



# UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA SYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

REVISED APRIL 28, 2023



“We are proud to share this plan for sustainability at the University of Nebraska that is built on the common-sense beliefs and values of the people of our state. Our goal is to be the best possible stewards of the resources entrusted to us. I thank all the students, faculty, staff and Nebraskans who have brought their ideas, leadership and engagement to this ongoing effort.”

**President Ted Carter**  
**University of Nebraska System**





# INTRODUCTION

## *A Framework for Our Future*

In 2020, the University of Nebraska System adopted a Five-Year Strategy to help chart our path forward. Included in the original strategy, and reaffirmed in 2022, was the call for a university-wide sustainability plan and goals.

To help set a framework to build the sustainability goals, we asked ourselves two fundamental questions:

▶ ***What is sustainability?***

We believe sustainability to be the effective, efficient, and responsible use of resources, guided by common-sense principles, to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

▶ ***Why does this work matter?***

Nebraskans have always taken pride in caring for the land, water and livestock that keep our people and economy healthy. Nebraska’s farmers and ranchers, after all, are the original conservationists.

Nebraskans entrust their university with their most precious resources—natural, human, and capital—and expect us to operate with common sense and prudence. We won’t spend money we don’t have; we will take care of the resources we do have; and we will continually look for opportunities to become more effective and efficient. Developing common sense strategies to manage our resources within a changing climate will be an important focus for not only the NU System, but all Nebraskans.

The four campuses of the NU System each have strategic goals or other high-level commitments to sustainability. The aim of the university-wide sustainability goals is to unite efforts across the NU System and leverage the scale of our total operation—including our university community of over 66,000 students, staff, and faculty—to promote and coordinate a culture of sustainability on each campus and across the state.

## ▶▶▶ TARGETS

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### **Target 1:**

#### ***Double Student, Staff, and Faculty Sustainability Engagement and Cross-Campus Collaboration by 2027***

- ▶ Hire and fund student interns at the NU System and on each campus to develop outreach and engagement strategies.
- ▶ Develop university-wide sustainability communications strategy, including a central website.
- ▶ Host an annual university-wide sustainability summit, rotated among the campuses.
- ▶ Engage the President's Sustainability Council no less than semi-annually to ensure progress against targets and solicit continued feedback.
- ▶ Establish a university-wide award to recognize excellence in sustainability; President to present award annually at the university-wide sustainability summit.
- ▶ Encourage ReUse initiatives, like career closets and move-in and out recycles, to repurpose items and support students.

### **Target 2:**

#### ***Adopt Measurable Sustainability Goals and Publicize Annual Progress Reports***

- ▶ Determine university-wide target for lowering energy usage intensity and work with our campuses and energy partners to explore the feasibility of alternative sustainable energy options when appropriate.
- ▶ Determine university-wide target for waste reduction, including setting goals for lowering single-use plastics and food waste.
- ▶ Determine university-wide target for reducing water usage by identifying users, quantifying use, and devising methods to reduce use and cost.
- ▶ Create a university-wide transportation and mobility team.
- ▶ Publicize annual progress reports on efforts.

## ▶▶▶ TARGETS, CONTINUED

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### **Target 3:**

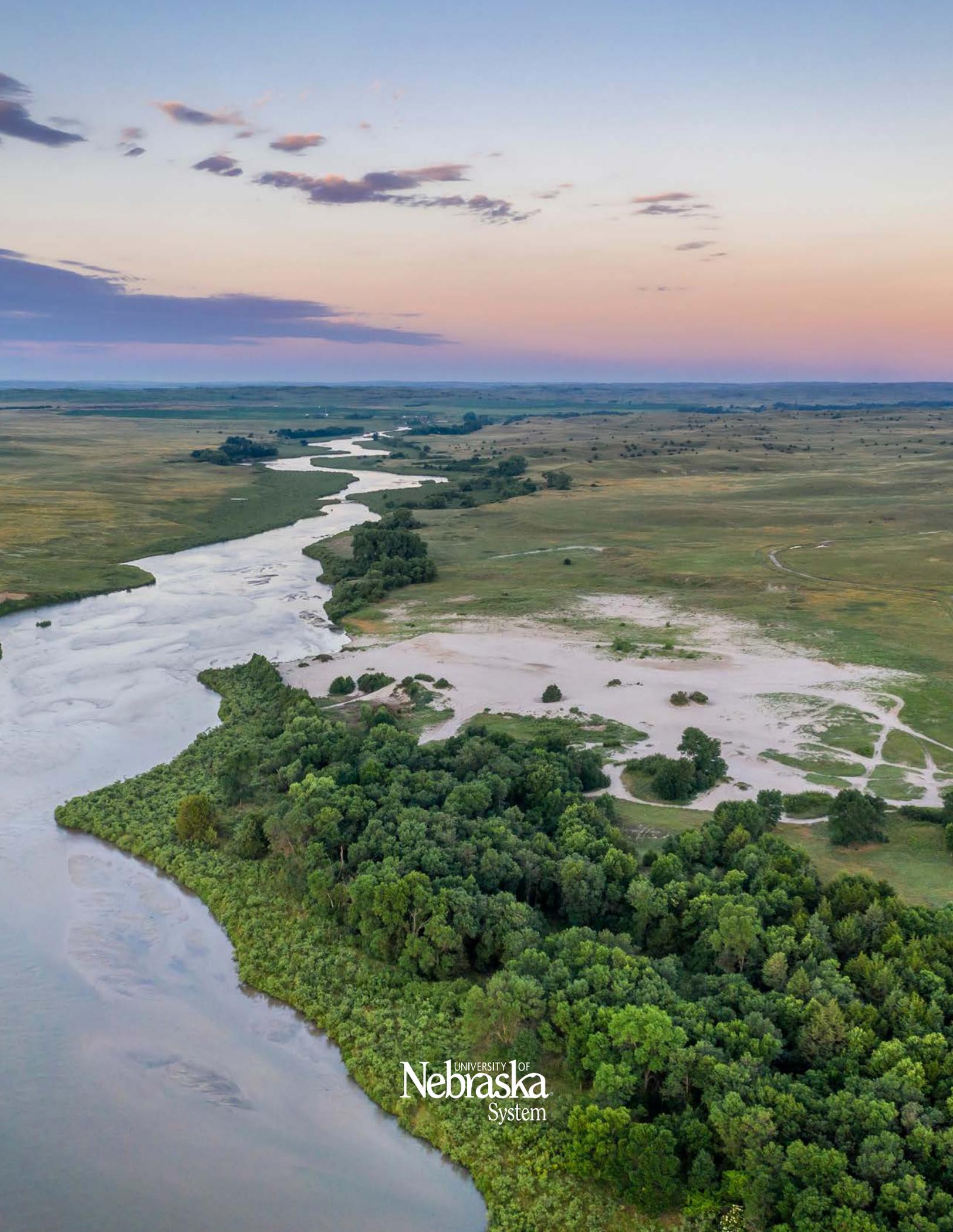
#### ***Maximize the University's Facilities***

- ▶ Create a facilities planning and construction guide to model standards and incorporate best practices in a comprehensive design guide.
- ▶ Develop strategies to reduce the university's physical footprint through removal of aging buildings.
- ▶ Develop strategies for improved space utilization and promote underutilized spaces.
- ▶ Explore innovative applications and integrations of extreme weather event planning into campus infrastructure.

### **Target 4:**

#### ***Reinforce a Culture of Sustainable Procurement***

- ▶ Promote more local purchases by adding indicators to our procurement catalog designating "local" and/or "sustainable" products to identify preferred vendors, benefiting the university and Nebraska-based companies.
- ▶ Establish baseline and increase purchases of consumable goods made from recycled materials.
- ▶ Develop strategies with vendors to mitigate packaging waste and guide suppliers on the NU System's environmental expectations.



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