

Wednesday, Feb 27, 2008

12:40 PM – 1:30 PM

Room 126

Engineering & Architecture Building

All are invited to attend

Pizza will be served

Environmental Engineering Seminar Series

**The modern American city:
Can we ever make it sustainable?**

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The short answer to this question is “not at the rate that we are going.” Yet, if we really wanted to, we could make great strides in the short term and with our current technical knowledge in the ways we use energy and resources. So what is stopping us? In this presentation, I will discuss the various perspectives on “sustainability,” a term that means very different things to different people, and make the case for why this is a pressing issue to be addressed sooner rather than later. To me the strongest case for changing the patterns by which we live and move can be made by considering the energy picture – supply, demand and consequence. I will discuss the requirements and the feasibility of developing truly renewable energy sources. I will consider the role of technology in finding solutions to the problem of sustainability, but I will also stress that technology, alone, will not supply the answers. Deeper understanding of the structure and function of ecological systems is key to designing sustainable cities. I will draw on examples of re-engineering the water cycle and a 100-year vision for the City of Chicago. Finally, sustainability requires that we address equity issues and the definition of prosperity across our own society as well as across the globe.