

SUSTAINABILITY INTRODUCTION: PART 1

Essential Question

How can individual actions, industry actions, and government actions increase sustainability? Explore strategies for sustainability used in Berlin.

Lesson Overview

During a homestay in [Berlin](#), you will explore how residents of Berlin are taking action to live more sustainably to reduce human impacts on the environment. As you explore, you will be asked to complete design challenges related to your own community. The Graf family, your homestay hosts, will be your guides to [sustainability](#) in Berlin.

Welcome to Berlin

Introduction

Sustainability goals address three broad categories: [society](#), [economy](#), and [environment](#). German sustainability [initiatives](#) are developed from a philosophy that each generation is responsible for the next generation. Meeting sustainability goals requires [strategies](#) and actions that can be taken by individuals, [industry](#), and government. The federal government of Germany defines sustainability as follows:

“Sustainability means only cutting down as much timber as can grow again. It means, living from the yield and not from the substance. In terms of society it means each generation must resolve the challenges facing it rather than passing them on to the generations to come” (Federal Government, n.d.).

Commitment to Sustainability

Located within the state of Brandenburg, the city-state of Berlin is the capital of Germany. Berlin's location on the Spree River and its temperate climate have made the city a center of politics and trade since the Middle Ages. Although the official founding date of Berlin is 1237, an archaeological investigation in 2008 uncovered evidence of settlement dating back to 1183. The [Brandenburg Gate](#), [Reichstag](#), the [Victory Column](#), [Checkpoint Charlie](#), [Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe](#), [Berlin Wall](#), and many more sites around Berlin are reminders of nearly 800 years of German history.

Modern Berlin is a city committed to environmental protection and sustainable practices. According to the official website for the city of Berlin, "Berlin is proud to be one of the most climate-friendly cities in Germany" (Climate-Neutral Berlin 2050).

Three broad environmental, transportation, and climate initiatives in Berlin include:

1. **Land development** that incorporates green space for human recreation and ecosystem management
2. **Air-quality** improvement through the establishment of efficient public transportation and an Environmental Zone with vehicle restrictions, strict emission regulation, and regular air-quality monitoring
3. **[Climate neutrality](#)** by 2050 through inclusion of [stakeholders](#) in an action plan that addresses public and private corporate partnerships for management of energy resources, green building transitions, and urban development, as well as private households and their consumption, mobility, and business activities.

Berlin's sustainable development goals and global responsibility focus are aligned with Germany's National Sustainable Development Strategy. The national goals are compatible with the [United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) (UN SDG). Adopted in 2015 by 195 countries, the UN SDGs are an international effort to mitigate climate change by 2030, all while working together to end poverty and foster peace. To find out more about the UN SDGs, watch this [video](#).

Write Your Own Definition

What is sustainability?

Rewrite the definition of sustainability in your own words and then give examples of sustainable activities from your own experiences. Share your answers with your class.