



St. Thomas
UNIVERSITY

Climate & Sustainability Action Plan 2025-30

A Collaborative and
Strong Future for
St. Thomas University

St. Thomas University

Climate & Sustainability Action Plan 2025-30

PREAMBLE

As St. Thomas University embarks on a new Strategic Plan, the University recognizes that sustainability and climate action must be integrated across all aspects of institutional life to ensure the long-term resilience of our campus community and the fulfillment of our mission. Through teaching, research, operations, governance, and community engagement, STU has an important role to play in responding to the interconnected challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, social inequity, and economic uncertainty.

The unique qualities of STU — our emphasis on people, ideas, and values — position the University to advance a holistic and human-centered approach to sustainability that reflects our commitment to environmental stewardship, reconciliation, social responsibility, innovation, and student engagement. The Climate & Sustainability Action Plan provides a framework to guide the University in reducing its environmental impact, strengthening campus sustainability practices, and creating opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to contribute to building a more resilient and inclusive future.

In leading the development and implementation of this Climate & Sustainability Action Plan, the Office of the Vice-President Finance and Administration, through the Sustainability Coordinator, worked collaboratively with campus stakeholders to ensure alignment with the broader St. Thomas University Strategic Plan 2025–2030 and its associated institutional plans, including: the Academic Plan; the Strategic Research Plan; the Strategic Enrolment Management Plan; the Advancement, Fundraising and Alumni Engagement Plan; the Human Resources and Well-being Plan; the Campus Facilities Plan; the Communication, Brand, and Marketing Plan; and the Financial Sustainability Plan.

Only through collaboration across the University community will STU achieve its sustainability goals and fulfill its responsibility to current and future generations of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the broader communities we serve.

MISSION STATEMENT

St. Thomas University prioritizes teaching and learning so that each student is prepared for personal and career fulfillment. Through leading programs informed by our humanistic approach and opportunities for experiential education, we offer a robust and inclusive learning community that fosters connections across academic disciplines and emerging scholarly areas. On our beautiful campus, supportive faculty and staff create the ideal place for discovery and possibility. Each St. Thomas student is empowered to think independently, communicate effectively, and act responsibly. Meaningful contributions to the communities we serve—locally, nationally, and globally—are made today, through our teaching and research, and tomorrow, through the success of our alumni.

VISION

St. Thomas University commits to become the leading choice for students seeking a holistic university student experience.

POSITION OF THE CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN WITHIN ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGIC PLAN (2025–30)

GOAL #5 of the University's Strategic Plan: Ensure St. Thomas University's long-term stability and capacity to provide transformative education to future generations of students.

STRATEGY # 4 under **GOAL #5** refers to the development of a Climate & Sustainability Action Plan:

Adopt a more comprehensive approach to sustainability — encompassing climate action, environmental stewardship, reconciliation, social equity, innovation, and economic resilience — to optimize campus operations and create opportunities for students to contribute to building a resilient and inclusive future. The St. Thomas University Climate and Sustainability Action Plan will be factored into institutional decision-making, ensuring sustainable practices guide operational improvements and student success initiatives.

PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING A CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN FOR ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY (2025–30)

In October 2023, STU hired a full-time Sustainability Coordinator, initially funded by the NB Environmental Trust Fund, to lead the development of the Climate & Sustainability Action Plan (CSAP). Prior to this, there had not been a full-time staff member dedicated to sustainability or climate action planning at the university.

As part of the CSAP development process, the Sustainability Coordinator completed a campus-wide sustainability audit and held extensive consultations with members of the university community. In fall 2023, consultations engaged 148 community members in person and 153 online. In May 2024, the University's new Environmental Sustainability Policy was approved, further strengthening the foundation for sustainability commitments at STU.

In July 2024, a comprehensive Sustainability Audit was completed, including an ASHRAE Level II Energy Audit conducted by certified energy management professionals. The audit identified baseline data, system inefficiencies, and opportunities for emissions and cost reductions across campus operations.

The President's Advisory Committee on Campus Environment Issues (PACCEI) reviewed a series of background briefs to inform the CSAP, including the 2023–2024 Sustainability Audit Report, the Climate Action Plan Framework, a Sustainability PESTL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal) Opportunities and Risks Analysis, and a benchmarking analysis of climate and sustainability strategies at peer universities. Based on these materials, the committee developed initial recommendations and draft actions for inclusion in the CSAP.

Draft recommendations were shared with the STSU Sustainability Committee, STU Sustainability Club, and FAUST Environment Committee for feedback, and revisions were made throughout the process based on input from campus stakeholders. The draft recommendations were also made publicly available on the STU website beginning in August 2024 to allow for broader community review and feedback.

Finally, the Climate & Sustainability Action Plan was approved by the Board of Governors in May 2026.

CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:** Recognize and address the unequal burdens of climate change and other sustainability challenges, while ensuring that all people share the benefits of environmental protection efforts. This means that all people, regardless of their race, color, gender, age, sexuality, national origin, ability, or income, live in safe, healthy, fair communities.
- 2 WHOLE-SYSTEMS SUSTAINABILITY:** Embed sustainability across academic, operational, and governance systems by addressing ecological integrity, climate mitigation, climate adaptation, social well-being, and long-term economic responsibility together.
- 3 COLLABORATION:** Work with Indigenous rights holders and diverse stakeholders to advance sustainability efforts, bringing together actors from across sectors, including community engagement, data collection, and funding.
- 4 INNOVATION:** Continuously strive to adopt innovative approaches and practices and share information and resources with peer organizations.

CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN AREAS OF FOCUS

1 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

OUTCOME: Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from STU's operations and improve the sustainability performance of STU's buildings.

TARGETS

- Achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.
- Reduce GHG emissions by 80% from 2010 baseline by 2030, 90% by 2040.
- Ensure all new construction and major renovation projects are aligned with a green building standard (e.g., LEED Gold or Platinum).
- Ensure 100% of floor space is managed in accordance with a green building operation standard by 2030.
- Reduce potable-water consumption per person by 60% from 2010 baseline by 2030.

ACTIONS

- 1.1** Conduct regular GHG inventory and energy audits of all campus buildings.
- 1.2** Based on the energy audit findings, develop a prioritized list of energy-efficient retrofits for each building.
- 1.3** Implement building-level energy management systems to track and monitor energy performance and identify opportunities for ongoing optimization.
- 1.4** Conduct a feasibility study to assess the potential for on-site solar energy generation at STU.

- 1.5 Explore partnerships with local utilities or private developers to facilitate renewable energy projects.
- 1.6 Write a policy to ensure all new construction and major renovations are designed and built to high energy efficiency standards, such as LEED Gold or Platinum.
- 1.7 Engage with facility services provider to develop and adopt a formal policy for sustainable building operations and maintenance that aligns with green building standards, such as LEED O+M or BREEAM-In Use.
- 1.8 Replace all standard plumbing fixtures with low-flow alternatives and implement leak detection and repair programs to further reduce water consumption.
- 1.9 Implement systems to recover and reuse water (e.g., greywater systems, air-cooling condensate recovery).
- 1.10 Launch an occupant engagement program to educate faculty, staff, and students about sustainable practices, such as conserving energy and water.

2 SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

OUTCOME: Reduce waste generation and increase diversion rates for indoor solid waste.

TARGETS

- Achieve a reduction in per person waste generation by 2030.
- Increase diversion rate to 50% by 2030.
- Decrease recycling stream contamination rate to 5% by 2030.

ACTIONS

- 2.1 Centralize and standardize recycling infrastructure and signage across campus.
- 2.2 Engage with waste hauler to optimize waste collection and disposal practices and improve data collection.
- 2.3 Launch educational campaigns to raise awareness among students, faculty, and staff about proper waste sorting and reduction practices.
- 2.4 Encourage the use of reusable dishware and cutlery in dining halls, cafes, and campus events.
- 2.5 Implement a deposit-return system for beverage containers collected on campus.
- 2.6 Implement composting programs for organic waste.
- 2.7 Establish a formal food recovery program to donate surplus food safely and regularly.
- 2.8 Conduct regular waste audits.

3 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

OUTCOME: Create a more biodiverse and ecologically sustainable campus environment.

TARGETS

- Increase the percentage of native plant species on campus grounds to 50% by 2030.
- Increase tree canopy coverage ratio to 20% by 2030.
- Increase the percentage of ecologically managed grounds to 95% by 2030.

ACTIONS

- 3.1** Conduct a comprehensive biodiversity audit to establish baseline data on campus species, habitats, and ecological conditions and use the iNaturalist platform for ongoing biodiversity monitoring and reporting.
- 3.2** Transition ornamental non-native species to a greater percentage of native plants that better support local ecosystems and pollinators.
- 3.3** Integrate edible plants (e.g., fruit trees, berry bushes, and community gardens) to enhance food security for students while supporting biodiversity.
- 3.4** Collaborate with Indigenous partners, respecting Indigenous Knowledge Systems and ways of knowing, to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge when selecting native plants.
- 3.5** Develop and publish a formal sustainable landscape management policy aimed at reducing the environmental impact of groundskeeping practices.
- 3.6** Implement Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to minimize pesticide use and promote ecological pest control.
- 3.7** Implement organic landscaping practices, reducing or eliminating the use of synthetic fertilizers and herbicides.
- 3.8** Incorporate water conservation measures into landscaping practices.
- 3.9** Increase the use of compost generated from on-site organic landscaping waste used to enrich campus soils.
- 3.10** Install rainwater collection systems to irrigate campus grounds and reduce municipal water reliance.
- 3.11** Develop on-site green infrastructure projects (e.g., bioswales, rain gardens, and permeable surfaces) to manage stormwater effectively and return water to surface or groundwater systems.

4 PROCUREMENT

OUTCOME: Integrate sustainability considerations into all purchasing decisions for goods and services at STU.

TARGET

- Increase the percentage of goods and services procured from suppliers that meet defined sustainability criteria by 2030.
- Increase the percentage spend of:
 - Office paper spend that meets preferable sustainability criteria
 - Furniture spend that meets preferable sustainability criteria
 - Electronics spend that meets preferable sustainability criteria
 - STU branded publications, merchandise, and swag that meets preferable sustainability criteria
 - Plant-based menu items
 - Locally sourced food and beverage products
 - Third-party certified sustainable food and beverage products
- Reduce the on-site sales and distribution of single-use disposable plastic food containers, utensils, and beverage cups by 2030.

ACTIONS

- 4.1** Develop a sustainable procurement framework with a Sustainable Procurement Policy that integrates environmental, social, and economic sustainability criteria into purchasing decisions.
 - 4.1.1** Update RFP (Request for Proposal) and RFT (Request for Tender) processes to include sustainability criteria and require suppliers to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable practices.
 - 4.1.2** Prioritize suppliers that demonstrate a commitment to fair labor practices, ethical sourcing, and reduced environmental impact.
 - 4.1.3** Establish clear sustainability criteria and targets for procurement categories, such as office supplies, electronics, furniture, STU branded publications, merchandise and swag, and food services.
- 4.2** Develop and publish a Supplier Code of Conduct that sets expectations for suppliers regarding:
 - 4.2.1** Environmental impact (e.g., emissions, waste reduction, responsible sourcing)
 - 4.2.2** Social performance (e.g., fair labor practices, human rights)
 - 4.2.3** Ethical governance and transparency.
- 4.3** Train staff on sustainable procurement practices.
- 4.4** Provide educational resources to faculty and staff about sustainable purchasing options.
- 4.5** Engage with dining services provider to eliminate the sale and distribution of single-use disposable plastic food containers, utensils, and beverage cups.

- 4.6** Implement a reusable container program for dining services and other campus food outlets to reduce plastic consumption.
- 4.7** Incentivize reusable containers and mugs by formalizing existing discounts for patrons who bring their own.
- 4.8** Advocate for the inclusion of sustainable procurement practices within Inter University Services (ISI) and the Atlantic University and Colleges Sustainability Network (AUCSN).
- 4.9** Leverage collaborative purchasing power to source sustainable goods and services.
- 4.10** Expand initiatives to ensure end-of-life electronics, office paper, and other materials are managed responsibly, including donations or certified recycling programs.
- 4.11** Implement a formal surplus program to store and redistribute university-owned goods (e.g., furniture, electronics, office supplies)

5 ACADEMICS

OUTCOME: Integrate sustainability into the curriculum and research activities across all disciplines.

TARGET

- Increase the percentage of academic programs with defined sustainability learning outcomes by 2030.
- Increase the percentage of academic departments with sustainability course offerings by 2030.
- Increase the percentage of faculty engaged in sustainability research by 2030.
- Increase the percentage of students engaged in sustainability research by 2030.

ACTIONS

- 5.1** Create a Sustainability Curriculum Map of sustainability learning opportunities across departments, including course offerings, applied learning projects, and research opportunities.
- 5.2** Provide Professional Development Opportunities for faculty on integrating sustainability into their teaching and research.
- 5.3** Establish Sustainability Learning Outcomes (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) for all academic programs.
- 5.4** Develop a Sustainability Literacy Assessment tool to evaluate graduating students' sustainability literacy.
- 5.5** Develop a program to encourage faculty and students to engage in sustainability research by providing incentives.

6 ENGAGEMENT

OUTCOME: Increase engagement of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the surrounding community in STU's sustainability initiatives.

TARGET

- Increase participation in sustainability events and programs.
- Achieve an increase in positive responses on surveys assessing sustainability awareness and engagement.
- Achieve a commuting modal share of non-single-occupant car trips to 10% by 2030.
- Decrease business-rated air travel by 2030.

ACTIONS

- 6.1** Empower student leadership: Establish a robust peer educator program to train students to promote sustainability in residence halls and across campus. Support student-led sustainability initiatives, providing resources and guidance to student clubs and organizations focused on environmental issues. Incorporate sustainability into student orientation and leadership training to educate incoming students about STU's sustainability goals and encourage active participation in sustainability initiatives.
- 6.2** Engage faculty and staff: Develop a sustainable workplace training and certification program to recognize and reward departments that implement sustainable practices. Host workshops and training sessions on sustainability topics relevant to faculty and staff roles.
- 6.3** Develop a comprehensive engagement strategy that outlines goals, target audiences, and methods for engagement across all stakeholder groups.
- 6.4** Create opportunities for meaningful dialogue and collaboration with Indigenous communities, respecting Indigenous knowledge systems, laws, governance and histories.
- 6.5** Establish a dedicated sustainability communication platform (e.g., Instagram, newsletter) to share updates, events, and progress actively.
- 6.6** Implement targeted outreach campaigns highlighting sustainability initiatives and their impact.
- 6.7** Develop feedback mechanisms, like annual surveys and focus groups, and track impact metrics to assess sustainability culture, gather feedback from stakeholders, and measure the effectiveness of engagement efforts.
- 6.8** Develop a commuting survey and a system for measuring GHG emissions from business-related travel.
- 6.9** Implement incentives and awareness campaigns for non-single occupant vehicle modes of commuting.
- 6.10** Expand active transportation infrastructure.
- 6.11** Update the university's travel policy to incentivize less-carbon intensive modes of travel.

FINANCING

The plan's financing will involve exploring various sources, including:

- **Internal Funding:** Allocate a dedicated budget for sustainability initiatives from existing operational funds.
- **Grant Opportunities:** Actively seek grants from government agencies, foundations, and other organizations that support sustainability projects in higher education.
- **Partnerships:** Explore partnerships with private sector companies to implement energy efficiency projects, etc.

IMPLEMENTATION AND TRACKING PROGRESS

- The Office of the Vice-President Finance and Administration (VPFA), through the Sustainability Coordinator, will be responsible for the Plan's overall implementation and progress tracking.
- The President's Advisory Committee on Campus Environmental Issues, with occasional inclusion of additional representatives from across the university community, will advise on the implementation of the Plan.
- The Sustainability Coordinator will lead the coordination of a sustainability audit every three years using the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS), a standardized assessment tool from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) to evaluate the University's progress in meeting its sustainability goals and targets.
- Annual reports on key sustainability performance indicators and progress on the Plan will be produced and shared with the university community and the Board of Governors.
- The Sustainability Coordinator will maintain regular communication with stakeholders on the progress of the Plan.
- The Plan will be reviewed and updated every five years to incorporate new information, changing circumstances, and feedback from stakeholders.