

# Discovery Museum Sustainability Plan

2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report  
September 2023

**Sustainability:** Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Becoming more sustainable is about more than just leaving our children a planet with adequate resources, it is also about achieving greater harmony in the present between the environmental, economic, and social impacts—both locally and globally—of our actions. As a children's museum, we also see it as our obligation to help inspire and prepare the next generation to face these complex issues.



## I. Introduction

Since 1982, Discovery Museum has dedicated itself to creating opportunities for children to learn through playful exploration. The Museum’s formal mission statement, adopted in 2018, says “that all children will feel inspired to explore their world and be confident in their natural abilities so they can fulfill their unique potential and embrace a dynamic future.” Given the magnitude of climate change, it is vital that we acknowledge this dynamic future will undoubtedly be defined by global environmental crisis.

In just the last century, we have put the planet on a perilous path. Global temperatures are rising at an alarming rate; we are seeing a dramatic increase in destructive weather events and forest fires; and habitat loss is rapidly reducing biodiversity. Access to basic resources is diminishing. Moreover, the disparities in access to natural resources between and within nations is growing. The crisis we are handing off to future generations, with its interconnected environmental, social, political, and economic challenges, is formidable.

The Museum first articulated its commitment to environmental sustainability in 2007, asserting that “we are keenly aware of the interrelationships of humans the natural world and our obligations to be good stewards of that world.” The Museum set formal goals for becoming a “green” organization and encouraging others to also take responsibility for the environment. The Museum expanded its nature program, hiring its first Outdoor and Environmental Educator in 2015, and in 2016, the Museum opened Discovery Woods, an award-winning, one-acre, fully accessible nature playscape and treehouse abutting 180 acres of town-owned conservation land. With a goal of encouraging every kid to play outside, every day, the Museum also deepened its Backyard and Beyond program series to offer a range of year-round outdoor experiences for children of all ages and levels of comfort with outdoor play. These steps reflect the importance of getting kids outside as the first step to developing an appreciation for the natural world and a sense of responsible stewardship for its resources.

In Spring 2020, the Museum assessed its greenhouse gas emissions. According to the analysis, the Museum emitted an equivalent of 2,265 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually, with visitor travel to and from the Museum accounting for 80% of it. The Museum also assessed its water usage and solid waste generation. The Museum used an estimated 65,000 cubic feet of water annually and generated 260 yards of trash and 140 yards of recycling each year.

The 2021 [Sustainability Plan](#) established concrete goals, strategies, and benchmarks for the Museum to tackle these issues in our own community and beyond. The plan outlines steps to reduce the environmental impact of the Museum’s operations, inspire children and families, through our example and through Discovery Museum visitor programs, to appreciate nature and act on its behalf. In addition, it outlines a strategy for the Museum to advocate for our values as they pertain to sustainability and the environment. In seeking to become a more sustainable organization, we will continue to adhere to our values as outlined in our [2019 Strategic Plan](#), 2019 Learning Experience Framework, and [2021 Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion Plan](#), particularly with respect to racial and environmental justice, as it is strikingly clear that the impacts of climate change and pollution disproportionately affect vulnerable communities around the world.

Two years into the five-year Sustainability Plan, the Museum has achieved a number of goals and is continuing to work on and develop additional steps to reduce carbon emissions, water usage, and waste. This second annual report highlights these successes below and outlines the goals that still need to be met.

## II. Goals



Building on our long-time commitment to inspiring life-long learners and encouraging children to appreciate nature, we have set ambitious, yet achievable goals aimed at reducing our carbon footprint, resource consumption, and waste generation—all to be carried out transparently and publicly in order to model environmentally sustainable practices. We created a Sustainability Advisory Group of experts and practitioners to provide feedback on annually reported progress and make periodic updates and amendments to the plan.

While the Museum has made substantial progress in some areas, it is taking its first steps in others, including implementing practices that have not been tested in a museum setting. As such, these goals and measures of progress are likely to evolve as we continue to learn more about our impact and the actions we can take to sustainably steward our environment.

## Goal: Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions to Carbon Neutral by 2024

### Context

Discovery Museum's biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions is visitor vehicles, which annually emit 1,800 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through travel to and from our campus. In addition, Museum educators travel 38,400 miles by car per year to deliver Traveling Science Workshop programs to students in their schools, producing an estimated 26.2 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Employee commuting adds another 76 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to the atmosphere per year. The 2021 Sustainability Report outlines the following actions for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions:

### Strategies

- **Install a 326kW DC solar canopy that will meet 100% of the Museum's electricity needs.**  
**Status:** *The solar canopy installation was completed and went online in August of 2022. During the first full year online, the solar canopy generated 344,850 kWh of energy—saving 26,757 gallons of gasoline. This is equivalent to planting 6,097 trees to remove carbon from the atmosphere. In addition, 172,425 gallons of water have been saved by relying on clean solar energy. Fifty percent of the energy produced has been designated back to existing electric bills. The remaining 50% is sold to nonprofit partners. Two EV charging stations are located beneath the canopy for community members to use.*



Aerial view of the installation



Explanatory panel mounted inside the Museum



- **Demolish the 183 Main Street office building.** Removing the building, which was in poor condition and contained a natural gas-powered furnace, was necessary to optimize the placement of the solar array.

**Status:** *The Museum obtained a \$200,000 grant in 2021 from the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund—which was matched by a private donor—for this project. Demolition was completed in 2022, and the gas fired heating system taken offline. Construction debris was sent to a recycling center in Devens, MA.*



- **Replace the oil burning furnace in the former Children’s Discovery Museum with an electric heat pump.**

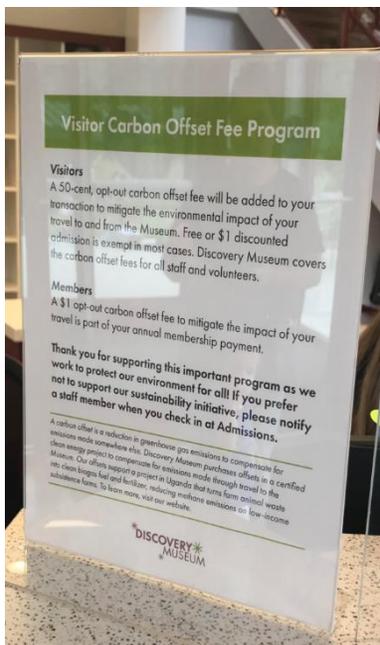
The furnace in the original museum building—the Victorian house at 177 Main St.—emits an estimated 40.8 tons CO<sub>2</sub> per year. The building is currently used for office space and storage. This strategy was amended to include removing the gas-fired hot water heater.

**Status:** *On hold awaiting a plan for the larger renovation of the building.*

- **Sell Excess solar electricity through a community solar partner.**

The Museum produces more electricity from the solar array than is required onsite.

**Status:** *Five local non-profit partners have been selected to purchase 50% of the total solar energy produced: LI Homeowner Boston, Acton Housing, Haley House, Boston Benfield Farms, Coppersmith Village. The non-profit partners selected were invested in using solar energy but did not have the space or capability to install their own solar array. With access provided by the Museum, the five solar partners were able to switch to clean energy.*



- **Mitigate carbon emissions through visitor-supported carbon offset purchases.**

With carbon offsets, a visitor can counteract their personal carbon footprint by helping build clean energy and support carbon-reducing projects.

**Status:** *A member carbon offset program began June 1, 2022. New or renewed members have a \$1 offset per year added to their membership cost. An opt out is possible. Money from the offsets is donated to the Hernando County Landfill Electric generation project. Since 2008, the Hernando County Northwest Landfill has voluntarily collected landfill gas, which otherwise would be released into the atmosphere, and turned it into electricity. In the first year of this offset program, the Museum collected \$3,646 in carbon offsets through memberships purchased. This means that Museum members eliminated roughly 260 tons of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. This is equivalent to the work of over 225 acres of forested lands. In September 2023, a 50-cent,*



*opt-out carbon offset fee per visitor group was added to admissions transactions to mitigate the environmental impact of visitor travel to and from the Museum.*

- ***Explore the feasibility of purchasing or leasing electric vehicles for use by Traveling Science Workshops (TSW) instructors; deliver some programs virtually.***

The TSW program brings hands-on STEM exploration to students right in their classrooms and is critical to our efforts to reach children facing barriers to Museum access. From September 2022 through August 2023, TSW instructors conducted 2,633 workshops at 819 locations throughout Massachusetts, serving roughly 51,500 children in Pre-Kindergarten programs up through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. TSW instructors drove more than 38,400 miles to deliver programs to students in their schools, a total that is expected to increase given the 6% per year average growth in the program over the last decade. Supplementing or replacing our instructors' use of gas-powered vehicles with electric vehicles would reduce our annual environmental impact. The delivery of school programs virtually can provide another way to reduce the program's carbon footprint.

**Status:** *The Museum implemented a TSW instructor carbon offset program on June 1, 2022. The offset cost of the 11 instructors is fully paid by the Museum for the next year of projected miles.*

*No progress has been made on obtaining electric vehicles for the instructors to use. We are still exploring the market for virtual program delivery. Schools are currently opting for in-person instruction.*

- ***Promote the use of public and alternative transportation to the Museum.***

**Status:** *A bike rack has been installed at the Museum for visitor use. Directions to the Museum via public transportation have been added to the [website](#). Other strategies to encourage visitors to use environmentally friendly modes of transportation continue to be discussed.*

- ***Accommodate staff telework when possible.***

**Status:** *A remote work policy was finalized and began on May 15, 2022.*

- ***Consider virtual delivery of lectures and events.***

The Museum typically hosts four to six lecture programs annually through the Discovery Museum Speaker Series. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, we transitioned these programs to a webinar format, which has both boosted attendance and allowed us to expand our reach widely. Going forward, we will continue to consider this format as a more environmentally sensitive complement or alternative to in-person gatherings. This also helps address inequalities in access to transportation and childcare.

**Status:** *In 2019, our last year of all in-person events, Speaker Series programs attracted 687 registrants total. In 2021, 6,170 people registered for our virtual programs, although this total was an outlier, as a single event, Talking to Kids about Race and Racism, presented by Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, attracted 4,160 registrants and a recording of the event was viewed 4,300 times. In 2022 and 2023, event registrations totaled 1,222 and 1,376 people, respectively. Holding programs virtually has allowed the Museum to reach viewers in 50 states and territories, 10 countries, and more than 300 towns and cities in MA. Hosting the Speaker Series virtually has also allowed for a greater range of featured speakers and topics. The 2023 Speaker Series consisted of 4 virtual events: Teaching Today's Kids to Spot Tomorrow's Fake News; Who's Raising the Kids? Big Tech, Big Business, and the Lives of Children; How to Talk to Kids About Gun Violence; and Incarceration and Families: What is the Toll on Children? The 2023 lineup also included one in-person event: A Family Revealed: From Slavery to Hope. The event was hosted at the Nashoba Brooks School in Concord, MA. Recycling containers were provided for program booklets,*



refreshments were served on eco-friendly compostable cups and dishes, and we took steps to reduce waste, for example by no longer providing name tags, as was our previous practice.

- **Addition: Take steps to reduce carbon emissions in daily museum operations.**



**Status:** The Museum uses all LED lighting. Because our solar panels feed into the grid, reducing energy consumption in the building reduces the overall demand for fossil fuels, allowing more clean energy into the grid. Both the lighting and HVAC systems are set to reduce the amount of energy used during hours when the Museum is not open to the public. In addition, the grounds maintenance team has almost entirely transitioned to electric-powered tools. Currently, staff utilize an electric snowblower, weedwhackers, leaf blowers, and a riding lawn mower that can be used as a tractor to pull carts. The only remaining tool that is gas-powered is the chainsaw; staff will replace this in the next few months. All these tools are charged with the electricity provided by the Museum's solar canopy.

## Goal: Reduce Consumption and Waste Generation

### Context

Unless humans change consumption habits, we are on pace to double our use of natural resources globally by 2050 and increase waste production by 70%. Given the urgent need to transform how we produce, consume, and dispose of materials, Discovery Museum is committed to setting ambitious targets for waste reduction and recycling, as well as more closely considering the entire life cycle of the materials we consume. The Museum had already taken some steps to reduce consumption and waste, as well as purchase more environmentally friendly products, including switching from plastic to paper bags in the Museum store; composting yard waste on site and mulching lawn clippings; installing Energy Star rated appliances; and using organic lawn care and pest control products. In addition, Discovery Museum already fosters a culture of reuse through its educational programs, which make common household goods and recyclable objects—including cardboard boxes shipped to the Museum—the raw materials for creation and experimentation. Through the following actions, the Museum will extend these efforts:

### Strategies

- **Decrease waste generation from special events.**

In 2022, the Museum reached more than 7,000 people through events and functions, including fundraising events, the *Discovery After Dark* evening event for adults, paid functions, and community events. The Museum now uses its own reusable tableware, tables, and linens for its own events and composts event food waste.

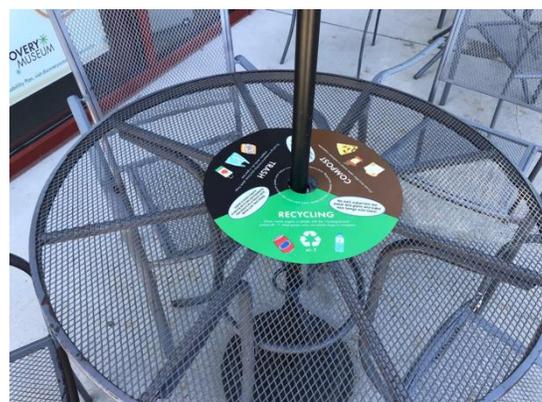
**Status:** The Museum now owns and stores reusable silverware, glasses, pitchers, cloth napkins, linens, and tables of various sizes to run events with meals for up to 35 people. Additionally, we store our own materials for centerpieces and battery-powered candles. For the majority of events hosted each year, we rely on our own reusable products. For the few larger events—such as the *Discovery Gala* in September 2023—we used our existing dishware, linens, tables, while also renting additional items to better serve the larger crowd.



At **Discovery After Dark**—an annual event for adults that drew 250 attendees in 2023—we hired food truck vendors that utilized compostable plates, bowls, utensils, and serving containers. Staff worked with Black Earth Compost to provide larger compostable totes for the event. Large signage gave specific instructions for what guests should put in the compost, recycling, or trash bins. Liquor vendors were asked to bring all beer in cans so they could be recycled. The live band was powered by the Museum’s solar canopy.

For **Discovery Gala**, held Sept. 30, 2023, we took careful steps to minimize the environmental impact of the event. In addition to being solar-powered, the event consolidated the traditional save-the-date and multi-piece invitation into one postcard digitally printed on 100% recycled stock by an eco-friendly printer, which has been a carbon-neutral business since January 2020. The event caterer, Calla Catering, follows the *Sustainable Catering: Small Business Guide*, by the Green Business Bureau. It also partners with local farms for fresh and sustainably grown ingredients, composts food waste, donates leftover food, and uses biodegradable or re-usable dishes and utensils. The Museum also purchased carbon credits to offset the vehicle emissions of all Gala guests, staff, and vendors. By using Givesmart Event Manager software to conduct e-bidding and collect donations, we reduced the need for printable items at the event. Other fundraising events, like the annual Discovery Museum Auction, also rely on virtual communications and auction software to reduce waste. Additionally, the marketing team now uses biodegradable yard signs to advertise and provide information about events.

- **Addition: Compost Museum waste on site**  
**Status:** Three composting bins have been added on campus: one in the lobby and two on the patio surrounding the Museum. There are two additional compost receptacles for staff use. Currently, we are composting food scraps on site with a worm composter located behind the Museum. The organic material produced from the composters is used in the vegetable garden. Plant scraps from facilities management are also composted.



- **Use environmentally friendly trash bags for 100% of the museum’s trash**

When the Sustainability Plan was first implemented, the Museum used 500 16-gallon trash bags and 100 45-gallon trash bags per month.

**Status:** Larger trash bags for outside bins have been replaced with a biodegradable alternative. Staff are still looking for a source for biodegradable bags for smaller indoor bins.

- **Eliminate single-use plastic water bottles**

**Status:** The use of single-use plastic water bottles has already been eliminated at meetings and indoor events. Plastic bottles are no longer sold in vending machines. Indoor water fillers have been added to the Museum. Visitors are encouraged to bring their own reusable water bottles. Staff are currently in the process of installing water fountains and bottle fillers outdoors.



- **Conduct a waste audit for educational and outreach programs and exhibit operations and develop strategies to reduce waste generation**  
**Status:** A waste audit of various spaces has been completed, but not for the whole museum. Staff are working to improve recycling for education program signage and expand composting efforts. Staff are looking to replace paper towels in the bathrooms with hand dryers.



- **Conduct a sustainability audit of materials and supplies and explore options for purchasing more sustainability sourced and packaged products**  
This includes an inventory of materials routinely purchased for programs, educational outreach, office use, events, exhibit construction and maintenance, museum store, vending machine, and cleaning, and development of a preferred purchases list of lower-impact products.  
**Status:** Staff have made a comprehensive list of all materials and supplies for operations that we purchase and are selecting and changing to alternatives. Currently, the Museum uses recycled paper products for paper towels. The cleaning products are being replaced with eco-friendly alternatives. The retail shop is taking steps to reduce potential waste from products. Puzzles are now purchased from a vendor that does not use plastic bags or shrink wrap boxes. Plastic bags are not provided at check out. Going forward, the retail shop will continue to research and switch to vendors that reflect the Museum's sustainability commitment.

## Goal: Reduce Water Usage

### Context

Due to a combination of population growth, economic development, and changing patterns of consumption, water usage has been increasing globally. In addition to depleting water resources, climate change has altered precipitation patterns around the world, with some regions becoming drier and others wetter. In Massachusetts, annual precipitation has been increasing in recent decades, however, much of it falls during extreme weather events punctuated by periods of lower-than-average rainfall. More intense rainfall produces high precipitation totals, but also leads to flash flooding and is not as effective at recharging groundwater. The following strategies are aimed at reducing water consumption at the Museum and managing our water resources more sustainably.



### Strategies

- **Develop reduction goals**  
The primary focus of water reduction efforts is on reducing irrigation water usage, the largest component of the Museum's water consumption.  
**Status:**  
The majority of landscaping on the Museum campus consists of native plants such as bee bomb, little bluestem grass, and red maples. Native plants require less support and water because they are naturally adapted to survive in the ecosystem surrounding the Discovery Museum. However, as new landscaping



was recently completed following a parking lot and pathway renovation, water usage was higher in 2022 as new shrubs, trees, and ground cover were established. Water usage in 2023 has been lower.

- **Capture storm water and redirect it for groundwater recharge**

**Status:** Stormwater runoff from the solar canopy has been successfully redirected back into the ground. A rain barrel is located by the Discovery Woods educational food garden to irrigate the vegetable garden, which provides a sensory garden experience for children by functioning as a “pick and snack” garden of green beans, cucamelons, and herbs. Collected rainwater is also used in the pollinator garden, located outside the window of the 0-to-3-year-old space in the Discovery Museum building. It consists of native plants that provide food and habitat for native pollinators. A rain garden is also located in Discovery Woods.



- **Replace outdoor paved areas with pervious pavement**

**Status:** 2,900 sq. ft. of impervious play area was replaced with pervious pavers in 2022. The largest remaining impervious surface is the parking space beneath the solar panels; storm water here is collected and infiltrates the ground in a focused way.

## Goal: Education and Communicate our Actions to the Public

### Context

The importance of building environmental literacy and changing habits and perceptions is profound, and organizations and institutions trusted to convene the community are among the most impactful educators. Parents and adult caregivers also play an important role in helping children develop a concern for the environment. Studies have shown that children’s attitudes about the outdoors form early. Kids who play outside regularly from a young age—and whose parents also value being in nature—are significantly more likely to spend time outside, develop a connection to nature, and become conscientious environmental stewards as adults. Research has also demonstrated that, like any skill or ability, forming a strong connection to nature happens progressively and dynamically, with children first gaining comfort being *in* nature then gradually developing the ability to be *with* nature—learning from it and feeling attached to it—before ultimately becoming motivated to act *for* nature—to care for it and take actions to protect it. Since 2015, Discovery Museum’s *Backyard and Beyond* program series has provided children and their families with a range of nature experiences tailored to different ages and levels of comfort with the outdoors. From simple observation, such as cloud gazing and weather watching, to more in-depth activities aimed at teaching children about such topics as gardening, animal adaptations, and astronomy, the Museum has a solid foundation upon which to deepen its nature programming and develop new learning experiences that inspire children to act for nature.

### Strategies

- **Expand and enhance the Museum’s nature, outdoor, and environmental education programs to inspire kids to act on behalf of the environment**



It is our responsibility to support the environmental education of our visiting families, as current and future stewards of our natural environment. To support phased outdoor and environmental education experiences that teach children to stand up for nature, the Discovery Museum is expanding the “In/With/For” approach to environmental education: First, give children (and their families) the opportunity to be IN nature, through appealing outdoor programs in Discovery Woods and in the 180 acres of conservation land it abuts. Then, encourage children to learn WITH nature, by exploring independently and becoming empathetic to the patterns and needs of

the outdoor world—and respectful of its inhabitants. Finally, we will model advocacy and seek to inspire children and their caregivers to speak up FOR nature, from positions both of authority as knowledgeable outdoor explorers and of responsibility as enthusiastic agents of change. We are also continuing to encourage young children to engage with natural spaces to support their health and well-being: from the physical benefits of gross-motor exercise to the mental health support of being in an accepting and soothing environment.

**Status:** *Discovery Museum hired a new full-time Director of Environmental and Outdoor Education in 2022 who is developing programs that follow three deeply interconnected paths: 1. Getting more families playing together outside; 2. Helping families learn about the natural world, the threats it faces, and how to engage with those challenges. 3. Helping youth and families practice advocacy skills. This includes engaging children in practicing age-appropriate civic skills, such as articulating why something is important, telling friends and families about what they have learned, or talking to a school leader about an environmental issue.*



*A core goal across the Museum is to ensure universal access to all spaces, including outdoor areas. Discovery Woods and treehouse were designed to include ramps, wide spaces, and pathways graded for wheelchair use, as well as play features that follow the Principles of Universal Design. We are continually working to enhance the accessibility of our natural areas, including the recent addition of wheelchair accessible garden beds. These inclusions in the museum landscape reduce barriers for visitors and ensure that our natural environment and sustainable programs include everyone.*

- **Continue partnering with the Town of Acton to encourage access to the neighboring Great Hill conservation land via a trailhead on the**

#### **Museum property**

**Status:** *The Museum leads nature walks on these trails, with consent of the Town.*

- **Develop partnerships with environmental organizations to provide additional educational opportunities and offer concrete ways for visitors to take action to promote sustainability**

**Status:** *We are participating in an IMLS grant-funded collaboration called Caretakers of Wonder, which will lead to a new climate and resilience educational framework for children under eight, with training for museum professionals to create culturally relevant climate change strategies, messaging, programs,*



and exhibits for young children and their caregivers. In partnership with nine other museums around the country, we are developing a strategic initiative to further reduce our environmental footprints. Through the Caretakers of Wonder collaboration, we are furthering our “In/with/for” overarching philosophy around environmental education, specifically with respect to programs that encourage environmental stewardship. Recent programs have included removing and identifying invasive plants, planting wildflowers, and building foundational civic skills, such as articulating what we value and why.



The Museum is also participating in the Gulf of Maine Research Institute’s Learning Ecosystems Northeast (LENE) project, which encourages collaboration between community organizations (e.g., public libraries, Boys and Girls Clubs) to provide educational experiences about climate change to kids in multiple learning contexts. We are providing expertise in outdoor education and resources to our partner organizations.

In addition, in response to heightened awareness of the childhood mental health crisis, the Museum created a new program in 2021 called Nature Connections that

highlights the connection between spending time in nature and our visitors’ physical and mental health. We have provided free field trips to hundreds of people served by some of our partner organizations, and have developed educational resources, including signs, highlighting the mental health benefits of nature.

- **Continue to foster dialogue and discussion on environmental issues through Discovery Museum Speaker Series and other means, particularly with older kids and adults.**

**Status:** We have offered two virtual Speaker Series events on sustainability and climate: Youth Voices in Climate Change with Varshini Parkash, founder of the Sunrise Movement in 2021, and Helping Kids Understand Climate Change and How to Make a Difference with children’s book authors Stacy Clark and Christy Mihaly in 2022.

- **Publicly report sustainability goals and progress and use our practices as examples for others.**

**Status:** A Sustainability Review Advisory group was formed, made up of 6 community members, to review and comment on the progress of the sustainability plan. Since installing the solar array in 2022, numerous community members have reached out with questions about this installation process, including religious organizations, schools, the New England Botanical Garden at Tower Hill, the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, the Town of Stonington, CT, and the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources.

- **Create a page on our website dedicated to the Museum’s sustainability efforts, including updates to this Sustainability Plan.**



**Status:** A [page](#) has been added to the museum website, which also includes the Strategic Plan and DEAI framework and will integrate reporting on all. Efforts are being made to produce a sustainability statement that will appear on the Museum’s webpage and other communications.

- **Include our sustainable practices in exhibits, programs, and other educational opportunities in order to model ways to better steward the environment.**

**Status:** Incremental changes in decreasing the use of disposable materials have taken place in programs. A photovoltaics exhibit and a renewable energy activity worked well in prototype; turning them into permanent/semi-permanent exhibits is in the planning stages. We are also working on introducing a real-time display of the productivity of the new solar array.

- **Advocate for our values as they pertain to sustainability.**

The Museum believes that sustainability is a necessity for a healthy and just society. Our educational efforts will, in audience-appropriate ways, advocate for collective action on sustainability by people of all ages.

**Status:** In order to demonstrate the Museum’s commitment to sustainable practices, we signed the We Are Still In (WASI) pledge and joined the America is All In coalition to declare our support for climate action to meet the Paris Agreement. The Museum received recognition from the coalition for our carbon offset initiatives. Additionally, we supported the Town of Acton in formally declaring a climate emergency. We are participating in the Culture over Carbon initiative, a groundbreaking research project led by the New England Museum Association (NEMA) with funding from an Institute for Museum and Library Service (IMLS) National Leadership grant. Project leaders are examining data from museums, zoos, aquariums, gardens, and historic sites across the United States to establish an energy carbon footprint for the museum sector and create “roadmaps” to help these institutions use energy more efficiently. We have also published articles on sustainability planning in three major museum association publications.

## **Goal: Prioritize Sustainability in Portfolio Analysis and Decision Making**

### *Context*

Investments in corporations or other vehicles that exhibit sustainable practices encourage such behavior. While tools are imperfect to make sustainable development decisions, it is important to encourage sustainable business practices through financial decisions.

### *Strategies*

- **Create a museum investment policy that maximizes investments in environmentally sustainable entities.**

**Status:** The Board amended its Cash and Investment Policy to include the statement: “All investments should seek to align with the Museum’s sustainability and DEAI plans.” More work and review needs to be done to meet this goal.

## **III. Conclusion**

For 41 years, Discovery Museum has sought to create a setting in which children of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities feel empowered to play and explore the world around them. Through our hands-on exhibits, programs, outdoor spaces, in-school programs, and with the encouragement of our dedicated staff, our message is clear: *play is welcome here*. By implementing the strategies outlined in this document, we aim to convey an additional message that everyone can and should take action to protect our world.



Two years into the 2021 Sustainability Plan, Discovery Museum staff have achieved a number of successes. Out of the 29 initial plan goals, staff have already completed more than half and continue to make progress on the remaining goals. Staff have added and are completing additional goals to reduce carbon and waste emissions. The biggest roadblock remains in updating the original Discovery Children's Museum building, which will be a large undertaking. However, from the successful installation of the solar canopy and the capture of stormwater runoff to the utilization of reusable linens, dishes, and serving containers and the on-site composting, Discovery Museum is proving each day that they are walking the talk in terms of building a more sustainable future.

With so much progress made, Museum staff are already looking ahead to the next set of goals. Staff are considering steps to achieve zero-waste certification as well as more fully incorporating action steps to produce environmentally just outcomes for Museum visitors and the greater community. Moving forward, we will continue to provide updates on the progress we make.