

# GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING

at the University of St. Thomas  
2023 - 2024



Sustainable  
St. Thomas

Residence Life



UNIVERSITY OF  
St. Thomas

# WELCOME TO ST. THOMAS!

This guide includes information and tips to help you live sustainably during your time on campus.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3. Introduction
- 4. Campus Sustainability Goals
- 6. Sustainable Move-in
- 7. Waste Reduction
- 10. Energy Conservation
- 11. Water Conservation
- 12. Sustainable Transportation
- 14. Get Involved
- 17. Get Connected

**Will you do your  
part, Tommies?**







An introduction from

## The Office of Sustainability Initiatives & Residence Life

Welcome to the University of St. Thomas, where sustainability is central to our mission to advance the common good. On behalf of the Office of Sustainability Initiatives and the Department of Residence Life, we invite you to explore how to incorporate sustainability into your daily life on campus and reduce your carbon pawprint as a Tommie.

We believe that sustainability means responsibly managing natural resources to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In the Catholic faith tradition, a core tenet of Catholic Social Teaching is care for God's creation. The University of St. Thomas upholds this tenet, pledging "an ethic of the care for God's creation through curricular and cocurricular activities aimed at environmental stewardship and sustainability."

This guide provides learning and resources for leading a sustainable lifestyle at St. Thomas. Whether in your residence hall, the classroom, dining venues, or around campus, there are many opportunities to make an impact through individual action, research, coursework, and community engagement, all of which can help to reduce our collective carbon footprint. As we continue to seek innovative, long-term solutions to sustainability challenges, we call upon all St. Thomas students to be an active part of the solution.



"We are called to be stewards of creation and to take intentional actions to care for our common home. Every member of the St. Thomas community has an important role to play in reaching our sustainability goals, and as an educational institution we have a unique responsibility to lead in the present and equip students with tools and inspiration to create a better future."

President Rob Vischer



# Campus Sustainability Goals

The University of St. Thomas created and published its first Sustainability Strategic Plan in 2019. The five-year plan outlines the university's mission and goals for working toward sustainability in the coming years, including two major long-term goals:

- **Reaching carbon neutrality by 2035**
- **Achieving an AASHE STARS gold rating by 2025**

In 2010, St. Thomas adopted its first Climate Action Plan and established its goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2035. In the past decade, the university has reduced its carbon emissions by 37% and infused sustainability into many aspects of academics, operations, and activities on campus.



# 2035

**CARBON  
NEUTRALITY  
GOAL**

# 2025

**STARS GOLD  
RATING  
GOAL**

## AASHE STARS

The University participates in AASHE STARS, or the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System. STARS encompasses every aspect of sustainability on campus including residence halls, dining, student engagement, academics, carbon output, energy usage, waste, and more. In 2018, St. Thomas completed its first STARS report and earned a silver rating. The University's second STARS report was published in April 2021 and earned a gold rating, well ahead of our 2025 goal!

View the 2021 AASHE STARS report [here](#).



# Sustainability Strategic Plan

The Sustainability Strategic Plan also outlines goals surrounding student and employee engagement, dining, transportation, facilities, investments, and procurement. Some highlighted strategies include:

**Implementing** energy conservation measures in existing buildings

**Pursuing** a minimum of silver LEED certification for new buildings

**Reducing** emissions from university-owned vehicles

**Reducing** emissions from student and employee commutes



## Sustainability accomplishments at St. Thomas include:

- LEED Platinum certification of Frey Residence Hall and LEED Silver certification of Tommie North Residence Hall. These ratings indicate high levels of sustainable construction and development standards.
- Establishment of the Pollinator Path, which effectively tripled the number of pollinators in the area.
- The Stewardship Garden provides research and educational opportunities.
- The Princeton Review ranked the University of St. Thomas in the Top 50 Green Colleges.





# SUSTAINABLE MOVE-IN

You've likely heard the phrase **"Reduce, Reuse, Recycle."** When moving into your residence hall, consider reducing the number of new items you bring to campus, reusing items you already have, or buying items secondhand.

## ACTION GUIDE

### PURCHASING ITEMS

- Buy used items when possible and coordinate with roommates to avoid unnecessary purchases.
- Check with Residence Life to see what items they offer residents to check out before purchasing supplies. Some halls offer kitchen supplies (pots/pans/cooking utensils), sports equipment, and games.
- Look for products with minimal packaging or reusable or recyclable packaging.
- Rent fridges and microwaves from the university-approved and licensed [Bedloft.com](https://www.bedloft.com).
- Check out the [UST Buy and Sell Facebook group](#), local buy nothing Facebook groups, or Facebook Marketplace in the Twin Cities to buy affordable, used items in good condition.

### PACKING

- Pack in reusable containers (i.e. cardboard boxes, plastic bins, laundry bins, suitcases).
- Properly dispose of all packing materials. Break down cardboard boxes to reuse.
- Use clothing, blankets, and other soft items to pack fragile items instead of bubble wrap or packing peanuts.
- Recycle plastic bags in [specialized recycling bins](#) on campus or at local stores.



### DID YOU KNOW...

Minnesota uses a waste management hierarchy to outline preferred waste management methods (1). St. Thomas is committed to managing waste responsibly and sustainably.





# WASTE REDUCTION

As students, our role is to consume responsibly— buy only what you need, reuse items when possible, and shop for items that produce minimal waste. St. Thomas provides the infrastructure to do this in the form of three-stream waste stations around campus for collecting recycling, organics recycling, and trash. We can utilize this infrastructure to properly divert waste to recycling and organics recycling instead of throwing it in the trash.

## Did you know...

The university has a waste diversion goal of 80% by 2030.  
Our current diversion rate is 60%. We need your help to reach our goal!

## ACTION GUIDE

### IN RESIDENTIAL DINING VENUES (THE VIEW & NORTHSIDER)

- Be creative! You don't have to take every item from a station. Mix and match foods from different stations to make the perfect meal for you.
- Try a sample first. If you're trying something new, take a small portion to see if you like it. If you do, you can always go back for more.
- Be a conscious eater. Pay attention to the foods that are often on your plate at the end of a meal. At future meals, take less of those foods so they don't end up as food waste.

### IN RETAIL DINING VENUES

- Getting food to-go at T's? Use a reusable to-go container!
- Bring your own mug to coffee shops on campus to receive a discount.
- Purchase only the food you plan to eat to reduce food waste.

### IN THE BATHROOM

- Switch to items with reduced packaging, such as shampoo bars instead of shampoo bottles.
- Switch to a reusable menstrual cup.

# ✓ ACTION GUIDE

## EVERYWHERE ON CAMPUS

- Invest in a reusable water bottle and refill it at water bottle filling stations across campus.
- Bring reusable bags to Summit Marketplace, Campus Stores, and the Tommie Shop.
- Take time to learn how to properly sort your waste!

## CHALLENGE

- Audit your trash! Pay attention to which items you throw away daily and research a sustainable alternative.



## SIMPLE ZERO WASTE SWAPS

### Instead of this...

Coffee pods

Wipes/paper towels

Dryer sheets

Single use dining ware

Plastic water bottle

Plastic straw

### ...try this!

Reusable coffee filters

Reusable towels/rags

Wool dryer balls

Reusable utensil set

Reusable water bottle

Reusable straw

# Recycling

It takes significantly less energy to manufacture products from recycled materials than it does to manufacture the same product from new materials. Recycling decreases demand for fossil fuels and extraction of new raw materials (2). At St. Thomas, there are many items accepted for recycling in the blue bins around campus.

## Recycle

- Plastics #1, #2, #5
- Metal
- Glass
- Cartons
- Paper
- Boxes



# Organics Recycling

Did you know that about 20% of our trash is food scraps (3)?

Organics recycling is an important way to divert valuable organic material from the waste stream. At St. Thomas, the organic material is collected and brought to a commercial compost facility that turns the material into compost. Compost is a nutrient-rich soil amendment that can be used in gardens and lawns!

How does organics recycling work in the residence halls?

- All rooms in residence halls are supplied with an organics recycling container that can be emptied in the waste room of each residence hall floor.
- Find organics recycling bags in the waste rooms of each residence hall.

## Organics Recycling

- All food scraps
- Napkins & paper towels
- BPI certified products
  - Dining Services provides compostable coffee cups, utensils, and paper to-go containers. Double check for a BPI certified logo!
- Coffee grounds & filters, paper tea bags, plant & flower trimmings, wood chopsticks & skewers, toothpicks, pizza boxes



# Specialized Recycling

St. Thomas has four specialized recycling collection sites where you can dispose of items that aren't accepted in the recycling bins.

Specialized recycling bins can be found at:

- outside the Campus Store in Murray-Herrick
- create[space]
- Facilities & Design Center entrance
- Terrence Murphy Hall lower level (on the Minneapolis campus)

## Specialized Recycling

- Batteries
- Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) Bulbs
- Ink/Toner/Electronics
- Plastic Bags/Film/Wrap





# ENERGY CONSERVATION

In Minnesota, over 20% of total energy consumption can be attributed to residential homes and buildings (4). Carbon emissions from the combustion of fossil fuels to heat and power buildings play a significant role in climate change, which exacerbates powerful natural disasters and disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable populations.

By conserving energy in your room, you can help St. Thomas reduce our overall carbon emissions and improve air quality in the local community.

## ACTION GUIDE

### IN YOUR ROOM

- Unplug any devices when not in use and turn off lights when leaving the room.
- Use LED bulbs, which require 75% less energy and last longer.
- Look for ENERGY STAR certified appliances for improved energy efficiency (5).
- In the winter, keep windows closed to retain heat indoors.
- In the summer, keep blinds closed during the hottest parts of the day to limit excess heat (6).

### IN THE BATHROOM

- Let your hair air-dry instead of using a blow dryer.
- Use lukewarm water or cold water when possible.

### IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM

- Wash full loads. The same amount of energy is required even when you wash a smaller load.
- Use cold water to cut down energy consumption from heating water.
- Dry your clothes efficiently:
  - Dry the right-sized load on lower heat settings.
  - Air dry clothes instead of using the dryer.
  - Use wool dryer balls and clean the lint filter to maximize dryer efficiency.



# WATER CONSERVATION



Water is essential for nearly every life process, from keeping our bodies healthy to producing food, cleaning, and creating energy.



Did you know that only 3% of the Earth's surface water is drinkable? Let's use it wisely! (7)

## ACTION GUIDE

### IN THE DINING HALL

- Try eating more plant-based meals. The dining halls regularly offer vegan and vegetarian options.

### IN THE BATHROOM

- Turn off the sink while brushing your teeth to save up to 8 gallons of water per day.
- Turn off the tap while shaving to save 10 gallons of water daily.
- Take shorter showers! A standard showerhead uses 2.5 gallons per minute, so a ten-minute shower uses 25 gallons (8)!

### IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM

- Wash only full loads of laundry to reduce your consumption. Conventional laundry machines use up to 51 gallons of water per load (9).
- Only wash clothing when necessary to save water, soap, and time. Reducing washes can also extend the lifespan of your clothing.

## CHALLENGE

- Time your showers! Limit your water consumption by taking shorter showers.
- Try eating a plant-based meal once per week.



# SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Minnesota (10). Most forms of transportation use fossil fuels like gasoline and diesel, which release carbon dioxide and other pollutants into the atmosphere and contribute to climate change. Fortunately, there are easy ways to get around St. Thomas and the Twin Cities metro area while minimizing your carbon footprint.

## BIKE

Biking is an affordable, eco-friendly way to get around campus and the Twin Cities! Biking reduces carbon-dioxide emissions, air pollution, roadway congestion, and fossil fuel consumption. St. Thomas provides bike amenities to make it easier to keep your bike on campus.

Bike racks are located near the entrances of many buildings on campus. If there is not a bike rack right next to the door you intend to use, look at another entrance to the building.

Secure bike storage is available on a first come, first served basis, and is accessible using a St. Thomas ID card. Bike storage is available in the following locations:

- Frey Residence Hall Garage
- Morrison Residence Halls Garage
- Tommie North Residence Hall Garage
- Anderson Parking Facility

Bike repair stations are available on both campuses to make simple repairs. Bike repair stations are available in the following locations:

- on the south side of O'Shaughnessy Stadium near the bike racks
- inside the secure bike storage in Frey Residence Hall Garage
- inside the secure bike storage in Tommie North Residence Hall Garage
- outside Schulze Hall near the bike racks (on the Minneapolis campus)



We recommend using a U-lock bicycle lock to secure your bike.

For more information about bike safety, registering your bike at St. Thomas, and preventing bike theft, visit the [Public Safety website](#).

## RIDE

The [Campus Shuttle](#) provides an easy way to travel between the Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses. The shuttle is available during weekdays and the schedule is available on the [Campus Shuttle page](#). The shuttle is free to use, and you don't need to be going to class to take the shuttle—use it to explore, shop, and dine in downtown Minneapolis.



Need to head elsewhere in the Twin Cities? Take [Metro Transit!](#)

The St. Paul and Minneapolis campuses are connected to the surrounding area by multiple bus routes and light rail lines. Use the [Metro Transit Trip Planner](#) to determine your route and arrival times.

St. Thomas offers a Metro Transit Student College Pass for \$150 per semester, or \$85 for the summer, which provides unlimited rides on buses and the light rail. Passes can be purchased through the [St. Thomas Parking Portal](#).

New to riding with Metro Transit? Check out the [How to Ride](#) page to learn about fares, transfers, and more!

## DRIVE

If you opt to drive, carpooling with fellow Tommies or friends is a great option to save money and reduce emissions.

Have an electric vehicle? [Electric Vehicle Charging Stations](#) are free to use, however the vehicle being charged must be legally parked in the parking facility. This means the driver either has a parking contract for the garage, or has paid for hourly visitor parking.

EV charging stations can be found in the parking garages below:

- Anderson Student Center
- Frey Residence Hall
- Tommie North Residence Hall



### Did you know?

There are three locations on campus with EV charging stations!



# GET INVOLVED

Interested in getting more involved in sustainability at St. Thomas? There are many academic and extra-curricular opportunities to explore at St. Thomas.

## ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES



### **Sustainability Minor**

You can earn a sustainability minor with any major (besides Environmental Studies) by taking classes with a sustainability focus. Choose from more than 100 courses offered by over 30 different departments!

### **Sustainability Study Abroad Opportunities**

Receive off-campus study experience with a sustainability-themed program.

### **Sustainability Scholars Grant**

The Sustainability Scholars Grant program supports undergraduate students from any discipline who wish to complete a major research project focused on sustainability.

### **Sustainable Communities Partnership (SCP)**

Through SCP, students collaborate with local governments and communities to apply what they learn in class to improve interconnected human and environmental well-being in the Twin Cities area. Students develop real-world, creative problem-solving skills, make connections in the Twin Cities community, and gain confidence to be leaders in sustainability in their future career paths.

### **First-Year Experience Core Curriculum Requirement**

All first-year students must complete the First-Year Learning Community Requirement by enrolling in either a Theme-Based Learning Community or a Living Learning Community.

- One option for the Theme-Based Learning Community is to sign up for the Environmental Sustainability and the Common Good theme and take two interdisciplinary courses.
- One option for the Living Learning Communities is to sign up for the Sustainability LLC. LLCs are specialized living environments that help connect students in and out of the classroom.

### **The Fowler Global Social Innovation Challenge**

Compete for funding in this social venture challenge by pitching an idea that addresses a United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal.



## CLUBS & ORGANIZATIONS

Visit Tommie Link to learn more about our sustainability-focused clubs & organizations!

### **Sustainability Club**

The Sustainability Club exists to challenge St. Thomas to be a more ecologically sound campus and to raise environmental awareness within our community, both on and off-campus.

### **Engineers for a Sustainable World**

The mission of the St. Thomas chapter of Engineers for a Sustainable World is to engage engineers in reducing waste and poverty by improving environmental, social, and economic sustainability worldwide by engaging in engineering projects which benefit communities which they are based in as well as raising awareness of the importance of engineering and its role in environmental, social, and political sustainability within our community.

### **Tommie Outdoors**

This club aims to unite St. Thomas Students together around a shared love of nature and the common good.

### **Undergraduate Student Government Sustainability Coalition**

The USG Sustainability Coalition is a committee of USG. Their purpose is to discuss topics of sustainability on campus and help develop and promote USG initiatives related to sustainability.

## STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

### **Student Sustainability Leadership Program**

The Student Sustainability Leadership Program (SSLP) is a student employment opportunity designed to prepare the next generation of environmental leaders by giving them hands-on experience with sustainability on campus and to increase student sustainability knowledge and action through peer-education.

### **Learn More**

Learn more about sustainability initiatives at St. Thomas and how to incorporate sustainability into your daily life by earning a [digital sustainability badge](#)! Badges available include [Sustainability Essentials](#) and [Pollinator Path Principles](#).





*Students volunteering at the Mississippi River Cleanup*

# GET CONNECTED



The Office of Sustainability Initiatives (OSI) is dedicated to advancing sustainability on campus. Check out OSI's social media accounts and websites for more information:



## Upcoming Sustainability Events & Happenings



Stay tuned for upcoming sustainability events and initiatives! You can view a full list of upcoming events on the Office of Sustainability Initiatives' events calendar. Some recurring events to look out for include:

- Welcome Days  
Be on the lookout for a sustainability-themed activities during Welcome Days!
- Bike, Walk, Roll
- Season of Creation
- Campus Sustainability Month (October)
- Sustainability Week (April)
- Mississippi River Clean-up

# Guide to Sustainable Living

## References

---

1. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. [Waste planning and recycling](#) (page 6)
2. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. [Recycling in Minnesota](#) (page 8)
3. Ramsey County. [Food Scraps](#) (page 9)
4. Minnesota Environmental Quality Board. [2019 Environment and Energy Report Card: Energy](#) (page 10)
5. Energy Star. [Energy Star](#) (page 10)
6. United States Department of Energy. [Programmable Thermostats](#) (page 10)
7. United States Bureau of Reclamation. [Water Facts - Worldwide Water Supply](#) (page 11)
8. United States Environmental Protection Agency, WaterSense. [Showerheads](#) (page 11)
9. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. [Water conservation for residents](#) (page 11)
10. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. [Climate Change trends and data](#) (page 12)



All for the Common Good<sup>®</sup>



UNIVERSITY OF

**St.Thomas**