

What is Sustainability?

I know everyone in this room, if asked that questions, would come up with a different answer.

In fact what most people think about when they see me coming to talk about sustainability is that they're going to get a lecture about: energy conservation, solar, planting trees, riding the bus, organic food or recycling.

But that's not really it.

From my perspective --

Sustainability is really both a much bigger concept. And yet also a much simpler concept than that.

To me it's really just two simple ideas:

The first concept is: everything's connected.

The environment, economy, community and our own personal health.

They're all tied together.

So if you mess up one part, sooner or later it will impact the rest.

Sustainability is not about the individual pieces like solar, recycling, green building or transit. Sustainability is about the spaces in between.

It's about how these things are linked together. The financing, the marketing, the land use regulations, urban design, behavior change theory, education and so on.

Sustainability is not just about another LEED building.

The second big, but simple idea is: whatever you do today affects tomorrow. Whatever you do...

What you buy, what you eat, how you got to work, what you throw away, what products you use, what you invest in -- each choice has an impact on the world that we live in.

And on the world that we leave to our kids.

So if we use up all the good stuff and leave a bit mess, they will have to clean it up.

But if we take care and are clever and efficient with what we have -- if we invest in the right things -- then they will inherit a better place.

So now when you hear the work sustainability, I hope you will think about how it means much more than just the environment.

It's about our neighborhoods, our families, our jobs and economy, our health, and our connection to the future.

Everything is connected.

It's all about the future.