



UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION

General Assembly Event Sustainability Report
Kansas City, Missouri 2018

Prepared by
MeetGreen[®]
August 2018

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A Message from the Planning Committee

We are pleased to share the sustainability results of another successful General Assembly. In addition to truly top tier results, such as the diversion of 92% of our total event waste from the landfill, one of the key areas that made our efforts even more impactful this year was the many “sustainability firsts” GA’18 helped bring to the Kansas City region. This work, which begins largely during the site selection and contracting phases, long before attendees arrive, culminates during our five days together each summer onsite.

Another area we have taken great pride in for 2018 is having helped catalyze two permanent compost and one permanent recycling program in Kansas City. Neither existed before GA and will now remain in-place long after we are gone. It is this kind of lasting influence that helps make our work so critical to local communities.

Our endeavors would not be possible without you; the many participants and contributors to General Assembly, our hard-working Green Team Volunteers, MeetGreen for its leadership in sustainability planning, as well as the willingness and dedication of our Kansas City destination partners who joined us in the greening of GA’18.

As proud as we are, we know we can always do better, and we welcome your ideas and input as we begin planning for an exciting future.

Thank you, and looking forward to seeing you in Spokane,

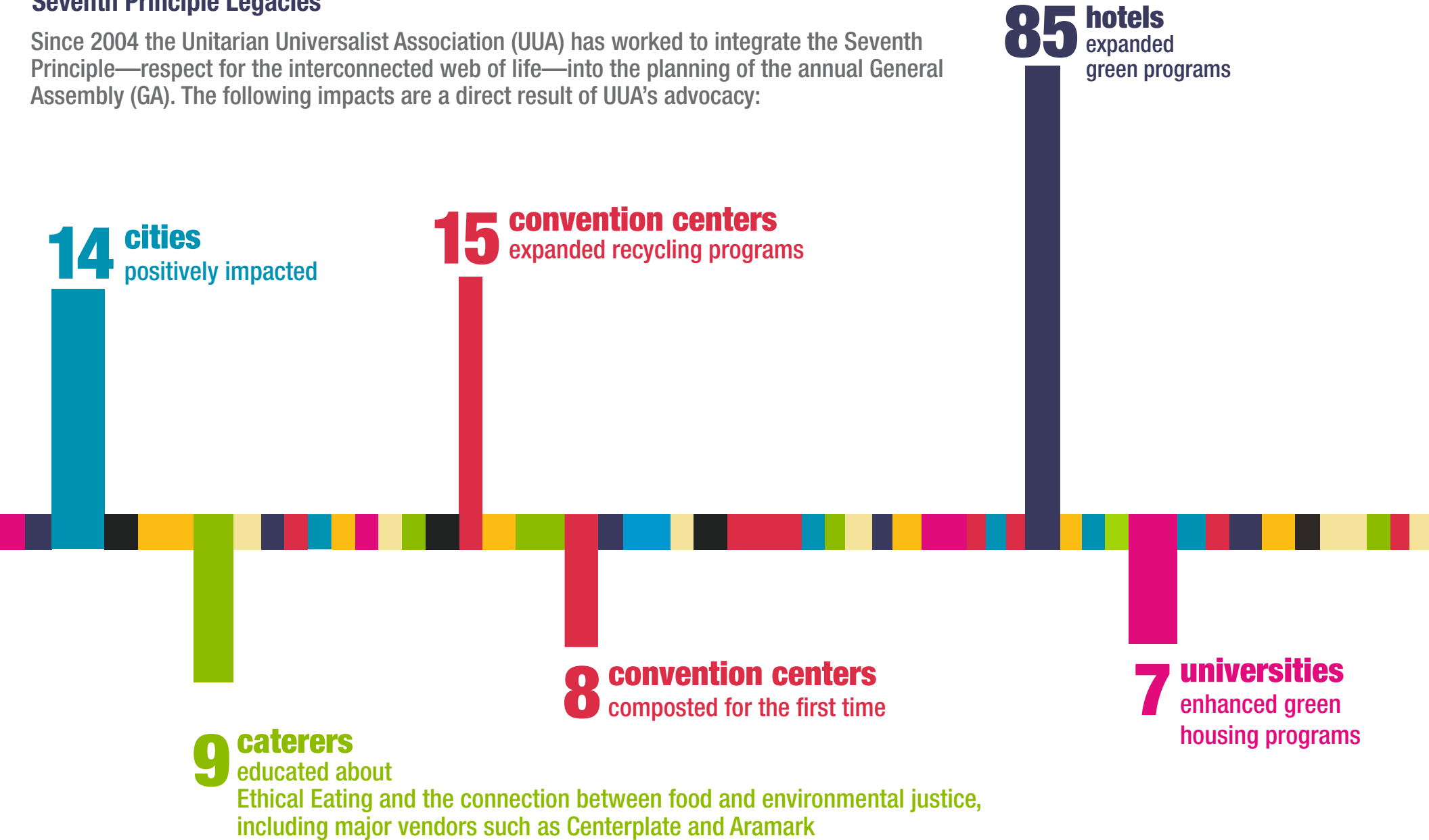
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UUA General Assembly Legacies 2004-2018

Seventh Principle Legacies

Since 2004 the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) has worked to integrate the Seventh Principle—respect for the interconnected web of life—into the planning of the annual General Assembly (GA). The following impacts are a direct result of UUA's advocacy:



48,642 Kg. of waste recycled & composted
enough to fill

4 garbage trucks

42% less solid waste
was discarded in 2018
compared to 2005,
meaning less needed
to be recycled,
composted and landfilled

2,161 Kg. of donations
including
3,881 meals

17,181
metric tons of
carbon emissions offset,
equal to planting
461,440 trees

189 volunteers
involved in the event
Green Team
bringing waste-wise education to
46,570
GA participants

3,628 hours donated to
zero-waste
programs onsite

Sustainability Principles

UUA congregations affirm Seven Principles that guide individual and community action. These Principles are integrated deeply into the fabric of how GA is planned:

- 1 The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
- 2 Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.
- 3 Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.
- 4 A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
- 5 The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.
- 6 The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.
- 7 Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.**



The Seventh Principle outlines the Unitarian Universalist belief in caring for our planet Earth, the home we share with all living things. This report summarizes outcomes related to the Seventh Principle only.

The Sustainable Event Planning Process

UUA's General Assembly planning is guided and aligned to ISO 20121, a global management system standard for sustainable events. Steps in this process include:

Pre-Event

Contracting: Sustainability expectations are included in most vendor contracts and agreed upon several years before the event. These contracted terms are continually refined based on stakeholder feedback, changing regulations and UUA advocacy priorities.

Input: The GA sustainability team gathers input from the community, UUA congregations, GA attendees and delegates, UUA staff, exhibitors, vendors and the host city.

Pre-event Site-Visit: An in-person meeting is held with the venue, catering, general services contractor, AV, and hotels to research destination best practices and communicate UUA values and GA objectives. Onsite tours are taken at each hotel and venue, as well as the recycling, landfill, and compost facilities to audit current practices and working conditions.

Objective-Setting, Targets and Action Planning: While objectives are consistent, improvement targets are set based on anticipated issues and destination and vendor baselines. An action plan is created to ensure progress.

Measurement Requests: MeetGreen works with staff and vendors to identify important data to be collected and reported post-event.

Onsite

Onsite Management: Follow-through on action steps is overseen by MeetGreen during GA, including daily Green Team meetings and operation of the Green Booth.

Onsite Audit: MeetGreen is onsite for seven days to observe onsite practices including front and back of house. These observations are taken into account when analyzing measurement data post-event.

Post-Event

Measurement Analysis: Vendors and staff provide post-event data which is analyzed by MeetGreen, including attendance, material use, waste, donations, emissions, energy, and water use.

Recommendations: A final report is prepared to summarize observations, outcomes, and action steps for the following year.

Key Sustainability Issues

Sustainability is addressed at every step of the General Assembly planning process. Below are the key sustainability issues identified for 2018 as well as ongoing goals and objectives related to the Seventh Principle.

- **Equal, inclusive and diverse participation**
- **Water conservation and quality**
- **Climate change**
- **Solid waste**
- **Health and wellness**
- **Accessibility**

Sustainability Goals And Objectives

- **Improve overall sustainability at the event**
- **Reduce environmental footprint in waste, water, energy and emissions**
- **Measure benefits of sustainable practices**
- **Provide and promote sustainable food and beverage at the event**
- **Educate attendees in sustainability efforts**



UUA General Assembly Kansas City 2018

Sustainability Action Steps

The UUA General Assembly seeks to improve sustainability year-over-year in its host destinations. For 2018 it focused on the following sustainability priorities in Kansas City, which are ordered according to steps that achieved top, moderate and limited success.

TOP SUCCESS



Inspiring Community Collaboration

UUA's comprehensive sustainability requirements helped drive the Kansas City Convention Center to look to its local community resources for assistance. As a result, they found a partner in Bridging The Gap (BTG), who works to make the Kansas City region sustainable by connecting environment, economy and community, and who was instrumental in helping bring curbside recycling to the KC metro region in 1992. By having a local partner of BTG's calibre, assisting with introductions to waste haulers and key contacts within the region, as well as managing back of house waste sorting, GA 2018 was able to make major strides in overall event sustainability.

Catalyzing Permanent Programs In Kansas City

Each year UUA strives to live the 7th Principle as thoroughly as possible at its General Assemblies, and frequently is dramatically able to transform event locations and environments during its five event days. However, at the end of each cycle, we also ask ourselves "wouldn't it be great if these programs continued-on permanently after GA?" This level of lasting influence and sustainability program permanence is unfortunately very difficult to achieve in the meetings and conventions industry at large. In Kansas City 2018 however, we are proud to share three significant permanent programs GA was able to inspire in the Kansas City region:

- **the adoption of a permanent recycling program at the Hotel Phillips**
- **the adoption of a permanent compost program at the Crowne Plaza**
- **the re-ignition of a food-prep kitchen compost program at the Kansas City Convention Center that had languished after an extended period of inactivity, but has been resumed and re-energized as a direct result of GA**

All three programs are major accomplishments that will extend UUA's influence on the region well into the future.

UUA General Assembly Kansas City 2018

Sustainability Action Steps

TOP SUCCESS

Capacity Building And First-Time Sustainability

Kansas City in 2018 was truly able to benefit from its partnership with UUA. This included many first-time sustainability initiatives for the convention center and hotels:

- **development of a first ever venue-specific Sustainability Policy by the Kansas City Convention Center**
- **first-time compost collection and back of house waste sorting at the Convention Center**
- **Aramark KC piloted its first use of compostable service-ware**
- **two hotels delivered in-room recycling for the first time specifically for GA**

We greatly appreciate our destination team's enthusiastic participation in these many first-ever sustainability initiatives.

Waste Management

Waste Management is always a critical component of every General Assembly, however 2018 was unique in several key areas. Kansas City marked the third time in the history of GA that waste was sorted by a back of house team. However, in our prior two material sorts, we have always relied on anonymous venue labor and waste hauler-provided data that typically arrives five to six weeks after the event, both of which are difficult to ascertain accuracy of the sort itself as well as the validity of data. By collaborating with Bridging The Gap so closely in a true front and back of house partnership with our Green Team volunteers, we were able to ensure sorting accuracy, as well as data credibility thanks to having a scale directly on the back dock to carefully weigh each bag after it was sorted. This real time data also allowed us to engage attendees surrounding waste education in new ways by sharing live updates on the GA app.

With this enhanced process in place, **UUA 2018 registered a landfill diversion rate of 92%. This figure falls firmly within the eligibility criteria of a Zero-Waste Event** (those events achieving a verified diversion rate above 90%).

Green Waste Education

2018 also marked the first time that both Green Team members and GA attendees participated directly in material waste sorting back of house. This began as an effort to assist Bridging The Gap, during a period late in GA when BTG ran low on volunteer help. The request was generated by a featured post on the GA app, and proved to be an educational and empowering experience for all involved. For attendees, their willingness to assist, at the waste-sorting level, was a tremendous testament to UU passion and commitment to the 7th Principle.



UUA General Assembly Kansas City 2018

Sustainability Action Steps

MODERATE SUCCESS

Food, Beverage, Concessions

One of UUA's goals heading into 2018 was to increase both the quality and quantity of vegetarian and vegan meals served at GA, with as many sustainable criteria met as possible. While challenges remain to truly execute this vision at the highest level, given both cost targets and the logistics of institutional food service, we believe progress was made in terms of continuing to raise the bar specifically in the area of menu construction and sourcing.

Hotel Block Engagement

While all hotels signed sustainability clauses in their contracts, it continues to remain challenging to ensure compliance with contract requirements in all areas. However, in 2018 UUA was successful in improving hotel recycling across all five conference hotels, particularly through the addition of in-room recycling at three properties, for whom this was not standard practice.

LIMITED SUCCESS

Reduction In Printed Programs

While UUA continues to monitor its entire print output closely, including printed programs and show guides, in 2018 over 400 pounds of unused programs were recycled after the event. In a growing app-driven environment, UUA may consider setting more aggressive limits on the printing of this 93-page GA Guide.

Water Access

Difficulties remain with many convention center water fountains both in terms of water pressure and ability to accommodate refillable bottles. Due to the significant cost impact of sourcing a large-scale increase in bubbler water stations, UUA continues to assess capabilities of future venues and proactively plan to the best of their abilities.

If everyone at GA used a reusable water bottle at the Kansas City Convention Center, enough energy could be saved to run a 75-watt light bulb for 78,436 hours!

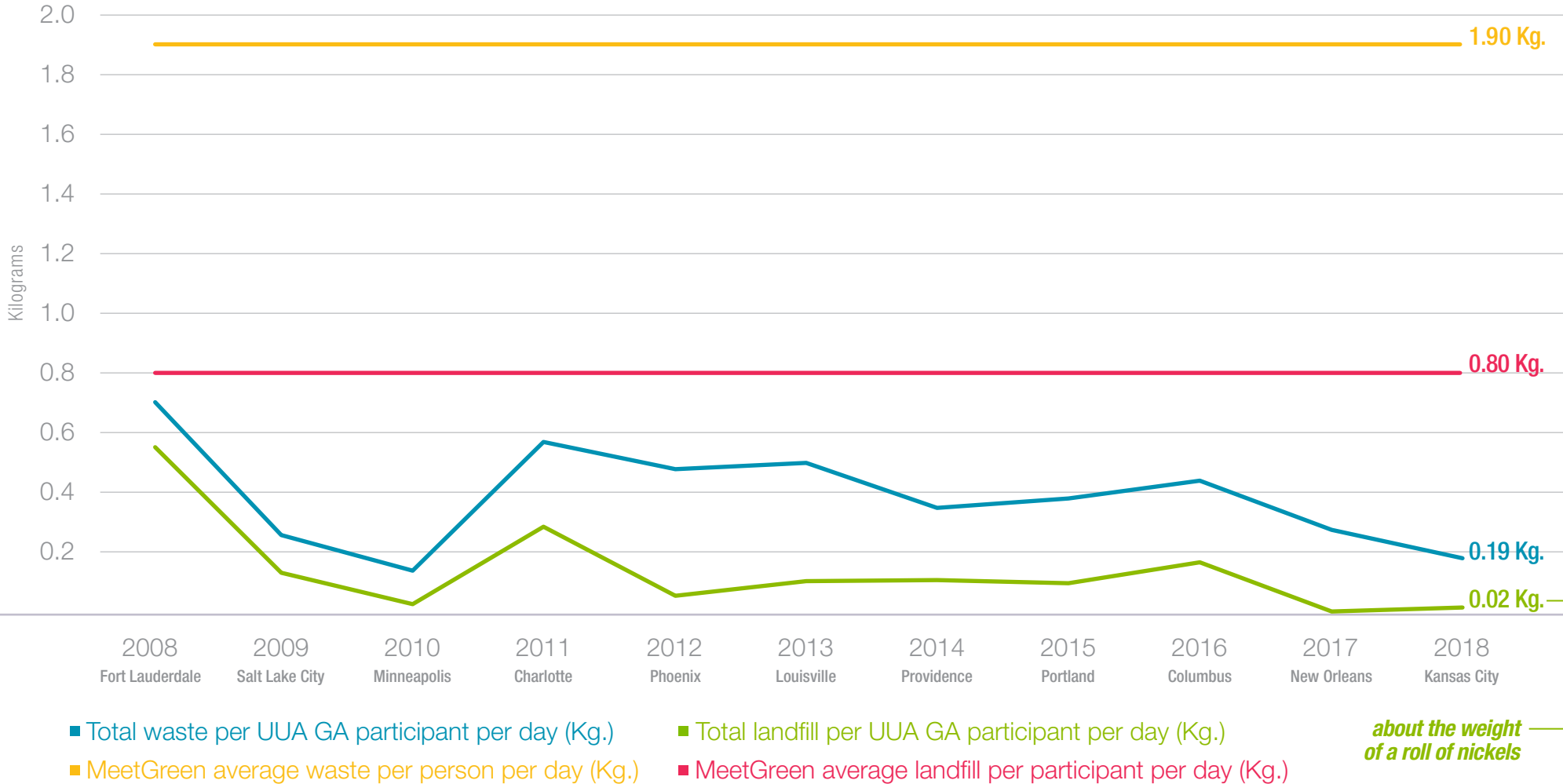


Sustainability Outcomes

Solid Waste Impacts 2008-2018

While the UUA GA sustainability program has been in place since 2004, measurement and metrics have only been reliably gathered since 2008. Ongoing collection and auditing of this data is essential for enabling UUA to effectively assess progress against its objectives.

Solid Waste Per Participant Per Day



UUA GA's waste footprint is dramatically less than the MeetGreen average per day. The MeetGreen average has been derived from audits of 77 conference event waste programs in North America since 2007, including non-UUA events. In Kansas City 2018, GA per participant waste amounted to only 0.20 Kgs per day, about the weight of a roll of nickels. In the photograph, note the darker bags to the right. These were the only two items sent to the landfill after the first day of GA!

Sustainability Outcomes

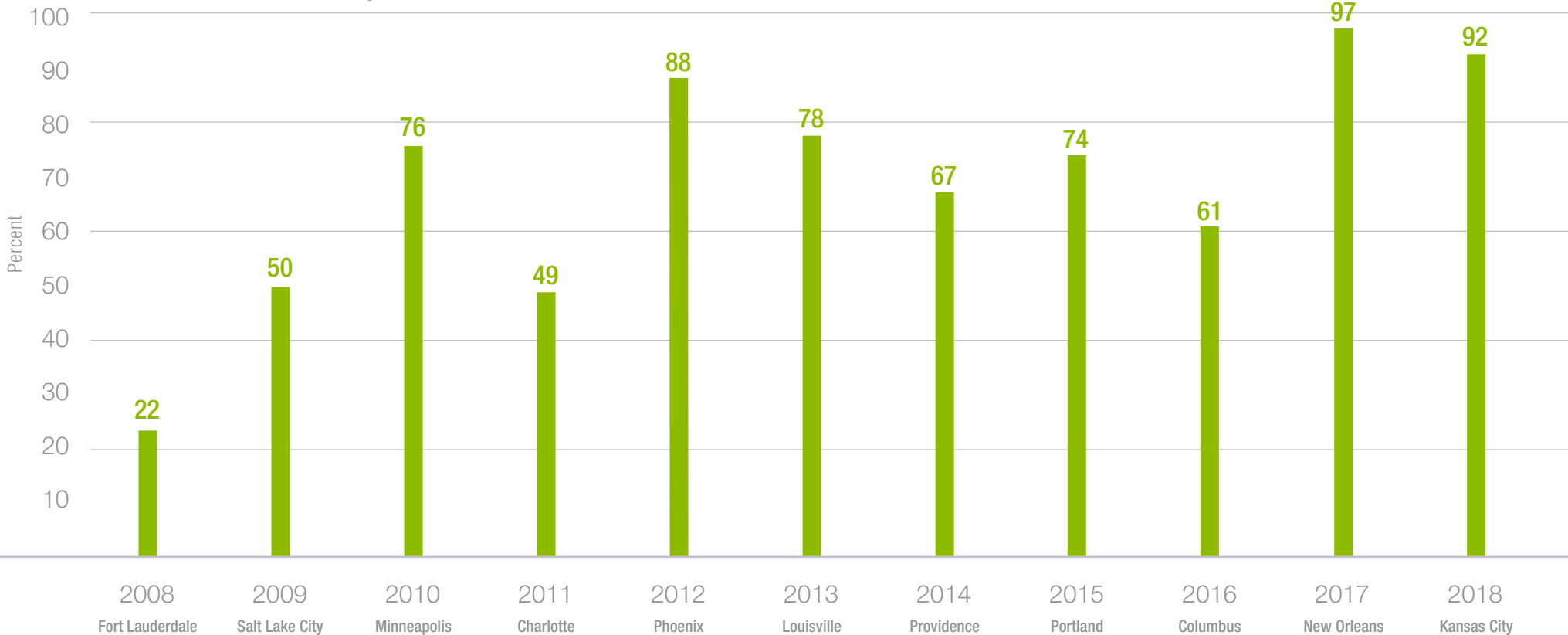
Solid Waste Impacts 2008-2018

Green Team volunteers managed front of house waste stations, and ensured material was sorted into correct waste streams, while Kansas City's local environmental partner organization, Bridging The Gap, handled back of house waste sorting. There have only been two prior GAs where back dock material sorting has occurred, in Phoenix in 2017, and New Orleans in 2018. Consequently all three represent the highest GA diversion rates in the event's history.

GA 2018 recorded its second highest diversion from landfill rate ever, with 92% of all event waste either reused, recycled, composted or donated.

For the second year in a row, UUA General Assembly exceeded the criteria for a "Zero Waste Event", achieving a diversion from landfill rate above 90%. Due to our high confidence in the accuracy of our data and sorting for 2018, we are especially proud of this achievement.

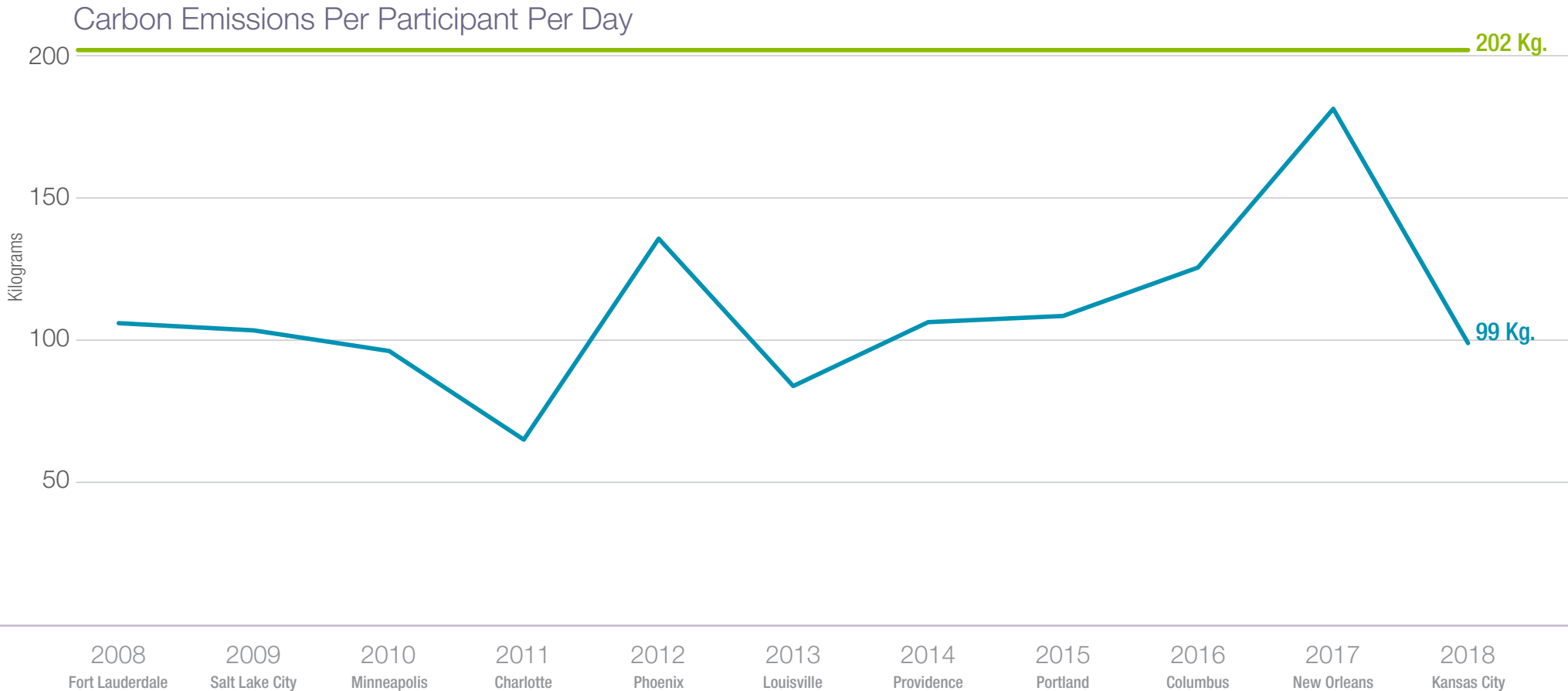
Solid Waste Recovery Rate From Landfill



Bridging The Gap brought its digital waste scale to the Convention Center loading dock, where each bag was carefully weighed onsite before hauler pick-up. **This method was instrumental in yielding our most credible waste data to date, and allowed our team to receive and report waste metrics in real-time throughout the event.** By posting this data on the GA App immediately after it was received, it helped dramatically enhance the visibility of the 7th Principle in action and communicate it to the larger UUA community.

Sustainability Outcomes

Carbon Impacts 2008-2018



- MeetGreen average carbon emissions (CO₂e) per person per day (Kg.)
- Total carbon emissions (CO₂e) per UUA GA participant per day (Kg.)

2018 saw a significant decrease in carbon emissions, primarily due to a 1000+ decrease in overall attendance, as well as from the centralized travel location of Kansas City within the United States, which further helped reduce coast-to-coast flight miles.

Since 2015, UUA has offset 100% of all event travel-related carbon emissions. Read on for more information about the exciting projects UUA supports.

Carbon Offsets

Change the world, one offset at a time...

Since 2015, UUA GA has taken responsibility for carbon emissions that cannot be avoided by supporting carbon offset projects. This year offsets purchased supported the:



Truck Stop Electrification Project, located throughout the United States, and with locations in both Missouri and Kansas, the Truck Stop Electrification Project helps provide electricity to truckers during rest periods and works to eliminate the emissions and air quality concerns from idling. Long haul truck drivers idle their trucks to heat or cool their cab and power on-board appliances during the federally mandated 10 hour rest period for every 11 hours on the road.



LifeStraws™ Carbon for Water Project, brings safe drinking water to more than 4.5m people in Western Kenya, while cutting 2.4m tonnes of CO2 emissions annually. It is one of the largest climate and safe water projects globally. As of 2018 over 877,500 families use LifeStraw Family water filters to purify water in their home, rather than boiling water for drinking over open fires. The system can filter up to 18,000 liters of water, enough to supply a family of five with clean drinking water for three years.



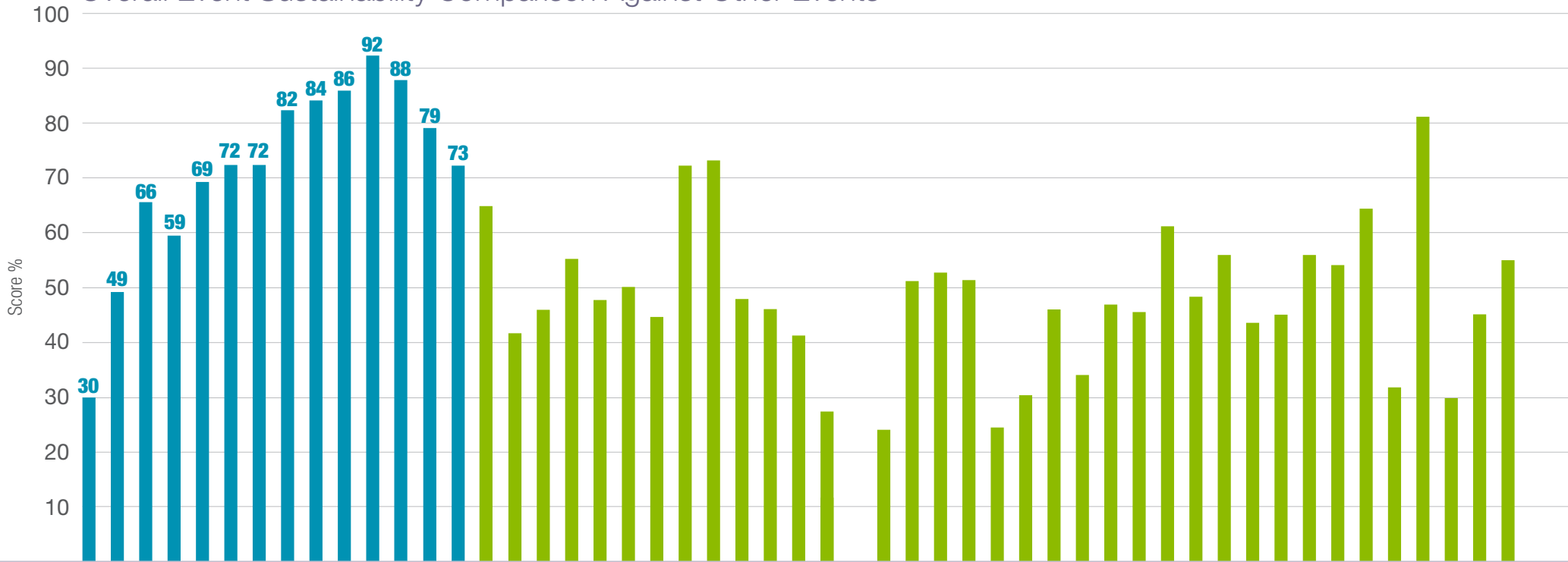
Blandin Improved Forest Management (IFM) Project, is a Native American Hardwoods Conservation and Carbon Sequestration project that is conducting improved forest management practices on 187,000 acres of forest under its ownership in northern Minnesota, which has been initiated to mitigate climate change. Project activities involve Smart Forestry practices, maintaining diversity of natural forest communities, as well as reducing harvest impacts. This project area provides critical habitat for rare species such as the northern long-eared bat and the golden winged warbler.

Sustainability Outcomes

MeetGreen® Calculator 2005-2018

The MeetGreen® Calculator measures overall sustainable event performance. This graph shows sustainability scores for General Assembly as well as scores for other similarly sized events that have been entered into the Calculator system.

Overall Event Sustainability Comparison Against Other Events



- UUGA in KANSAS CITY, 2018
- UUGA in NEW ORLEANS, 2017*
- UUGA in COLUMBUS, 2016
- UUGA in PORTLAND, 2015
- UUGA in PROVIDENCE, 2014
- UUGA in LOUISVILLE, 2013
- UUGA in PHOENIX, 2012
- UUGA in CHARLOTTE, 2011
- UUGA in MINNEAPOLIS, 2010*
- UUGA in SALT LAKE CITY, 2009
- UUGA in FORT LAUDERDALE, 2008
- UUGA in PORTLAND, 2007
- UUGA in SAINT LOUIS, 2006
- UUGA in FORT WORTH, 2005

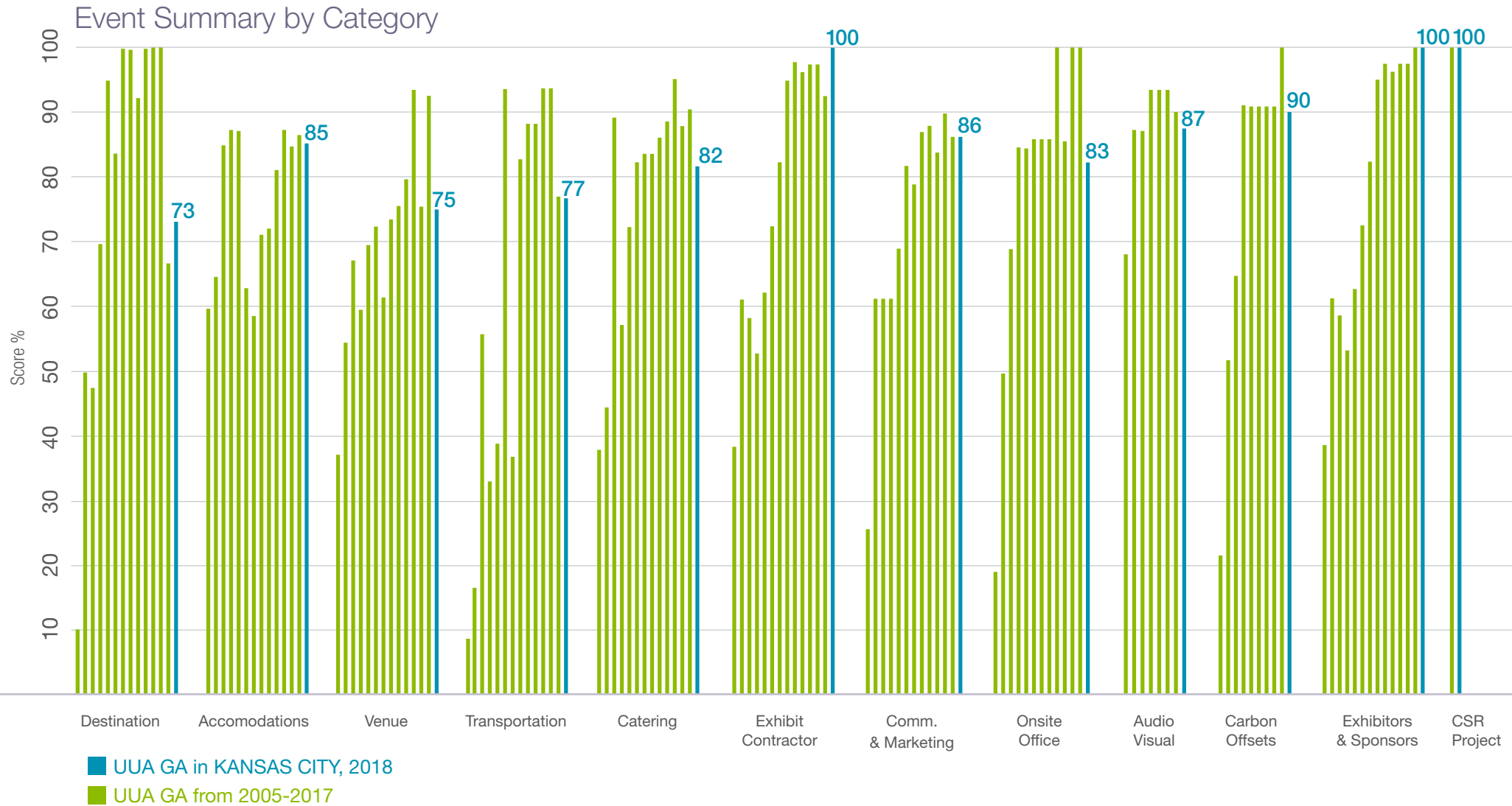
The MeetGreen® Calculator allows organizations to benchmark their progress against their own efforts and anonymous events of similar size and type. The Calculator is regularly updated to reflect leading sustainable event practices and has undergone significant upgrades in both 2010 and 2017.

* Because updates raise the bar in terms of sustainability expectations, scores typically drop or have no to minimal improvement in these years.

Sustainability Outcomes

The MeetGreen® Calculator also allows for a more in-depth analysis based on twelve sustainability categories.

MeetGreen® Calculator 2005-2018



Due to the recent MeetGreen® Calculator updates in 2017, the overall rigor has increased, which makes higher scores even more challenging to achieve. As a result, it is common for scores to drop in the years immediately following a major upgrade.

Service Projects

Change the world, one act at a time

Every year GA enables UUs to be of service to communities that host the event. This year several meaningful opportunities were organized in Kansas City. These included:

Black Lives of UU

This year, Black Lives of UU led the annual Public Witness Project. One of the activities included was the Care Package Build Project where attendees built Domestic Violence Care Packages for the Kansas City community. This space was set-up and open throughout General Assembly. BLUU created over 1,100 care packages for the Kansas City-based Reale Justice Network. The Reale Justice Network provides support services to survivors of domestic violence, education and trainings on the dynamics of domestic violence, and also works on a range of social justice issues including infant and maternal mortality, eliminating homelessness, breaking the school to prison pipeline, police brutality, racial discrimination, harassment and intimidation.

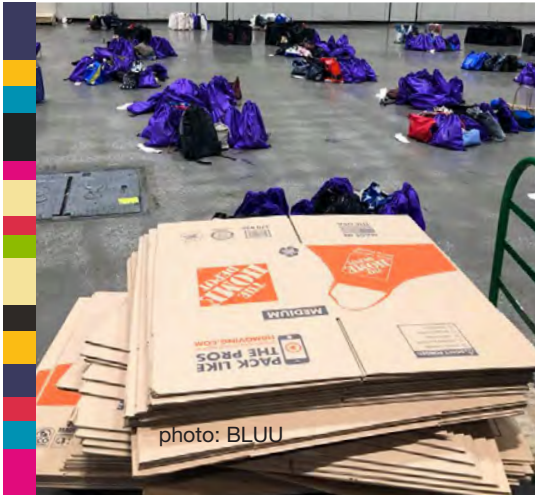


photo: BLUU

Communities Creating Opportunity (CCO)

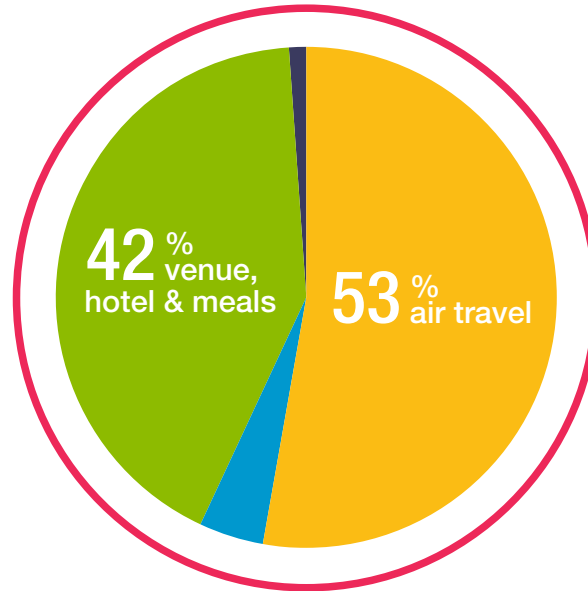
The Service Project collection taken at the Sunday Morning Worship during General Assembly 2018 benefited the work of Communities Creating Opportunity (CCO) in Kansas City. CCO envisions a society with human dignity at the center of public life and organizes diverse communities and people of faith to realize their power, develop strong leaders, unite partners, and advance solutions to our connected challenges.



photo: cco.org

UUA General Assembly Kansas City 2018

100% of attendee travel-related carbon emissions offset
3,693 metric tons



Emissions came from the following sources:

- 53% air travel
- 4% automotive travel
- 42% venue, hotel and meals
- 3% freight and shipping

Each event participant at GA:

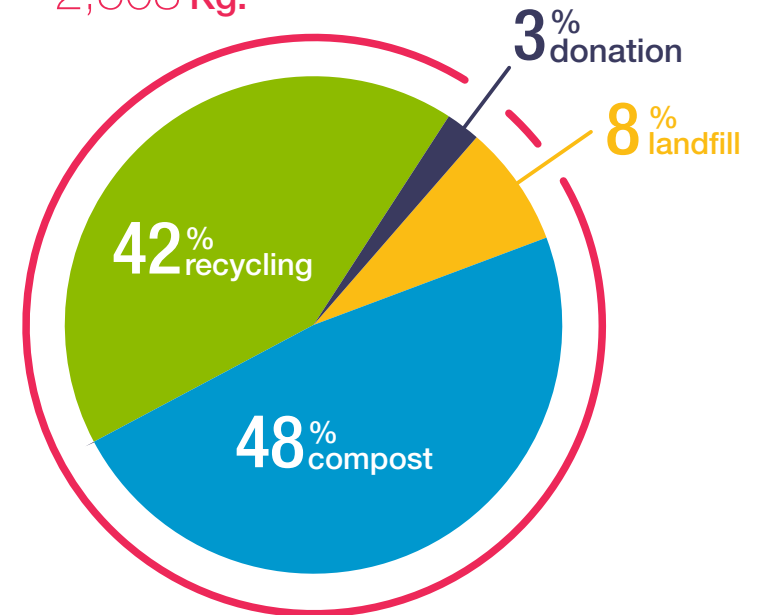
Generated **200** grams of solid waste (including landfill, recycling and compost) per day, the weight of 17 empty water bottles

Produced **20** grams of landfill per day, the weight of two nickels

Emitted **90** Kg. of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions enough to fill 9,050 party balloons

Used **124** L of water enough to fill 496 cups

92% of solid waste recovered from landfill
2,503 Kg.





Top ways GA participants engaged in sustainability:

95% **sorted waste** at the convention center

78% **participated** in green efforts at hotels

78% brought and **reused a water bottle**

13 committed UUs **answered the call** from the GA app to help sort and weigh event waste on the back dock of the Convention Center

29 **Green Team volunteers** provided

456 **hours** of sustainability education onsite

225 **remote participants** joined GA from their homes.

Sustainable purchasing:

42,880 square feet of **carpet reused**
enough to cover **23 volleyball courts**

25% **post-industrial recycled content** carpet used in the exhibit hall

100% **recycled content lanyard** and **PVC-free** name badge

0 **signs** sent to landfill

From Local To Global

In 2015 the United Nations defined a collection of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) designed to achieve the following targeted goals by 2030: ending poverty, promoting prosperity, well-being for all, and protecting the planet.

One very powerful visual is seeing how a small fraction of the sustainability actions taken at the 2018 UUA General Assembly link closely and support the global initiatives outlined by the UN SDGs.



UN DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GA SUSTAINABILITY ACTIONS

SDG 2: Zero hunger	Donation of leftover food.
SDG 3: Good Health & Well Being	Incorporation of local / sustainable food on the menu. Commitment to ethical eating.
SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, And Infrastructure	Sending sustainable practice surveys to core event suppliers: Venue, Accommodations, Catering, and General Contractor.
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production	Condiments and beverages served in bulk. China and linens for meals, compostable service-ware, no disposables.
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production	Reuse applicable existing signage and use of sustainable materials for new printing.
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production	No bottled water served at event.
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production	Reduction of printed material.

Recommendations

The following items have been identified as new and continued priorities to address event sustainability at General Assembly 2019 in Spokane:

UUA Objectives	2019 Recommendations
<p>1. Improve overall sustainability for the event</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive destination partners to reach out to local sustainability resources. This proved to be a critical link for 2018, and helped provide a glimpse of what can be possible at future GAs. • Require all outside catered Food & Beverage conform to UUA food service guidelines. • Assess capabilities of the venue to service water bottle refills and proactively plan to address any limitations. • Include stronger penalties for non-compliance with sustainable practices in hotel contracts. • Push for 100% single-use plastic free grab and go food offerings.
<p>2. Reduce environmental footprint in waste, water, energy, and emissions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request back dock material sort as mandatory at future GAs. After experiencing their success first-hand in 2017 and 2018, it is strongly recommend that UUA adopt this as a standard practice request for venues. • Use Banquet And Event Orders (BEOs) to alert Green Team regarding catered evening events, to better anticipate waste flow from sessions. • Work with hotels to source a to-go coffee cup that can be recovered at the event venue. • Identify a carbon offset program that benefits host city and state. • Assess all printed material, including show guides for reasonable areas of print reduction.
<p>3. Measure the benefits of sustainable practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request the use of a waste scale on all future GA back-docks (in conjunction with enhanced material waste sort) for credible, real-time data measurement. • Require hotels to donate all gently used amenities and track quantities. • Request venue implement three bin liners for each stream (landfill, recycling, compost) that are color-coded differently than those in the building, to avoid contamination from outside shows, and from the many back of house areas in the convention center not under the purview of the UUA's Green Team and waste plan.
<p>4. Provide and promote sustainable food and beverage at the event</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase food and beverage service-ware in accordance with onsite waste management program. • Measure sustainable and ethical food purchased by event caterer. • Taste proposed meal sample during pre-event site visit. By responding to product in-person, it may be easier to craft and fine-tune UUA's menu.
<p>5. Educate attendees in sustainability efforts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase pre-event messaging surrounding compostability and recycling practices anticipated at GA. This will help prepare attendees for protocol onsite. • Increase app-related sustainability messaging, photos, data updates, and fun facts. • Invite attendees and green team to volunteer during back of house material sorting.

Thank You!

UUA Staff: Stacey Dixon, Michael O’Herron, Don Plante, Steve Ransom, Janiece Sneegas

Green Team Volunteers: Cole Beetcher, Erika Beetcher, Bev Buhr, Linda Bunge, Sam Bunge, Christine Carmona, Benjamin Eisenberg, Jo Ellen, Cassady Ells, Robin Hazard, Dick Hildenbrand, Melissa Hildenbrand, Barbara Johnston, Tammy Lemmer, Kiernan Lepp, Bridget Lewis, Henry McCarthy, LaNay Meier, Jacqueline Morgan, Liz Nolan-Greven, Emily Parker, Jen Raffensperger, David Reno, Thomas Spiritbringer, Aimee Stubbs, Elizabeth Warman, Scott Weaver, Claire Weichselbaum, Jackson Young

Kansas City Convention Center: Matt Cunningham, Sarah Fallat, Walter Moore, Jacque Stock

Aramark Kansas City: Audra Ebelsheiser, Hunter Young

Destination Partners: Esther Walker-Young, Kansas City Convention and Visitors Bureau

Bridging The Gap: Cassandra Ford, John Fish

Hotel Partners: Aladdin Holiday Inn Hotel, Crowne Plaza Kansas City, Hotel Indigo Kansas City, Hotel Phillips, Marriott Kansas City Downtown

All photos: UUA GA Green Team, MeetGreen, unless otherwise noted

Waste data: Includes all materials discarded by UUA staff, vendors and event participant at event venues, from move-in through move-out of General Assembly. This may include materials that are recycled, composted, donated, landfilled, incinerated, and/or used as waste-to-energy. It does not include material discards at hotel sites, or non-UUA events, unless otherwise noted. Waste generated in the planning process (i.e. at UUA headquarters and during site visits) is also excluded.

Waste disposal sites are visited to verify follow-through on actual recovery. Recovery from landfill includes materials that are composted, recycled and donated. Landfill and incineration are not calculated as recovered waste.

Carbon data: Is calculated by TheCarbonFund.org in collaboration with MeetGreen, using data provided by UUA (registration) and vendors (freight and bus fuel, building energy use, landfill). The following emissions sources are considered in-scope for UUA GA:

- *Event space energy for UUA-functions (convention venues and hotel event space)*
- *Hotel guest room energy for UUA guest rooms booked in the UUA housing block*
- *UUA-freight, including items shipped from UUA headquarters and by exhibit contractors*
- *UUA-provided shuttle buses (if used)*
- *Event participant travel to and from the event by air, train, bus, transit and/or personal vehicle, including staff, vendors, speakers and all participants*
- *Landfill*

