Individual consumption – including household heating and cooling as well as non-business transportation – creates roughly one-third of U.S. energy use and carbon emissions. It would feasible to reduce these emissions by twenty percent in a decade: there is a lot of low-hanging fruit yet to be picked.

A range of individual actions, while seemingly minor, could dramatically reduce household energy consumption. To name just a few, individuals could reduce idling of cars, carpool more frequently, select more energy efficient cars and appliances, modestly reduce indoor winter temperatures and increase summer temperatures, and install better furnaces.

The actions that have been taken to date have been fragmented and timid, rather than integrated into a strategy for more sustainable living. The consumption sphere, including transportation and housing, provides an enormous untapped potential for reducing carbon and addressing other environmental issues.

Bringing the California Dream into the Twenty-First Century: Strategies for Sustainable Consumption and Communities, a white paper from the Center for Law, Energy and Environment (CLEE) explores these issues with particular attention to possible collaborations between California's government and universities.

The white paper presents a vision for putting people front-and-center in sustainability − a vision that focuses on how people live their daily lives in their communities. The paper also explore strategies for implementing the vision.

Bringing the California Dream into the Twenty-First Century is only one step toward addressing these issues. The issue of sustainable consumption needs much more attention from researchers and policymakers if our future society is to provide sustainable, rewarding lives to its members.