

Infrastructure & Resilience Plan



Office of Sustainability
2024

Priority actions for the IRP

The Infrastructure & Resilience Plan (IRP) continues to make progress on finalizing the goals, strategies, and actions that are needed to achieve the University's short, medium, and long-term climate goals. The UTA Office of Sustainability held a campus-wide engagement summit on May 1 to hear feedback from students, faculty, and staff members on the priorities of the campus. This engagement was made to support and build consensus beyond what was already collected through the campus survey about goals and actions.

CREATING CONSENSUS

In-person attendees took part in a two-part workshop; the first, **"Sprinting to Sustainability!"** where attendees spent five minutes on the major themes of the plan to help provide insight on any missing strategies and actions that might have been missed. Each group then rotated for another five minutes until all attendees provided insights on the major topics. This provided the plan with diverse perspectives in areas where people might not usually participate in giving feedback! The main themes are:

- Social and community impact
- Economic Development and Innovation
- Food and waste
- Operations and finance
- Culture and Communication
- Mobility
- High-performance buildings
- Energy infrastructure
- Resilience

At a high level, there was impressive alignment between the public survey and the stakeholder engagement conducted on campus. This is fantastic news! UTA's leadership reflects the goals of its students and shows that they will be great stewards of the community's ambitions for sustainability at UTA. We held discussions around each theme in order to ensure that the planning effort captures as much context on the ground as possible, all of which have been summarized on the following pages.





SOCIAL & COMMUNITY IMPACT

Engagement with the Social and Community Impact topic group led to great discussions, which we will see emphasized later, around research and sustainability. Almost every goal in this topic group was ranked as a high priority, including: **highlight existing sustainability research at UTA; ensure widespread research access by hosting published articles on publicly available infrastructure; and ensure sustainability materials are integrated into onboarding and recruiting efforts for students, faculty and staff.** Connections with off-campus communities were considered a long-term priority, with continued efforts needing to be made to extend beyond the great relationship between UTA and the City of Arlington and its surrounding community. Fostering a culture of sustainability was a key discussion point in this topic group, something that will be emphasized later in the Culture and Communication topic group.

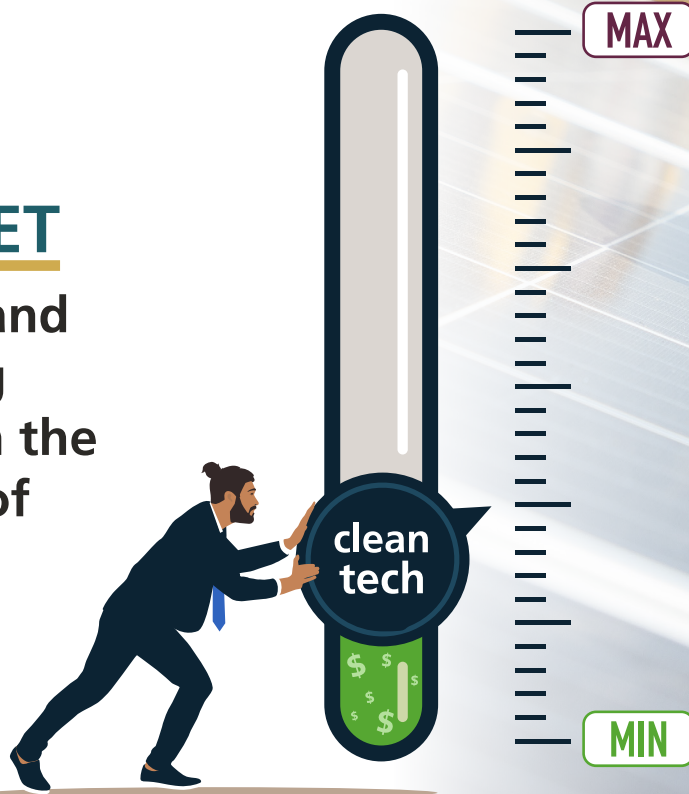


ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION

Discussions on Economic Development and Innovation provided great feedback for goal development. Research and development, in several forms, was the standout priority for the stakeholders, with the most popular goals being: **identify faculty to foster research within green technology; identify target areas for sustainability to further grant-funded research; and develop partnership for transition training utilizing UTA courses for professional accreditation.** Goals around green workforce development, green tech networks, and leadership in green jobs were lower priority, and after some conversations around this, these initiatives will be on a longer-term development path.

Growing the **GREEN MARKET**

through research and workforce training helps to dial down the negative impacts of climate change



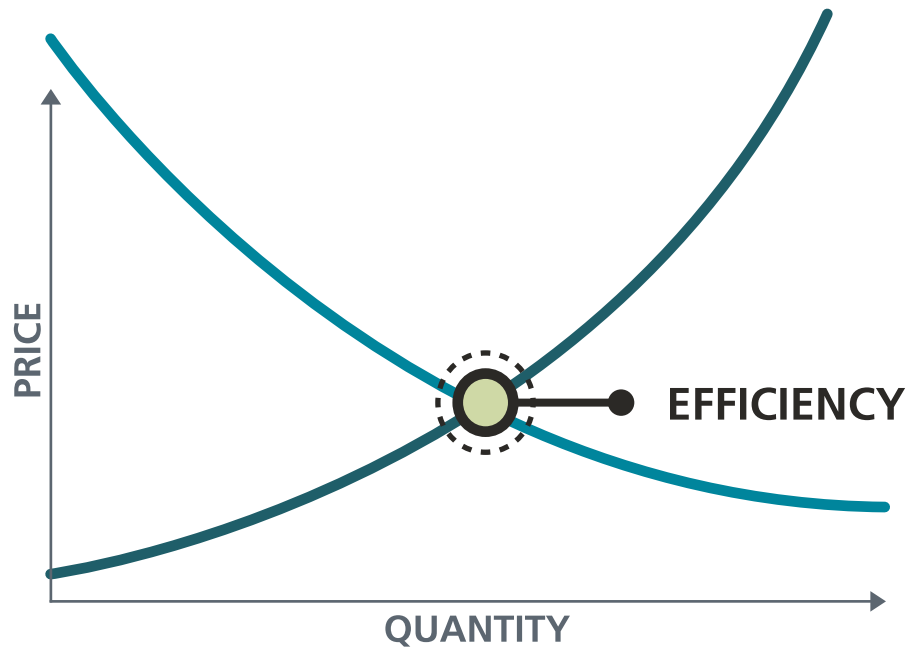
Food waste collected at Maverick dining halls is used as mulch and soil amendment on UTA's campus grounds and in our community garden!



FOOD & WASTE

The Food and Waste topic group highlighted some existing needs on campus, increased communications of current operations, as well as available campus services, such as the campus community garden program. Additionally, much of the discussion was focused around a need for a **comprehensive strategy for waste diversion** and interest in **reducing construction waste** – the two most popular goals dealt directly with these issues. Goals around food consumption, sourcing local food and providing education on responsible food consumption are considered longer term priorities, and will be developed over a longer period of time.





OPERATIONS & FINANCE

Operations and Finance showed a great diversity as to priority, with a single standout: **identify opportunities to improve water conservation and efficiency**. Other high priority goals included: **reinforce a culture of social and environmental responsibility through UTA's financial investments**, and **minimize environmental impact of landscape management by focusing on xeriscaping**. Goals around financial tools that can mitigate building operational impact were lower priority, and will be recommended for longer term development.



CULTURE & COMMUNICATION

The conversation around the Culture and Communication group was very enthusiastic, with consensus being reached that sustainability is a high priority for students, faculty, and staff, and it will be necessary to overhaul how sustainability is discussed at the university. Confirming alignment with the public survey, the most popular goals from the stakeholder engagement sessions were the **continued expansion of community service programs**; the **integration of sustainability messaging across all campus platforms organizations**; and **increasing dynamism of sustainability communications through increased social media presence**.

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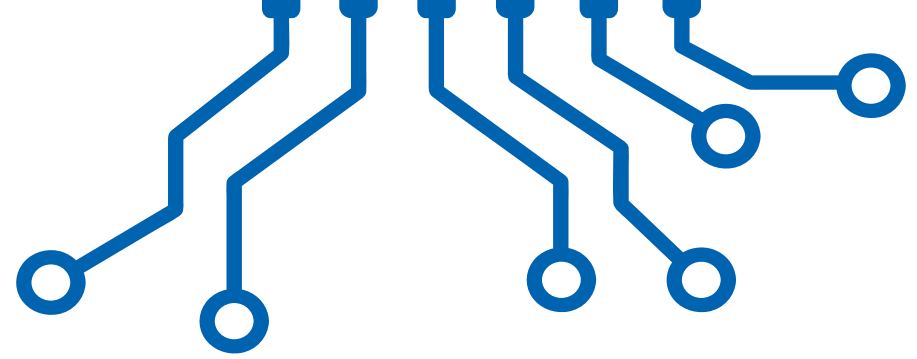
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MOBILITY

The feedback from the Mobility focus area provided us with the most popular goal in both the public survey and stakeholder engagement sessions: **promote active transportation options such as walkable connection to downtown, bike paths, etc.** This goal fostered wonderful discussion around the need for low-carbon, health-forward options such as walking and biking to be available to those on and off campus. Discussions around multi-modal transportation options, as well as the need for safe transportation, illustrated a need seen in both discussions for the physical master plan as well as the IRP – safe, sustainable, personal mobility will be a key driver for development on campus.





HIGH-PERFORMANCE BUILDINGS

Some of our most impactful conversations came from discussions around operational emissions on campus – what can we do now to reduce our emissions? Highest priority items included a **development of sustainable design guidelines to be distributed to all contractors and designers working on UTA projects**, as well as **lowering building water use intensity through high efficiency fixtures**, which highlighted the interest in developing easily deployable solutions to improve building performance. Given longer development timelines, lowering overall building energy use intensity, or improving existing building performance through retrofitting will be considered an essential, but longer-term step in lowering emissions in campus operations. Solar and green roofs were another popular goal, citing the need for **development of on-site green infrastructure and renewable energy**. Targeting LEED certification and reducing embodied carbon were considered lowest priority, relative to the very popular goals around direct solutions.



SUN FOR ENERGY

SHADE FOR PLANTS

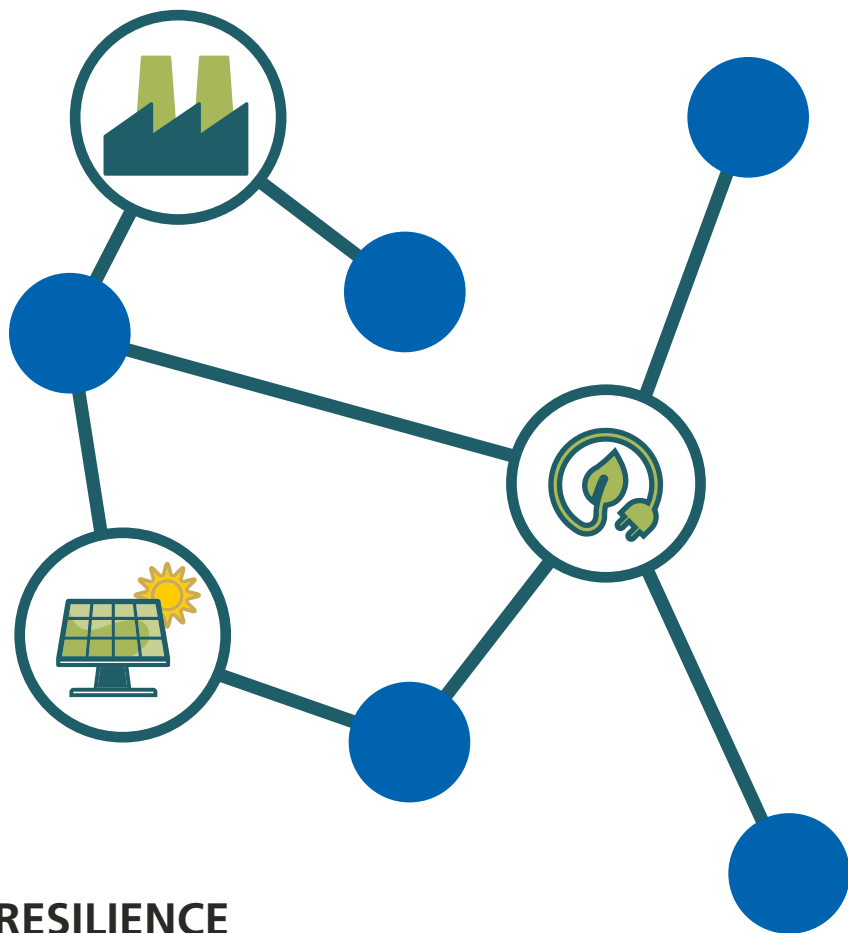


Introducing agrovoltaics to UTA can integrate renewable energy generation with the expansion of our community garden. Solar panels can provide shade to protect sun-sensitive herbs and vegetables from the intensity of the Texas sun.

ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Similarly to High-Performance Buildings, conversations on Energy Infrastructure got to the heart of implementable, low carbon operations. Goals around **green energy and green energy data** were of particularly high priority, with more ambitious targets such as **replacing steam heat with high-efficiency heating infrastructure**, and **sourcing 100% low-carbon electricity** being priority goals, with longer timelines necessary for their large-scale development.





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RESILIENCE

The discussions on Resilience focused heavily on communication and highlighted the need for existing operations and practices to have dedicated communication strategies, as well as understanding how to properly ensure resilience moving forward in the face of extreme weather. Highest priority items included: **update and expand upon university disaster response planning** and **enhance campus power systems redundancy**. Goals around flooding and urban heat island effect were considered lower priority and will be developed over a longer period of time.



This engagement point verified the priorities and actions of the University and a broad variety of its stakeholders. Engagement point one asked the question **WHAT ARE THE MAJOR GOALS THAT THIS PLAN NEEDS TO ACHIEVE?**. The survey asked the question **HOW DOES UTA GO ABOUT ACHIEVING THESE GOALS?**. This last engagement series of the data assessment asked the question **WHICH OF THESE ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES ARE OF PRIORITY AND WHAT IS THE APPROPRIATE TIMELINE FOR ACHIEVEMENT?**

Recognizing that the school year is quickly coming to an end (congratulations to all for making it through a wonderful year!), the IRP project team will take the summer to focus on aggregating the recommended strategies, creating metrics for tracking progress, and ultimately confirming the robust governance structure that allows for clear achievement and accountability on each of the respective goals.

More progress will be shared with the start of the school year in Fall 2024.



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