

FINAL

# The Seventh Principle Plan

*A multi-year strategic plan to  
optimize BUC's  
environmental sustainability.*

*Developed by the  
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Environmental Sustainability Subcommittee  
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## THE SEVENTH PRINCIPLE PLAN

*A multi-year strategic plan to optimize BUC's environmental sustainability.*

### INTRODUCTION

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote seven Principles, which we hold as strong values and moral guides. We live out these Principles within a “living tradition” of wisdom and spirituality, drawn from sources as diverse as science, poetry, scripture, and personal experience.

The Seventh Principle is “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” While the Seventh Principle can be understood in many ways, the state of the contemporary world – in which we are confronted with the existential threat of cataclysmic climate change – makes concern about our impact on the physical and environmental world a matter of the first magnitude.

### SUSTAINABILITY

Like the Seventh Principle, sustainability can be understood in many ways. For purposes of this plan and report, sustainability is understood primarily to mean environmental sustainability. The plan examines the impact BUC has on the natural world and how a changing natural world impacts BUC. As part of that examination, the plan also acknowledges that sustainability has financial and social justice components. However, the plan is neither a financial nor social justice action plan. When sustainability measures have financial implications, the plan attempts to identify those financial implications, but authority to incur financial obligations on behalf of the congregation remains in the hands of the Board of Trustees and Executive.

### PROCESS

Members of the BUC Environmental Action team and other members of the congregation, with the sanction of our Board of Trustees, began a sustainability planning process in the fall of 2021. As part of that process task force members did the following:

- Invited all church members to two brainstorming sessions during which two dozen attendees offered suggestions about what the congregation could do to improve our sustainability.



- Asked the membership to complete an online survey on whether they had a favorable or unfavorable view of each of 57 suggestions. 72 members responded.

- Analyzed suggestions and survey results to determine for each suggestion whether the impact of that idea was high or low, and whether the difficulty of that idea was high or low, in order to help prioritize actions.
- Consulted with available technical experts within and outside the congregation on a selection of topics.
- Developed a timeline for action and when necessary, identified questions requiring follow-up research and additional consideration.

This document describes many projects planned and proposed for the coming years. As a plan, it is subject to revision as events unfold. Ambitious and high-minded plans are often praised, then shelved. To prevent a similar fate for this plan, ongoing reporting is proposed, with an update on accomplishments reached, information gathered, and with priorities updated after the first in six months, and at least annually thereafter.

## WHAT YOU THOUGHT

Members of the congregation at BUC are quite knowledgeable about many topics, including climate change. They are well-read, intelligent, thoughtful and caring people who are trying to do what they can in their personal lives to address climate change.

During our brainstorming sessions many ideas were proposed. We put them into several categories for the survey:

# of suggestions	Categories
4	Water
3	Gas/Heat
3	Electricity
5	Operations
3	Value Based Purchasing and Investing
19	Outdoor Campus
3	Community
3	Environmental Justice
6	Communication
3	Individual Behavior
52	

Since many of us own homes and enjoy working in our yards and gardens, it is no surprise that there were many suggestions on the outdoor campus. Of the 19 items in that category:

4 had to do with the overall landscape plan and mitigating the potential for water damage

5 involved native plants

3 related to grass

3 were about the parking lot

2 were about our spiritual life,

And 1 each were on rain barrels and trees.

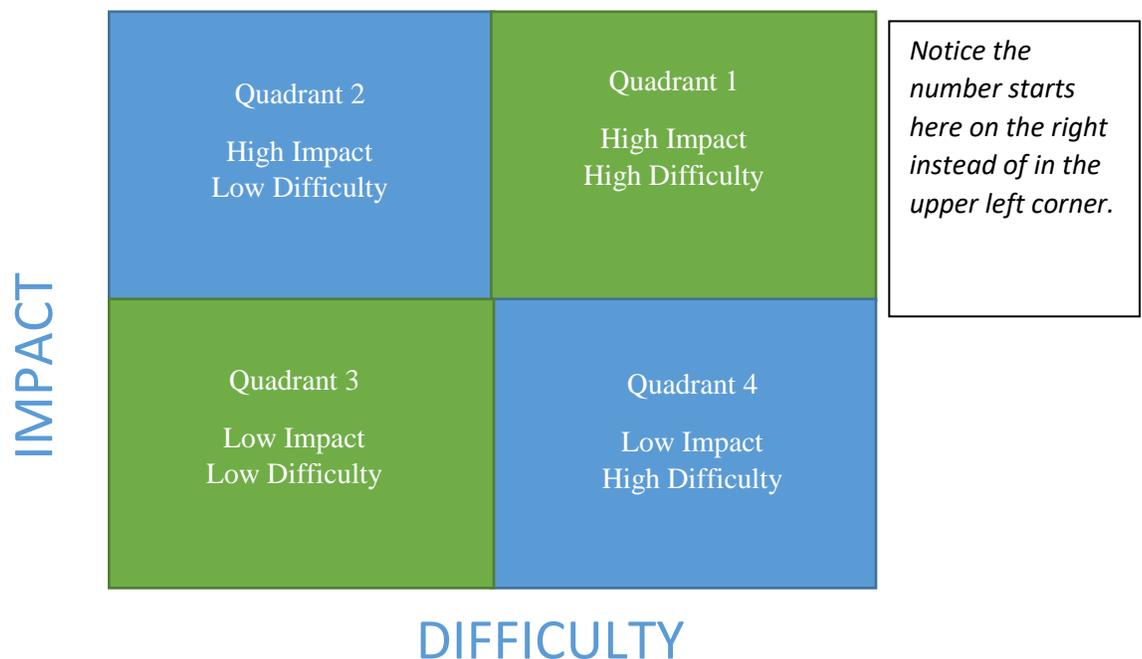
## ANALYSIS

After gathering ideas and surveying congregants as to which ideas were most important to them, we did a 4 quadrant analysis.

A quadrant analysis chart is a common tool used for decision making. A quadrant chart is technically a scatter plot that is divided into four sections or quadrants. In a quadrant analysis, performance under two parameters is assessed for each entity.

The parameters we chose were

- Impact –the impact the solution would have on lowering our carbon footprint, or put another way, on improving our sustainability.
- Difficulty – the level of difficulty involved in implementing an action. This could be expressed several ways. It could be a factor of how much it costs financially, and/or how long it would take to research **and** to implement. Or, as we bring in outside experts, we may, for example, discover facts about the church building that complicate implementation of some solutions. And, of course, these issues can all be interwoven.



Our analysis was based on our own knowledge and understanding of the solutions. Some we know quite well. Others will require more research, so we had a fifth category we called ‘More Research Required.’ We could have put those in one of the High Difficulty squares, but without research we don’t know the Impact.

Using our 4 Quadrant Chart, we began to discuss how to select projects. Someone had the idea of looking at through a food metaphor: We selected a menu of projects that have some protein, some veggies and some carbs:

- “Protein” would be the high impact / high difficulty projects that will bring us the most results.
- “Veggies” would be interesting projects that will have some impact, and will provide ways for members to get personally involved, keeping us energized
- The “Carbs” would be enjoyable projects such as a social event after Flower Communion Sunday service
- And of course, we need to take our “Vitamins” so there are some research projects on the side.



The following pages describe the items in each quadrant in more detail. They include a list of the items we placed in that quadrant—the category and the specific item; the number of people who rated the item in their survey response, the overall score the item received, and the quadrant number.

There is discussion under each quadrant, but this is NOT THE PLAN. We share the plan later in this document, under the heading, THE PLAN.

## QUADRANT 1: HIGH IMPACT, HIGH DIFFICULTY

Here are the Quadrant 1 actions (Protein Projects).

Where projects were very similar or in the same category they were combined into a box at the top, regardless of how they were ranked in the survey.

Category [Specific action]	# survey responses	Ranking	quadrant
Outdoor Campus [Find ways to mitigate flooding and stormwater run-off]	71	4.7	2
Outdoor Campus [Obtain expert opinion on flow of stormwater through property to assist in planning]	71	4.5	2
Outdoor Campus [Obtain expert opinion on our ecosystem, best practices]	71	4.0	2
Communication [Involve BUC youth in climate work]	71	4.5	2
Electricity [Install solar panels on roof]	72	4.4	2
Gas/Heat [Replace inefficient windows]	72	4.2	2
Values-Based Purchasing & Investing [Screen investment portfolio for environmental-justice issues]	72	4.1	2
Gas/Heat [Replace gas furnaces with electric energy-efficient heat pumps]	70	3.9	2
Values-Based Purchasing & Investing [Disinvest endowment funds from fossil-fuel companies]	71	3.9	2
Outdoor Campus [Eliminate grass]	70	3.3	2
Outdoor Campus [Revisit permeable parking lot]	71	3.3	2

## **Quadrant 1: High Impact, High Difficulty *continued***

We placed these projects in the order we think they should be addressed:

2022-23

- Solar Panels – All the research has been done; we are at the point of raising funds.
- Stormwater remediations and ecosystem: the committee has consulted an expert in the field who made some suggestions that can be implemented right away.

2023-24 or in the second half of 2022-23

- Involve BUC Youth in climate work: We are currently recruiting a new RE director. Letting that person get their feet on the ground would be imperative to the success of any project with the youth.
- Replace furnaces with energy efficient units. Suitable technology has not yet been identified.

2023-24

- Upgrade inefficient windows: full assessment, selection of remediations such as window replacement, weather stripping, and window coverings to be determined.
- Screen investment portfolio to divest from Fossil Fuel investing: Will require consultation with a financial adviser or team.
- Eliminate grass: this will be a multi-year project that can be combined with the other native plant projects

2024-25

- Permeable parking lot: research project

## QUADRANT 2: HIGH IMPACT, LOW DIFFICULTY

We should do some of these right away, and keep a selection of them for future use. These are vegetable projects—very useful, and easier to do.

Category [Specific action]	# survey responses	Ranking	quadrant
Outdoor Campus [Review landscape plan done in prior years]	71	4.2	1
Outdoor Campus [Increase use of native plants]	71	4.4	1
Outdoor Campus [Provide habitat for pollinators]	71	4.7	1
Outdoor Campus [Plant trees to absorb water]	71	4.4	1
Outdoor Campus [Plant rain gardens to absorb water]	71	4.5	1
Outdoor Campus [Use rain barrel to catch water, water plants]	71	4.1	1
Community [Donate to environmental nonprofits]	71	4.0	1
Community [Advocate with legislators on climate issues]	71	4.7	1
Environmental Justice [Advocate for environmental justice issues]	71	4.6	1

### 2022-23

Native plant work is already beginning. Create a specific plan for this area incorporating topics and timeline (include 3 items from Q3)

Donation to environmental nonprofits: Continue current practice of doing this through plate collection process.

Advocacy: Continue to advocate with legislators on climate and on environmental justice issues as opportunities arise. We have a solid protocol --- Write Here! Write Now! – that has worked very well for getting letters written and delivered.

### QUADRANT 3: LOW IMPACT, LOW DIFFICULTY

Many projects fell in this category. They can be taken up whenever we have people interested in working on them.

Category [Specific action]	# survey responses	Ranking	quadrant	
Operations [Use earth-friendly cleaning supplies]	72	4.6	3	Staff
Operations [Place recycling bins next to every wastebasket]	71	4.1	3	Are there any remaining?
Operations [Use biodegradable trash bags]	71	4.5	3	Staff
Operations [Use recycled paper in office copy machine]	72	4.4	3	Staff
Operations [Use recycled paper towels and toilet paper]	72	4.3	3	Staff
Values-Based Purchasing & Investing [Buy supplies and other large purchases from companies whose values align with ours]	72	4.2	3	Staff
Outdoor Campus [Promote use of Capek Woods--spiritual, emotional, beauty]	71	4.4	3	Native
Outdoor Campus [Expand Flower Communion Sunday to include activities in Capek Woods]	70	4.0	3	native
Outdoor Campus [Declare property part of the Home Grown National Park program, other certifications]	70	3.6	3	Native
Outdoor Campus [Add signage to property to share actions with visitors] Communication [Install signage in pertinent areas to alert congregants and visitors to actions taken] Communication [Publicize actions taken and actions planned] Communication [Locate information on church website on actions we have taken, actions other could take] Communication [Re-start Green Tips (small signs in restrooms with environmental messages)]	70	4.0	3	Communication

Outdoor Campus [Calculate salt runoff from parking lot]	71	3.8	3	Research
Outdoor Campus [Consider alternative products to salt for de-icing]	70	4.4	3	Research
Individual Behavior [Share with congregation actions they can take in personal life, at home, information sources]	71	4.4	3	
Individual Behavior [Offer samples of green products they can try out inexpensively]	71	4.2	3	

### 2022-23

- Create a team of 2-3 including Sara Constantakis to plan and manage communications. Plan should include a way to communicate all the things we have done and are doing; such as smart thermostats in all the rooms, replacing LED's, and replacing old furnaces.
- Incorporate outdoor campus items with native plant plan in Q1
- Develop a plan in coordination with church staff

### 2023-24

- Individual Behavior
- Recruit someone to review de-icing product used on the parking lot and exterior walkways to minimize environmental impact

## QUADRANT 4: LOW IMPACT, HIGH DIFFICULTY

Category [Specific action]	# survey responses	Ranking	quadrant
Water [Install gray water for toilets ("gray" water has been used for dishwashing etc, still sanitary enough to reuse )]	72	3.3	4
Water [Install tankless hot-water heaters]	71	3.8	4
Electricity [Install electric vehicle charging stations]	72	3.8	4
Outdoor Campus [Lawn service use only electric equipment]	71	3.4	4
Community [Support local efforts to fight climate change]	71	4.7	4
Environmental Justice [Work closely with one or more EJ organizations in SE Michigan]	71	4.5	4
Individual Behavior [Provide support for carpooling (place where people could sign up, find people close to them)]	71	4.2	4

2022-23 and beyond

Invite members to take on any of these items

4.7 Support local efforts to fight climate change eg. Attend Turn Oakland County Green event, other local marches, presentations, local advocacy

4.5 Work with EJ organizations,

4.2 Carpooling support – identify what this might look like and how it could be implemented

3.4 Look for lawn service company that uses electric equipment

3.3, 3.8 Explore the impact and costs of using gray water and tankless hot water heaters

2023-24

3.8 Reconsider EV charging stations when we have more EV drivers, and the technology becomes more affordable



## ITEMS TO RESEARCH/GET MORE INFO

Water [Install low-flow faucets] Water [Install low-flow toilets]	Do we already have these
Gas/Heat [Install drapes over large windows to maintain temperature]	How impactful would this be; what would cost be
Electricity [Use DTE's voluntary program to get power from DTE from renewable sources]	Do we even qualify given Constellation arrangement;
Outdoor Campus [Use no pesticides or herbicides on lawn while we have it]	Confirm with Valerie that we don't use pesticides

**THINGS THAT ARE ALREADY HAPPENING:**

Environmental Justice [Donate still-usable furniture (leftover from rummage) to Humble Design, other orgs]	71	4.8
Communication [Green Sanctuary – consider obtaining full reaccreditation]  I would like to ask EA team if anyone there is interested in leading the assessment portion	71	4.1

We also need to create a way to communicate all the things we have done and are doing; such as smart thermostats in all the rooms, replacing LED's, and replacing old furnaces with heat pumps.

## THE PLAN

We propose to use the following process: Each year we identify several projects to address as a congregation in the following months. These will include a selection from each of the quadrants, combining high impact projects needed in order to make real progress with simpler but still significant ones.

A plan is an intention, not an obligation, financial or otherwise. Rather, this is a context in which to make decisions. What we have done here is to create a way to go forward, with specific plan ideas; a perspective as to why some would be done before others; and consideration as to the specifics of our church community and facilities.

The process we propose will require the ongoing engagement of the membership of BUC. This should not and will not be a plan implemented by a few people on a 'green committee.' On the contrary, it needs to be something we all know about and are committed to supporting with our own time and energy.

At least once a year, but maybe more often, we propose an all-church meeting, as conditions allow, to celebrate the accomplishments, share new ideas, select projects for the following 6-12 months, and recruit church members to participate in those projects. The beauty of this process is that an individual or group can take up one project without fear of taking on more than they can handle.

The plan below has identified specific projects for the next 6-12 months. There are also suggestions for projects for the fall of 2022; these are suggestions only, it is up to all of you to help decide what is next, and to help make them happen.

# THE PLAN

## **YEAR ONE: AS OF JUNE 1, 2022**

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### **High/High Projects: water mitigation, solar**

- Seek expert opinion on water flow on property, opportunities to mitigate flooding, ecosystem; use information gained to make future plans
- Present research and funding options to congregation to install solar panels

### **High/Low: native plant program**

- Convene native plant enthusiasts to identify projects for current and next year, including plans for Flower Communion Sunday outdoor activities
- Hire an environmental landscaping professional to plant lower-level lawn with natives, build swale to move water to retention pond
- Begin Tree planning project – 6 trees per person per year

### **Low/Low: operations purchasing, communications plan**

- Convene a team (to include Sara Constantakis) to prioritize projects for current and coming years
- Meet church staff to review current practices, and to consider implementation of suggestions
- Plan a Halloween event for youth in Capek Woods to encourage awareness of our campus

### **Low/High: invite BUC members to take on any of the low/high items**

- Publicize research projects and any low/high projects to congregation, invite members to take on any of these projects

**Environmental Action Plan Town Hall October 16, 2022:** (after/during Harvest Potluck if public health conditions allow)

Get feedback, celebrate accomplishments, share new ideas, help select projects for the next 6-12 months, get volunteer commitments

# THE PLAN *CONTINUED*

## **YEAR TWO TENTATIVE PLAN: AS JUNE 2023**

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### **High/High Project: gas furnace replacement**

- Research options for energy efficient replacements for gas furnaces; develop multi-year plan for replacement

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### **High/Low: native plant program**

- Continue working on previously identified projects to increase native plantings on BUC campus

### **Low/Low: operations, communications plan**

- Add previously identified communications projects
- Assess the impact of de-icers now used on parking lots and walkways
- Educate the congregation on furnaces, tankless water heaters, and other current technology

### **Low/High: invite BUC members to take on any of the low/high items**

- Publicize research projects and any low/high projects to congregation, invite members to take on any of those projects

**October 16, 2023:** Environmental Action Plan Town Hall (after/during Harvest Potluck as public health conditions allow)

Get feedback, celebrate accomplishments, share new ideas, help select projects for following 6-12 months, get volunteer commitments

# THE PLAN *CONTINUED*

## **YEAR THREE TENTATIVE PLAN: AS JUNE 2024**

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### **High/High Projects: windows/drapes; value-based investments and purchasing**

- Research impact of existing windows and of potential replacements, and of window treatments such as cellular blinds and/or insulated drapes; inform congregation and devise plan to implement if appropriate
- Replace more furnaces

### **High/Low: native plant program**

- Continue working on previously identified projects to increase native plantings on BUC campus

### **Low/Low: operations, communications plan**

- Add previously identified communications projects

### **Low/High: invite BUC members to take on any of the low/high items**

- Publicize research projects and any low/high projects to congregation, invite members to take on any of those projects