



Reduce the Environmental Footprint of Off-Campus Housing

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT(S) THIS INITIATIVE SUPPORTS

- **7 - Sustainability Literacy**

INITIATIVE ALIGNMENT WITH THE CHARGE

- **Build Community:** This initiative will serve as an opportunity to bring the University of Arizona Sustainability and Climate Action Plan out into our local community in a tangible way, partnering with off-campus housing providers to model sustainable practices and align with on-campus housing.
- **Be Actionable:** While establishing “enforceable policies” with off-campus housing partners is unlikely, the University of Arizona may be able to provide incentives for these partners to adopt sustainable guidelines and practices.
- **Demonstrate Leadership:** This initiative will model sustainable guidelines and practices for housing providers across Southern Arizona and for state, national, and international communities.

INITIATIVE DETAILS

Initiative Summary

This initiative proposes to enhance sustainability efforts for off-campus housing by re-establishing and expanding a program that engages with local rental properties. It aims to address challenges related to waste diversion, energy conservation, and student move-out by creating partnerships with off-campus housing entities and implementing sustainability practices similar to those on campus. The initiative will involve research, strategic planning, and collaboration with community partners to develop and pilot a comprehensive sustainability program for off-campus housing. Actionable items include:

- Review and assess previous efforts and data related to off-campus housing sustainability initiatives to understand successes and challenges, including consulting with staff and faculty involved in past programs.
- Investigate partnerships with Government & Community Relations, the University of Arizona Police Department, and other community organizations to create a comprehensive list of off-campus housing partners and contacts.
- Select a small number of off-campus properties to partner with, build relationships with residents and staff, and establish an action committee to implement sustainability initiatives and track their effectiveness.
- Develop and distribute promotional items to engage residents and staff at partner properties, including potential “sustainability agreements” in rental contracts.

- Collect and analyze data on off-campus housing usage and student demographics to tailor sustainability initiatives, and use surveys and feedback to evaluate and improve the pilot program.

Proposed Initiative & Background

Many colleges and universities have mastered on-campus sustainability programs, but off-campus programs, including waste diversion and student move-out, remain a challenge. Apartments, condos, and single-family homes located off-campus generate different (and often bulkier) materials and often place large burdens on city/county staff (AASHE Conference).

According to Dr. Jill A. Burchell, Senior Coordinator, Sustainability Operations and Initiatives for Housing & Residential Life, a program piloted at the University of Arizona for off-campus housing is not currently offered. A special relationship with different sponsor properties previously existed, but the current extent of the relationship is that Housing & Residential Life provides a website for students to connect with local apartments.

The University of Arizona previously had an Off-Campus Housing Sustainability program that worked with approximately 20 local properties. Student workers created some print pieces about saving water and energy and produced some social media posts. They attended a few properties' functions with tabling activities. They ran a water reduction competition between a couple of the buildings (companies provided their water bills for a baseline and competition month). The student workers organized an end-of-year donation program in a few of the buildings by asking some local nonprofits to come remove the donated items in exchange for keeping them.

The success of these initiatives was limited and relationships have not been maintained. Dr. Burchell has noted that once a month, Government & Community Relations has a safety meeting with local properties. This might be a place to connect with some of the most University of Arizona-engaged properties. Julie Katsel, Assistant Vice President, Government & Community Relations, coordinates those meetings.

This initiative will be in alignment with the actions of other initiatives for on-campus housing. This includes waste reduction, energy conservation, move-in and move-out strategies, and sustainability events and education. Initiative 7.3, "Establish a Sustainability Ambassadors Program," should also be connected, with Off-Campus Ambassadors recruited and trained to serve as liaisons.

Preliminary Actions

Initial steps to realize this initiative will need to focus on research, data collection, and strategic planning. These efforts could potentially be undertaken by an existing staff member or by a student worker or intern. This individual should be managed through the Office of Sustainability and/or Housing & Residential Life.

Previous efforts by Housing to engage with off-campus housing entities will need to be reviewed and, if possible, assessed for effectiveness (successes and challenges). Dr. Burchell and any other faculty/staff with experience with the program should be interviewed and consulted. Any data collected on the program that still exists should also be reviewed and considered to determine the best courses of action and plans for data collection and evaluation of this new program.

Collaboration with Government & Community Relations and the safety meetings with off-campus partners should be investigated as a conduit to a list of off-campus housing partners and associated contacts. Other entities, such as the University of Arizona Police Department, on- and off-campus may also maintain contacts with off-campus properties that cater to University of Arizona students, and this should also be investigated as needed so that a comprehensive list can be established and utilized. If possible, any properties with any sustainability-related promotions or programs should be identified. A student survey could be launched to collect data on off-campus housing sustainability initiatives, or lack thereof.

If it does not already exist, an overall snapshot of students utilizing off-campus housing should be created and reviewed, including the number of students, grade level, demographic info, etc. This data collection should perform an intersectional analysis to understand how various factors (race, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.) intersect and affect sustainability initiatives or living conditions. Initiative 7.2, “Distribute a Campus-Wide Sustainability Survey,” should allow student respondents to select on- or off-campus residency as a way to segment their responses and use them to develop programming.

The City of Tucson and certain community organizations are likely to have an interest in supporting this initiative given the disruption that can come with high-density student housing, particularly during move-in and move-out periods.

Crafting and Implementing a Pilot Program

- Depending on available resources (staff & students, interested off-campus partners, funding, etc.), select a small number of off-campus properties to partner with.
- Build a relationship with residents and staff of partner properties. This could include open house discussions, special events with food or other incentives to participate, workshops, or guest speakers.
- Establish an action committee with representatives from residents and staff at all partner properties. Provide financial compensation (stipend, hourly wage, or similar) if possible.
- Select action items to implement at each site, using the on-campus initiatives as a guide. Create promotional items (electronic or other) to advertise the action items and engage residents and staff.
 - Could ask partner properties to include a “sustainability agreement” in their rental contracts.
- Track action items to evaluate effectiveness. For example, if having guest speakers is selected as an action, track the number of guests and get their feedback on the experience. If waste reduction is selected, evaluate initial waste levels and then track the change over time.

The action committee will meet regularly to provide feedback from their property and implement changes to the plan as needed. The pilot program, with a small number of partner sites, should be in place for at least two academic years before expansion to include other sites. Ideally, if resources are available, expansion should occur each year from year 3 onward.

Data Analyses to Support Initiative

****It should be noted that this initiative comes from direct feedback from the Sustainability & Climate Action Plan Core Team and Advisory Team.**

Available Data

- Any information from previous off-campus program by Housing & Residential Life

Data Needs

- Off-Campus Housing metrics – number of students, demographics, properties catering to/hosting the majority of University of Arizona students
- Examples from other universities

Resource Requirements & Return on Investment

Resource Requirements

- Cost for staff & student time – evaluation process, coordination, ambassadors, promotional material development
- Cost for stipends or other financial compensation for action committee participation
- Cost of event facilitation – open houses, guest speakers, food, etc.
- Cost of promotional materials, including signage, flyers, posters, etc.

Return on Investment

- The return on investment of this initiative is unclear due to the highly qualitative nature of its proposed activities; however, it is unlikely that this initiative will result in a direct return on any investments made.

Potential Funding Sources

- Campus Sustainability Fund
- Off-Campus Housing Partners

Accountable Division(s) & Department(s)

- Office of Sustainability, including proposed ambassadors
- Government & Community Relations
- Housing & Residential Life

Partners & Collaborators

University of Arizona Partners

- Campus Community Relations Committee
- Students for Sustainability

Other Partners

- Off-campus housing partners
- City of Tucson
- Pima County
- Neighborhood Associations

Implementation

Length of Time to Implement

- Less than one year
- One to five years
- More than five years

Difficulty of Implementation

- Low
- Medium
- High
- Extremely High

Relative Timing

- Begin within two years
- Begin in three to five years
- Begin in six years or later

Metrics for Success

- Number of involved/interested off-campus partners
- Pre- and post-program waste numbers (and effectiveness of other action item-related campaigns)
- Number of students impacted by off-site partners
- Event numbers – number of events, participants, partners, etc.
- Waste diversion stats for move-in and move-out events