



## The Fort Collins Dilemma

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Shannon Arvizu at Triple Pundit has an article on the dilemma facing the good citizens of Fort Collins in Colorado (and home of Colorado State University--note the advert in the sidebar)-choosing [solar or nuclear power](#).

[The New York Times reported today an intriguing article on what's happening in Fort Collins, Colorado](#) - a city that prides itself on being a bastion of green living. The town's motto, "Where renewal is a way of life," is more than just a metaphor. The city is heavily involved in promoting carbon-free energy production. They



currently have two proposals on the table - an innovative solar panel production plant and a uranium mining project for nuclear power. Although the energy that will be generated from each project will be carbon-free, the processes of production and/or extraction each have their own environmental hazards. Should the town support nuclear, solar, or both? And what about the NIMBY factor? Should the town expose itself to possible health hazards for the sake of local job creation and global carbon-free energy production?

This case is an interesting example of the type of decisions that those of us in the sustainable business field have to consider. At first, it may seem like a no-brainer. Fort Collins should support the solar panel production and veto the uranium mining. But, the type of solar panel production that they are considering necessitates the use of cadmium, which could enter the waterways and is linked to cancer. In addition, the amount of clean energy that could be produced from the panels is probably not as much the amount that could be generated from the uranium. Mining uranium, however, has its own host of problems. The plan involves using "in-situ mining," an experimental process developed in the 1950s that injects chemicals into the ground to release the uranium and is pumped to the surface. So...what to do?

I think both options are a bust. Both would bring in local revenue and produce carbon-free energy, but both represent outmoded forms of technology. What about applying cradle-to-cradle principles to energy? Instead of solar panel production, why not, for example, solar thermal production? Harness the sun's energy directly using mirrors and direct the heat to create steam to power energy turbines. The picture for this article is an example of one such plant in operation in the Mojave desert.

Fort Collins shouldn't have to sacrifice their principles, or their health, to make their motto a reality. Residents of this progressive town should consider new ways of eco-efficient technology for their energy needs.

I don't see why you can't build the solar panel production plant and build a solar thermal power plant...



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