

# Wellesley College Strategic Sustainability Plan, 2016-2026

*Environmental stewardship and consciousness are at the core of Wellesley's mission to educate women to make a difference in the world. Creating opportunities for future generations can only be possible if the principles of sustainability infuse all that we do as a college community.*

--President of Wellesley College, H. Kim Bottomly

*Wellesley College considers environmental sustainability to be an important component of its core mission. As part of this commitment, the college will consider sustainability as a factor in all institutional decisions. Members of the Wellesley community have individual and collective responsibility for environmental stewardship.*

--Adopted April 2007 by President Diana Walsh '66

*It is said that the meek shall inherit the Earth. But it will take boldness and action to save it. [L]et us each pledge to treat our shared environment with respect, and to act with determination to safeguard it for generation upon generation to come.*

--Madeleine Albright '59, Wellesley Alumna and Former Secretary of State

These declarations by Wellesley leaders inspired and guided the development of Wellesley College's Strategic Sustainability Plan, 2016-2026. Their voices remind us that although our efforts to address sustainability must begin on campus, this work must also extend to the world beyond. Given that environmental inequities disproportionately affect women, Wellesley women have an important role to play in advancing sustainability through research, education, and leadership. Wellesley is an ideal, even crucial, place to develop in young women an understanding of sustainability strategies and their importance.

Our commitment to sustainability rests on several principles:

1. There is an intrinsic relationship between on-campus practices and broader sustainability challenges. Taking action here is consistent with our commitment to *minister unto*; a commitment to sustainability can be an important element of the Wellesley Effect.

2. It benefits our students to live in an ecologically diverse, energy efficient, and healthy campus that models traditional and new approaches to environmental sustainability.
3. Sustainable practices are consistent with the long-term stewardship of the college's assets and financial well being.
4. Improving our environmental sustainability will burnish Wellesley's reputation. An institution that fosters leadership and civic engagement should lead in this work.

Wellesley's longstanding commitment to environmental sustainability has gained momentum in recent decades. A co-generation plant has lowered greenhouse gas emissions approximately 25 percent since 1994. Potable water consumption has been reduced 39 percent since 1999. And the college has undertaken a wide range of other sustainability initiatives: including significant campus landscape restoration projects, developing a move-out move-in sale to help students' recycle and reuse furnishings, adopting Green Building Standards, and piloting innovative programs with the support of the Class of 1957 Green Fund.

Wellesley is now ready to build on these past successes and to expand on its commitment to integrate sustainability into all institutional decisions. This strategic plan sets forth Wellesley's overarching priorities and goals for addressing sustainability over the next decade. A companion [website](#) and [report](#) include detailed descriptions of the approaches, projects, responsible departments, and incremental steps for each overall goal and its objective.

This work has been spearheaded by the Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability, which, in addition to researching similar practices at other colleges and institutions, solicited suggestions, comments, and advice from the campus community and met with stakeholders from across Wellesley in an effort to make this document the product of many desires, beliefs, and voices.

## Sustainability Priorities and Goals

**Academic and Co-curricular Integration.** The most important contributions Wellesley will make to advancing sustainability will be through its activities as an educational institution. Advancing sustainability requires deep, creative, and critical thinking across a range of

disciplines, the kind of thinking that is central to Wellesley's mission as a liberal arts college. This means providing students with the conceptual tools to consider how social and cultural contexts, economic and policy trade-offs, and scientific concepts and evidence are relevant to studying sustainability.

Primary Goals:

- Support study of sustainability by providing interested faculty with resources to help them incorporate sustainability-related material into their classes.
- Implement a Sustainability Year to raise awareness across the college
- Increase hands-on learning and research opportunities for students related to sustainability

**Data Collection and Community Engagement.** The most important step the college can take to advance sustainability on campus, both in support of institutional decision making and community engagement, is to expand monitoring of resource consumption. Data on energy, water, and waste should be collected on at least a building-by-building basis to better support institutional decision making, promote community engagement, and provide data sets for analysis and research (in a range of disciplines, from psychology to environmental studies to computer science).

Primary Goal:

- To implement metering for primary utilities at the building-level for 80 percent of campus within five years and ensure the resulting data are available for facilities management, academic research, and educational purposes.

**Energy, Buildings, and Transportation and Climate Change.** Wellesley College is committed to aggressively and creatively pursuing opportunities to promote energy conservation, increase energy efficiency, and implement infrastructure changes that can reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and contributions to climate change. We can achieve these goals through community engagement and investments in campus infrastructure (such as the college's co-generation facility) and existing buildings. At the same time, the College values our culturally and geographically diverse student body, study abroad opportunities, and academic travel; as a result, we do not anticipate substantial reductions in travel-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Primary Goals:

- To reduce the college's greenhouse gas emissions from on-campus activities by 37 percent by 2026 and 44 percent by 2036 from a 2010 baseline and to undertake longterm planning to achieve carbon neutrality.
- To improve the energy efficiency of buildings through the implementation of the Green Building Standards (adopted in 2014) for major construction and renovation and the expansion of the current Green Revolving Fund to further support improvements in other buildings (which could help address deferred maintenance issues).

- To expand awareness of the impacts of college-funded travel and encourage alternatives, without limiting such travel.

**Landscape, Watershed, and Water.** Wellesley College's beautiful landscape at the edge of Lake Waban is a resource as precious as any financial asset we own. To advance landscape and watershed health, we must make the campus a more sustainable landscape, promote human engagement with the landscape, and improve our management of water resources.

Primary Goals:

- To establish a more ecologically sustainable campus landscape through both design and maintenance, building on the 1998 Campus Landscape plans and updates.
- To encourage community engagement with the landscape through research (the campus is a living laboratory), additional signage (to educate people about the campus), and support for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- To improve the sustainability of campus water consumption by carefully managing our aquifer, reducing potable water consumption to 50 percent below the 1999 baseline by 2026, and eliminating the purchase of bottled water.

**Food, Dining, Purchasing and Waste Management.** Wellesley can increase sustainability by refining purchasing practices, dining operations, and waste disposal.

Primary Goals:

- Encourage reductions in purchasing and waste generation by encouraging reuse and setting specific goals for the purchase of environmentally preferable products in high-volume categories (paper, toner, computers).
- Develop and implement goals for sustainable purchasing in dining operations that factor in considerations such as local, fair, humane, organic, and other relevant criteria.
- Develop a waste management plan in the next two years, including quantitative goals for long-term waste reduction.