

GREEN LIVING GUIDE

FOR RESIDENTS | 2024

SUSTAINABLE LIVING FOR EVERYDAY IMPACT

Your property team is taking strides to make your community more sustainable and efficient and to minimize the negative impacts buildings can have the environment. By improving the efficiency of a building's systems the community can save energy and water and produce less waste. In some instances, these improvements are felt by occupants, too. This confluence is often known as ESG+R, or environmental, social, governance, and resiliency practices, and sometimes just as “sustainability”.

This **Green Living Guide** contains numerous no-cost and low-cost suggestions you can implement to support the efforts of your property team and help improve the efficiency of your community. There are simple and easy measures you can take to save energy, conserve water, limit waste, improve your surroundings, and reduce your impact on the environment. By practicing any or all of the recommendations in this guide, you can positively contribute to a healthier and more sustainable community and you may save money, too!

Small changes can make a huge difference, and there are many added benefits in practicing sustainability. Thank you for exploring these opportunities and giving back to your community.

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ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Decreasing energy use reduces greenhouse gas emissions and can save money. Greenhouse gases contribute to climate change.

HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING

- **Keep windows closed** when the heater or air conditioner is running.
- Ensure vents are **free of obstructions** to allow air to move freely and efficiently.
- Set the target temperature on programmable or “smart” thermostats **lower (for heating) and higher (for cooling)** when you are at work or away for an extended period of time.
- Wear **seasonally-appropriate clothing**, even when inside.
- In the winter:
 - **Slant blinds** downward to permit sunlight to enter the room and increase warmth. That will serve as an insulator.
 - **Reverse the direction of ceiling fans** to spin in reverse to circulate warm air downward. (The fan will turn clockwise when looking at the fan from below.)
 - Place a **draft stopper** under exterior doors. You can use a rolled towel, a product designed for this use, or request a door sweep and weather stripping from the property team.



The Department of Energy calculates that your energy bill will increase **3%** for each degree you raise the thermostat for heating.

- In the summer:
 - **Close the blinds** (with the slats in the up position) as tightly as possible. This will reflect light and heat and create a pocket of air.
 - **Set the ceiling fans** to circulate warm air to the ceiling. (The fan will turn counter-clockwise when looking from below.)

ELECTRONICS

- Delete old **files saved to the cloud** to reduce energy used by data centers. All files that you have on the cloud are stored in data centers, which use energy.
- **Use a “sleep mode” instead of a screen saver.** Screen savers use almost as much energy as when you are actively using your computer.
- Some electronics draw electricity when they are plugged into an outlet (phantom electricity). **Plug electronics into surge protectors and turn off power strips** when electronics are not in use.

EXCEPTION: Electronics that require power in order to access an Internet connection for regular updates.

- Save money by **shutting down a home computer** if you don't expect to use it for the next two hours. Turn off the monitor if the computer is not going to be used within the next 20 minutes.
- As you replace equipment, look for energy-efficient products that conserve energy, such as those labeled **ENERGY STAR® certified** in the USA.

THE KITCHEN

- **Thaw frozen foods** in the refrigerator before cooking to reduce cooking time.
- Minimize the number of **times the oven is opened** during operation. Each opening can drop the oven's temperature by 25°F/14°C, requiring additional energy costs to reheat.
- When possible, **use smaller appliances** to cook.
- **Cover pots** and pans when cooking to reduce cooking time.
- Set temperatures **only as low as needed** to ensure food safety (36°F/2.2°C to 40°F/4.4°C for the fridge and 0°F/-17.8°C for the freezer).
- **Avoid overcrowding** in the fridge and freezer to allow for airflow, while keeping enough in the units to act as insulation: 2/3 full is ideal for maximum cooling efficiency.
- **Minimize the time spent** with doors open by keeping food organized, visible, and accessible.
- Turn off the drying function of the dishwasher. Leave the door open to **air-dry dishes** instead.

LIGHTING

- Take advantage of **natural daylight**.
- When working or reading, **use task lighting** (such as desk lamps) rather than lighting the entire room.
- **Regularly dust** lamps and light fixtures to remove dust obstructing light emission.
- **Turn off lights** in unoccupied rooms.
- Switch to **LED lights** when it is time to replace task lighting and appliance lights. Ask the property team about replacing larger appliance or in-unit lighting.

WATER CONSERVATION

Water conservation practices can protect wildlife habitats by reducing demand on water sources and fights water scarcity. Saving water reduces the energy needed to treat and deliver the water, all while decreasing your water bill.



THE KITCHEN

- If the sink is equipped with a sprayer, **use the sprayer** to rinse dishes and **don't leave the water running**.
- Load the **dishwasher to capacity**. A full load will save water, energy, and detergent.
- **Avoid rinsing dishes unnecessarily** before loading them in the dishwasher.
- Select the **short cycle** option on the dishwasher.
- **Fill containers with tap water** and keep drinking water in the refrigerator instead of letting the tap run while you wait for the water to cool.
- Store empty pitchers or basins near the sink to **collect water that runs** while adjusting the water temperature. The water collected can be utilized for drinking water, rinsing dishes, filling pet bowls, or watering plants.
- **Wash fruits and vegetables** in a pan of water instead of washing them with water running continuously from the tap.
- **Soak pots and pans** instead of letting the water run while scraping clean.
- Use dropped **ice cubes to water plants** rather than throwing them in the sink to melt.
- Instead of using running water, **defrost food in the refrigerator** for water efficiency and food safety.



IRRIGATION

- **Identify any leaks, flooding, or over-use of irrigation systems.** Fix or report to responsible parties (e.g., property manager, Homeowners' Association, or local authorities).
- Tell your property management teams if you notice **irrigation occurring during or after a rain event**.



THE BATHROOM

- **Report malfunctioning toilets or dripping faucets** to property management.
- Strive for **short, efficient showers**.
- **Turn off running water** when washing face or brushing teeth.
- When running a bath, **plug the tub before turning on the water** then adjust the temperature as the tub fills.



LAUNDRY

- Always **adjust the washer's load setting** to match the laundry load size.
- **Wash clothes in cold water** to save both water and energy and help clothes keep their colors.
- **Choose biodegradable detergents** over traditional, synthetic detergents made from petrochemicals.
- **Use eco-friendly dry cleaners** that do not use perchloroethylene ("perc"), a chemical that can be harmful to humans.

REDUCE & REUSE

Source reduction is the best way to conserve resources and reduce pollution. Challenge yourself to find ways to either go without or reuse.



REDUCE INCOMING WASTE

- **Stop junk mail** by registering at dmachoice.org.
- **Unsubscribe from catalogs** with catalogchoice.org and insurance and credit card offers at consumer.ftc.gov.
- Utilize email instead of snail mail and **pay bills online**.
- Use **electronic notes**, white boards, or dry erase markers on mirrors for lists and reminders
- **Reuse any paper** that has been printed on only one side as note paper.
- **Avoid buying wrapping paper**. Reuse gift bags, magazines, or newspaper.
- To reduce packaging, **buy items in bulk** containers or large quantity packaging rather than single serve or individually packaged. However, only buy the quantity you will use to avoid waste.
- **Find a bulk, re-fill, or zero-waste** store to refill everything from shampoo to spices to dry goods.



RE-USE INSTEAD OF SINGLE USE

- Utilize **reusable coffee filters and pods**. Some reusable filters are made from renewable resources such as hemp or organic cotton.
- Keep **reusable shopping and produce bags** in the car so they are on hand while shopping.
- Avoid buying water in disposable, single-use bottles. Instead, **use reusable BPA-free water bottles**.
- **Use reusable mugs and insulated cups** to reduce the amount of non-biodegradable Styrofoam entering the landfill. Some cafes offer a discount when customers bring reusable mugs.
- Pack lunches in a **lunchbox** and use **reusable sandwich bags and containers**.
- Use **cloth napkins** instead of paper napkins.
- Convert to **reusable kitchen choices**: beeswax parchment, washable bowl covers, and reusable paper-towels.
- Buy clothes, gifts, and **household goods secondhand**. “Thrifting” can happen at thrift and consignment stores, estate and yard sales, and online community sharing or selling fora and marketplaces.



If there are concerns regarding water quality or taste, **use a water filter pitcher** to fill glasses and reusable bottles. Learn about water quality in your area: homewater101.com.



REPAIR

- **Take ripped or worn clothing** to the tailor for repair. This is likely less than the price of a new garment.
- Take **worn or damaged shoes** and leather goods to a cobbler.
- Use electrical tape or Sugru® to **mend headphones and laptop chargers** with exposed wires.
- Fix cracked **cell phone screens** rather than replacing the whole phone to reduce waste and save money.
- **Dropped your phone in water?** Quickly and carefully power off the phone, remove the battery and SIM card (if possible), and dry the phone with a towel. Place all parts in uncooked rice (wrapping the phone loosely in a paper towel first), or in a Ziploc® bag with desiccant packets, and leave for 24–72 hours to absorb any remaining moisture. (Bonus: save any desiccant packets from products you purchase to prepare for this type of accident.)



PRINTING

- **Only print when necessary**.
- Always **review a document in Print Preview** to find and correct mistakes before printing.
- If your printer duplexes (**double-sided printing**), set it as the default.
- When printing a web-page, copy and paste the link into printwhatyoulike.com to **optimize the web page for printing** (for free).
- Use resources such as PrintGreener.com, which **analyzes documents** to identify ways to reduce waste.
- **Save on ink** usage by switching to fonts with a lighter font weight or a smaller size (e.g., Century Gothic, Courier, or Garamond).

RECYCLING & COMPOSTING

Recycling allows individuals to decrease the negative impact of the waste they produce by saving landfill space and reducing water and air pollution. Emissions from landfills contribute significantly to climate change.



ELECTRONIC E-WASTE

- **Recycle used cell phones and accessories** at phone retailers or other local recycling programs or donate if services are available to do so.
- Drop-off TVs, DVD players, cell phones, cameras, music players, computers, and appliances at a **large, national electronics store to be recycled** where this service is offered.
- Research manufacturer recycling programs and send small electronics, such as mobile phones and tablets, back to the manufacturer for **recycling, re-purposing, or resale**. Some trade-ins still have value.



COMPOST & FOOD WASTE

- If the community offers composting, **follow the composting guidelines** on what is accepted and when or how the compost should be picked up or dropped off.
- If the community does not offer composting, **research local composting offerings** for pick up services or drop off locations.
- **DO NOT** pour used cooking oil down the drain. This practice can back up the sink and cause problems throughout the sanitary sewer system.
- Research local cooking oil recycling options provided by the municipality, such as **recycling drop-off sites**.
- If grease must be thrown away, allow it to cool and solidify, then **place it in a sealed container**, and place in the trash for proper disposal.
- Individual **composting may be an option**. Check with your property manager if a compost bin can be placed on site and maintained or on individual unit balconies or patios. Composting technology is advancing, and counter-top compost units have [recently come on the market](#).



LIGHT BULBS, BATTERIES & INK/TONER CARTRIDGES

- Handle CFLs safely and dispose of them responsibly. **CFLs contain a small amount of mercury** and recycling these bulbs prevents the release of mercury into the environment. Check the local area home improvement store for information about disposal.
- Recycle old **general-use, phone, and laptop batteries** at a local drop-off center.
- Inquire about **used car battery recycling** at major auto parts stores in your area.



RECYCLE EVERYTHING ELSE

- Check with the property manager for guidance on **recycling plastic, paper, aluminum, and glass**. Visit earth911.com for recycling locations of other items.
- **Donate non-perishable foods** to food banks or local food pantries to help reduce food waste.
- **Donate or re-sell clothes, gifts, and household goods** to thrift and consignment stores, estate and yard sales, and online community sharing or selling fora and marketplaces.
- **Utilize online marketplaces and apps**, such as [Facebook Marketplace](https://www.facebook.com/marketplace), BuyNothing groups, [eBay](https://www.ebay.com), or [Craigslist](https://www.craigslist.com) to donate, sell, and buy items.
- **Recycle shoes** at [Soles4Souls](https://www.soles4souls.com). Check the website for drop-off locations.
- **Return hangers and plastic bags** to the dry cleaner.
- **Reuse packing peanuts**, take them to a UPS store, or find a local recycling center that will accept them. (Alternatively, they can be used in the bottom of house plant pots for light-weight drainage material).
- Join a community forum, such as [Freecycle](https://www.freecycle.org), [Nextdoor](https://www.nextdoor.com), or [Buy Nothing](https://www.buynothing.com), to trade with others who are **giving or receiving goods for free** within their neighborhoods.

SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING

When you need to make a purchase, making more environmentally-conscious purchases has positive impacts on community health and wellbeing, the environment, and the local economy.



EVERYDAY PRACTICE

- Choose items made with renewable resources such as **cotton, wool, hemp, soy, bamboo, and cork**.
- Purchase products in **reusable containers**.
- Purchase **products that can be recycled** at the end of their useful life.
- **Patronize local, small businesses** to support the community, and also choose items made and sourced locally to reduce emissions associated with the purchase.
- Look for **third-party** certified products (e.g., Fair Trade® Certified, GreenGuard® Certified, EcoCert® Cosmos, B Corp®).
- Reduce packaging by **combining online orders** from the same retailer. Review your cart at check-out for options to combine shipments and wait to complete a purchase until you have a few items in your cart.



FOR THE HOME

- Purchase paper products that are made from **post-consumer recycled content** or bamboo.
- Switch to **rechargeable batteries** wherever feasible. Bring old batteries to a local office supply store or electronics store for proper recycling.
- Read cleaning product labels carefully before purchasing. If a product has a warning label because it contains **known hazardous chemicals**, consider one of the alternatives in the Green Cleaning Section of this guide.
- Purchase recyclable plastic pump-spray **bottles instead of aerosol cans**.
- Replace appliances with **energy and water efficient appliances**.



FOOD

- Purchase **in-season** produce to support the local community and reduce the distance produce travels.
- Shop at your **local farmer's market** to support local vendors and reduce the emissions associated with transporting food long distances.
- Participate in the **"Meatless Monday"** campaign. Plant-based foods have fewer emissions associated with their production and require fewer natural resources to produce.
- Select **food that has a lower impact** on the environment.
- Opt for organic and natural foods and food lower on the food chain (i.e. **vegetables and plant-based proteins**) that have fewer emissions and may be grown with better soil, water, and wildlife conservation practices.
- Choose free range protein and **foods without artificial hormones and antibiotics** that have less impact on ecosystems as well.



CLOTHING & PERSONAL CARE

- Host a **clothing swap** with friends.
- Shop **resale stores** either online or locally. Often you can find new items that still have tags.
- When buying new clothing, look for items made from **recycled or renewable materials**, such as cotton or hemp.
- Choose **petroleum-free cosmetic products** that do not contain mineral oil, paraffin, or propylene glycol. See [Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep®](#) database for toxicity ratings of common cosmetic products.
- Look for **certified organic plastic-free** personal-care products.
- Use **aluminum-free** deodorants.
- **Recycle clothes** that are not suitable for donation by purchasing a Take Back bag through [thredUP](#), For Days, or similar provider. The services may offer credit to their online stores.

GREEN CLEANING

Green cleaning keeps toxins and chemicals out of the air, water, and soil.

BAKING SODA AND VINEGAR USES

Baking soda and vinegar have many cleaning applications. They are readily available, affordable, and can be bought and stored in bulk. Production and disposal of these two agents are not harmful to biodiversity or ecosystems. They are non-toxic to humans and pets and will not damage textiles if spilled. Below are suggestions for using baking soda and vinegar to replace more harsh, toxic, and expensive cleaning solutions.

BAKING SODA USES

- Place a box or small bowl of baking soda in the fridge, freezer, or cupboard **to absorb unpleasant odors**.
- A paste of baking soda and water can be used to **clean stainless steel appliances**.
- Sprinkle baking soda into a wet **toilet bowl or white sink**; allow to sit for 10-15 minutes and then scrub.
- To create a **tub-scum cleaner**, mix baking soda and a “green” liquid soap to a honey-like consistency.
- To **remove odors from carpets**, sprinkle with baking soda. Let stand for at least 15 minutes, and then vacuum. Repeat as needed.
- To help **remove spills**, blot as much as possible then clean as normal. When finished, sprinkle with baking soda and then vacuum.

VINEGAR USES

- For cleaning, **choose white vinegar**, as brown vinegar will typically stain porous surfaces.
- Some **air fresheners use harsh chemicals**. Instead, lightly spritz your space with white vinegar (the smell will quickly vanish).
- Add 1/4 cup (60ml) of white vinegar to the washer **to remove any mildew smells** from towels and sheets.
- A cup (240ml) of white vinegar will **clean a washing machine**. Run it through a regular cycle, without clothes.
- Deodorize and clean the **garbage disposal** with white distilled vinegar, while flushing with cold water.
- **Clean the microwave** by mixing a 1:1 solution of white distilled vinegar and water in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat inside the microwave. Baked-on food will be loosened, and odors will disappear. Wipe clean.



INDOOR AIR QUALITY

- To reduce moisture and the risk of mold and mildew in the home, **always use ventilation when cooking and bathing**.
- Many vacuums disperse small bits of dust. Look for vacuums with **HEPA filters** (high-efficiency filters that catch tiny particles) and dirt sensors that signal when a carpet is clean.
- Plain water on a cloth works great for the vast majority of dusting chores. If something more powerful is necessary, **choose the least-toxic product** for the job.
- To keep indoor air clean and lessen contaminants tracked into homes on the soles of shoes, consider becoming a **shoe-free household**.



REMOVING STUBBORN CLOTHING STAINS

- Reduce chemicals, toxins, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in cleaning practices. Often, **soap and water are sufficient** for maintaining clean and safe surfaces.
- When using disinfectants or chemical-based cleaning solutions, **follow the label directions**, be cautious around those with asthma, and always dilute concentrates according to the manufacturers instructions.
- **Create your own cleaning solution** by combining the same amount of distilled white vinegar and water in a reusable spray bottle. Add strips of lemon or rosemary for a fresh scent!

TRANSPORTATION

In addition to positive environmental impacts, switching to active and alternative forms of transportation can provide financial, physical, and mental health benefits.



ALTERNATIVE TRANSIT

- Research nearby **walkable shops, restaurants, services, and activities**.
- **Discover local public transit** using online public transit trip planners, such as [Google Maps Transit](#), which provides a map, step-by-step instructions, and photos to help reach the destination.
- Look into using **bike/scooter share** as an alternative form of transportation.
- If possible, **telecommute or work from home** instead of driving. Benefits include saving on parking costs and **increased productivity**. Save on travel expenses by **teleconferencing**.
- Map **bike paths for commuting**, shopping, or going out. Understand local bike-safety laws and how to maintain and store your bike for safety.



YOUR CAR

- When considering purchasing a car, compare the [fuel economy](#) and opt for the **more fuel-efficient vehicle** option.
- **Aggressive driving** (speeding, accelerating rapidly, and braking erratically) **wastes gas**. Save money and reach your destination safely.
- Use **cruise control** on the highway to maintain consistent speed and save gas.
- Turn off the vehicle's engine when it is parked to **avoid tail-pipe emissions (and save gas) while idling**.
- Keep **tires properly inflated** for optimum gas mileage and safety.
- Consider **carpooling or ride-sharing**.

RESOURCES

coolclimate.org

CoolClimate's mission is to massively scale up the adoption of climate solutions. Calculate your Carbon Footprint and learn more ways to combat climate change.

epa.gov/cfi

Our mission is to protect human health and the environment.

energystar.gov/saveathome

Find ways to save energy in your home to enjoy lower energy bills and increase comfort.

fueleconomy.gov

Learn more about fuel economy at the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy.

greenamerica.org/green-living

Our mission is to harness economic power—the strength of consumers, investors, businesses, and the marketplace—to create a socially just and environmentally sustainable society.

greenamerica.org/green-business-index

Find the green, healthy, and ethically produced products and services you need for home and work.

lamprecycle.org

Visit us for a one-stop source of information about recycling mercury-added "lamps."

meatlessmonday.com

This is a nonprofit initiative of The Monday Campaigns, working in collaboration with the Center for a Livable Future ("CLF") at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

wateruseitwisely.com

Sign up for their newsletter and you'll never run out of water-saving ideas.

greenchoices.org

This site includes information on simple and effective green alternatives that make a real, lasting difference.

epa.gov/environmental-topics/greener-living

EPA has tools to help you learn and understand the issues and help you reduce your environmental footprint.

