

# Sustainable : Local

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The term local is one of those tricky concepts, much like sustainability or community, where we all know what it means, but everyone's definition is just a little bit different. For some people, local means in the same city or town, while to others it means a 100 or 200 mile radius. We can probably all agree that local refers to something that is close by, and that being locally minded has an important role to play in the realm of sustainability.

Here are just a few ways to "think local":

1) Supporting local businesses and buying local products. Local food has its own movement associated with it, but food isn't the only commodity that South Carolina produces. Patronizing local businesses and buying locally made items supports our local economic and social fabric. Local businesses pay taxes that keep your roads smooth and your sewer systems in repair. Local businesses also hire local workers, so spending money with local business is one way to support the people who work there; your friends and neighbors.

2) Spending time close to home; taking a bike ride around your neighborhood, having a picnic in a local park, or hosting a neighborhood potluck are just a few ideas for spending some free time close to home. Spending time locally can reduce transportation expenses and use less energy. Social benefits to spending time in your neighborhood include a safer and closer knit community.

3) Protecting or restoring your local environment. Natural systems are an important part of a healthy society, providing us with benefits that range from clean air and water to food products and recreation opportunities. Removing invasive species, picking up trash, installing a rain garden or planting a tree are all simple ways to help protect the local environment.

4) Becoming involved. Whatever you are passionate about, chances are, there's a local group that you can be a part of. Volunteering your time to be a citizen scientist, an activist, or a philanthropist isn't just good for your community, but it's also a great way to make friends and feel great. When we make our little piece of the world a better place, the whole world can become just a little bit brighter.

There's a reason that "think globally, act locally" is such a great catch phrase. We can all be a little more locally minded, and reap the benefits in a healthier, safer, more economically and environmentally sustainable community.

