

# Nebraska Medicine Case Study

## Nebraska Medicine by the Numbers:

Employees: 5,500  
 Square Footage: 1.7+ million  
 Number of Beds: 624  
 Annual Energy Costs: \$10.5 million  
 Total Savings: \$150,000–\$200,000  
 Diverted 1.8 mil lbs of recycling/year  
 Reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 1,000 tons

## How we are Helping:

Green Team Facilitation  
 Sustainability Master Plan  
 Greening the Operating Room  
 Online Pledge Tool  
 Energy Star Benchmarking  
 Behavior Focused Energy  
 Conservation Programs



**SERIOUS MEDICINE. EXTRAORDINARY CARE.®**



## Project Overview

Our role with Nebraska Medicine started with the facilitation of the hospital's original green team [which recently joined with the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) to form LiveGreen] and benchmarking the campus' building energy efficiency using Energy Star. Shortly after ramping up engagement and accelerating the success of the original green team, Nebraska Medicine asked us to assess their operations according to the Green Guide for Healthcare (GGHC) - a framework that outlines the best practices for the industry.

Through the GGHC assessment process, the Nebraska Medicine identified the need to standardize and expand the mixed recycling program for the main campus and employ various waste reduction strategies in its surgical services department. These efforts resulted in reduced waste generation and a 40% increase in the amount of recycling collected.

The GGHC benchmark and recycling expansion were great stepping stones for the development of a comprehensive Sustainability Master Plan (SMP). The SMP creation process involved engaging numerous stakeholders across the hospital to obtain input and build support. Simultaneously, extensive data was collected to determine the hospital's energy and resource use. The results helped Nebraska Medicine establish relevant goals and identify immediate and long-term opportunities.

Since the launching of the SMP, we have helped Nebraska Medicine coordinate the implementation of the plan, which includes several behavior-based energy conservation initiatives and the development of a transportation demand management pilot program. Collectively, these efforts have driven down costs and pushed engagement levels to all-time highs.



Working with the Verdis team has been a valuable experience for us. Not only have they been a tremendous help in organizing our sustainability initiative, they have helped us lead a change in culture which has been truly amazing. They have been, and continue to be, an outstanding partner. ”

### Don Futrell

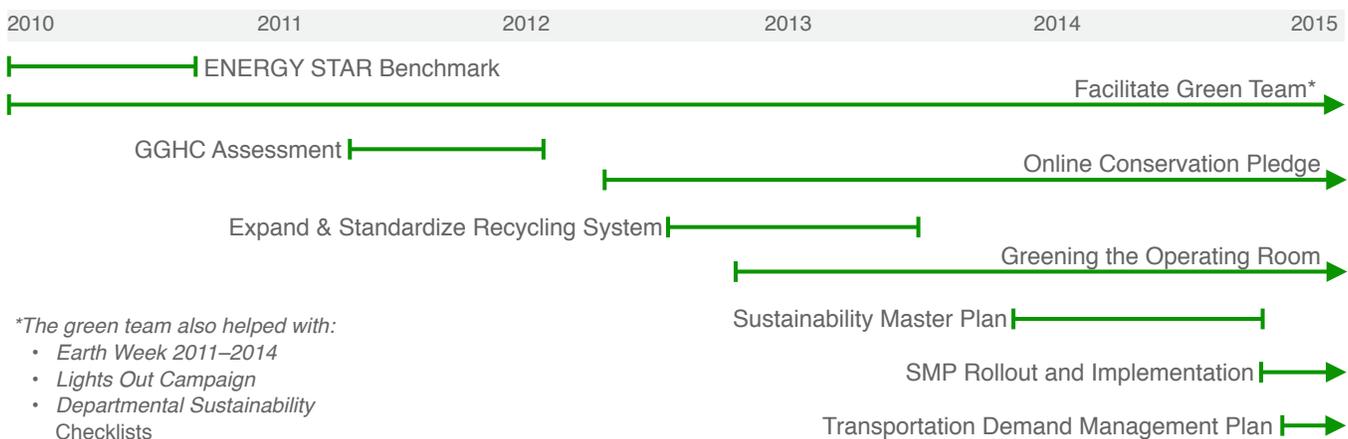
*Former Executive Director - Facilities Management & Planning*  
 Nebraska Medicine

## Key Successes

Due to the efforts of various parties, campus-wide energy fell 17% over the last three years; the operational and behavioral campaigns we initiated play a significant role in these achievements. The green team, under our guidance and leadership, has helped draw organization-wide attention to Nebraska Medicine's efforts to reduce energy use with notable results. Efforts in partnership with Nebraska Medicine's purchasing and surgical services departments have garnered excellent results in the operating room: over 10,000 pounds of blue wrap and foam liner material are recycled annually and approximately 5,000 reprocessed medical devices are diverted from the landfill each year.

## A Diversity of Strategies

Our primary focus on day one with Nebraska Medicine was energy conservation. Specifically, shifting the culture of the organization toward one that values and promotes it. Our online Pledge Tool was one of many tools we used to make that shift happen. As the wins stacked up, we began exploring other opportunities outside of the energy realm. As indicated below, we have cut across the spectrum of sustainability issues over the course of our partnership, and successes have been demonstrated in waste and materials management, greening the operating room, employee awareness and engagement, and everything in between. It has been one of our best examples of tying together operational efficiencies with behavior change strategies.



This timeline illustrates our work with Nebraska Medicine over the past few years. Our small team has juggled a number of complex projects simultaneously by working closely with Nebraska Medicine personnel.

## Green Hospitals: An Opportunity to Improve Health

The opportunities for the health care sector are significant. A November 2012 issue brief from the Commonwealth Fund found that if a relatively simple package of sustainable “interventions” were deployed across the country, savings could exceed \$5.4 billion over five years and \$15 over ten.

The health benefits are also undeniable. When approached correctly and holistically, principles of sustainability will help hospitals and other health care facilities improve patient

outcomes; research shows consistent positive correlations between sustainability actions and patient outcomes.

The opportunities for doing good and saving money are plentiful, which often results in “opportunity overload” for many hospitals. Our role is often to help organizations overcome this barrier, and to zero in on the top priorities. Incorporating sustainability into the health care industry isn't simple, but it's vital to community health.

