

# Seminar in Sustainable Urban Development

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On Wednesday, May 20th, we had a seminar on alternative energy sources and sustainable city planning. We met our guide in a classroom under a solar tower in the city of Freiburg. We began with a powerpoint that had many facts about energy usage in Germany as well as the rest of the world. We saw, as we expected, that America was using far more energy per person than the rest of the world. We then spoke about transportation in



Germany versus America. Our guide stated that in Freiburg almost a quarter of the people ride a bike while even more use public transportation. This cuts down on energy costs, pollution and the depletion of natural resources. After the powerpoint presentation, we went on a tour of two special communities in Freiburg. Each of these communities was unique in that the people opt to live in smaller apartments without their own yard or garden. Many also forgo a parking space as they don't have a car. Instead, there are many public areas such as playgrounds, parks and public indoor living rooms where people can gather to spend time together. There was also a market in each community which had vendors selling local goods. Each community has schools for the children, stores for most things you would need as well as access to public transportation. They all work together to cut down on energy expenditure and are cooperating to further a more sustainable city. I found these ideas intriguing and challenging.

Although many of these ideas would be difficult to begin implementing in America, I believe we should work to incorporate these more conservative and Earth-aware lifestyles and mind frames into our day. One example of a way we could cut down on pollution is the idea of carpooling. Another idea would be to encourage the use of separating waste into plastic, glass, paper, aluminum and biodegradable items. This way we could recycle more things and cut down on the amount of useful things we dispose of.

America could also work harder to make better use of the space that we have. We could build our towns and cities in a more earth-friendly way by incorporating solar energy and less paved and cemented areas. This is important to us as Christians, as it is being a good steward of what we have been given. Overall, we as Americans have much to learn from the rest of the world on what things in life are truly necessary and what luxuries we should spare.

-Julie Davis

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