

GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING

at the University of St. Thomas
2025 - 2026



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.

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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

Sustainability is central to the University's mission of advancing the common good. We envision sustainability as fostering interconnected human and environmental well-being now and for future generations. The University of St. Thomas infuses sustainability into academic programs, student life, facilities, dining and campus operations. The University is committed to:

Maintaining an AASHE Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) Gold rating

Obtaining a minimum of LEED silver certification for new buildings larger than 25,000 square feet

Reducing annual carbon emissions while working toward a goal of carbon neutrality by 2035



AASHE STARS

The University participates in the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's 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 STARS Silver rating. The University set a goal to achieve and maintain a STARS Gold rating. In 2021 and 2024, St Thomas earned a STARS Gold rating.

View the [2024 AASHE STARS report](#).



Sustainability Accomplishments

In the past years, St. Thomas has had many significant sustainability accomplishments. Some highlights include:

- LEED Platinum certification of Frey Residence Hall, LEED Silver certification of Schoenecker Hall North, and LEED Gold certification of Schoenecker Center. These ratings indicate high levels of sustainable construction and development standards.
- The Pollinator Path has effectively tripled the number of pollinators in the area.
- The Stewardship Garden provides research and educational opportunities.
- Placed 10th in the waste diversion category of the 2025 Campus Race to Zero Waste competition.



78%

**OF ACADEMIC
DEPARTMENTS
OFFER
SUSTAINABILITY
COURSES**

#17

Reducing Carbon Emissions

In 2010, St. Thomas adopted its first Climate Action Plan and established its goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2035. Since 2007, the university has reduced its carbon emissions by 51% and infused sustainability into many aspects of academics, operations, and activities on campus.

**GREEN MATTERS:
EVERYONE
CARES ABOUT
CONSERVATION
(2025,
PRINCETON
REVIEW)**

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](#).
- Check out local buy nothing Facebook groups or Facebook Marketplace in the Twin Cities to buy affordable, used items in good condition or even find items for free!

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 goal to divert as much waste as possible. Our current diversion rate is 57%. We need your help to achieve 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	Reusable coffee filters
Wipes/paper towels	Reusable towels/rags
Dryer sheets	Wool dryer balls
Single use dining ware	Reusable utensil set
Plastic water bottle	Reusable water bottle
Plastic straw	Reusable straw

...try this!

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.

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 fresh water? Let's use it wisely! (6)

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 (7)!

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 (8).
- 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 (9). 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:

- inside Frey Residence Hall near the south entrance
- inside the Morrison Parking Ramp
- inside the Schoenecker Hall North Parking Garage
- inside the Anderson Parking Facility

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

St. Paul

- inside the secure bike storage in Frey Residence Hall
- inside the secure bike storage in Schoenecker Hall North Parking Garage
- near the bike racks on the south side of O'Shaughnessy Stadium
- near the bike racks outside the south entrance of O'Shaughnessy Science Hall
- near the bike racks outside the south entrance of Schoenecker Center

Minneapolis

- near the bike racks outside Schulze Hall



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

For more information about biking at St. Thomas, visit the [Parking & Transportation 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!

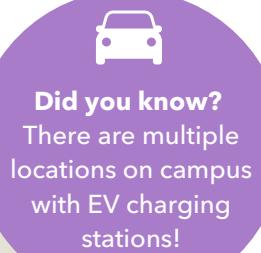
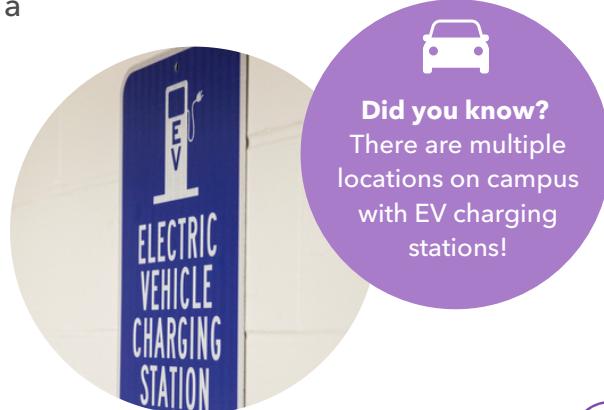
DRIVE

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 following locations:

- Anderson Student Center Parking Garage
- Anderson Parking Facility
- Frey Residence Hall Parking Garage
- Schoenecker Hall North Parking Garage



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.

ACADEMICS & RESEARCH



Sustainability-Focused Majors & Minor

You can pursue a sustainability-focused major or earn a sustainability minor with any major (besides Environmental Studies). Choose from more than 100 sustainability inclusive and focused courses offered by over 30 different departments!

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.

Sustainability Study Abroad Opportunities

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

Sustainability Scholars

Sustainability Scholars through the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) supports undergraduate students from any discipline who wish to complete a major research project focused on sustainability.

Sustainability Living Learning Communities

LLCs are specialized living environments that help connect students in and out of the classroom. One option for a Living Learning Community is to sign up for the Sustainability LLC. There is even a Sustainability Second-Year LLC!

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 sustainability-focused [events](#) and [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.

Earth, Environment, and Society Club

Whether you are majoring in a field within the EES department, just taking an EES class, or just simply loving nature, this is the place for you!

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.

Students for Justice & Peace

Students for Justice & Peace (SJP) is a club devoted to peace, equality, and recognition of human dignity. We work to create positive social change both globally and locally.

Tommie Outdoors

The club aims to unite students together around a shared love of nature and the common good. The main focus of the club will be to hold events that connect students with each other and nature through outdoor activities.

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

Student Sustainability Leadership Program

The Student Sustainability Leadership Program (SSL) 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.



Digital Badges

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, Pollinator Path Principles, and Pollinator Path in Practice.





Students and alumni 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 (September)
- Campus Sustainability Month (October)
- Sustainability Week (April)
- Mississippi River Cleanup (each semester)

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 Bureau of Reclamation. [Water Facts - Worldwide Water Supply](#) (page 11)
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