

UAB GREEN EVENT GUIDE

Go Digital

- Reduce paper waste by creating a digital campaign for your event. Digital signage can be posted in the residence halls, Rec Center, and the Hill Student Center through the **Student Affairs Digital Signage Form** and in the academic buildings through the **College of Arts and Sciences Digital Sign Request Form**.

Need a Meeting Space?

- The Solar House is a great place to hold meetings since it gets all of its energy from the sun and is free to reserve! It can hold around 25 people, and food is allowed to be brought in. Check out our solar house guidelines **here** for more information on what the house can offer. Contact **solarhouse@uab.edu** to reserve the space.

Commute Responsibly

- UAB Transportation lists several **sustainable commute options**, like the UAB bus system. Taking the bus over driving can cut down on your transportation greenhouse gas emissions by around 33% (Tina Hodges, 2010)! There are several bus routes that can take you all over campus. The buses can be tracked on the DoubleMap app or on the **UAB Transportation website**. You can also use UAB's many **bike racks**. Additionally, conduct the event over Zoom for larger parties to reduce the need for travel.

Consider Food Options

- Go vegetarian for your event! Eating less meat lowers your greenhouse gas output (IPCC, 2022). If ordering meat is unavoidable, then avoiding red meat is the next best option. Chicken and fish farming releases fewer greenhouse gases into the environment than beef farming (IPCC, 2022).
- Include gluten-free & vegan options to accommodate all diets at the event.
- Use buffet-style catering instead of boxed meals. Make sure you specify that you do not want boxed meals. Ask for buffet or family-style catering options when ordering the food. This helps avoid excess packaging waste and allows people to take the exact amount of food they would like to eat.

Avoid Bottled Drinks

- Ask your guests to bring a reusable bottle to the event. Every UAB building has **water bottle refill stations** and water fountains.
- Use beverage dispensers and aluminum canned drinks (you can even get plain water in cans!). One plastic bottle can take 450 years to break down and will leach harmful chemicals into the environment in the process (WWF, 2021).

Reusable Utensils

- Reserve our 50-person dining set for your event for free – we'll even clean the dishes for you! Simply email solarhouse@uab.edu 48 hours before your event and arrange for someone from your event to pick up and drop off the dishes at the UAB Solar House!
- Don't forget to ask the caterer to omit napkins or plastic cutlery. Make sure you clearly state to the caterer, "Please do not include napkins, plates, cups, or cutlery in my order." Oftentimes, people do not know what reduced packaging means, so making it clear what you do not want is important.

Avoid Food Waste

- For catered events, ask guests to RSVP ahead of time to avoid overordering food. Food waste accounts for 170 million tons of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere every year (around 42 coal-fired power plants worth of pollution). (Jean Buzby, 2022)
- For events with fewer people, ask guests to bring reusable containers to take any leftovers home to avoid food waste.
- For larger events, have a food rescue plan in place to save excess food from landfill. A food rescue takes food that would go into a landfill because it cannot be resold and gives it to people in the community who are food insecure (Grace Klein Community, 2023). FeedBHM volunteers from the Grace Klein community are able to come to events between the hours of 6:00 AM and 11:00 PM to pick up excess uneaten food. Contact FeedBHM at 205-490-7516 a week in advance for volunteers to come pick up food and let them know the date, time, location of the event, if containers are needed to collect the food, and the contact information for someone who can wait for the volunteers to collect the food after the event ends. The volunteers will then call an hour before the expected pick-up time to confirm that food rescue is still needed. They can pick up full trays of food from buffet-style meals. If they need to bring containers because the food is in a container you need to keep, then you will need to let them know when you call a week in advance.

Decorate Mindfully

- Avoid adding dates to decorations so that you can reuse them for multiple events or purchase paper decorations that you can recycle after use. Look at purchasing reusable decorations like fabric tablecloths over using disposable ones!
- Avoid giving out single-use items. Ask yourself if the item you are giving out can be used again and is something attendees want.

Know Waste Options

- Have clear identification of waste and recycling bins in proper containers & ensure guests are aware of these waste options before food is served. Make sure that guests know exactly what can be recycled and what has to go into the trash. UAB recycles clean paper/cardboard, clean aluminum cans, & clean #1 & #2 plastic bottles. Ensure that only these items go into the recycling bins, as heavy contamination in the recycling can cause the whole bag to be thrown away!

Say "No" to Plastic Confetti!

- Standard confetti is often made of plastic and can negatively affect the environment. These little pieces of plastic end up as litter on the ground and wash away into drainage systems and local water sources. They then can harm aquatic life and birds, or get pressed into the ground, harming the health of the soil.
- Instead, try water soluble confetti options, bubbles, or flower petals to have fun with in pictures- but with less environmental consequences.

For any further questions about how you can make your event sustainable, contact us at sustainability@uab.edu!

References

Public transportation's role in responding to climate change.

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The benefits of buying locally sourced produce Colby College

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Buzby J (2022) Food waste and its links to greenhouse gases and climate change. USDA.

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SUSTAINABILITY

The University of Alabama at Birmingham