



# **Taking Sustainable Cities Seriously: Economic Development, the Environment, and Quality of Life in American Cities (American and Comparative Environmental Policy)**

*Kent E. Portney*

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Today at least twenty-five major U.S. cities have pursued some form of sustainability initiative. Although many case studies and "how-to" manuals have been published, there has been little systematic comparison of these cities' programs and initiatives. In this book Kent Portney lays the theoretical groundwork for research on what works and what does not, and why. Distinguishing cities on the basis of population characteristics and region for his analysis, Portney shows how cities use the broad rubric of sustainability to achieve particular political ends. Cities that take sustainability seriously, such as Portland, San Francisco, and Seattle, use broad definitions that go well beyond concern for the physical environment or creating jobs. They pursue sustainability at many levels and integrate concern for economic development, the environment, and quality of life across all activities of city government. Cities that take sustainability less seriously, such as Cleveland, Boston, and Orlando, confine it to such issues as solid waste disposal, brownfields, redevelopment, and neighborhood beautification. Still other cities, such as New Haven, Brownsville, and Milwaukee, do considerably less to work toward sustainability. Portney begins by reviewing the conceptual underpinnings of sustainable development and sustainable communities. The comparisons that follow provide a foundation for assessing the range of what is possible and desirable for sustainability initiatives. In the book's conclusion, Portney assesses the extent to which cities can use the pursuit of sustainability either to foster change in public values or merely to reinforce values that are already reflected in systems of governance.

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