

THE CONTEXT FOR SUSTAINABILITY

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The question of attaining sustainability is massive: how can we alter our patterns of development, land use, and transportation to create a more livable future (not just in the U.S., but in every city and country)? How can we significantly change the way people think and live and react to the environment they've built?

One basic measure to be considered with each action is the "triple bottom line." This means that sustainability encompasses people, planet, and profit. All three of these fundamentals must be addressed to create the motivation for large-scale behavioral changes necessary in the short term to allow long-term, viable sustainability.

Sustainability is by its nature interdisciplinary, and our response as parking professionals has to be the same. Planners, engineers, architects, private owners, and governments are inevitably more effective in creating and implementing sustainable solutions when they act in a coherent manner with the same end in mind.

One of the driving philosophies is to attain a zero impact to the planet. This means that the design of a product, operational program, building, or transportation system must not use materials that cannot be reused now or returned to the earth for later reuse. To better understand that lofty goal, let's consider a single building. If the end goal is a net-zero energy (the sum of all energy used and all energy created) building, the owners, planners, architects, engineers, and occupants must work together to get to zero. If the end goal is a walkable city that relies primarily on transit, the government, planners, architects, engineers, and citizens (and parking professionals) must work together to get there.

Scientists can provide the research and theories. The role of professionals is not to theorize, but to communicate the goals of

the project and implement changes that take on the challenges of the triple bottom line. As parking professionals, we may not be able to alter the grand scheme, but there is much we can do.

In terms of energy, we can use renewable resources at a rate at least equal to the natural environment's ability to regenerate resources. As Professor Antony D. Cortese of Tufts University states, "This means living off the income, not the capital." We can generate clean energy from natural sources such as solar.

In terms of land use and transportation, we can work from the transportation side to create urban development that specifically reduces dependence on the single-occupant automobile. We can work with planners and government to balance infrastructure needs between highways and railways.

Regarding social equity (the people side), we can contribute to cities, towns, and places that are linked to transit and other resources that allow for greater social mobility and accessibility. These efforts, such as Complete Streets (See page 24 of the November 2011 *The Parking Professional*), focus on walkable places that allow for a healthier physical environment for the people who live there.

We can contribute to the shift away from the current paradigm, fundamentally changing the way we work, live, play, and drive. We must coordinate and cooperate with other professionals to create an "alternate reality." We need all professionals, all disciplines to carry out strategies and technology for a more sustainable future. **P**



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