



# REIMAGINING PAPER IN THE 21ST CENTURY

BY THE REPAAPER PROJECT

## Executive Summary

**C**limate change has risen to a critical level of concern amongst all industry and government officials. The paper industry is one of four manufacturing sectors that contribute the most greenhouse gas emissions. There is a vast opportunity, but one that has been overlooked to date: increasing the recycled content of paper made in North America as a way to minimize these emissions. Increasing the volume and quality of the collection and recycling of waste paper will be an urgent and critical component of greening the paper industry. In order to jumpstart the conversation and call for coordinated action, the RePaper Project presents the Discussion Paper: *Reimagining Paper in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

North America has experienced painful fluctuations in our recycling infrastructure, recycling markets, and consumer participation, exacerbated by varying combinations of deficiencies in design, lack of political will, and/or overdependence on unreliable markets. Thoughtful policy changes, and a renewed effort to improve and increase collection via collaborative partnerships, have the ability to bolster the paper recycling industry and achieve a myriad of climate benefits, as well as an efficient, sustainable green jobs economy.

In Reimagining Paper for the 21st Century, the RePaper Project presents the factors creating bottlenecks in the paper recycling system, their contribution to the increasingly poor performance of the system in general, and the shockingly low recycled content in printing and writing paper, in particular. Prioritizing improvements in the recycling system will simultaneously reduce the carbon footprint of both waste management and paper manufacturing.

**The RePaper Project has outlined the following seven Guiding Principles that work to define the path forward while offering ideas for short term policy options that build momentum for systemic change.**

- 1. Transition the recycling collection system from a "trash-based" management system to a resource management system.**
- 2. Maximize fiber recovery.**
- 3. Maximize fiber quality during the entire recovery and recycling process.**
- 4. Maximize recycled paper production capacity.**
- 5. Create a climate-friendly paper industry.**
- 6. Revitalize a thriving, environmentally sustainable paper industry in North America.**
- 7. Rebalance the recycling system to better meet manufacturing needs.**

**Among the many action ideas in this discussion paper, the RePaper Project particularly identifies the following priorities:**

- 1. Convene a diverse task force to analyze, prioritize, and advance initiatives that will boost paper recycling.**
- 2. Mandate and/or boost office paper collection programs from commercial buildings.**
- 3. Explore and offer appropriate tax incentives for recycling and recycled paper manufacturing expansion.**

Reimagining Paper for the 21st Century provides a multitude of ideas for exploration but does not seek to outline the only strategies or policies to advance this vision. Policy ideas need to be adapted to each region by local experts. By offering for discussion a diversity of ideas that have seen success in some areas, we hope to advance the dialogue and distribute information to practitioners and policy makers.

The RePaper Project seeks to encourage creative thinking and collaborative partnerships that will identify ways to help relieve our common concerns for climate change, while advancing increased recycling and recycled paper manufacturing. By furthering these together, we can begin rebuilding a green 21st century recycled paper manufacturing industry in North America.

**To download the full paper, go to: <http://www.repaperproject.org>**

