

**sustainable
madison**

Sustainability Handbook

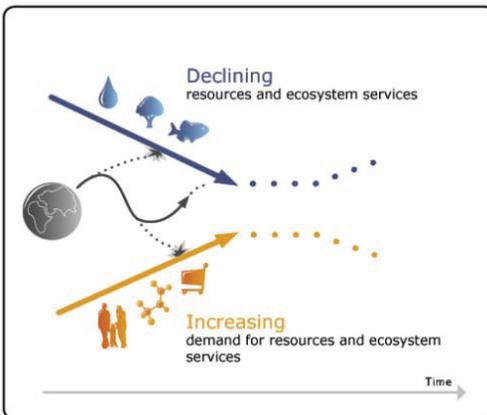


*Fostering
Environmental,
Economic and
Social Resilience*

What is sustainability?

Sustainability is about creating the kind of world we want for ourselves, our neighbors and future generations. This world balances the needs of a healthy environment with those of a healthy economy and a healthy society. It recognizes that a healthy environment underpins economic and social wellbeing.

Sustainability challenges us as individuals, organizations and societies to make decisions that ensure that future generations will enjoy a quality of life equal to or better than our own. It asks us to think about the way our behaviors impact the environment and to make better choices for our own good and the good of future generations.



The image of a funnel provides a helpful way to think about sustainability:

As time goes by, population growth and consumer habits increase the demand on natural resources and the environment.

At the same time, the capacity of our natural systems to accommodate that demand is constantly shrinking.

The convergence of these two realities restricts our options. In a sustainable society, these two pressures are stabilized or even diminished.

What is Madison doing about sustainability?

In 2006, the City of Madison officially adopted the principles of The Natural Step (TNS) to guide its decision-making, operations and management toward a more sustainable future. Based on “systems thinking,” which recognizes that what happens in one part of the system affects every other part, The Natural Step provides a framework and common language for making choices that improve our economy and our environment, and the quality of our lives in our community.

What’s The Natural Step all about?

The Natural Step’s framework is based on the following sustainability principles:

1. Reducing dependence on fossil fuels, and things made from underground metals and materials.
2. Reducing dependence on chemicals and other manufactured substances that can accumulate in nature.
3. Reducing dependence on activities that harm the Earth’s ecosystems.
4. Reducing dependence on activities that interfere with people’s ability to meet their basic needs.

So what does this mean for me?

The same principles that have helped Madison to become more sustainable as a city can help us to become more sustainable in our everyday life. Here are some examples of how The Natural Step framework can apply to the decisions we make.

1. To use less fossil fuel, we can choose to drive less and use energy efficient appliances.
2. To use fewer manufactured substances, we can choose to buy sustainably produced products and reuse the things we already have rather than buying new.
3. To reduce our impact on ecosystems, we can choose to reduce the amount of waste we produce and work to preserve natural spaces in our community.
4. To enable people to meet their needs, we can choose to support public transit and libraries, community gardening, parks and recreation, and education.

But this is just the beginning. There are countless ways to take The Natural Step, and the time to start is now. This guide brings together a wide variety of tips, resources and ideas about sustainable living. We hope you'll use it to find your Natural Step and improve our community and our planet for future generations.

How do I use this handbook?

The Sustainability Handbook is organized into three sections: Sustainability in the Home, Sustainability on the Road, and Sustainability in the Community. Each section reflects a specific area where we have an opportunity to make sustainable choices and work toward the principles of The Natural Step.

The tips and ideas within each section are separated by experience level: beginner, intermediate and advanced. The designation reflects the amount of time, commitment and expertise required for that tip or idea. For example, someone just starting to work toward sustainability or who has little time or money to devote to the cause may choose to use less water by taking a shorter shower, while someone who has been working toward sustainability and is willing to devote significant time and money may choose to use less water by installing a dual-flush toilet.

Use the sections and experience levels to find the tips that will work best for you. Small steps are just as important as big ones!

You will also find a variety of outside resources including websites, articles and books related to specific areas of sustainable living. Use these resources to explore sustainability further and find new ways to incorporate it into your life.

Sustainability in the Home

Sustainability begins in the home. Home is where we spend a majority of our time, and we use more natural resources in our homes than anywhere else. Luckily, home is also the place where we have the greatest control over choices related to sustainability. From the energy we use to the waste we create and the food we eat, our behaviors in the home have a profound effect on the sustainability of our community. Sustainability is all about making decisions that are positive and constructive rather than negative and destructive.

There are many steps, both big and small, that we can take to become more sustainable in the home. Choose the ones that work for you.

Beginner

1. Where You Live: Choose a sustainable neighborhood.

Where we live is just as important as how we live. The location of our home affects our transportation needs, our access to education and recreation and our overall quality of life. Consider the following tips to choose a neighborhood that will allow you to meet your needs:

“Creating sustainable neighborhoods will require flexible thinking and a willingness to experiment, but it can be an adventure that adds purpose and excitement to our lives.”
Superbia: 31 Ways to Create Sustainable Neighborhoods by Dan Chiras and Dave Wann

- **Walkability and bikeability.** Does the neighborhood have sidewalks, trails and markings for walkers and bicyclists? Is it located in an area of heavy traffic or are the streets relatively quiet? Could you walk or bike to some of the places you visit frequently from the neighborhood? Could you exercise outdoors in your neighborhood? Could you walk or bike to work?
- **Proximity to nature.** Is the neighborhood close to a park or other green space? Is it near a lake, river or other waterway? Is outdoor recreation an option in the neighborhood?
- **Proximity to places you frequent.** Is the neighborhood close to work, school, the grocery store, or any other places you visit regularly? Could you get there on foot, by bike or public transportation? Could you get there using less gas and energy than you use now?
- **Access to public transportation.** Are there bus stops in or near the neighborhood? Do other options for public transportation exist in or around the neighborhood? Could you get where you need to go from the neighborhood without using a car?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, the neighborhood will help you to live more sustainably.

There are also lots of steps you can take to make your own neighborhood more sustainable. Start by advocating for more bus stops, parks and green spaces, supporting pedestrian-friendly road construction and setting up agreements with your neighbors to carpool and share things like lawnmowers and snowblowers.

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Resources

- Want to know more about Madison neighborhoods?
» www.cityofmadison.com/residents/community
- Want to know more about what makes a neighborhood sustainable?
» www.sustainableatwood.org
- Want to make your neighborhood more sustainable?
» [Superbia: 31 Ways to Create Sustainable Neighborhoods by Dan Chiras and Dave Wann](#)

2. The Energy You Consume: Make a few easy changes to your everyday energy consumption habits.

We all use energy every single day, and most of us use more than we think. Cutting back doesn't have to be hard, however. In fact, a few easy changes can make a huge difference. Try these simple tips and you'll be surprised by how much energy you save:

- **Unplug appliances** when you're not using them. Even appliances that are switched off can drain energy when plugged into an outlet.
- **Light your home more efficiently.** This can include using natural light from the sun whenever possible, switching from incandescent to LED light bulbs, and turning off lights every time you leave a room.
- **Heat and cool smarter.** Only use heating and cooling when you really need it. Take advantage of extra clothing layers in the winter, and fans and other natural ventilation in the summer. If you do need heat or air conditioning, set your thermostat 2-3 degrees warmer (in the summer) or cooler (in the winter) than you normally would. Chances are you won't even notice the difference.
- **Use less water.** This can include taking showers instead of baths (or taking shorter showers), running your dishwasher only when full, and wash all but your most soiled clothing on the "cold" cycle.

What's the deal with light bulbs? Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) have received lots of buzz recently, and for good reason. This type of bulb consumes 65-70% less energy and lasts ten times longer than a traditional incandescent light bulb. However, CFLs also contain mercury, which can be harmful to the environment when it enters landfills. For a bulb that's just as energy efficient as the CFL but doesn't contain mercury, try an LED light bulb. If the LED light bulb doesn't meet your needs, a CFL is still a smarter choice than an incandescent light bulb.

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Resources

- Want help choosing the right light bulb for you and the planet?
» http://eartheasy.com/live_energysave_lighting.htm
- Want more tips for laundry day?
» <http://planetgreen.discovery.com/home-garden/green-laundry3.html>

3. The Waste You Create: Get serious about recycling.

Despite the fact that 80% of the waste created in American households is recyclable, only 24% of all waste actually is recycled. We all know that recycling is good for the environment, but we need to be smarter about our recycling practices if we hope to live more sustainably. Fortunately, recycling rates in Madison are far better than the national average, but we still have work to do. Follow these tips to increase your recycling and decrease your waste.

- **Know what can go in your recycling bin.** You can put the following items in your green recycling carts:
 - » Plastic Bags (grocery and retail bags, produce bags, newspaper bags; no dark green or black bags)
 - » Plastic Dairy Tubs and Deli Containers and their Lids
 - » Other Plastic Containers Numbered 1-7
 - » Number 1 Plastic Clamshells and Berry Containers
 - » Empty Steel Paint Cans and Lids
 - » Metal Pots and Pans
 - » Small Metal Appliances (toasters, blenders, etc.)
 - » Small Metal Plumbing Fixtures and Pipe (faucets, valves, pipe 18" long or less)
 - » Paper:
 - ~ Newspapers and all the inserts
 - ~ Corrugated Cardboard
 - ~ Junk Mail
 - ~ Magazines and Catalogs
 - ~ Paper Grocery Bags
 - ~ Envelopes
 - ~ Office and Computer Paper
 - ~ Phone Books
 - ~ Cereal and Cracker Boxes
 - ~ Roll Cores from Paper Products
 - ~ Soda Cases, etc.
 - ~ Receipts and Bills
 - ~ Gift Wrap (No Tissue Paper)
 - ~ Greeting Cards (No Photos)
 - ~ Paper Egg Cartons
 - ~ Paper Milk and Juice Cartons
 - ~ Juice Boxes and Other Aseptic Packages
 - ~ Clean plastic bags can also be recycled at a plastic bag recycling drop-off center. Visit www.cityofmadison.com/streets/recycling/plasticBag.cfm for locations.
 - ~ Join Waste Watchers. This program, run by the City of Madison, challenges residents to decrease their waste by a pound a week and gives them helpful tips and resources for reaching their goals. Learn more at www.cityofmadison.com/streets/programs/wasteWatchers.cfm.
 - ~ Go beyond the green cart. Some recyclable materials, including things like books, computers, and inkjet printer cartridges need to be dropped off at specific locations so they can be recycled properly.

Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to run a TV for three hours – or the equivalent of half a gallon of gasoline.

Did you know that you don't need to sort the material that goes into your green recycling bin? Everything in these bins can be recycled together.

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Resources:

- Want to know more about recycling in Madison?
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/streets
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/streets/documents/recyclopedia.pdf
- Want more helpful recycling tips and ideas?
 - » www.earth911.com
- Want to know where to recycle your plastic bags in Madison?
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/streets/recycling/plasticBag.cfm
- Want to know where to recycle things that don't go in the green bin?
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/streets

4. The Food You Eat: Make more sustainable food choices.

When you're deciding what to eat for dinner, you may not be thinking about the impacts of your options. Where does the food come from, how was it grown or produced, who harvested or made it, what transportation was involved in bringing it to where you could purchase it? These are all important questions to consider, and the answers may surprise you. Here are some easy ways to make sure your food choices contribute to sustainability:

- **Cut your bottled water habit.** The bottled water that Americans drink each year creates 1.5 million tons of waste and requires 47 million gallons of gasoline to produce. Even worse, over 80% of recyclable water bottles are thrown in the trash each year. Bottled water is no healthier or fresher than the water that comes out of your tap here in Madison. In fact, most bottled water is tap water in disguise.
- **Eat less meat.** Did you know that 18% of greenhouse gasses come from meat production? It's true. And livestock farming is responsible for a third of the loads of nitrogen and phosphorus that pollute our waterways. Meat is likely the least eco-friendly part of your diet, but cutting back even a little bit helps. If you're not interested in going full-fledged vegetarian, why not take a day of from meat each week, like "meatless Mondays". If you do chose to eat meat, try to buy organic, free range and/or locally grown.
- **Eat organic** when it matters most. Organic food is getting more affordable, but it can still be expensive. If you can only afford to shop organic some of the time, focus on the following foods:
 - » Milk
 - » Peaches
 - » Strawberries
 - » Green beans
 - » Bananas
 - » Rice
 - » Bell peppers
 - » Apples
 - » Potatoes
 - » Cucumbers
 - » Soybeans
 - » Grapes
 - » Baby foodThese foods contain the most pesticides and, when grown conventionally, present the biggest risk to your health and the environment. When a food is labeled "organic" you can rest assured that it has passed strict standards for sustainable production set by the USDA.

If tap water cost the same as the cheapest bottled water, monthly water bills would come to \$9,000 in most U.S. households.

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Resources:

- Thinking about switching to tap water? Want the facts about Madison's tap water?
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/water/FrequentlyAskedQuestions.cfm
- Want to learn more about local food?
 - » www.ifmwi.org
 - » www.reapfoodgroup.org
 - » www.cacscw.org/gardens.php
 - » <http://wilocalfood.wordpress.com>
 - » www.csacoalition.org
- Want more ideas about cutting your meat consumption?
 - » <http://planetgreen.discovery.com/food-health/reduce-meat-flexitarian-diet.html>
- Want to learn more about eating organic?
 - » www.treehugger.com/files/2007/09/green-basics-organic-food.php

Intermediate

1. Where You Live: Rent or buy a sustainable home.

We tend to think a lot about things we can do inside the home to live more sustainably, but a good portion of our home’s eco-footprint comes from the features of the home itself. Keep the following features of sustainable homes in mind when looking for a new apartment or house:

- **“Green building” certification.** If your home or apartment building was built in the last ten years, it might be “green building” certified. According to the U.S. Green Building Council’s website, LEED is “an internationally recognized green building certification system, providing third-party verification that a building or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at improving performance across all the metrics that matter most: energy savings, water efficiency, CO₂ emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts.” When you buy or rent a green-built home, you can rest assured that greater care has been taken to make sure that home is environmentally friendly.
- **Energy efficiency.** Check with the utility company serving the home or apartment for information on past energy bills. This will give you an idea of how much energy it really takes to heat, cool and power the home.
- **Insulation and weatherization.** Do you feel drafts or leaks when you walk around the home or apartment? If so, it is probably lacking insulation or weatherization and leaking valuable energy. Request that your renter or realtor provide up-to-date information about the home’s insulation and weatherization features.

Renters often feel that they have little control over the environmental impact of their homes, but green features can be great bargaining items. Request installation of green features like programmable thermostats, low flow showerheads and improved weatherization before you sign your lease. You may just get what you want!

- **New and/or Energy Star appliances.** The older the appliances are in the home or apartment, the more energy they use. Look for a home with relatively new appliances, or, better yet, Energy Star appliances.
- **Appropriate size.** A sustainable home is one that provides you with no more space than you really need. Minimize wasted space (and wasted energy) by buying or renting the smallest home you can live in comfortably.

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Resources

- Want to learn more about “green building” certifications?
 - » www.usgbc.org
 - » <https://ilbi.org/lbc>
 - » http://www1.eere.energy.gov/buildings/building_america/about.html
 - » http://architecture2030.org/2030_challenge/the_2030_challenge
 - » www.energystar.gov
 - » www.iccsafe.org/cs/igcc/Pages/default.aspx
- Want a full sustainable home buying/renting checklist?
 - » www.epa.gov/greenhomes/renterschecklist.htm#selecting

2. The Energy You Consume: Optimize your home's energy efficiency.

You changed your light bulbs and committed to taking shorter showers, but you feel that you could do a whole lot more to make your home more energy efficient. Well, you're right. Follow these steps to take your energy conservation to a new level:

- **Perform a do-it-yourself home energy audit*** to see how much energy your home is using and losing. When performing the easy audit, you'll look for air leaks, evaluate the effectiveness of your insulation and appliances, and examine the energy used to light your home.
- **Find an energy alternative.** Many utility companies, including Alliant Energy and Madison Gas and Electric allow you to purchase your energy from a renewable source for just a few extra dollars a month. If alternative energy plans won't work for you, you could consider signing up for a carbon offset program, in which you purchase credits to offset some of the carbon you release into the atmosphere. The money you contribute to these programs is invested in green technology and tree planting projects.
- **Heat and cool smarter.** Start by installing a programmable thermostat in your home and set it so that it uses less energy while you're away. Next, replace your furnace filters with reusable ones. They'll save you money in the long-run and keep used filters out of landfills.
- **Use less water.** Start by installing a low-flow showerhead to minimize your water waste. Then, if you're up for it, purchase or make a rain barrel to capture and re-use storm water run-off to water your garden.

A single rain barrel can save approximately 1,300 gallons of water during peak summer months. The City of Madison holds an annual rain barrel sale every year, usually in the spring.

Trees decrease cooling costs and help neutralize carbon emissions. "If you plant a tree today on the west side of your home, in 5 years your energy bills should be 3% less. In 15 years the savings will be nearly 12%."
Dr. E. Greg McPherson, Center for Urban Forest Research

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Resources

- Want to learn about your utility company's alternative energy options?
 - » www.alliantenergy.com/SaveEnergyAndMoney/RenewableEnergy
 - » https://www.mge.com/my_mge/serviceforms/WindPowerRes.htm
 - » www.mpoweringmadison.com
- Want to learn more about the City of Madison's energy programs?
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/greenmadison
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/Sustainability/City/madiSUN
- Want to compare carbon offset programs?
 - » www.treehugger.com/files/2006/03/survey_of_carbo.php
- Want to learn more about rain barrels, purchasing a rain barrel or rain gardens?
 - » www.rainfordane.org
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/engineering/stormwater/raingardens

* www.energysavers.gov/your_home/energy_audits/index.cfm/mytopic=11170

3. The Waste You Create: Donate, re-sell and upcycle.

Recycling is a great place to begin limiting waste, but there are many other options for keeping the things we no longer use out of landfills. Try some of the ideas below for donating, re-selling or upcycling things you no longer use and you'll instantly reduce your impact on the environment.

- **Donate.** There are a wide variety of places where you can donate unused goods, from food to clothing. Find the right place to donate your goods to someone who needs them.
 - » **Thrift Stores.** Most thrift stores accept clothing and accessories, furniture, books, and household goods like framed pictures, pots and pans, and silverware. Check with the specific thrift store if you're unsure whether they'll accept a particular item. The following thrift stores all have locations in Madison.
 - ~ Goodwill
www.goodwill.org
 - ~ Salvation Army USA
www.salvationarmyusa.org
 - ~ St. Vincent DePaul
www.svdpusa.org
 - » **Food Pantries.** Food pantries typically accept all types of non-perishable foods, including canned and boxed goods and dry foods like pasta and cereal. Some are also beginning to accept refrigerated and frozen food. Check with your local food pantry for details. The following food pantries are located in Madison:
 - ~ Second Harvest Foodbank
www.secondharvestmadison.org
 - ~ St. Vincent DePaul Food Stores
www.svdpusa.org
 - ~ River Food Pantry
www.riverfoodpantry.org/
 - » **FreeCycle.com.** FreeCycle is a membership organization with a website where you can donate your things to other members of the community free of charge. You can also set up trades for things you need. Madison has a very active FreeCycle group.
 - » **MadisonStuffExchange.com.** The Madison Stuff Exchange is a City-run website much like FreeCycle that allows members of the community to donate the things they no longer need or sell them at low prices. There are also many used goods for the taking.
 - » **Charities.** Many charities accept donations specific to their area of business. You can donate everything from pet food to a used vehicle. Check with your favorite charity to see what they need.

Upcycling: The process of converting an industrial nutrient (material) into something of similar or greater value, in its second life.

- **Re-sell.** Just because you don't want that pile of trendy jeans or that old couch doesn't mean someone else won't. There are lots of opportunities to make a buck or two off your used goods while keeping them out of landfills.
 - » **Rummage sales.** If you have a large quantity of decent used things, especially clothes and furniture, a rummage sale is a great way to sell your goods.
 - » **Craigslist.org.** Craigslist is an online version of the classified section of your newspaper. Users sell everything from old video games to used bikes, and you can too. Craigslist can also be a great place to find recycled furniture and other goods for your home.
 - » **Consignment and resale shops.** Consignment and resale shops are great places to sell your brand name or high quality clothing and home goods. While some of these shops only pay you when your items are sold, others will offer you a fraction of the selling price upfront. You can also find some great deals and shop sustainably at these shops.
- **Upcycle.** Like recycling, upcycling aims to take something we no longer need and rework it for continued use. However, upcycling is even more sustainable than recycling, because it turns an unused good into something more useful without first breaking it down into its individual components. You can upcycle most anything, from a used soup can (turn it into a pencil holder) to a stack of old tee-shirts (turn them into a rug). Repurposing old things is a fun and creative sustainability solution. See upcycleit.com for ideas to get you started.

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Resources:

- Want to learn about organizing an effective rummage sale?
 - » www.yardsalequeen.com
- Want to find more places to donate your unused things?
 - » www.thegoodhuman.com/2009/01/19/where-to-donate-all-your-unwanted-stuff
- Want to learn more about upcycling?
 - » <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upcycling>

4. The Food You Eat: Eat local.

Eating local some or all of the time is a great way to live more sustainably. Locally grown food is better for you and tastes better, too, because it is fresher and often produced with fewer pesticides and chemicals. Eating local even benefits Madison’s economy, because the money we spend on locally grown/produced food goes back into our community. So how can you get more of your food from close to home? Try these tips:

- **Shop at farmers’ markets.** The Dane County Farmers’ Market is one of the oldest and largest in the country; all of its vendors produce their food in the area, and many practice sustainable and/or organic farming methods. There are other farmers’ markets in the area, too. See www.dcfm.org.
- **Eat in season.** Seasonal produce is also likely to be local.
- **Join a CSA.** In a Community Supported Agriculture program, households directly support farmers by paying an annual fee that entitles them to a share of the season’s produce. Once harvesting begins, members receive weekly box of fresh foods which may include produce, fruits, cheeses, eggs, meats, poultry, flowers, herbs or preserves.
- **Advocate for local food at your child’s school.** School food has traditionally come from national suppliers, but Madison schools are starting to look locally for their food needs.
- **Dane Buy Local.** This coalition supports local businesses and helps community members find ways to keep their dollars in the County while also reducing their environmental impact. www.danebuylocal.com

“Food from your neighborhood will likely be whole, unprocessed vegetables, fruits, or animal products grown on small, diversified farms by growers committed to the health of their land. The food is good for you, and the money you spend on it stays in your community, helping to keep those nearby green spaces intact and strengthening your local food economy.”

Barbara Kingsolver, author of Animal, Vegetable, Miracle

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Resources:

- Looking for locally sourced restaurants?
 - » www.danebuylocal.com/directory/restaurant-hospitality.html
- Want to learn more about Community Supported agriculture or find a farm?
 - » www.macsac.org
- Looking for Madison-area farmers’ markets?
 - » www.reapfoodgroup.org/atlas/farmers_markets.htm
- Wondering what foods are in-season?
 - » www.sustainabletable.org/shop/seasonal
- Want to join an organization to advocate for locally sourced school food?
 - » www.sustaindane.org/going-sustainable/in-school/our-program

Advanced

1. Where You Live: Build sustainable.

Green building does not have to mean starting from scratch. While building a new home presents a great opportunity to employ the latest green building features, it also creates lots of waste and uses valuable land. Renovating an existing home, on the other hand, is a lot like recycling; it allows us to take advantage of what already exists and improve it while minimizing waste.

If you wish to have complete control over the impacts of your home, building is a great option. Building a new home or renovating an existing one will allow you to employ all the available green home features while tailoring your environment to suit your lifestyle. But what exactly is green building? It can be defined by the following six features:

“With consumers hyper-sensitive to energy costs while becoming more environmentally conscious in general, most observers agree that green is the color of the future for builders and buyers, alike.”
 Joe Bousquin, HGTVpro.com

- **Green site selection.** The location of the home is chosen to minimize its impact and maximize its proximity to places the owner frequents. The lot is not cleared of all vegetation to make space for the home. Instead, the home is built around existing natural features, only altering them when absolutely necessary. Additionally, a green-built home is oriented on a lot in a way that maximizes natural lighting, heating and cooling potential.
- **Environmentally friendly building materials.** A green home is built using materials that will not end up in a landfill, like cement or wooden siding. When possible, green homebuilders use salvaged or recycled materials like pre-used doors and light fixtures.
- **Air-tight construction and healthy indoor air.** A green home is built to minimize leaks that lead to wasted energy and increased emissions. To keep this air fresh and healthy, the green home also features a fresh air ventilation system, and safer paint products.
- **Green building practices.** Green homebuilders make every effort to minimize waste and conserve materials by using energy-efficient building equipment and recycling their construction waste.
- **Green appliances and features.** Green homebuilders use energy efficient appliances whenever possible and make sure all features they add to their homes will use as few resources as possible. Energy Star appliances, low-flow toilets and gray water recycling systems are just a few of the features they use to make their homes more sustainable.
- **Durability.** Green homes are built to be durable and lasting. The longer a home can last without serious repairs or remodels, the more sustainable it is.

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Resources:

- Want to learn more about green building?
 - » www.hgtvpro.com/hpro/pac_ctnt/text/0,2595,HPRO_20196_52951,00.html
 - » www.treehugger.com/htgg/how-to-go-green-cleaning.html
- Want to find a green certified homebuilder, remodeler or other provider?
 - » <http://weigogreener.org>
 - » www.madisonenvironmental.com

2. The Energy You Consume: Outfit your home with energy-savers.

You've changed your habits and made some easy upgrades to use less energy. But now you want to make some big changes that will have a powerful impact on the energy you use. Consider taking the following steps to maximize your home's energy efficiency:

- **Replace old appliances** with Energy Star certified appliances. Energy Star is an international standard of energy efficiency for consumer products. Certified products can be identified by the blue Energy Star label and typically use 20-30% less energy than required by government standards. Energy Star appliances will reduce your energy bill by about one-third, and may also make you eligible for a federal tax credit when installed in an existing home.
- **Find an energy alternative.** Are you ready to take the plunge into solar energy? The City of Madison's MadiSUN program is currently working to double the number of solar water and electric installations and you can help. It is possible to heat the water your home with energy from the sun. Doing so will both decrease your environmental impact and save you money. As a Madison resident you are eligible for a free solar energy consultation in which a solar agent will evaluate your home's solar options, provide you with information about necessary permits, and help you find an installer and apply for federal funding for your solar system. Contact solar@cityofmadison.com to set up an appointment. If you're ready for full-home solar energy, consider installing a system that uses the energy of the sun to generate electricity.

The energy used each year by an average family (four people) with an electric water heater is roughly equal to the energy used by a medium-sized automobile driven 12,000 miles a year at an average fuel efficiency of 22 miles per gallon (about 11 barrels of oil) a residential solar water heating system can drop that consumption (and your water bill) by 50-80%.

Since 1995, American Energy Star homes have eliminated four million pounds of carbon emissions from the atmosphere.

- **Heat and cool smarter.** Passive solar heating and cooling can keep your home at a comfortable temperature without using mechanical or electrical devices, with careful location of windows, effective sealing and insulation. Depending on your needs, passive systems can be designed to carry the entire heating and cooling burden for your home, or to share the responsibility with your traditional furnace and air conditioner.
- **Use less water.** At an advanced level, this can mean installing a more environmentally friendly toilet. Those wishing to live more sustainably should concentrate on conserving toilet water with a low-flow toilet. These toilets come in two forms:
 - » Dual Flushing toilets. These toilets allow you to choose a full-volume flush (typically 1.6 gallons) and a water saving flush (usually .8 gallons) depending on your needs.
 - » High Efficiency toilets. These toilets use pressure-assist technology to minimize the amount of water needed per flush, cutting it to about 1.2 gallons. A high efficiency toilet can save you between 4,000 and 7,000 gallons of water each year.

Household water that does not come in contact with human feces (also known as gray water) can be recycled using a gray water recycling system. These systems involve routing water from your dishwasher, shower, sink and washing machine into a holding tank instead of allowing it to flow into the sewer system. The water may then be used directly to water plants or to fill toilets. There are many different types of graywater recycling systems, so do some research to find the best one for your home.

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Resources

- Want to learn more about Energy Star?
 - » www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=about.ab_index
- Wondering if you qualify for an Energy Star tax credit?
 - » www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=tax_credits.tx_index
- Want to learn more about Solar Power?
 - » www.solarpower.org
- Interested in adding solar to your home through the MadiSUN program?
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/Sustainability/City/MadiSUN/residents.cfm
- Want to learn more about passive solar heating and cooling systems?
 - » www.energysavers.gov/your_home/designing_remodeling
- Want to learn more about environmentally friendly toilet options and the City of Madison’s toilet rebate program?
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/water/inTheHome/toiletRebate.cfm
- Want to make your own solar water heater?
 - » www.treehugger.com/files/2007/08/make_a_solar_wa.php

3. The Waste You Create: Start a composting program in your home.

If you’ve already improved your recycling habits and are making efforts to donate, upcycle and resell the things you no longer use, composting may be your next step toward sustainability. Composting is the process of decomposing the remains of food, plants and other organic material to make fertilizer. By composting you can minimize your waste and improve your yard or garden. Use the following steps to get started:

A well-built compost pile will not smell and will produce usable compost in 12-16 weeks.

- **Dedicate an outdoor space near your home.** Your composting spot should be easy to access and close to the source of your compost materials.
- **Obtain a compost bin.** You can choose either an open bin or an enclosed container depending on your needs. You can find a variety of instructions for making your own bin online. You could also purchase a compost bin at a variety of retail locations or at the annual city of Madison Compost Bin Sale, held each spring. Make sure your bin has two chambers: one for old “cooking” compost, and one for new, fresh compost.
- **Obtain necessary tools.** To maintain your compost you’ll need at least a pitch or turning fork for mixing the pile and a shovel for transferring compost. You may also wish to invest in an indoor countertop compost container so you don’t have to make a trip outdoors each time you want to add to your pile. You should empty the indoor container 2-3 times a week.
- **Start composting.** The ideal compost pile will be made up of about four parts brown material to one part green material. Most green material comes from your kitchen (all food waste) as well as your lawn (green grass, weeds and green leaves), while brown material includes dry leaves, dried grass, and straw.
 - » When your compost pile is about one cubic foot in size, stop adding to it and start another. Continuously adding new material to a single pile will re-set the composting process from day one.
 - » Mix the pile regularly and add water as needed to keep it moist.
 - » When your compost looks more like soil than food and plant waste, and when it smells pleasantly earthy, it’s ready to be used in your garden, as a soil additive or as fertilizer for your lawn.

The City of Madison offers compost training sessions each year in the spring. Check www.cityofmadison.com in late winter for details.

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Resources:

- Want to learn how to build your own compost bin?
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/streets/compost/howto.cfm
 - » www.backyardgardner.com/compost
- Want to learn more about starting your own composting program?
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/streets/compost
 - » www.ecosalon.com/how-to-compost-a-composting-guide

4. The Food You Eat

Growing your own food is the epitome of sustainable living. No other practice allows for as much control over the production process, conserves as much energy and resources, saves money and contributes to your quality of life as harvesting your own food. Though it's nearly impossible in today's society to produce all the food we eat, these tips can help you to grow at least some of your produce:

- Determine what you can reasonably grow based on climate, soil, rainfall, and time and effort you are willing to devote. Tomatoes, potatoes, corn, peppers, cabbage and carrots grow especially well in Madison.
- **Find a plot of land.** It doesn't have to be in your own yard, either. A variety of community gardens exist in and around Madison where you can rent/lease inexpensive land to grow your own food.
- **Make a growing plan.** Learn all you can about the crops you plan to harvest, and plant according to their specifications.
- **Hydrogardens**, which are typically made out of PVC pipe and used two-liter soda bottles, make it easy to grow a variety of plants from a window. If you live in an apartment or other dwelling with no garden space, consider starting a hydrogarden. You can purchase a pre-made kit or find instructions online to make your own.

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Resources

- Want to learn more about hydrogardens or build your own?
 - » www.treehugger.com/files/2005/05/hydroponics_onl.php
- Looking for a Community Garden in the Madison area?
 - » www.cacscw.org

Sustainability on the Road

Most of us spend at least some of each day on the road. Whether we drive to work, walk to school or take a bus to the grocery store, the way we chose to get from point A to point B has an effect on the environment. In fact, transportation is responsible for about a third of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions. We cannot possibly reduce our impact on the environment and public health without changing our driving habits. In doing so, we may realize additional benefits like saving money, spending time with neighbors and getting more exercise.

Luckily, we now have more opportunities than ever to make sustainable transportation choices. Here in Madison, you might chose to ride your bike to work, purchase a hybrid vehicle, join a car sharing program or make some of your daily trips by city bus. And that's just the start. Learn more about sustainable transportation options below and choose the ones that work for you.

Beginner

1. The Way You Get Around: Drive smarter.

Though you may not be willing to give up your car just yet, you can significantly decrease your environmental impact by making smarter driving decisions. A few small changes can make all the difference when it comes to transportation. Consider the following tips for sustainable driving:

- **Limit your car trips.** All it takes to reduce your environmental impact is a bit of conscious thought about where you're going and why. Before you take a trip by car, ask yourself whether you really need to go. If so, consider whether there is way you could get where you need to go that doesn't involve a car. Only drive when it's really necessary. To better understand your driving habits, why not try to keep a record of the number of individual trips you make by car for a week or a month? Then think about ways to cut this number (called your "tripshare") in the future. You'll save money, too.
- **Group your trips.** Is the bank on your way to the gym? If so, why not deposit your check before you work out? The fewer individual car trips we make, the less fossil fuel we use, and the less carbon we emit.
- **Optimize your car for fuel efficiency.** Make sure you aren't carrying around excess weight in the trunk or backseat; unload things that do not need to be in your car. Make sure your tires are full; underinflated tires use significantly more gas.
- **Practice EcoDriving.** Make small changes in your driving patterns: start and stop smoothly rather than slamming on your brakes, use cruise control when driving on the highway, minimize air conditioner use, and try to keep your car moving slowly even in congested traffic. Keep a constant speed when driving in the city, and try not to exceed 60 miles per hour on the highway. Above 60 miles per hour, your gas usage increases drastically.
- **Carpool.** There's a good chance you live near someone who works at your office or attends your school. Why not share a car for your daily rides? Not only will you decrease fuel costs and wear and tear on your car, but you'll also help the environment by taking one car off the road and you might get to know some nice new people. You can also carpool for longer trips across the state or country.
- **Use alternative fuels.** Gasoline is not the only way to power your car. Consider using ethanol, biodiesel, compressed natural gas, hydrogen, or electricity (with an electric car). All these options are becoming more widely available, and each has its own advantages. Do some research to see if an alternative fuel could work for you.

The trip share rate in Madison is twice as good as the Dane County average. This means Madisonians take half as many trips by car as other Dane County residents.

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Resources

- Looking for someone to share a ride or start a carpool?
 - » www.rideshareetc.org/rp
- Want more tips for Ecodriving?
 - » www.theaa.com/motoring_advice/fuels-and-environment/drive-smart.html
- Want to compare alternative fuel options?
 - » www.consumerreports.org/cro/cars/new-cars/buying-advice/fueling-the-future/overview

Intermediate

1. The Way You Get Around: Diversify transportation methods.

Are you ready to start making better use of alternative modes of transportation but unsure about where to begin? Replacing even a couple of weekly car trips with alternative transportation can significantly reduce your carbon footprint. Try some of these easy alternatives:

- **Walking.** Madison is an extremely pedestrian-friendly city. The Downtown area, which features the UW campus, Capitol Square, and the shop and restaurant-filled State Street is fully walkable. Other neighborhoods are great for walking as well.
- **Bicycling.** Madison is known as one of the best cities in the nation for bicycling, and for good reason. Our city is full of great bike trails, beautiful scenery, and bike-friendly streets, and our City government is committed to making Madison a world-class bicycling city. Think you'd like to start making more trips by bike? Here are a few steps to get you started:
 - » Get a bike. Madison is home to many bike shops, so this step should be easy. You can find great deals on bikes during sales and some shops even offer deeply discounted used bikes and free rentals. You may also consider purchasing a used bike through DreamBikes, a Madison-based bike restoration and retail shop that employs underprivileged young people and works to give them new opportunities for advancement.
 - » Register your bike. It's easy to do, can help the police find your bike if you lose it, and we'll know better how many bikes are being used in Madison.
 - » Bike safe. Start by wearing a helmet, obeying traffic signals, wearing light clothing during the day and reflective clothing at night, signaling before you turn, installing a headlight, and riding with traffic. But don't stop there. If you really want to make biking a part of your transportation mix, aim to learn all you can about bike safety. www.cityofmadison.com/bikemadison
 - » Map your Ride. With hundreds of miles of trail and bikeable road in Madison, it's good to know where you're going. Study the City of Madison's Bike Map or plan your trip using Google Maps bike feature. www.cityofmadison.com/trafficEngineering/documents/2010_BikeMapForWeb.pdf
 - » Park it. Parking your bike is essential if you plan to bike for more than just exercise. Luckily, bike racks exist all over Madison, especially in the downtown area. Obtain a strong bike lock and make sure you lock your bike through its frame and not a tire or other part of the bike that can easily be removed.

According to the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin, registered participants in Bike to Work Week: burned 3,606,550 calories, saved \$56,703 in vehicle costs, prevented 41 tons of carbon dioxide emissions, prevented 5,129 pounds of carbon monoxide emissions and saved 4,192 gallons of gasoline by biking to work rather than driving for one week.

- » Join in on bike events. Madison is home to many popular bicycling events each year, such as:
 - ~ Ride the Drive. For this event, a large section of city streets are closed to motor vehicles and opened to bicyclists, walkers, inline skaters and runners. Learn more at www.cityofmadison.com/ridethedrive.
 - ~ Bike to Work Week. This event challenges Madison and Milwaukee residents to leave their cars behind for a week and bike to work. Workplaces compete to see who can ride the most miles, get the most employees on bikes and more. Bike to Work Week takes place each June. Check the website for exact dates: <http://bfw.org>.
- **Buses.** Our city bus system, called Metro Transit, provides another great alternative to driving. Metro's route network covers the vast majority of Madison, and stops are conveniently located to get you where you need to be. As an added bonus, Metro recently switched to low emission ultra-low sulfur fuel, added hybrid electric busses to its fleet, and began using "green power" (wind power and other) in its administrative offices. Here are a few tips to get you started riding the bus:
 - » Get your Pass. Metro has a variety of pass discount options, including:
 - ~ The Low Income Bus Pass System. 31-day passes are available to low-income riders. www.cityofmadison.com/Metro/fares/lowincomepass.cfm
 - ~ Metro Commute Card. This program allows forward-thinking businesses to cover Metro costs for their employees at a subsidized rate. There is no cost to cardholders. www.cityofmadison.com/Metro/fares/commuteCard.cfm
 - ~ ASM Student Pass. This pass, provided in partnership with Associated Students of Madison, allows University of Wisconsin students to ride Metro for free. www.cityofmadison.com/metro/fares/passprograms/asm.cfm
 - » Plan your Trip. Know your route number and stops before you travel. Enter your origin and destination to find the right route for you on Metro's handy trip planner. Soon, you'll be able to plan your trip with Google Transit as well.
 - ~ <http://trip.cityofmadison.com>
 - ~ www.google.com/maps
 - » Rack & Roll. Bringing your bike onto the bus will allow you to extend Metro's routes even farther and get exactly where you need to go with minimal environmental impact. Metro's Rack & Roll program has placed bike racks on every bus, so bringing your bike is a breeze. www.cityofmadison.com/metro/planyourtrip/bikeracks.cfm
- **Longer trips.** Several commuter busses connect Madison to the rest of the state and region, and soon, high speed rail will provide yet another option. Some transportation options for destinations further afield include:
 - » Badger Bus with service between Madison and Milwaukee: www.badgerbus.com
 - » MegaBus with service between Madison, Chicago and Minneapolis: <http://us.megabus.com>
 - » Van Galder/Coach USA with service between Madison, Milwaukee, Chicago and Minneapolis: www.coachusa.com/vangalder
 - » Greyhound with cross-country service: www.greyhound.com/home
 - » Trains. Amtrak and the future high speed Mid West rail network connect with our region and will offer more alternative opportunities in the future: www.amtrak.com
 - » www.connectthemidwest.com

Public transportation use in the U.S. saves 1.4 billion gallons of gasoline. This represents almost 4 million gallons of gasoline per day.

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Resources

- Looking for a used bike?
 - » Visit the bike shop websites for used bikes.
- Want to rent a bike?
 - » www.redbikes.org
 - » <http://madison.bcycle.com/Portals/11/madison-endcap4-print.pdf>
- Want to learn how to prevent crashes on your bike?
 - » <http://bicyclesafe.com>
- Want to learn how to commute on bike in the winter?
 - » <http://gearjunkie.com/winter-bike-commuting-10-tips-to-ride-safe>
- Want to learn more about Metro’s green efforts?
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/metro/about/green
- Want to get Text Alerts from Metro or download phone apps?
 - » <https://my.cityofmadison.com> (sign up and then choose Metro Alerts or download an app)

Advanced

1. The Way You Get Around: Go car-free.

If you want to take your sustainability efforts to the next level, it might be time to give up your car. Though some of us might never dream of giving up our vehicles, others are happy to avoid the headaches that come with driving. Doing so will help our health, our bank accounts, and most importantly, our environment. Fortunately, Madison is a great place to go car-free. The transportation alternatives discussed in the Intermediate section will help you to get around without a car, but you may still need a vehicle on some occasions. If so, these organizations can help:

- **Community Car.** This locally owned car sharing organization rents its fleet of cars by the hour. Community Car has placed a fleet of hybrid-electric vehicles across Madison that members can reserve online and unlock with a key fob. This affordable alternative to owning a car may be a great option for the occasional driver: www.communitycar.com
- **U Car Share.** U Car Share is a national business similar to Community Car with a fleet scattered mostly throughout the Downtown area: <https://www.ucarshare.com/secure/Home.aspx>
- **Badger Cab.** This shared-ride taxi service allows you to travel within a designated zone at a flat fee and allows passengers going to destinations in the same zone to share a cab: www.badgercab.com
- **Union Cab.** This cab company recently began operating the first hybrid cab in Madison: www.unioncab.coop
- **Green Cab of Madison.** This company is eco-friendly and offers an all hybrid fleet: www.greencabofmadison.com
- **Car-free Challenge.** This challenge will give you a taste of life without a car and a goal to work toward: www.carfreechallenge.com

“In America, well over 50% of trips are under four miles. Each day, there are countless opportunities for people to re-meet their feet, board a bike, take a train or hop on a bus.”
Katie Alvord, author of Divorce Your Car!

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Resources

- Want to learn more about going car-free?
 - » www.giveupyourcar.com
 - » [Divorce your Car! : Ending the Love Affair with the Automobile](#) by Katie Alvord
 - » www.wikihow.com/Live-Without-a-Car

Sustainability in the Community

While many opportunities to live more sustainably are focused on the individual, we must think about sustainability on a community level if we wish to have an even greater impact. We are lucky to live in a community that provides many opportunities to make a difference each day. Here in Madison, we can choose to shop for sustainably produced products. We can learn more about sustainability through a variety of classes offered by our city's universities and environmental groups. We can even become activists for environmental protection or teach others how to live more sustainably.

Beginner

1. The Things You Buy: Make small changes in your consumption habits.

A great deal of the waste we create comes from the things we buy. Consumption may be a necessary part of everyday life, but these easy adjustments will make your shopping more sustainable:

- **Choose the right bag - paper or plastic?** We all know the best answer to this question is "neither...I brought my own." But if you forgot to bring your reusable shopping bag, here are some helpful facts to weigh in making your decision. Plastic bags can be recycled, but they are made from petroleum products. Paper bags are also recycleable and can hold more volume, but they take more resources to produce than plastic. So, if you're willing to take the extra work to recycle your plastic and have just a few groceries, go plastic. Choose paper any other time you forget your reusable bags.
- **Limit packaging.** When choosing between products, always compare packaging. Many companies have begun to use less packaging and can help you to make smarter shopping decisions. Choosing a better packaged product is also a way to vote with your dollar and advocate for improved packaging practices.
- **Receipts.** With the advent of online banking and bill paying, many of us no longer keep track of receipts the way we used to. If you don't need a receipt for your purchase, tell your cashier before you check out.

According to The Wall Street Journal, the U.S. goes through 100 billion plastic shopping bags annually. An estimated 12 million barrels of oil is required to make that many plastic bags.

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Resources

- Want more idea for limiting packaging?
 - » <http://greenlivingonline.com/article/overpackaged>
- Want to learn more about the paper vs. plastic debate?
 - » www.cityofmadison.com/streets

2. The Opportunities You Pursue: Educate yourself.

Sustainability is a big concept. In order to truly understand it, we should seek to educate ourselves whenever we can. Many opportunities exist to learn the basics of sustainability, environmentalism and The Natural Step. There are also many resources that will help you stay up-to-date with the new ideas about sustainable living that are emerging all the time. Consider some of the following ways to educate yourself:

- **Reading.** There are many books that can educate you on sustainability issues. One, that has been of particular use to City staff is, The Natural Step for Communities: How cities and towns can change sustainable practices by T. Lahti.
- **E-Learning.** Online, you'll find many courses that claim they can teach you everything you need to know about sustainability. While some can be worth your time, others are simply money-making schemes. We recommend Sustainability: Step by Natural Step. This online course is designed by The Natural Step and follows the framework used by the City of Madison. It provides lots of useful information about sustainable decision-making on both a personal and a community or business level (fee involved). www.naturalstep.org/fr/canada/elearning
- **College Courses.** UW-Madison, Edgewood College and MATC all offer courses or programs in sustainability to their degree-seeking students. All three colleges also allow members of the community to audit some of their classes without enrolling in school or earning a grade. Courses in environmental science can provide great learning opportunities for those interested in learning more about sustainability.
- **Discussion Courses.** These courses give you all the resources you need to start a discussion group about sustainability with friends, family members, co-workers, neighbors or any other group you choose. NWEI may even provide a volunteer teacher to introduce or run your course. You can choose from a range of topics, including things like globalization and eating for sustainability, and get started any time. www.nwei.org/discussion_courses

*Over 1,300 individuals in the Madison/
Dane County area have participated in one
or more of the sustainability discussion
courses offered by
Northwest Earth Institute.*

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Resources

- Want to see more sustainability links for educational purposes?
 - » <http://sustaindane.org/going-sustainable>
- Want to learn about auditing courses at local universities and colleges?
 - » www.dcs.wisc.edu/info/guests.htm
 - » <http://matcmadison.edu/registration-policy>
 - » www.edgewood.edu/about/Sustainability.aspx
- Want to learn about environmental education at local higher education institutions?
 - » www.nelson.wisc.edu
 - » <http://matcmadison.edu/mesa>
 - » www.edgewood.edu

Intermediate

1. The Things You Buy: Consume less.

When we decide which product to purchase, our choice has an impact on many aspects of sustainability. If we choose things that were produced in a sustainable manner by people who were fairly compensated for their labor, have been packaged in recyclable materials, and which are made to last, we are making a positive impact. But we might make an even greater impact in our community by choosing not to buy – especially things which are unnecessary, disposable, or could have been produced in more sustainable ways. Here are some ways to reduce your consumption:

- **Plan your shopping trip.** Make a list whenever you shop, and stick to it. This will help to prevent impulse buying and make you think consciously about your consumption habits. When grocery shopping, try to plan a menu ahead of time and shop only for things on that menu.
- **Rent and borrow.** Why buy something you'll only use once or twice if you could obtain it another way? Here are some great resources for renting or borrowing the things you don't need to buy:
 - » Borrow all kinds of things from your neighbors and let them borrow from you!
 - » Some home improvement stores offer rentals for things like power tools and snow blowers.

“The things we buy and use become extensions of ourselves; we use them mindlessly, with little awareness of why. The challenge for business should be to reverse this pattern by offering goods and services that, beyond merely adding to our possessions, actually restore and maintain our ability to care and flourish.”

John R. Ehrenfeld, author of Feeding the Beast

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Resources:

- Want to learn more about shopping less?
 - » www.fastcompany.com/magazine/111/next-essay.html
 - » www.wisebread.com/the-new-frugality-consume-less-save-more-live-better

2. The Opportunities You Pursue: Join a sustainability challenge or team.

A challenge or team can help you kick your sustainability efforts into gear and get inspired by the efforts of others. A few local sustainability-related challenges are listed below, but you can always create your own, too.

- **EnAct.** Start a team of like-minded individuals to learn more about sustainability through EnAct educational materials and then challenge each other to meet measurable goals. When you're done, EnAct will provide you with an analysis of the impact of your efforts. www.enactwi.org
- **Mpower Madison.** The Mpowering Madison campaign asks the community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 100,000 tons by 2011. This is approximately 865 pounds per person. Challenge yourself to reduce your own emissions through conservation, efficiency and alternative transportation, and see how you do with an online carbon calculator. www.mpoweringmadison.com

By reducing our community's carbon emissions by 100,000 tons (Mpower Madison's goal) we will save 33,844 tons of coal, or enough to fill 3.5 miles of rail cars.

- **Earth Day Challenge.** Each year on Earth Day, Madison residents form groups, flock to the parks and compete to see who can pick up the most trash. Call 608-267-4919 to sign up today!
www.cityofmadison.com/parks/celebrate/earthdayChallenge.cfm

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Resources

- Want to calculate your carbon footprint?
 - » www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind_calculator.html
- Want more ideas for reducing your greenhouse gas emissions?
 - » www.epa.gov/climatechange/wycd

Advanced

1. The Things You Buy: Consume consciously.

So you’ve already made some changes to your shopping habits and you’ve cut down on the amount you consume, but you’re still worried about the impact of the things you buy. Here are a couple ways to make sure that you are making the most sustainable consumer decisions when you do have to buy.

*85% of
fair trade
products are
also organic.*

- **Buy fair trade.** Fair trade is a market system that supports producers, production communities and the environment. When you purchase a fair trade product you can be sure that its producers were paid fair wages, that the money you spend on the product will be reinvested in a positive way in the production community and that the producers have used sustainable production methods.
- **Buy sustainable.** It’s no secret that some products are more sustainable than others. If you’re serious about changing your consumption habits, research products and make the most sustainable choice whenever possible. ClimateCounts.org is an especially handy website, which allows you to browse “climate scores” by company, sector, brand and product type. www.climatecounts.org

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Resources

- Want to learn more about Fair Trade?
 - » www.greenamericatoday.org/programs/fairtrade/whattoknow
 - » www.fairtradefederation.org

2. The Opportunities You Pursue: Become a volunteer, activist or advocate.

Don't just hope for change, create it. There are literally hundreds of opportunities to become a force for change in Madison. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Volunteer with Madison Parks.** People for Parks provides a variety of seasonal opportunities to help maintain and improve Madison parks. Great parks are essential to a healthy environment. www.cityofmadison.com/parks/partner/volunteer
- **Volunteer with other environmentally minded organizations.** Some examples include Habitat for Humanity, Wisconsin Lakes, Dane County Buy Local, Sustain Dane, EnAct, and Madison area farmers' markets.
- **Become an activist for the causes you believe in.** Start by writing letters to the editor of your newspaper, and then contact your congressional representatives, state legislators, mayor and city council members to urge them to support environmental policies you favor. Then find a way to educate others in the community and help them to live more sustainably.

“Let every individual and institution now think and act as a responsible trustee of Earth, seeking choices in ecology, economics and ethics that will provide a sustainable future, eliminate pollution, poverty and violence, awaken the wonder of life and foster peaceful progress in the human adventure.”

John McConnell, founder of International Earth Day

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Resources

- Want to learn more about environmental activism?
 - » www.ehow.com/how_2093938_be-environmental-activist.html#ixzz0sG1Nx1NC
- Looking for more environmentally friendly places to volunteer?
 - » www.morgridge.wisc.edu/students/landingpages/documents/EnvironmentAgencies.pdf