

Guiding Sustainability Principles for Materials and Waste Management

The following Guiding Principles appeared in a [2015 report](#), endorsed by the Executive Vice President and Treasurer's Office at MIT. They provide a framework for the purchase, disposal, recycling, and reuse of materials on campus, including food and related materials. A working group tasked with developing sustainability guidelines specifically targeting the procurement, consumption, and life-cycle of food is convening in fall 2017 and will have further guidelines and recommendations developed in summer 2018.

Guiding Principles

Materials management refers to the full life cycle of materials and products as they move through the economy, enter the MIT campus via procurement, and leave the campus via waste management, recycling, compost, and reuse programs.

The Materials and Waste Management Group established a set of principles to guide future sustainability efforts related to the purchase, disposal, recycling, and reuse of materials - ranging from office supplies, food, and computers to lab equipment, vehicles, and construction materials. These principles are as follows:

- Support and facilitate a life-cycle approach to the purchase of products, services, and materials that maximize benefits to human and ecological health.
- Maximize the potential of existing systems to reduce waste and the unnecessary consumption of materials.
- Engage vendors as partners in transforming MIT's supply chain.
- Reduce the impact of material flows on the environment.
- Integrate concepts of the circular economy framework, which essentially "designs out waste" to ensure that all materials used can be disassembled and re-purposed, to inform materials management practices at MIT.
- Steward urban land resources and plan comprehensively for a campus that supports the health and well-being of the MIT community and surrounding living systems.
- Adopt strategic and mindful decision-making frameworks that consider the full life-cycle costs and impacts of MIT's operations and management on our social, economic, and ecological systems.
- Design sustainable campus and ecological systems with the dynamic capacity to absorb, recover, and/or successfully adapt to unexpected and changing conditions.
- Innovate and demonstrate solutions to shared local, regional, and global sustainability challenges.
- Prioritize decision-making platforms that accelerate transparency, collaboration, innovation, and accountability.

MIT's Sustainability Framework

At MIT, our framework for campus sustainability is based on a "Scales of Impact" model. We seek to make a better world by enabling the continuous generation of breakthrough sustainability solutions at all scales: the individual, campus, city, and globe.

- Individual: We start with individuals to find solutions at the campus level to serve both the institution's needs as well as to incubate new ideas.
- Campus and city: We recognize the deep interconnectivity between our urban campus and the city and seek to operate at both scales.
- Globe: We seek to make structures, processes, and solutions developed at MIT accessible for reapplication and scaling around the globe.

