



Girl Scout National Properties are the physical sites that make this movement possible, from our Distribution Center, which collects and ships out our merchandise, to our Edith Macy Center (EMC) and Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace (JGLB) sites, which serve as critical gathering and learning spaces for our girls and leaders. In conjunction with the Girl Scout Merchandise community, the Girl Scout Properties community developed the following sustainability strategy to align our operations with the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

The Girl Scouts of the USA Supports the Sustainable Development Goals



[Goal 7, Affordable and Clean Energy](#), is most relevant to the Girl Scout Properties team, as we seek to decrease our carbon footprint through energy efficiency and renewable energy at our three major owned locations. Below you will find more information about the sustainability projects underway at each of these properties.

1. DISTRIBUTION CENTER

Background: The Girl Scout Distribution Center in Randolph, New Jersey, contributes significantly to our operations by moving all non-cookie-related merchandise. However, we wanted to learn more about how our operations aligned with energy-efficiency best practices, so we enlisted the MIT Sustainability Lab in the Spring of 2020 to do a deep dive into our energy consumption. We chose to focus on energy because it is a major driver of climate change. According to the U.S. Green Building Council¹, buildings use 41% of the energy in the United States, making large sites such as warehouses critical to decreasing nationwide energy consumption.

1. Source: [Benefits of Green Building | U.S. Green Building Council \(usgbc.org\)](#)

Achievements: After partnering with MIT, we developed a three-year strategy to implement our energy goals. We aim to achieve best-in-class energy use by reducing our energy consumption 36% by 2022 to earn the EPA's ENERGY STAR certification. As part of this goal, we have already:

- Replaced the property's HVAC equipment with the highest-efficiency, lowest-energy options on the market.
- Installed a tankless water heater, which will allow us to easily access warm water on an as-needed basis rather than keeping tanks warm.
- Developed an operational checklist to ensure energy-conserving practices at the start and close of each business day.
- Installed smart thermostats for office HVAC, which will manage our usage more efficiently.
- Explored a contract for solar panel installation, which will power almost 100% of our electricity needs; installation is tentatively scheduled to begin mid-2021.

We know that sustainability is a process. As we implement our strategy, we plan to monitor our energy use, conduct on-site monitoring, and collaborate with vendors and nonprofit partners to make additional improvements.

2. EDITH MACY CENTER

Background: With nearly a century of use as a Girl Scout property, the 405-acre Edith May Center (EMC) in Briarcliff Manor, New York, serves as a hub for events and retreats across the Girl Scouts Movement. It includes a conference center complex, lakeside cabins, dense woods, and open areas—all of which provide opportunities for high-impact sustainability projects. This opportunity for impact, along with the geographic and architectural complexity of the property, made EMC an excellent site for a Spring 2021 MIT Sustainability Lab project similar to our Spring 2020 engagement at the NJDC. The student team assessed EMC for opportunities in energy efficiency beyond what has already been implemented, as well as electrification of other energy sources and on-site solar generation. Our EMC team looks forward to implementing many of their recommendations and continues to conduct operations with sustainability as a top priority.

Achievements: Whenever possible, equipment and products used at EMC are purchased with energy efficiency and low resource consumption in mind. Over the past several years, we have:

- Installed water coolers in shared spaces to reduce the use of plastic water bottles.
- Reduced the use of disposable straws to instances made on request.
- Switched to compostable plasticware and bamboo plates for outdoor catered events.
- Sourced bathroom paper products from companies certified by the Forest Stewardship Council and/or ensured that products contain high levels of post-consumer recycled content.
- Swapped most property lighting to LED bulbs, with a plan to switch entirely over to LEDs property-wide.
- Replaced our two electric boilers in the Conference and Event Center with 97% efficient high-pressure, gas-fired boilers, significantly reducing carbon emissions.
- Changed to variable-speed pumps.
- Upgraded the HVAC systems across the property—including to energy-efficient HVAC units in our Gathering Place building and to a multizone HVAC system in 46 guest rooms—to save energy and maximize the comfort of our guests.
- Replaced miscellaneous equipment with high-efficiency upgrades, such as our commercial dryers and water pumps.

Moving forward, we plan to:

- Explore rooftop solar generation and options to join a community solar operation.
- Continue replacing HVAC units with the highest-efficiency options available.
- Compost our food waste for use as fertilizer in our property gardens.

As an important gathering center for the Girl Scout Movement, the Edith Macy Center will undergo continued improvements to reflect the value that we and our girls place on sustainability.

3. JULIETTE GORDON LOW BIRTHPLACE

Background: The Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace (JGLB) is a historic site built in 1821 in Savannah, Georgia. As the birthplace of Girl Scouts founder Juliette Gordon Low, the property receives 40,000 visitors annually. Our JGLB team tackles the challenges of integrating sustainability into this unique property, ensuring the integrity of historical features in the house, two outbuildings, and the garden, while prioritizing environmental performance and comfort, accessibility, and inclusion for all visitors.

Achievements: Whenever possible, property upgrades and replacements are conducted with sustainability and durability in mind to minimize our resource consumption and maximize accessibility. To date, we have:

- Conducted extensive renovations in 2012 and 2014, with all repairs made to last at least 50 years. For instance, instead of replacing the original windows with new ones, our team repaired and reinstalled the originals to prevent waste.
- Replaced all property lighting with LEDs.
- Installed energy-efficient mini-split AC systems to enable cooling control for individual rooms.
- Installed touchless faucets to decrease water use and limit the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses.
- Redesigned our garden pavement to slow stormwater runoff.
- Planted pollinator beds to support pollinating insects, as well as indigenous plants, which require less irrigation and are already adapted to the local climate.
- Sourced gift shop products from local vendors and women entrepreneurs, including a line of local honey and products made from beeswax.
- Spearheaded a comprehensive redesign of the property to increase accessibility, inclusion, and comfort for all visitors. Thanks to a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, we engaged the Institute for Human Centered Design to improve the design of our facility for people with disabilities. This included the installation of an elevator and the construction of connecting structures to link three previously disconnected buildings.

As an iconic site for the Girl Scout Movement, the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace will endeavor to reduce its environmental footprint, and to modify its buildings and property to maximize accessibility and inclusion for all.