
Dumbarton House Sustainability Action Plan



Supplemental to the Master Site Plan

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NSCDA[®]

Museum & Headquarters ★ The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America
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NSCDA Mission

Promotes national heritage through historic preservation, patriotic service and educational projects

Dumbarton House Mission

The mission of Dumbarton House, headquarters of The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America, is to support the organization's Corporate Societies and their members, to maintain its historic museum property, and to enhance the cultural life of Washington, D.C. Through the interpretation of its historic site and collections, Dumbarton House promotes the understanding of historic preservation and of the early history of our nation, so that the lives and ideals of early Americans inspire present and future generations.

Purpose

Over the last several years, Dumbarton House has begun to go green in its operations. It began with staff members interested in operating the museum and headquarters in an environmentally friendly way and as an option for lowering operational costs. Further, the national green museum movement has continued to take shape and influence the way that museums operate. Therefore, the time is ripe for Dumbarton House to solidify its standing as a leader in the green museums movement as well as to institutionalize its current green practices into policies of sustainability.

This Sustainability Plan provides a framework to ensure that the museum's daily operations reflect and advance its preservation and educational mission, within the tenant of sustainability. Because sustainability is an ongoing process, this plan will be used to guide continuous improvement in the area of environmentally sustainable practices, as new products, technologies and methods are created and developed. The plan, therefore, should not be a static one, but one that is continuously looked at in terms of how we can ensure that all of our practices are sustainable.

Creating the policy institutionalizes behavior by providing vision and frameworks, defines process, identifies goals and evaluation methods and delegates authority. The plan is not intended to stand alone, but as an integrated part of the existing headquarters and museum systems and operations.

A major tenant of both the NSCDA mission and the Dumbarton House mission is preservation. Preservation is "green"- maintaining a structure rather than tearing it down to build something new is a sustainable action.

Having a well thought out "Green Plan" will not only directly impact the facility and its operations but will have wider community impact as well. As a non-profit organization Dumbarton House exists for the public good, becoming as sustainable as we can is a great example of us as a community partner- we are not wasting resources. It also solidifies us as a community leader; we care about the future and are willing to do our part.

The plan has two objectives: to operate the historic structure using sustainable practices and to conserve resources so that there is as little impact on our environment as possible.

The Sustainability Plan will impact the three areas of our site: the Museum, the Non-Museum spaces and the Grounds.

Definition:

So what does “Green” mean? What level of “Greenness” does Dumbarton House want to attain?

“Green” is the new catch phrase used everywhere and on everything. And as a result can have very many definitions. “Green” typically encompasses products and behaviors that have little environmental impact, whereas sustainable equates to practices that rely on renewable or reusable materials and processes that have little environmental impact, as well as strengthens economic vitality and community equity. I would propose that Dumbarton House not just “be green”- anybody can do that- but to be sustainable. Sustainable branches out to the larger community and solidifies our value for the present and for the future.

Therefore the Proposed Sustainability Policy Statement should read:

It is the policy of The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America and Dumbarton House staff to operate the Headquarters and Museum sustainably and in keeping with current historic preservation standards to ensure its existence for the future and that its operations do not harm the environment in which it serves.

The “Green” Team

Implementing the sustainability plan is not the job of one staff person, but rather the responsibility of every staff member and department. The actions of each individual in the organization carry out the goals of the plan.

The “Green” Team will be made up of a lead staff member and the Building and Grounds Committee of the Dumbarton House board.

The team will be tasked with identifying ways that Dumbarton House can continue to become sustainable, as well as ensure that the practices having been implemented are maintained. A fully sustainable Dumbarton House is only as effective as its staff and volunteers comply with the initiatives and goals of the plan. Therefore educating the staff and volunteers in every aspect of sustainability ensures its practice as well as internalizes it.

Guidelines & Objectives

Operational Areas of Focus

There are three different physical areas of the site:

- Non-Museum
- Museum
- Grounds

The following goals and objectives apply to each of these three areas in addition to the departments that oversee them.

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

Conservation starts by reducing consumption of new materials; extending the life of materials through reuse; recycling of materials with no further useful life; and purchasing of items made from recycled materials.

Therefore it is our goal to reduce, reuse and recycle as much as possible through all areas of our site. We also want to work with companies that promote sustainability.

Specific operational policies include:

- All **packing material** used in shipments we receive will be reused, or provided to a vendor who reuses such materials
- **Recycling and paper use:** Desktop and workstation recycling of materials is provided, including paper, glass, metal and plastic. Recycled paper will be used in all museum publications, or paper made from materials other than wood pulp. An ongoing commitment will be made to scale back paper consumption (reduced demand, two-sided copying).
- **Alternative Transportation:** Commuting alone by gasoline-powered automobile uses non-renewable resources, pollutes the air and ocean and contributes to congestion on city streets. The museum addresses some of these issues by providing matching funds to use the city mass transit and the local bike sharing program. As well as providing an onsite bicycle rack for visitors.
- **Hazardous Materials Handling:** It is easier to improve environmental health by keeping toxins out of the system in the first place than to clean up pollution afterward. Museum policies minimize the use of toxic materials and require proper disposal of those materials we use. **Purchase and Use:** The museum is committed to buying and using the least hazardous materials available that will do the job, to practicing integrated pest management, and to using non-toxic or least-toxic materials. We maintain an approved list

of cleaning and disinfecting products, and all approved products are the least toxic that work effectively. Disposal: The museum complies with all state and federal laws for safe disposal of hazardous materials.

- **Utilities:** We are committed to conserving energy and water by reducing the power we use, and seeking out cost-competitive suppliers who generate energy with the fewest environmental impacts. We are committed to purchasing power for a cost-competitive rate from a supplier whose operations have minimal impacts on the environment. We will conduct energy and water-use audits, and retrofit our fixtures and equipment to reduce consumption both of water and energy.
- **Merchandise Operations Purchasing Policy:** We will make every effort to source products locally or Made in the USA, as well as environmentally friendly where appropriate.
- **Purchase of office supplies:** We will make every effort to purchase supplies for use in the office from recycled materials or that may be recycled.
- **Replacement of outdated equipment/furniture/fixtures:** When items need to be replaced, they will be replaced with energy efficient, made in the USA and made from recycled materials, where possible and available and as fits in with budget
- **Construction Materials/Paint:** Upon any construction appropriate methods and materials for sustainability will be researched and utilized where possible and available and as fits in with budget

Current and Proposed Initiatives

Current Initiative	Impact
Reduce phantom loads- turning off and unplugging electronics when not in use	Reduces electricity consumption
Set computers to hibernate/sleep after a certain amount of time	Reduces electricity consumption
Purchase items made from recycled materials	Contributes to sustainability goals
Promote our sustainability efforts	Broadens our constituent base
Recycle all materials no longer useful	Reduces waste
Maintain accurate temperature controls	Reduces electricity/gas consumption
Lights- turn on/off when not in use	Reduces electricity consumption
Limit print advertising to reach largest audience	Reduces paper use
Implement ideas from HVAC research study to replace and upgrade system	Opportunity to look into more energy-efficient system
During renovations, ensure reusable materials are reused or donated	Eliminates unnecessary waste
When new appliances are purchased, purchase those with an Energy Star label	Reduces electricity consumption
Compost plant material	Reduces waste and purchasing of fertilizer for grounds
Make all outlets/plugs visible	Reduces unnecessary electricity use
Perform twice yearly cleanings of office spaces	Allows use of all items and provides an opportunity to review plugs

Proposed Initiative	Impact
Work with preferred vendors who also practice sustainability	Further promotes sustainability of our organization
Explore sustainable exhibit design	Reduces waste and cost of exhibit design
Use smart strips for computer work stations	Reduces electricity consumption
Add aerators to faucets	Reduces water waste
Purchase a tankless water heater	Reduces electricity consumption, by only heating water on demand
Use permeable pavers or porous pavement where appropriate when resurfacing	Allows water to seep through the ground recharging groundwater or be collected for filtering and managing through a storm drain system; reduces need for ice melt and improves safety
Use sand on front walk instead of salt during the winter	Reduces harmful chemicals from salt going into the ground
Look into composting what material we can, from food and grounds clippings	Reduces overall waste going into the landfills
Use native plants for landscaping	Reduces water use, often are low maintenance, support local ecology
Low-flow toilets	Reduces water waste
Install motion sensors where appropriate	Reduces electricity consumption
Use drip irrigation methods to water grounds	Reduces water waste
Use rain barrels to capture runoff from the building	Reduces water use, by capturing rain/snow water to use on the grounds
Research water usage on the grounds- how much is used, how frequent, use of sprinklers	Allows for a more efficient use of the current system and an understanding of what can be

	done better or in the future
Reduce air infiltration in the west wing back door	Reduces heating/air conditioning costs
Adjust opening/closing procedures, so that only necessary lights/equipment are on	Reduces electricity consumption
Involve neighbors and other institutions	Promotes our overall sustainability to community
Find a recycling source for Nitrile gloves	Reduces waste
Implement green janitorial practices	Reduces use of harmful chemicals
Fix plumbing issues as soon as they occur	Reduces water waste
Create a lighting inventory form, diagram and preferred purchasing	Ensures lights get recycled, cfl's or leds are purchased
Future computer purchases should be laptops	Reduced electricity use
Label all cords with what it is connected to and unplug unnecessary items	Reduces electricity consumption
Label recycling and trash bins	Ensure waste goes in proper bins

Marketing Strategies

The sustainable efforts of Dumbarton House will only be effective as they are shared with the wider community. Therefore, to ensure that our sustainability efforts are made known, we will implement the following marketing strategies.

- Keep updated a page on the website detailing our sustainability practices
- Use green energy logos on website, printed materials
- Seek and apply to awards recognizing sustainability efforts
- Sign-up for marketing options with green partners; i.e. make sure website link is active on Clean Currents webpage, EPA, Washington Gas and Energy Services
- Use social media to publicize sustainability efforts
- Highlight green initiatives to local museums, HHMC, DKMC, NSCDA properties and at conferences, where and how appropriate