

Sustainable Communities Profit Corporate America:
How to Make Sustainable Community Development
\$\$\$ Profitable for Everyone \$\$\$

This is a tricky subject, yet one that has been waiting to be thoroughly explored and written about. Traditionally, and in the prevailing mindset, the concept of “sustainability” has been accompanied by images or notions of giving up, doing without – *sacrificing* comfort, convenience, and abundance in the name of some altruistic and elusive goal. Unfortunately, this prevailing mindset has been reinforced by proponents of sustainability, many of whom passionately and almost fanatically plead for such immeasurable objectives as “saving the Earth.” Beyond mere “voluntary simplicity,” which is usually understandable and acceptable to more reasoning minds, the move to sustainability is often framed as the reversion to some archaic mode of living intrinsic to times gone by. “Capitalism” is often targeted as the culprit, with the subsequent proposal that if only capitalism – and the global financial system – were completely dismantled, then the world naturally and effortlessly would begin its transition to “sustainability.”

With these kinds of images and notions, it’s no wonder that the concept of “sustainability” is usually politely refused by the general populace, and fiercely resisted by captains of industry; after all, people in general are keen to increase their prosperity and well-being, and corporate America is founded on the very principle of profitability. If it can be demonstrated, therefore, that transitioning to sustainability (i.e. transitioning to practices that actually benefit the long-term health and vigor of the natural world) can actually *promote* prosperity and well-being, *in addition to* profitability, then we will have opened up a discussion amenable to all parties...and I think this can be done.

The concept “sustainability” is fairly vacuous unless it can be applied within a specific context: that’s where the art and science of designing “sustainable communities” comes in. The community – not the world, or the nation, or the state, or the corporation – is where the principles of sustainability can find their most measurable and demonstrable application, their most natural context. Therefore, the “sustainable community” is the place to begin “transitioning to practices that actually benefit the long-term health and vigor of the natural world.” If it can be demonstrated that the sustainable community in partnership with corporate America benefits *both*, then we will be on our way to redefining the relationship between “capital” and “labor,” and revisioning a fully holistic context as the most productive and salubrious setting for industry – and this will have global consequences.

In order to validate this proposition, and to apply it specifically and credibly to the unique circumstances at North Creek Village, I will be using the following approach:

- 1) I will be researching the Internet for “best practices” in Japan, Europe, and closer to home here at Microsoft. I believe the leading edge for the corporate world currently is to add gyms, day cares, recreation centers, and the like within corporate complexes. We would be taking an extra step beyond these best practices by implementing detached, full-featured, mixed-use Urban Villages that service these corporate industrial parks. Being in close proximity adds enormous benefits, and there are historical precedents to support this. Also, having one’s paid work be an integral component of one’s total life – instead of an unwanted but necessary something to do ‘over there’ – fosters a built-in sense of loyalty and commitment.
- 2) I will be scanning regularly journals of the *American Planning Association*. I need to have current knowledge of how similar ideas are being treated, received, and implemented within the planning profession. It will be important to reference examples, however lacking in a fully holistic sense, when we make our case.
- 3) Amory Lovins, from the Rocky Mountain Institute, co-authored a book called *Natural Capitalism* that highlights many examples where corporate America achieved profitability by going sustainable. It will be important to reference this book as well as the ongoing consulting work of the Rocky Mountain Institute.

We need to be very professional about this. We will be proposing that our solution goes beyond “best practices,” ushering in a whole new level of conscious human and planetary development.