

## **Sustainability Framework theme:**

Environmental Awareness - Environmental education and integrating environmental practices into our planning will change negative outcomes of the past and improve our future.

## **Holiday Cheer, Carbon Consequences**

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For many people, the next couple of months will be a lot! They will travel, enjoy time with loved ones, eat, get and give gifts, attend community events, and generally celebrate the season's merriment. However, amidst all the celebrations, there is often a lack of sustainable practices. [The Stockholm Environment Institute](#) estimates that each person produces an additional 1400 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> over the holidays, almost 4% of a person's annual carbon footprint.

Join us for a 2-part series that will take a more in-depth look at how to have a wonderful holiday season while supporting local sustainability efforts. This month we will look at the holidays' carbon contributions and how to mitigate them. Next month we'll look at reducing overall energy use and waste from gifts, seasonal decor, and parties. Don't be hard on yourself if you can't implement every recommendation! If everyone made just a couple of changes, we would see the benefits add up!

One of the first things that come to mind during the holidays is travel. In the modern world, instead of a one-horse open sleigh, people will be flying and driving to celebrate the holidays, see loved ones, and attend various community events. Not only will people be traveling, but there will also be increased shipping of food and gifts. Producing and transporting these goods around the globe is a significant contributor to carbon emissions.

Addressing these issues can all come down to one principle: think local. Gifts? Buy from local shops, artisans, and craft markets! Or think outside the box and get passes to local movie theaters, zoos, or other experiences. Food? Try to plan your recipes around local, in-season produce! [The Holland Farmers Market](#) is open Wednesdays and Saturdays from 9-1 until November 30th, and then Saturdays from 9-1 until December 21st. This is a perfect place to get locally grown food that's not only delicious but has a lower carbon footprint!

When it comes to traveling to see loved ones, staying home because you don't want to contribute to carbon emissions isn't an option for most people; we value the quality time! However, there is still a local solution for this. [The Community Carbon Fund](#) is a West Michigan-centric option for reducing our local collective carbon footprint.

How it works is simple: after you've made lifestyle changes where you can, you can make donations to offset your carbon contributions for the things you can't compromise on. Individuals and businesses can donate to the fund and receive an estimate of how much carbon will be sequestered locally with their donation. The funds are held by the [Community Foundation of Holland and Zeeland](#) (CFHZ), and local non-profits can submit proposals to CFHZ to perform carbon impact projects and receive funding based

on the amount of carbon their project is estimated to mitigate. All donations will be allocated to local impact projects in the Holland/Zeeland communities.

Lastly, don't forget to carpool and use [MAX transit](#) to travel to parades and parties! That's another great way to help reduce carbon emissions from holiday travel.

If you'd like to learn more about reducing your carbon footprint, attend the [Holland BPW's Home Energy Expo](#) on November 13th! Check out our local stores, support local business owners, and visit the Holland Farmers Market! Join us next month to learn about reducing energy use and overall waste during this time of year while still having a holiday season full of good cheer!

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