

2024 SUSTAINABILITY REPORT



University Housing
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2024 BY THE NUMBERS

From waste diversion to student engagement, Housing works hard to decrease the impact of our operations on the environment.



16,971

POUNDS OF FOOD WASTE AVOIDED

at Rheta's and Four Lakes Markets using Leanpath Food Waste Tracking Software



78,648

DISPOSABLE CONTAINERS SAVED

from landfill by the reusable Ticket to Takeout container program



637

VOLUNTEER HOURS

helping with Housing's Sustainable Move In & Move Out programs



7,294

POUNDS OF VEGETABLES GROWN

at the Dining & Culinary Services Campus Farm



5,499

MEALS RECOVERED

and distributed for free to students through the Frozen Meals Program



79.4%

OF ALL WASTE RECYCLED OR COMPOSTED

at the annual Convocation Cookout event serving 8,000+ first-year students

200,000+

POUNDS OF FOOD SCRAPS

composted at Gordon, Carson's, & Four Lakes Markets

412K+

POUNDS DIVERTED FROM LANDFILL

through Housing donation and recycling projects in 2024. This number does not include routine recycling and compost collection that are standard practice in Housing buildings.

WASTE DIVERSION



SUSTAINABLE MOVING

Housing Sustainability supports students living in residence halls with additional recycling and donation options during Move In and Move Out. Volunteers spent over 630 hours assisting with sorting at each site between the two events in 2024, which prevented a total of **234,696 pounds** from entering landfill.

University Apartments also hosted the first **Move Out Swap Meet** in June aimed at reducing waste and supporting community. The event welcomed about 100 visitors to donate, exchange, or shop for items.

RECYCLING

Housing continues to optimize recycling practices throughout our operations. Members of the Housing Sustainability Committee received an Administrative Improvement Award in 2024 for their work on the Division-wide transition to single stream recycling, which has shown to improve recycling rates and save Housing around \$60,000 each year.

Housing is also collaborating with the Office of Sustainability Zero Waste team to host two AI Recycling Assistants called **Oscar Sorts**, which help users properly sort their recyclables. Look for the new devices in Gordon and Dejepe!



SPOTLIGHT: CONVOCATION COOKOUT

Every year, Housing Dining celebrates the nearly 9,000 first-year students through a cookout on Convocation Day. Housing partners with the Office of Sustainability Green Events program to make this a 'Certified Green Event'. In 2024, 79.4% of all waste produced by this event was diverted from landfill through compost and recycling efforts.



SLICHTER WINDOW RENOVATION

Housing replaced 232 windows in Slichter Hall in summer 2024. The new windows were designed to meet performance requirements of Wisconsin's Division of Facilities Development Sustainability Guidelines, including low-emissivity (Low-E) coated insulated glass units, which reduce heat loss and solar heat gain to improve energy efficiency. An additional 48 windows will be replaced in summer 2025 as renovation is completed on the lower level of Slichter.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY UPGRADES

The University Apartments Facilities team significantly enhanced building envelopes and insulation in the University Houses neighborhood in 2023 & 2024. Upgrades included extensive air sealing, insulation improvements, and enhancements to window glass and entrance doors.

BIRD-FRIENDLY WINDOWS

The Bird Collision Corps and UW-Madison students applied for Green Fund support to add dots to the lake-facing glass windows of DeJope Hall with a goal of increasing visibility to birds and preventing collisions. A similar project at Ogg Hall in 2020 reduced bird deaths by 90% and contributed to a policy change by the university and City of Madison, which now require bird-friendly glass as a standard for new construction projects.



ELECTRIC VEHICLE

University Housing Facilities purchased a GEM e6 electric vehicle this year with support from the Office of Sustainability Green Fund. This new passenger vehicle will support essential operations while preventing air pollution and emissions associated with traditional fuel-powered vehicles.

SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION



RESIDENT SUSTAINABILITY AMBASSADORS

The Resident Sustainability Ambassador (RSA) Program is a peer outreach and leadership opportunity for residents interested in sustainability. A cohort of volunteers living in Housing meet weekly to learn from campus experts on topics related to resource conservation, recycling, food sustainability, and more. RSAs then take this information and share out with fellow residents through events, tabling sessions, and other outreach strategies. This fall, they celebrated 'Campus Sustainability Month' in October with three weeks of sustainability-focused outreach activities, including:

Food Waste Week: RSAs audited 2,706 plates at all Dining Markets and found that 51% of students have plate waste with diners wasting an average of 1.5 ounces per plate. These results led to additional outreach and survey efforts.

Energy Competition: In partnership with the student organization Helios, RSAs educated residents about topics like phantom energy and compared impact on meter readings over a two-week period. Dejope Hall demonstrated the greatest decrease in energy use and residents were celebrated with cookies and hot cider.

Zero Waste Week: RSAs teamed up with the Office of Sustainability to educate about the new campus-wide Zero Waste Compass resource and conducted a hands-on audit of Housing's recycling at Pellitteri Waste Systems to identify commonly missorted items and strategize possible intervention opportunities.

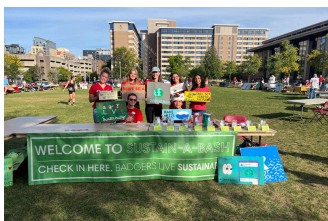
GREENHOUSE LEARNING COMMUNITY

This intentional living community based in the LEED-certified Leopold Hall prepares residents for sustainability leadership through hands-on experiential learning opportunities. In 2024, GreenHouse residents participated in frequent workdays at the Dining Farm, baking & cooking competitions, invasive species removal, documentary screenings, and field trips to local farms, Leopold's shack, and more.



SUSTAIN-A-BASH

Sustain-a-Bash began in 2014 as an introduction to campus sustainability for new Housing residents. Now a campus-wide effort, Sustain-a-Bash contains a full week of sustainability-centered activities. Through partnerships with student organizations, the Office of Sustainability, and other campus entities like the Wisconsin Energy Institute, 2024's Sustain-a-Bash featured multiple daily educational events in mid-September. The *Slide to Sustain-a-Bash* with Bucky and the Marching Band kicked off the culminating Sustain-a-Bash Showcase this year, attracting 300+ attendees to the Gordon Lawn to learn from over 40 campus and community organizations.



EARTH DAY MEAL

Housing Dining celebrates Earth Day every year with a theme meal at all markets. Each station celebrates one of five different sustainability focus areas, from water-friendly to low carbon recipes. Student diners participate in games and sustainability trivia in exchange for prizes from some of Dining's local vendors.



SUSTAINABLE DINING

Dining & Culinary Services prioritizes sustainability throughout operations. Efforts to reduce waste, conserve water and energy, and purchase sustainable food continue to be guiding principles. To build on this progress, Dining has set ambitious goals to enhance efforts moving forward and ensure a healthy, responsible, and sustainable food system at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

2024 PROGRESS ON CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT GOALS

Goal 1: Increase purchases from the **state of Wisconsin** by 10% and increase purchases with **sustainable attributes** by 2% every year.

- **Progress:** Dining received support from the Office of Sustainability Green Fund to implement MaetaData Sustainable Insights Platform, a dashboard that examines all purchases for current local and sustainable attribute status.

Goal 2: Reduce climate impact through menu offerings by 10%.

- **Progress:** Menus were analyzed and data revealed that 54% of all current entrée offerings are plant-based (vegan or vegetarian).

Goal 3: Reduce back-of-house food waste at all Dining Markets by 50%.

- **Progress:** Leanpath Food Waste Tracking was expanded to all Markets, providing more detail on current trends in food waste and real-time reduction results.

Goal 4: Eliminate single-use plastics in front-of-house standard service operations in all Dining Markets.

- **Progress:** A summer committee audited and set standards for the condiment bars across Dining, which included the elimination of single-use and non-recyclable items wherever possible.

Goal 5: Increase student engagement in Dining Sustainability projects.

- **Progress:** Various student collaborations expanded in Dining this year, including multiple Green Fund initiatives, over 800 hours of engagement at the Dining Farm, food waste outreach and research, and event planning.



FOOD WASTE TRACKING Leanpath

Leanpath is an innovative food waste tracking system that helps us track and reduce food waste from production. The project was first introduced at Rheta's Market in 2022 thanks to the Green Fund, where it saw a successful 40% reduction in waste in just one semester. After another successful launch at Four Lakes Market in 2023, Leanpath technology was expanded to all six Dining Markets in November 2024. Leanpath is just one tool in place to help Dining reach the goal of 50% reduction in back-of-house food waste.



FOOD RECOVERY

The Nutrition Access Program (formerly known as the Frozen Meals Program) is a student-run initiative through Dining & Culinary Services to divert surplus Dining food into pre-packaged microwaveable meals at no cost to any UW-Madison student. In 2024, 5,499 meals were distributed across campus. This program has shifted to engage in more comprehensive campus-wide programming and utilize department resources more effectively. Check out the new and improved [Nutrition Access Program website here](#).

Dining continues to participate in other food recovery efforts as well, donating over 3,000 pounds to The River Food Pantry in 2024 and partnering with the Food Recovery Network and Porchlight to redistribute surplus food.



DINING FARM

The Dining Campus Farm completed its second growing season as a 1.5 acre footprint within the Lakeshore Nature Preserve. Existing garden plots were improved, flowering perennials were planted for pollinators, and an overgrown orchard was restored which will begin producing apples, pears, plums, black currants, and elderberries in 2025 and beyond. The GreenHouse Learning Community helps start seeds indoors in the Leopold greenhouse, and Dining staff and student volunteers help plant, weed, and harvest. Over 7,000 pounds of campus-grown vegetables were featured at Rheta's, Carson's, and Lowell Markets this summer and fall.



GREEN FUND PROJECTS

The Office of Sustainability Green Fund remains an integral partner in improving sustainability in University Housing and supported two unique projects at the Dining Farm in 2024.

YEAR-ROUND GREENS

At Leopold Hall, students from the GreenHouse Learning Community and Engineers for a Sustainable World designed and proposed a year-round veggie production system in the rooftop greenhouse. Successions of fresh basil and microgreens are now grown in different styles of hydroponic trays to be used in Dining Markets.



AGRIVOLTAICS

Students in the Engineering Senior Design team constructed a model agrivoltaics system to be featured at the Dining Farm in the 2025 growing season. This small mobile array of solar panels provides shade to salad greens while charging a battery, which will power different electric gardening tools used on the farm.



GET INVOLVED

1. **Volunteer for a Sustainable Move In or Move Out shift:** For staff that may experience a slower pace at the transition periods, lend a hand by helping to break down cardboard or sort through donations with Sustainability.
2. **Become an expert on Housing recycling guidelines** and be on the lookout in your area for recycling issues or challenges. Connect with the sustainability team for advice or updated signage when needed.
3. **Volunteer with the DCS Campus Farm:** Bring your office team out for a volunteer day during the summer months to weed, plant seedlings, and harvest vegetables for the dining markets.
4. **Represent your unit** as a Housing Sustainability Committee member or Dining Sustainability Champion! These groups are comprised of staff volunteers who care about improving sustainability efforts throughout our division.

To learn more or get involved, visit our website: housing.wisc.edu/about/sustainability or contact sustainability@housing.wisc.edu

2024 IN PHOTOS



Photos by

University Housing Marketing, Housing Sustainability, and the Office of Sustainability