

# What Defines a “Sustainable City”?

Short Answer: “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Longer Answer: "Sustainable community development is the ability to make development choices which respect the relationship between the three "E's"- economy, ecology, and equity:

- Economy - Economic activity should serve the common good, be self-renewing, and build local assets and self-reliance.
- Ecology - Human are part of nature, nature has limits, and communities are responsible for protecting and building natural assets.
- Equity - The opportunity for full participation in all activities, benefits, and decision-making of a society."

# 1) Plentiful Parks



Parks are the "lungs of the city," architect Frederic Law Olmsted famously said about New York's Central Park.

From New Orleans outstanding City and Audubon Parks, to downtown Houston's new Discovery Green, parks provide both a place for residents to relax, exercise, and connect with nature, but also a cooling counter to the heat-island effect created by all that asphalt, and an effective buffer against flooding.

Green space has even been shown to improve urbanites' physical and mental health.

## 2) Efficient Public Transportation



Commuters in Dubai, Beijing, and Lausanne, Switzerland, have shiny new metro systems to ride to work, while transit authorities in Mexico City, Istanbul, and Los Angeles have vastly improved buses efficiency by simply giving them their own lanes.

Whether high-tech or humble, transit solutions that allow people to get around quickly and easily without a car are a key element to a green city.

# 3) Quality Public Space



Amid all the tall buildings and crowded roadways, a good green city has places that are built or renovated to human scale - places where people can safely walk and gather socially.

Whether it's New York's High Line, a old railway track converted into an aerial walkway, or popular pedestrian-only streets in Santa Monica or Dublin, such places not only encourage getting around on foot, but reduce the need for large private dwellings by creating communal space for people to enjoy.

## 4) Bike Lanes



While the density of cities makes them great in theory for getting around by bike, heavy traffic - and angry drivers - can make cycling unpleasant and even dangerous without designated lanes.

The most bike-friendly cities create separated bike paths, provide parking and showers, institute bike-sharing programs, and allow cyclists to bring their bikes on buses for longer trips.

# 5) High-profile Green Buildings



Showcase developments that seek to be the biggest or most green building may be seen simply as "window dressing" for governments and corporations seeking some green props.

But so long as they're not all a city's doing, a prominent, striking eco-friendly structure such as the San Francisco Federal Building or the green roof on Chicago's City Hall provides a very visible symbol of green intentions, draws attention to the latest technologies, and can even support tourism growth.

## 6) Comprehensive recycling and composting programs



Recycling is the classic individual environmental choice, but it's not effective without someone to provide conveniently placed and sized bins and reliable collection. The greenest city initiatives are going further than gathering cans and bottles, by adding electronics and food waste to the list of items recycled and composted, and by instituting larger-scale programs to recycle water for industrial use.

# 7) Mixed-use and Infill Development



Good planning is key to a green city. While many cities sprawl further out, straining infrastructure and limited funding, Hamburg, Germany is renovating an obsolete waterfront area into a walkable mixed-use neighborhood with office, retail, and residential space, while Sacramento, California, is giving new life to old alleyways.

Such projects "recycle" existing space that's already woven into the urban fabric, making them easy to get to and get around.

# 8) Green Leadership

Not every city official is going to be a "knight on a shining bicycle" like London Mayor Boris Johnson, who stopped an assault as he was cycling by.

But government officials such as Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, former Austin Mayor Will Wynn, and the city council of Marburg, Germany, are heroes in their own right for cleaning up their cities' sewer systems, promoting wind power and biodiesel, and making solar installations mandatory on new and renovated buildings.

An active citizenry provides leadership from the ground up to prod or encourage politicians in the right direction.



# 9) Smart Energy Policies



Buying renewable energy and mandating efficiency measures are two ways a city can use its economic clout to create a market for greener products while lowering environmental impact and operating costs.

Phoenix, Arizona, for example, is boosting the amount of power it draws from renewable sources and constructing new city buildings to LEED standards, while San Francisco is building a big new solar array, Austin, Texas is mandating home energy audits, and New York City is looking into offshore wind farms.

# 10) Enjoying the Good Green Life

Great cities strongly support sustainability and a green economy with lifestyle choices.

For example, farmers' markets full of tasty, locally produced foods, bars and restaurants serving the best local and organic fare, creative exhibits by ecologically minded artists, and music festivals that offer bike valet parking, recycling and solar-powered stages.





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