



Advancing Climate Justice Together

A NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
2023 PROGRESS REPORT
BY THE
CLIMATE JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABILITY HUB



N Northeastern University
Planning, Real Estate, and Facilities

Artwork: 999 Cranes by Silvia López Chavez

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INTRODUCTION

Northeastern University (NU) has earned a reputation for addressing the impacts of climate change through research, learning and campus operations. Now we are at a critical moment for addressing the intersection of climate change and related social issues, calling for an approach to these challenges in a systemic and holistic manner, engaging our entire community, including those who are most impacted by the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, and structural inequities. Fifteen years ago, Northeastern University President, Joseph Aoun made sustainability a top priority for the University. A founding member of the 2007 American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment, Northeastern helped launch a national movement of colleges and universities acting on climate and sustainability. Sustainability was also designated as one of the university's three main research thrusts and the academic plan, Experience Unleashed.

In 2010, the University's Office of Sustainability developed NU's first Sustainable Action Plan, which focused on our facilities and operations. This report outlines the significant progress we've made cutting greenhouse gas emissions (27% as of 2021), reducing waste (48% of waste from the Boston campus is diverted), and ensuring new construction adheres to cutting edge sustainable building standards (the new Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering Complex (ISEC) achieved LEED Gold certification). These accomplishments have been acknowledged by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) with our 2023 Silver rating in their Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS).

Our pride in these accomplishments is matched by our interest in moving forward to broaden efforts for collective action at the intersection of climate change and other social justice issues. Events like the Flint Water Crisis, police violence targeting Black communities, and COVID-19's inequitable impacts on low-income, communities of color have demonstrated the interconnected nature of these issues.

This report documents and shares our ongoing journey towards climate justice by showcasing Northeastern's collective efforts from divisions across the university to address the unequal impacts of the climate crisis. The endeavors undertaken by the campus community stands as a testament to our commitment to sustainability, inclusivity, and social responsibility.

In the spring, the Hub will be releasing its Climate Justice Action Plan, a collaborative initiative co-created with our neighboring communities. This strategic plan outlines our future steps and commitments, providing a roadmap for furthering our mission in addressing climate justice issues in our community. Stay tuned for opportunities to learn more about it and contribute to the plan.



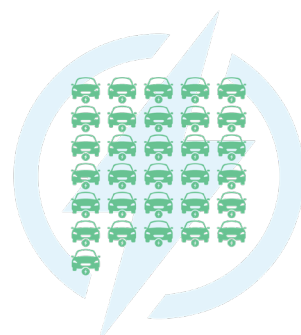
Northeastern University received a STARS Silver rating in recognition of its sustainability achievements from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE).

SUSTAINABILITY BY THE NUMBERS



27%

Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions since 2005



31

Electric Utility Vehicles



48%

Boston Campus' waste was diverted



95%

Students using alternative modes of transportation

68%

Employees taking alternative modes of transportation

100%

Offset of all buildings emissions on Boston's Campus



ABOUT THE CLIMATE JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABILITY HUB

The Climate Justice and Sustainability Hub, which is a department in the Planning, Real Estate, and Facilities division, aims to support Northeastern's bold vision to serve as a model of sustainability and equity and as a catalyst to drive meaningful action. The Hub works with partners across our global university network to create just solutions to the climate crisis and build a culture of engagement. Through close collaboration with sustainability leaders, students, faculty, staff, and researchers, the Hub is connecting and advancing ideas and discoveries to ensure communities everywhere are sustainable, resilient, and equitable.



The Climate Justice and Sustainability Hub team

Based on input from faculty, students, and community leaders, the Hub established four goals to guide its work and advance climate justice across Northeastern. These goals are being refined with additional input from neighboring environmental justice communities.

Draft Goals For The Hub

01



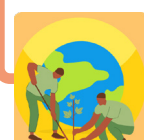
Campuses will be models of sustainable, resilient, healthy, and inclusive communities.

03



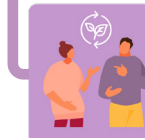
Leverage research and academic strengths to advance just and equitable solutions to the climate crisis

02



Contribute to a just and regenerative economy, both locally and globally.

04



Collaborate with adjacent communities to contribute to equitable and sustainable neighborhoods

CLIMATE JUSTICE ACTION PLANNING

What is Climate Justice?



Tackling climate change is about more than reducing pollution and emissions. At the root of the issue is social inequality and institutionalized racism that enable the exploitation of land, people, and resources to such a severe degree that our climate is changing and people, especially low-income and BIPOC communities across the world, are suffering. Climate justice seeks to address climate change by solving these systemic root causes.

In 2022, the Faculty Senate's Climate Justice Action Committee defined climate justice

action as “an approach to climate action that redresses the legacies of exploitation and injustice that have resulted in sharply unequal vulnerabilities to climate risks, both locally and globally. Climate justice action requires transformative systems-level changes that integrate multiple kinds of knowledge linking technological and social innovation in ways that prioritize social, racial, and economic equity.”

About The Action Plan

Prior to the Hub's launch in April 2022, the Northeastern community participated in the climate justice action planning process through several engagements, such as campus tabling events, working groups, and community conversations. Students, faculty, and staff provided feedback on what the university could be doing to act on climate change. Some input points to specific strategies targeted to reduce emissions, such as the installation of solar. Other ideas are wider in scope, including increasing transparency and inclusivity in university decision-making to ensure equitable solutions to the climate crisis.

The graphic on the next page highlights what we heard from this phase of the process. Since then, we have engaged a much broader group of stakeholders in a process that seeks to center those who are most impacted by the climate crisis, especially communities in our adjacent neighborhoods.



Northeastern Community Priorities And Concerns

Sustainable and affordable transportation

NU's impact on the surrounding community

Diversity, equity, and inclusion

Renewable energy and fossil fuel free buildings

Inclusivity, transparency, and accountability in decision-making

Meaningful and authentic connections to our surrounding communities

Divestment from fossil fuels

Leadership on climate justice

The Collaborative Process

Much of the initial feedback from the NU community has been about focusing on the needs of those most impacted by climate change. To do this, the Hub sought partners in the community to design a collaborative process that would respond to climate and environmental justice priorities and concerns. One Square World and Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE) were selected through a competitive bid process to facilitate a process that centers justice and our neighboring community members. This work will be completed over two years, giving us time to build relationships and build trust with our community partners. It also provides resources to frontline communities through the partnership with ACE to help ensure the work is supportive of community goals and not extractive. The goals, outcomes, and timeline of this process are presented on page 8.

This report marks the beginning of the process—a shift towards centering those who are most impacted and getting to the root causes of the climate crisis. While there is significant work ahead to fully center climate justice in our work, we are highlighting some of Northeastern's recent accomplishments in climate justice and sustainability so we can build on this work as we bring in and center the priorities and needs of frontline communities in Boston.

Climate Justice Action Plan Process

Fall 2022	Goal: Ensure that the climate justice process is accountable to community members most impacted by climate injustice in Boston.
Spring 2024	Outcome: Develop and recruit an accountability mechanism (Steering Committee) to guide the project.
Winter 2023	Goal: Ensure that participants in the climate justice planning work have a foundational knowledge of structural oppression, environmental justice, and intersecting issues.
Spring 2023	Outcome: Provide racial equity training to 50+ individuals including faculty, students, staff, community partners, other local area university sustainability staff, and Green Ribbon Commission Staff.
Winter 2023	Goal: Identify climate justice priorities and concerns affecting the people most impacted by climate injustice in Boston.
Summer 2023	Outcome: Through facilitated meetings, work with ACE and other Boston frontline community organizations and community members to identify priorities and concerns.
Fall 2023	Goal: Develop vision, goals, and strategies for Northeastern's climate justice work. Outcome: Through facilitated meetings, engage with frontline community organizations and the University community to develop Northeastern's response to community priorities and concerns.
Winter 2024	Goal: Ensure the final climate justice plan meets accountability goals. Outcome: Development of the final document, facilitate a steering committee meeting to come to agreement, development of the final document, and share with community in final wrap-up.

Project Team Partners

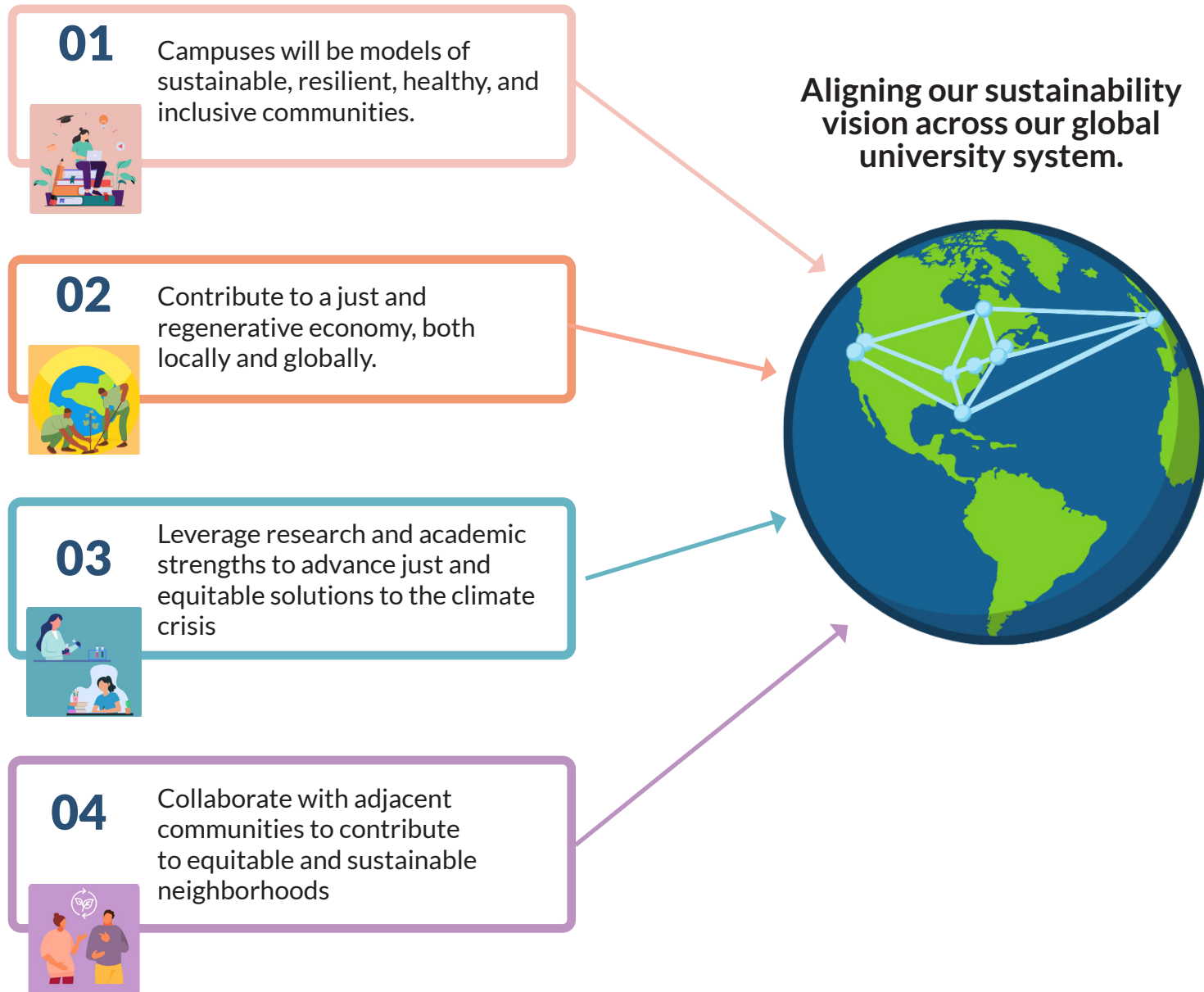


Steering Committee Members

Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE)
 Boston Ujima Project
 Climate Justice & Sustainability Hub, Northeastern University
 New England United for Justice
 Thom S. Carlson Corp, Northeastern University Contractor
 Northeastern University Students
 Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Northeastern University
 Office of City and Community Engagement, Northeastern University
 Planning, Real Estate & Facilities, Northeastern University
 Reclaim Roxbury
 Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project, ACE
 Social Impact Lab, Northeastern University

NORTHEASTERN'S JOURNEY TO A MORE JUST FUTURE

The goals set by the Climate Justice and Sustainability Hub complement and support Northeastern University's ongoing sustainability efforts. The subsequent pages highlight initiatives from across Northeastern that align with the Hub's goals, demonstrating our collective dedication and commitment to climate justice



Goal 01

Campuses will be models of sustainable, resilient, healthy, and inclusive communities.

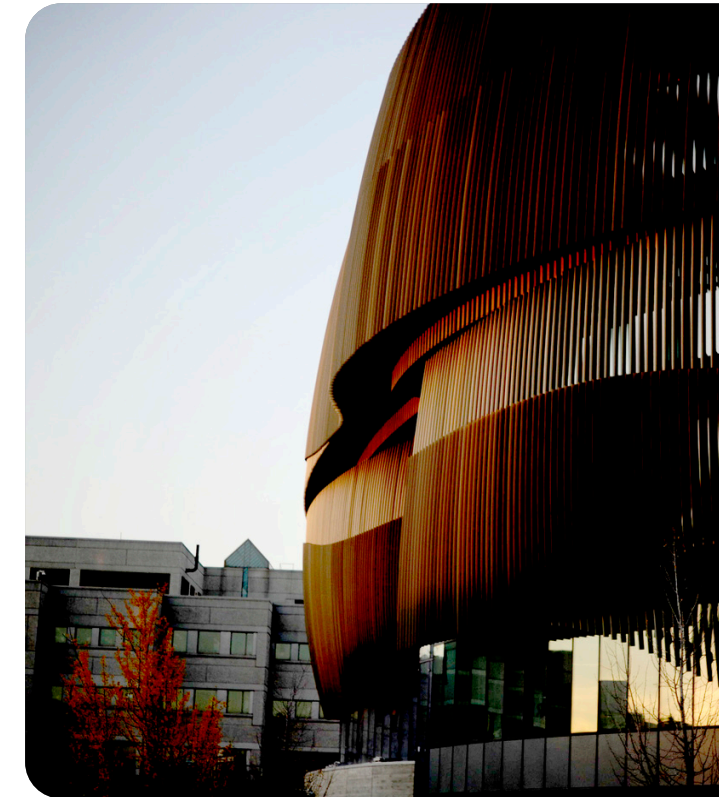


Recent initiatives at Northeastern that harmonize with the Hub's goal.

Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Buildings

Between 2005 and 2021, greenhouse gas emissions per square foot of building space on the Boston campus declined by 42%. This success can be attributed, in part, to fuel switching, energy conservation measures, such as lighting retrofits, and sustainable building design.

Completed in 2017, the Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering Complex, ISEC, earned LEED Gold certification and was designed to use 50% less energy than a typical research building. Building 5, Northeastern's unique research building and maker space in Burlington, MA, also earned LEED Gold; and EXP, Northeastern's newest research building, will incorporate further innovations targeting LEED Platinum, the highest rating offered by the U.S. Green Building Council.



Boston Campus Arboretum

With more than 11 acres of arboretum green space and over 260 different species, varieties, and cultivars of woody plants, our diverse collection bestows natural beauty as well as ecological and human health benefits for the campus community. Northeastern University's Arboretum has maintained a Level II Accreditation through ArbNet.

Student-Led Dorm Composting

In 2021, access to composting services was expanded to all eateries on campus. In 2022, 843 tons of food waste were diverted to composting, accounting for more than 18% of waste generated. During the Fall of 2022, NU implemented its first residential hall compost program in the East Village dorm, informing the expansion of the program in Fall of 2023. The student organization Composting at NU, CANU, played a pivotal role in advocating for, promoting, and supporting the residential program.



“I believe all students at Northeastern should have access to a more sustainable way to throw out their food scraps.”

-Student from CANU survey

Sustainable Transportation

According to a 2021 rideshare survey, 95% of students and 68% of employees in Boston take sustainable transportation to campus. Northeastern provides a variety of programs to support sustainable choices, such as reduced-price bikeshare memberships. In September 2022, the Forsyth Bluebike station on campus was the most used Boston station in the entire network, with over 9,000 trip starts.



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

In February 2021, Dr. Karl Reid was appointed as the university's first chief inclusion officer, as part of an institution-wide effort to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion and ensure that every member of the university community is supported on the path to success. Northeastern's Planning, Real Estate, and Facilities' division is currently implementing a diversity, equity, and inclusion action plan with over 25 measurable actions focused on the following themes: education, hiring and advancement, an inclusive work environment and economic inclusion.

Mills Farm in Oakland

A year-round effort started by students a decade ago, the Mills Community Farm in Oakland is 2.5 acres of organic urban agriculture with an emphasis on sustainability, education, and partnerships.



“We're planting flowers, herbs, and different kinds of vegetables. Everything has a purpose, and everything works together.”

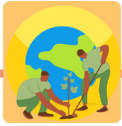
- Mills Farm Manager, Julia Dashe

“Since our DEI Council advocated for the hiring of my role in 2022, we've been able to streamline diversity, equity and inclusion across our division with a specific focus on employee engagement and wellbeing. I'm proud of the work we've been able to lead which promotes our values of integrity, people first and joy.”

- Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Culture - PREF, Beyazmin Jimenez

Goal 02

Contribute to a just and regenerative economy, both locally and globally.



Recent initiatives at Northeastern that harmonize with the Hub's goal.

Upcycling on Campus

From clothing, kitchen wear, books, or art supplies, the Mills Reuse Depot is a student-run thrift store on the Oakland campus that allows students to upcycle and access their basic needs free of cost. On the Boston campus, student group Trash2Treasure collects belongings during move out for donation and resale. Reusing rather than buying new goods indirectly reduces natural resource use, chemical pollution, and waste.



“When working at the reuse depot, I am overjoyed to encounter students and staff practicing an eco-friendly way of letting go of unwanted items, and in doing so, fostering a community of generosity, thoughtfulness, and accessibility here on campus. This small donation site on campus is representative of a zero-waste hub of hope!”

- Leah Marcus, Student Worker at Reuse Depot

Partnering With Local Worker-Owned Cooperatives

CERO (Cooperative Energy, Recycling, and Organics) is a worker-owned, W/MBE co-op based out of Dorchester. CERO's mission is the following: “keep food waste out of landfills, save money for our clients, and provide good, green jobs for Boston's hard-working communities.” A partner since 2015, NU recently expanded their contract to collect all compost on campus.



Black-Owned Businesses on Campus

In 2021, Nia Grace, a local black woman entrepreneur, opened the Underground Café and Lounge on the ground floor of Lightview. Northeastern and development partner ACC supported Nia's vision to expand her business through an affordable rent structure, fit out, and marketing, while funding rotating art by local youth artists with Artists for Humanity.

Sustainable and Equitable Procurement

The Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce recently commended Northeastern's commitment to economic inclusion. By dividing the bid package for campus-wide cleaning contracts and including diverse ownership as a selection criterion, Northeastern enabled MBE firms Done Right Building Facility Service and All Time Service, Inc. to compete with larger established firms while growing internal capacity.

“I applaud Northeastern University for giving us an opportunity to grow and make things better for our people and for the people in our communities.”

- Janet Peguero, President and CEO at All Time Service

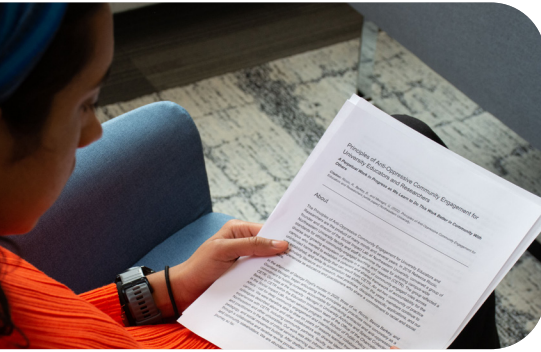


Goal 03

Leverage research and academic strengths to advance just and equitable solutions to the climate crisis



Recent initiatives at Northeastern that harmonize with the Hub's goal.



Principles of Anti-Opressive Community Engagement for University Educators and Researchers

Developed by NU professors and staff members, this document offers a framework to mitigate the harms that can result from community-engaged teaching and research and support the development of systems of accountability between campus and community stakeholders.

Alternative Spring Breaks

Northeastern students volunteer with community organizations that address complex social issues, such as affordable housing, environmental conservation, food security, and public health. Through meaningful action, reflection, and education, volunteers explore new places and cultures, work with people from different communities, and develop problem-solving and leadership skills for the future.



Service-Learning

Through Service-Learning projects, Northeastern students and faculty work with community organizations, nonprofit groups, and government agencies to combine academics and service to meet educational and community goals.



“The Service-Learning partnerships are critical to the growth and maintenance of our programs! When I see the students grow more comfortable throughout the semester and develop relationships, have deeper conversations with older adults, it indicates that the program achieved its goal of reducing social isolation among older adults.”

- Service Learning Community Partner



Research Spotlight - Dr. Sara Wylie

Professor Sara Wylie, an associate professor in Northeastern's Sociology/Anthropology and Health Sciences departments, is a pioneer in environmental health, exploring novel, cross-disciplinary methods for environmental justice research. Dr. Wylie, in collaboration with Northeastern University's Social Science Health Research Institute, the MIT Media Lab, and the grassroots organization GreenRoots in Chelsea, led a science and art demonstration entitled "Chemicals in the Creek." To spur a community conversation about industrial accountability, the team floated dozens of lanterns down the Chelsea creek, each representing a clean water act violation, with logos from the facility where the chemicals originated.



Academic Spotlight - Shalanda Baker, J.D.

Dr. Shalanda Baker, professor of law, public policy and urban affairs at Northeastern, co-founded the Initiative for Energy Justice in 2018. The initiative provides law and policy resources to frontline community advocates and policy makers to drive a just transition to an equitable and renewable energy economy. Recognized for her important work, Dr. Baker was tapped by the Biden Administration and is currently serving as the Director of the Office of Economic Impact and Diversity at the U.S. Department of Energy.



“My vision is really to make equity and justice enduring at the Department of Energy”

- Shalanda Baker

Goal 04

Collaborate with adjacent communities to contribute to equitable and sustainable neighborhoods



Recent initiatives at Northeastern that harmonize with the Hub's goal.

Co-ops In-Service To Our Neighbors

Through this program, Northeastern funds 12 co-ops each year to work in local organizations that advance community economic development. The program, which emerged from a two-year community process, amplifies the amazing work of local organizations in Roxbury, Mission Hill, and the Fenway.



"The [Co-ops in Service to our Neighbors] program has been hugely impactful to the work of MHNHS and the relationship between NU and MH [Mission Hill]. Your co-ops have been the best institutional ambassadors."

– Pat Flaherty, Executive Director, Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services.

Good2Go

An income-tiered electric car share with four locations in Roxbury including Northeastern's Columbus Garage, Good2Go aims to provide everyone access to clean and affordable transportation. The Good2Go fleet includes Nissan LEAFs and Chevy Bolts, both 100% electric.



Kevin Fitzgerald Park

For years, Northeastern University has actively contributed to the upkeep and preservation of Kevin Fitzgerald Park, a beloved 5.5-acre community gathering space. NU students and arboretum staff applied for ArbNet accreditation on behalf of the Mission Hill community to recognize the park's role in community building and protect its ecosystem services. The accreditation brings community awareness to the park's benefits, including air quality, stormwater management, mental and physical health, and biodiversity.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The graphic design of the report was completed by Christine Jones and Katherine Morrissey.

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We would also like to recognize all the students, faculty, and staff who have supported and advocated for Northeastern University's climate justice and sustainability efforts. We would not have been able to get as far without you, and we expect and hope you'll continue to challenge and push us forward.



Thank You

FROM THE CLIMATE JUSTICE AND
SUSTAINABILITY HUB