GW’S PROGRESS TOWARD URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

The George Washington University Sustainability Plan

The university envisions a future with healthy and thriving ecosystems that encompass its physical footprint, as well as academics, and seeks to enhance ecosystem services. This is a rich opportunity to bring together the self-healing and self-organizing capacity of natural plant systems among other sustainable features.

50% OF OUR ELECTRICITY COMES FROM SOLAR ENERGY

28% REDUCTION IN GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS BETWEEN 2008 AND 2016

50% OF OUR WASTE IS REUSING AND COMPOSTING

7 LOCATIONS ON CAMPUS OUTFITTED TO COLLECT STORMWATER FOR REUSE (WITH A RETENTION CAPACITY OF APPROXIMATELY 9,500 GALLONS)

GOAL 2 | AIR AND CLIMATE

- We have used solar energy to meet 50% of our electricity needs.
- We have increased our use of renewable energy by 28%.
- We are reducing our waste by reusing and composting 50%.

GOAL 3 | FRESH WATER

- We have used water-efficient fixtures and appliances in new construction.
- We have reduced our water use by 28%.
- We have transformed a parking lot into a green space.

GOAL 4 | FOOD

- We have supported sustainable food production systems.
- We have provided sustainable food options for our students.
- We have reduced our carbon footprint by 28%.

GOAL 5 | WASTE

- We have reduced our waste by 19%.
- We have increased our recycling by 70%.
- We have zero waste in our campus.

GOAL 6 | URBAN ENVIRONMENT

- We have enhanced our physical and mental health.
- We have improved our climate and air quality.
- We have increased our use of local, ecological, fair and humane meals.

GOAL 7 | INVESTMENT STRATEGIES

- We have invested $21 million in sustainable and community-oriented initiatives.

FROM THE CAMPUS TO THE WORLD: THINKING STRATEGICALLY

GW is a leader in the sustainability movement in the United States and the world. Our campus is a model for urban sustainability, demonstrating how to achieve sustainable outcomes in diverse environments. Our sustainability strategy is based on an assessment of our current performance and what we can and will accomplish.

An analysis of GW’s education and research outcomes indicates that the university’s sustainability progress is scheduled to be released fall/winter 2017 and can be found here:

GOAL 1 | NATURAL SPACE

STRENGTHEN HABITAT AND OPTIMIZE NATURAL SPACE

Our goal is to enhance natural resources by increasing green space on our campuses, and by implementing policies and initiatives that ensure the health and safety of students, faculty and staff. This includes developing a framework that will help GW incorporate and protect the natural environment.

IN 2016... 4,276 TONS OF WASTE SENT TO LANDFILL SINCE 2006

20 SUSTAINABILITY SITES IMPACTED THROUGHOUT THE WASHINGTON METRO AREA

LOOKING AHEAD

The university’s commitment to sustainability is an integral part of our academic mission. By 2040, we will be a Carbon Neutral University.

The University of Washington, D.C. 2008 is certified as carbon neutral by the Carbon Disclosure Project. In addition, the university will continue to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 28% and 20% of our on-campus energy will be renewable by 2020.

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SPOTLIGHT ON ACHIEVING 50% SOLAR POWER THROUGH INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

In January 2017, GW celebrated the university’s first full year of receiving half our electricity from three solar farms in North Carolina. The solar project, a key part of meeting our commitment to reduce campus greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 40 percent by 2025, was conceived, financed and built through an innovative partnership formed by GW. This project has become a model for other institutions seeking to leverage their buying power and expand their renewable energy options.

In our close urban quarters, GW lacks the space to make a meaningful dent in electricity consumption using on-site solar, so we had to look elsewhere. Together with the George Washington University Hospital and American University — collectively the Capital Partners Solar Project — we purchase 100 percent of the output from a 53.5-megawatt solar photovoltaic system, cutting our collective carbon footprint by the equivalent of 18,000 cars. When fully operational in 2017, GW will reduce its GHG footprint by an estimated 25 percent compared with 2008.

SPOTLIGHT ON EMBEDDING SUSTAINABILITY IN OUR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

GW is committed to enhancing and promoting sustainability research, education and programs. Interdisciplinary problem solving is the key to finding solutions for challenges such as climate change, clean energy, biodiversity loss and sustainable agriculture. At GW, students have the opportunity to choose from 470 courses with sustainability-related content and a number of degree programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The university also established a sustainability minor — GW’s first interdisciplinary degree program, which attracts 150 students each year. Led by the GW Sustainability Collaborative and team-taught by faculty from five different schools within the university, the minor introduces students to the concepts, principles and issues that inform the sustainability paradigm. It integrates classroom and community-based learning and research to prepare students to make meaningful contributions as they enter the professional world.

SPOTLIGHT ON LEED-ING THE WAY TO MORE SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS

In 2007, GW pledged that all new buildings would meet a high standard of sustainability — specifically, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver or better. Ten years later, we have made good on the commitment: There are 12 LEED-certified buildings and one LEED-certified interior on GW’s campuses, including Alaska, Gold and two Platinum.

In some ways, improving the efficiency of existing buildings is more difficult than designing efficiency in from the start. But not all buildings can meet LEED requirements; some exist simply because of the local building codes and regulations in place when they were constructed. GW has worked to identify and address some of the common challenges and barriers to retrofits. GW has led the way for other institutions by forming an innovative partnership with the Urban Institute and U.S. Green Building Council to lobby for building code changes that incentivize energy efficiency improvements.

In some ways, improving the efficiency of existing buildings is more difficult than designing efficiency in from the start. Yet the vast majority of GW’s energy and water use occurs in existing buildings at once cost-effective and efficient design can be achieved. GW has worked to identify and address some of the common challenges and barriers to retrofits. GW has led the way for other institutions by forming an innovative partnership with the Urban Institute and U.S. Green Building Council to lobby for building code changes that incentivize energy efficiency improvements.

In its first six years, the program invested more than $20 million to address $200 million in energy and waste reduction projects across GW’s campuses, including six LEED-certified interior spaces, five LEED-certified buildings, one LEED-certified field, one LEED-certified student project and one LEED-certified campus. In its first six years, the program invested more than $20 million to address $200 million in energy and waste reduction projects across GW’s campuses, including six LEED-certified interior spaces, five LEED-certified buildings, one LEED-certified field, one LEED-certified student project and one LEED-certified campus. In its first six years, the program invested more than $20 million to address $200 million in energy and waste reduction projects across GW’s campuses, including six LEED-certified interior spaces, five LEED-certified buildings, one LEED-certified field, one LEED-certified student project and one LEED-certified campus. In its first six years, the program invested more than $20 million to address $200 million in energy and waste reduction projects across GW’s campuses, including six LEED-certified interior spaces, five LEED-certified buildings, one LEED-certified field, one LEED-certified student project and one LEED-certified campus.

SPOTLIGHT ON LINKING STUDENTS TO THE COMMUNITY THROUGH ECO-EQUITY CHALLENGE

Many students come to GW wanting to change the world for the better. Through the Eco-Equity Challenge, GW encourages undergraduate and graduate students to put their passions to work by finding solutions to environmental and social justice issues in underserved or low-income communities. The program provides funding and other support to help student entrepreneurs pursue projects that deliver positive environmental and social impact in underserved or low-income neighborhoods in Washington, D.C. To qualify, projects must also raise awareness within the GW community about environmental or climate justice.

For more information on GW’s sustainability efforts, visit sustainabilityoffice.gwu.edu.

To read the full sustainability report, visit: go.gwu.edu/UrbanSustainabilityProgress.

Carshare