



UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

Congregational Assessment

UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2, 2019

1. Introduction

A year ago, at the 2018 Annual Meeting, our Congregation voted to become a UUA certified Green Sanctuary congregation. A year later, there is much that has been accomplished. Our congregation has thoroughly investigated the option of investing in rooftop solar panels, and unfortunately determined it to be technically not feasible. The Green Team has been meeting regularly since January 2019, with its efforts centered on completing a congregational assessment as required by the UUA Green Sanctuary program. This document is the result of that effort.

This assessment of our congregation's current practices in relationship to environmental sustainability and environmental justice is meant to be a starting place for us to come together as a congregation and take stock of our current practices. We can pat ourselves on the back for what we are doing well and we can create priorities for what we most would like to change. The UUCGV Green Sanctuary/Green Congregation Team will be our congregation's guide and cheerleader as we go through this process.

2. Sustainable Living

Facility Energy Use and Management

We get our energy through Xcel energy. According to the Feb 8, 2019 article about Xcel in the Daily Sentinel, "Currently, the company uses coal for 43 percent of its energy, natural gas for 27 percent and renewable energy for 30 percent, which consists of wind, solar power and hydroelectric." (https://www.gjsentinel.com/news/western_colorado/goal-green-by/article_92a8f3c4-2b69-11e9-aab5-20677ce05640.html).

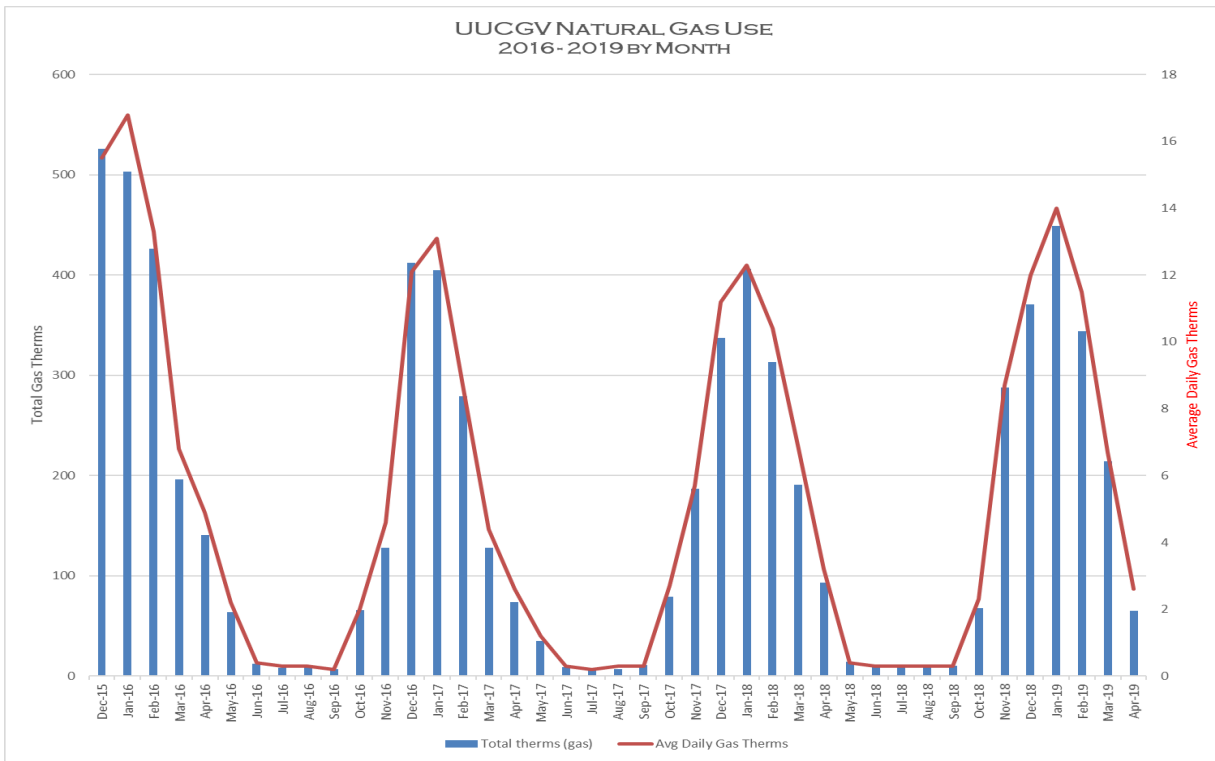
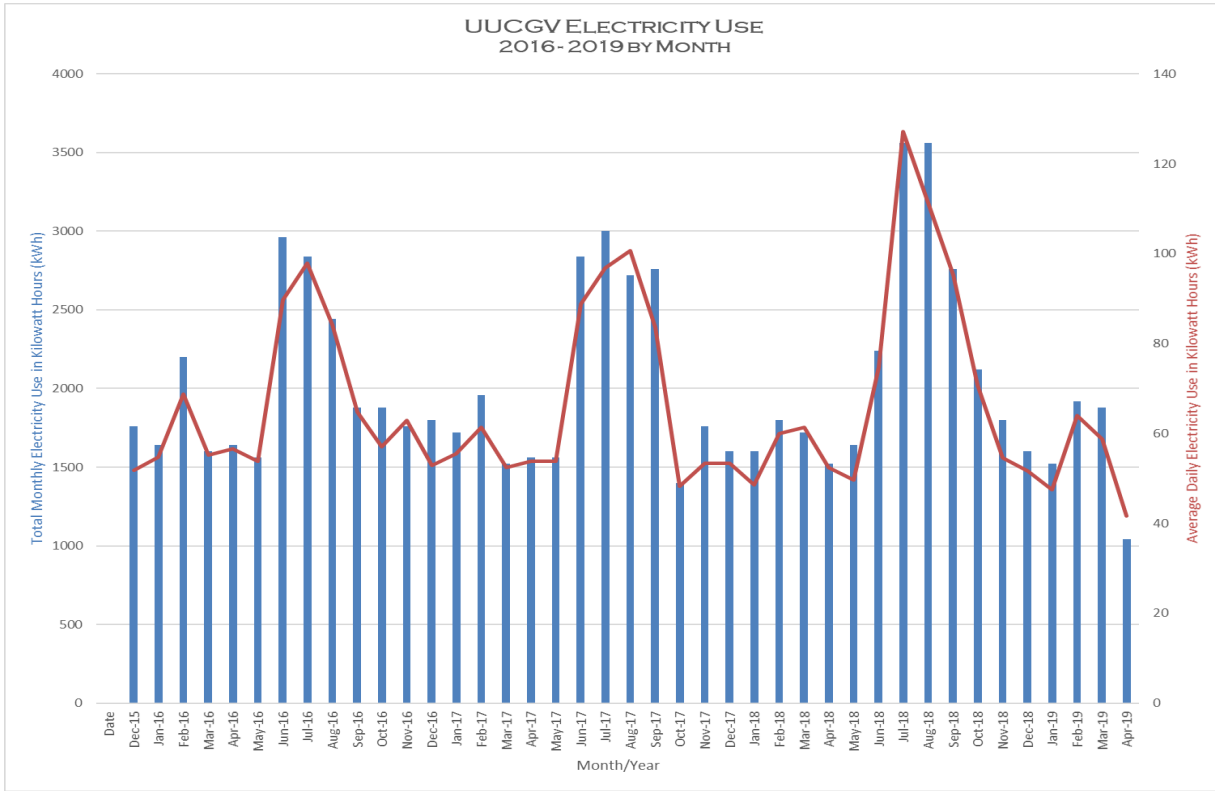
We do not currently purchase renewable energy for any portion of our energy use. Our facility is totally central heat and air conditioning through-out the whole building.

The following graphs show our facility energy consumption patterns over the past 3 years:

UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2, 2019



UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2, 2019

Practices and habits that affect our energy consumption:

We have been working on not leaving the doors propped open at the front entrance to our building so as not to waste energy. During hot summer months especially keeping the doors closed could help us to save energy.

Almost all of our lighting is LED or fluorescent lighting. As the old bulbs burn out, our Facilities Manager Sterling VanWagoner has been systematically changing them over to the LED bulbs and ballasts.

We could be better about remembering to turn lights off in empty rooms. There are only two (2) light switches that are to be left on when the building is empty. One is the first switch by the front door in the foyer which controls the outside light under the canopy, which can be turned on and off manually. The second one is in the janitors closet in the back hallway. It stays on all the time and does have a piece of tape on it. It controls all of the exterior lights that are on a sensor and come on at dusk. All of the rest of the building has some lights that stay on due to fire safety codes.

We do have programmable thermostats. Sterling currently has them all set for heat in the late fall/winter and cool for the late spring/summer. The thermostats can be overridden during events that either need them shut off completely or adjusted for specific events. If they are overridden they will automatically go back to the original settings for the next day.

Water Use and Management

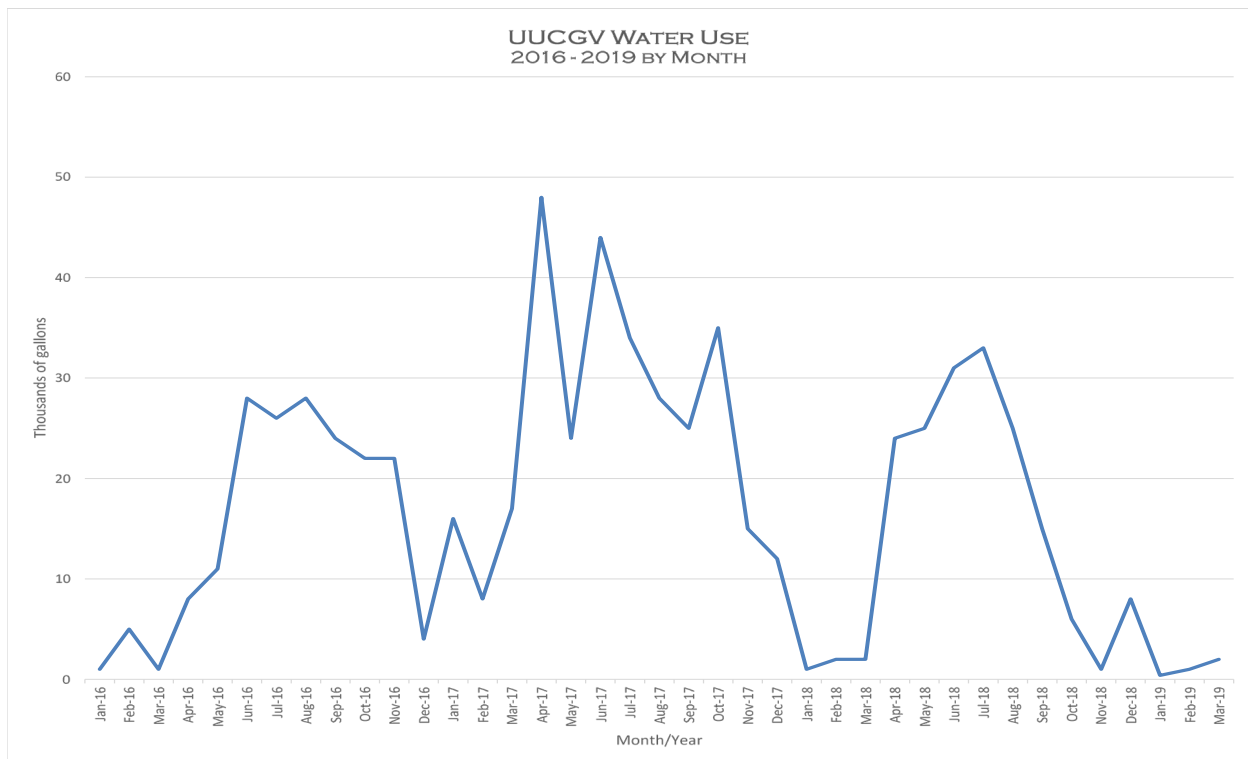
UUCGV and the City of Grand Junction get their water from reservoirs on the Grand Mesa. (Clifton gets its water from the Colorado River).

Attached is a graph of our monthly water use for the past 3 years. Of note, our monthly water use has ranged from 0.4 thousand gallons to 48 thousand gallons.

UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2, 2019



Practices that affect our water use: We have low-flush toilets, so this helps to conserve water. We do use water in the summer to water the lawn to the South of our building (since the lawn is shaded, it needs less water than a lawn exposed to the sun would need) and to water our garden. A congregant has just donated rain barrels for use in water conservation.

Potential challenges to our local water supply include contaminants from drilling, drought/global warming, and flood danger if there is too rapid snow melt. Many of the lower income communities in Grand Junction live next to the river where there is a higher risk of flooding.

Facilities Management

How is your building cleaned? Are their specific requirements/policies for nontoxic cleaners?

Our building is cleaned by our Facilities Manager Sterling VanWagoner. We also do have volunteer “deep cleaning days” twice a year. We do not currently have any policies in place about nontoxic cleaning supplies. However, Sterling is in the process of

UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2, 2019

investigating a switch to using all Melaleuca cleaning products, which are environmentally friendly and can be purchased at wholesale prices.

What is your current practice regarding operations supplies? Do you have policies for purchasing items with recycled content and materials from sustainable sources?

We do not have policies for purchasing items with recycled content and materials from sustainable sources. We do use Envirocopy paper for our print jobs. This paper is Green Seal Certified and post-consumer recycled content is 30%. Our printer cartridges are from the Green World Alliance program (www.xerox.com/gwa). We do not currently use recycled paper towels in our bathrooms or recycled toilet paper.

What is your congregation's awareness and practice regarding sustainable food? Are vegetarian or vegan options regularly made available? Do you use sustainable practices during potlucks? Do you use fair trade coffee/tea and other products?

We serve Fair Trade coffee during our fellowship hour and we also have a "self-pay" shelf where we sell Fair Trade coffees/teas/chocolates.

Usually there is at least one vegetarian option at potluck meals.

We have started using cloth napkins during some of our potlucks and a volunteer from our congregation is taking them home to wash. We do have opportunities to be more sustainable in our practices for storing leftovers; perhaps having congregational members bring containers to store leftover food in so that we don't need to use plastic wrap/plastic bags.

Some individuals in our congregation have gardens or are members of Community Supported Agriculture cooperatives. We also have members of our congregation who are helping with the Library "Discovery Garden" to the north of UUCGV.

How do you handle recycling/composting for your congregation?

We have one (1) general container for all recyclable materials upstairs (sanctuary kitchen) and (1) downstairs (just outside the kitchen down stairs), and (1) for paper products in the middle office.

Our facilities manager Sterling VanWagoner takes our recycling to the drop-off center. On average, our congregation (and visitors to our building) actually put recyclables in the recycle bins only about 30% to 40% of the time. Most of the time people just put everything in the trash and Sterling has had to dig it back out and sort it into the proper containers. People also have been putting trash into the recycle containers. People

UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2, 2019

have not been rinsing out containers before putting them in the recycle bin or taking the lids off the containers before depositing them in the recycle container.

We do not currently compost kitchen waste at UUCGV. There could be an opportunity to bring our compost to the Discovery Garden to the north of our building, however we would need to ensure that our compost was not contaminated with the incorrect items. Before we try to implement a composting program, it may be wise to increase our education of our congregation regarding recycling and demonstrate our ability to maintain non-contaminated materials in our recycling bins.

Transportation

Most of our congregants drive to UUCGV, but there also are many who ride their bikes or walk. We provide a bicycle rack at our front door for congregants to use. We do not currently have any formal carpooling program. Grand Valley Transit does run near our building, but it does not run on Sundays.

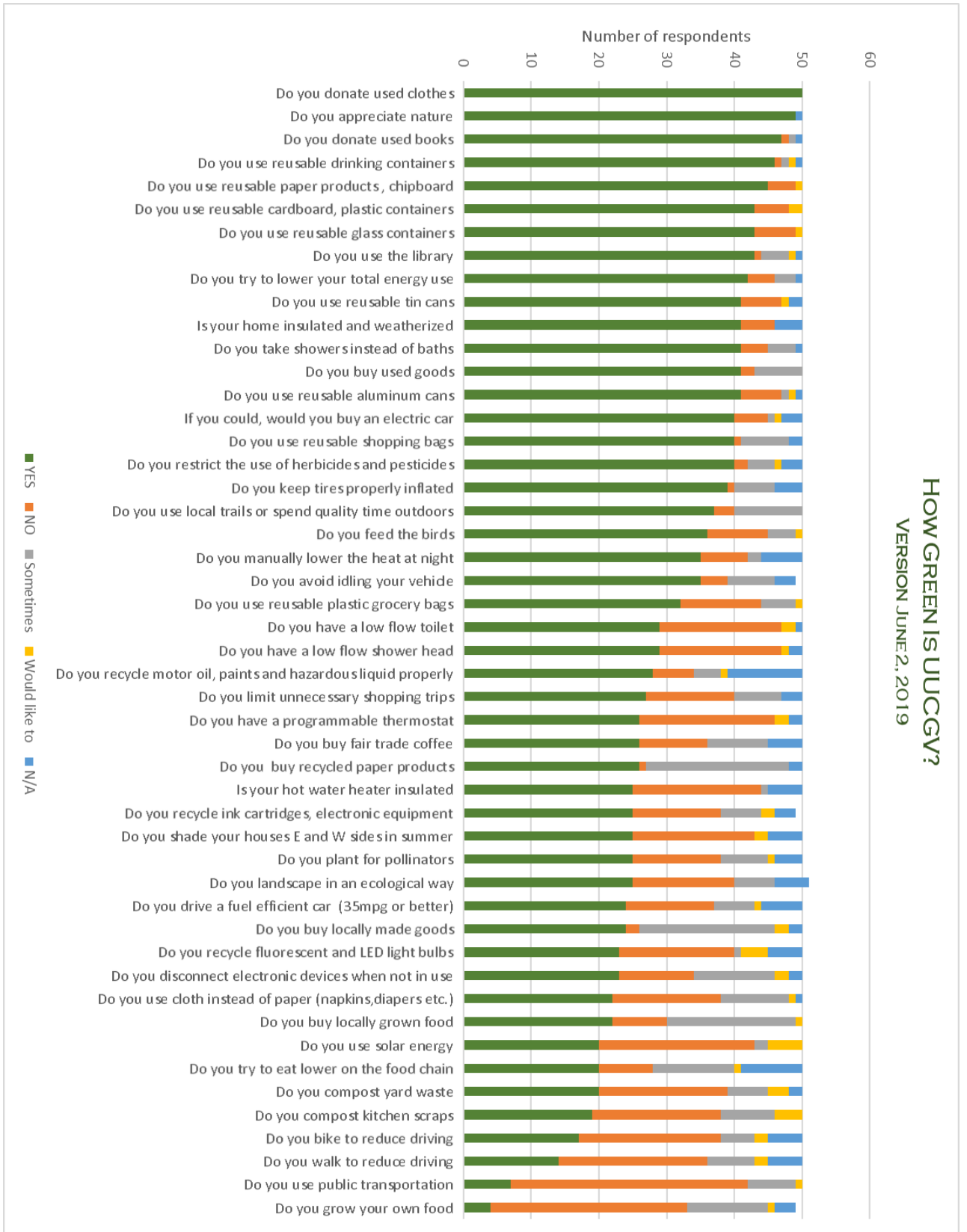
Personal Assessments

The graph below is our congregation's response to the Personal Assessments of "How Green are You?" Fifty people filled out personal assessments which are included in this graph:

UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2, 2019



UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2, 2019

3. Financial Management

Are socially and environmentally responsible criteria part of the congregation's practice and policies regarding investment decisions?

Our congregation as a whole as well as individuals who attend UUCGV can make a difference in this world by investing in financial institutions that support social and environmental responsibility. A good place to start with learning about socially responsible investing is this Wikipedia article about socially responsible investing:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socially_responsible_investing.

UUCGV currently does not have socially and environmentally responsible criteria as part of the congregation's policies regarding investment decisions. UUCGV has a reserve fund which is invested in a Vanguard mid-cap mutual fund and UUCGV does the remainder of its banking with US Bank.

According to a March 6, 2018 article by Business Insider, Vanguard is the third top investor in companies that do nuclear weapons work. (<https://www.businessinsider.com/nuclear-bomb-companies-401k-retirement-fund-list-2018-3>). The information in this article is taken from a report called "Don't Bank on the Bomb" by the Netherlands-based group PAX. This report also recommends Green Century Fund as a US-based company that does not fund companies that do nuclear-weapons work

(<https://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/2018-hof/>). According to the website Fossil Free Funds, Vanguard also invests 9.4% of its assets in fossil fuel investments.

(<https://fossilfreefunds.org/families?q=Vanguard>).

The UUCGV Finance Team has had discussions specifically about our Vanguard mutual fund (and discussed the report referenced in the article from Business Insider mentioned above), and the team has a variety of opinions and concerns about making changes to our current strategy. We understand that these types of investment decisions are complex, for organizations of all sizes. There are several factors to consider in our investment choices, and we expect this to be an ongoing conversation.

Fortunately, it is easier than ever to research the socially responsible profile of investment companies. The US SIF Forum for Sustainable and Responsible Investment maintains an updated list of funds with information about financial performance and socially responsible screens (<https://charts.ussif.org/mfpc/>). At the time of this writing, the list had been updated on 4/30/19 and contained 180 different socially responsible mutual funds and information about their financial support in 16 different categories including clean energy, human rights, and animal welfare.

UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2, 2019

The record with US Bank is positive. According to EcoWatch, US Bank is the first major bank in the US “to formally exclude gas and oil pipelines from their project financing.”

(<https://www.ecowatch.com/us-bank-divest-pipelines-2408440397.html>) And according to Business Wire, in 2018 “across the 680 companies across all industries, Fortune ranked U.S. Bank as ... No. 6 in both Financial Soundness and Social Responsibility.”

(<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20180119005740/en/Fortune-Recognizes-U.S.-Bank-2018-World%E2%80%99s-Admired>)

4. Environmental Justice

Our Unitarian Universalist faith recognizes that environmental issues are not only matters of spirituality, but of justice. Our faith calls us to support the ecological health of human communities – especially the disadvantaged, oppressed, and indigenous ones – as we strive to protect natural systems and nonhuman communities.

The UUCGV has been loosely involved with Mesa County Libraries Discovery Garden. The Discovery Garden project is a series of interactive and demonstrative gardens that will provide education, food, respite, and community engagement. A variety of gardening techniques will be modeled, including xeric, raised bed, in-ground farming, pollinator, and permaculture design. The Discovery Garden is by the community and for the community!

The Discovery Garden won't offer gardening plots to individuals. Instead, the community food plot will be used to grow food crops for donation to local organizations such as food banks. The garden will also serve as a location for education programs, quiet relaxation, and general enjoyment.* (mesacountylibraries.org/booksandmedia/garden/)

(<https://mesacountylibraries.org/booksandmedia/garden/>)

The Discovery Garden is located on library-owned ground at Fifth Street and Chipeta Avenue, which is the vacant lot adjacent to our UUCGV property. The Discovery Garden will greatly enhance the *feng shui* of our property. Even the name, “Discovery Garden”, seems to fit well with Unitarian Universalism. This project presents an excellent opportunity for further involvement from the UUCGV community. The library is seeking grants and assistance from community partners to find and build the project. Brainstorming ideas include gathering a group to volunteer at the Garden's Thursday night volunteer night, and/or possibly providing compost from our facility. Any ideas?

UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

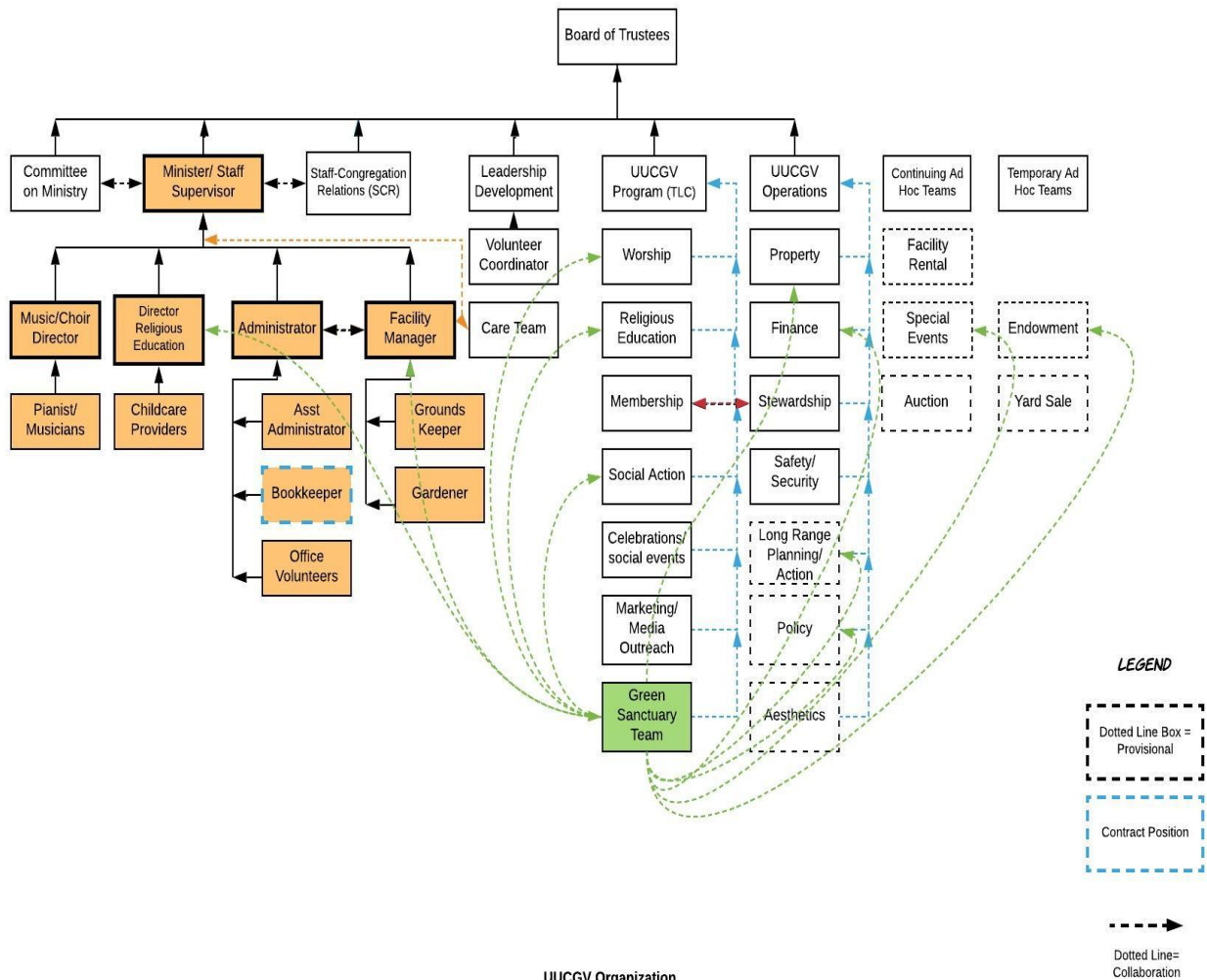
CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2, 2019

5. Congregational and Community Involvement

What existing committees and groups could work in partnership with the Green Sanctuary team? What expertise do their members have to offer?

Within the UUCGV community, there are multiple opportunities for collaboration between the Green Sanctuary team and other volunteer teams and staff members. The organization chart below illustrates nearly a dozen of these potential relationships.



UUCGV Organization
Chart-Ver5-0-Team=Green Sanctuary
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UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2, 2019

Among these relationships, 6 are primary:

- *Facility management (staff)*- areas of collaboration include energy sources, HVAC, lighting, water use, wastewater handling, service equipment, kitchen appliances, office equipment, office and service supplies, grounds maintenance practices, etc.
- *Property team (volunteer)*- areas of collaboration include facility strategic design planning, major building maintenance and repair projects, capital construction projects, etc.
- *Religious education (staff and volunteer)*- areas of collaboration include multi-level education on interdependence between human and other life forms, energy sources, uses and impacts, water sources, uses and impacts in arid zones like the Grand Valley, how to design and live a green life style, etc.
- *Social action (volunteer)*- areas of collaboration include deepening ties to existing local and regional environmental groups and socially progressive green initiatives. Examples include the Western Colorado Alliance, Citizens for Clean Air, Clean Energy Economy for the Region (CLEER), etc.
- *Long range planning/policy (volunteer)*- areas of collaboration include incorporating green concepts into future program design, facility improvement design, etc.
- *Finance/endowment/fundraising (volunteer)*- areas of collaboration include active exploration of green investment options and adoption of investment strategies aimed at gradually shifting UUCGV investments into greener, less carbon intensive, portfolios.

What interests, concerns, and opportunities offer potential for environmental education and action, whether or not they have a readily apparent environmental connection?

- By way of a two-year long collaborative effort with the Clean Energy team of the Western Colorado Alliance (WCA), UUCGV members learned a great deal about city/county planning and development, land use decision-making, actual and potential incorporation of green concepts into public works activities, commercial building design and improvement, transportation, etc. The team goal was to find ways and organize support for shifting the Grand Valley economy from fossil fuel-based to clean energy-based. There were two strategies employed:

UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2, 2019

- Create an alternative energy citizen advisory board to mobilize community support for clean energy initiatives, advise City Council, and help implement clean energy-based municipal policies;
- Implement a State-coordinated Colorado Commercial Property-Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program within Mesa County that would provide low-cost, long-term financial investment tools and opportunities in order to benefit commercial property owners of all types (non-profit, agricultural, industrial, school, retail, etc.) as well local building contractors, local business supply companies, local financial service institutions and the general citizenry, all of whom would be involved in what would become a robust, locally based economic development initiative. Implementation of the C-PACE program depended on approval by the Board of County Commissioners.

Unfortunately, neither strategy was successful, despite mobilization of community support and the efforts of numerous organizations. Political opposition by conservatives and by extractive industry proponents and supporters proved to be decisive.

Despite these defeats, we learned much about the regional economy, local economic and political actors and interests, and developed what can still become a strong base of support for green initiatives in the future.

- The presence of Colorado Mesa University (CMU), a rapidly growing campus of the Colorado State University system has the potential to provide a wide range of educational services to community groups as well as students. Although green concepts are not currently involved in CMU teaching, curricula and research, they could be and perhaps will be as the impacts of climate change on regional forests, snowpacks and water availability become more pronounced. In some ways, the Grand Valley could become a classic case study of how rural communities meet the challenges of climate change, adapt and thrive.
- The presence and activities of the Hispanic Affairs Project (HAP), a social justice and immigrant rights organization that UUCGV both supports and is involved with, span immigrants and communities all over the Western Slope of Colorado. Most of these communities are agricultural; most HAP members are involved in agriculture-related work, directly or indirectly. Opportunities for education and promotion of green concepts remain unexplored.

UUCGV GREEN SANCTUARY PROJECT

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2, 2019

- A number of UUCGV members are members or active participants in multiple environmental organizations, among them:
 - Sierra Club
 - Audubon Society
 - Nature Conservancy
 - Colorado National Monument Association
 - Colorado Parks and Wildlife
 - Colorado West Land Trust
 - Grand Old Broads of the Wilderness
 - Conservation Colorado
 - League of Conservation Voters
 - Alliance for Sustainable Colorado
 - Clean Energy Action

What skills and experiences might contribute to furthering environmental commitments?

- Some UUCGV members and friends have deep experience in forestry, park service, land management and agriculture and are capable of offering advice and education based on what they have learned, to the Congregation and the wider community.
- Other UUCGV members and friends have deep experience in residential/commercial building design and maintenance incorporating green concepts and are capable of offering advice and education based on what they have learned, to the Congregation and the wider community.

What local activist congregations, secular environmental groups, and/or political action groups work on environmental issues? Which are potential partners?

- Interfaith Coalition for Social Justice- a coalition of 4 faith communities and several other, allied communities, formed in 2016, and focused on improving life for all in the Grand Valley by addressing and resolving systemic causes of injustice. The current focus is on racism, inclusivity and diversity. A recent accomplishment was developing, with 18 other civic and religious organizations, a Proclamation of Inclusivity which was then discussed/negotiated and finally passed by the Grand Junction City Council in February 2019. The Coalition and the 18 other organizations involved in this effort could potentially become a base for extending green concepts throughout the Grand Valley.