner in the celebration should contact Allen Burriss at earthsnatural@aol.com. WED 2012: Unite for a Sustainable DC is organized by the WED DC Partnership. For more information about WED 2012: Unite for a Sustainable DC, please visit: www.ddoe.dc.gov/worldenvironmentday.

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