

Get Smart About Carbon Reduction/ Net Zero in Schools

Carbon reductions can save money and benefit students, reduce operating costs, and improve operating efficiency.

This session will demystify jargon such as “Carbon Footprint” and “Net Zero” while sharing tactical approaches to carbon reductions at a range of scales from renovations and operational updates at existing facilities and considerations for new buildings.



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Learning Objectives

- Demystify jargon such as “Carbon Footprint” and “Net Zero”
- Identify how carbon reductions benefit students
- Identify how carbon reductions can save money, reduce operating costs and improve operating efficiency
- Discuss tactical approaches to carbon reductions at a range of scales:
 - Renovations and operational updates at existing facilities
 - Considerations for new buildings



Demystify Jargon

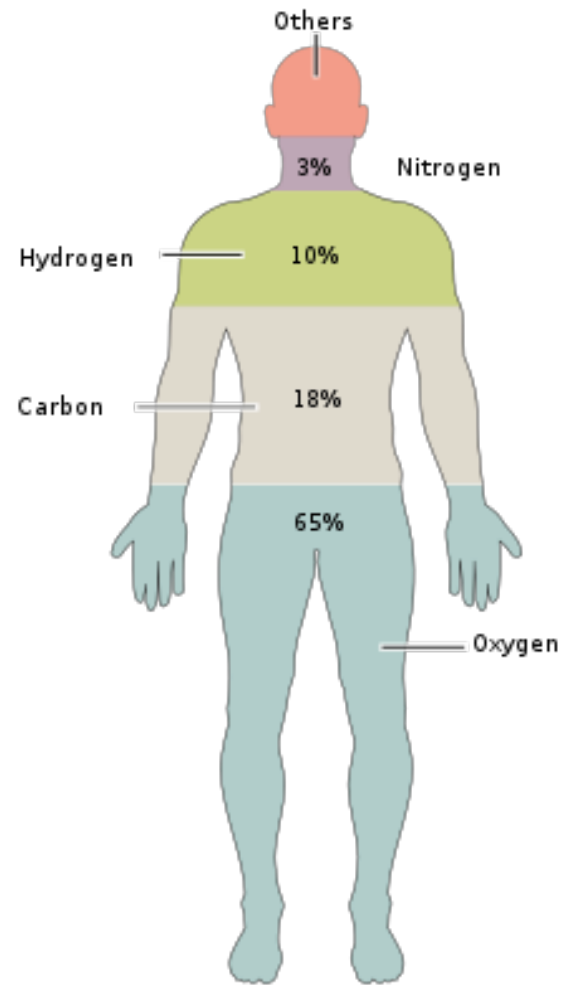


What is carbon?

Carbon is a **chemical element**.

Carbon is one of the most common elements found in living organisms.

Carbon is **constantly cycling between living organisms and the atmosphere**.

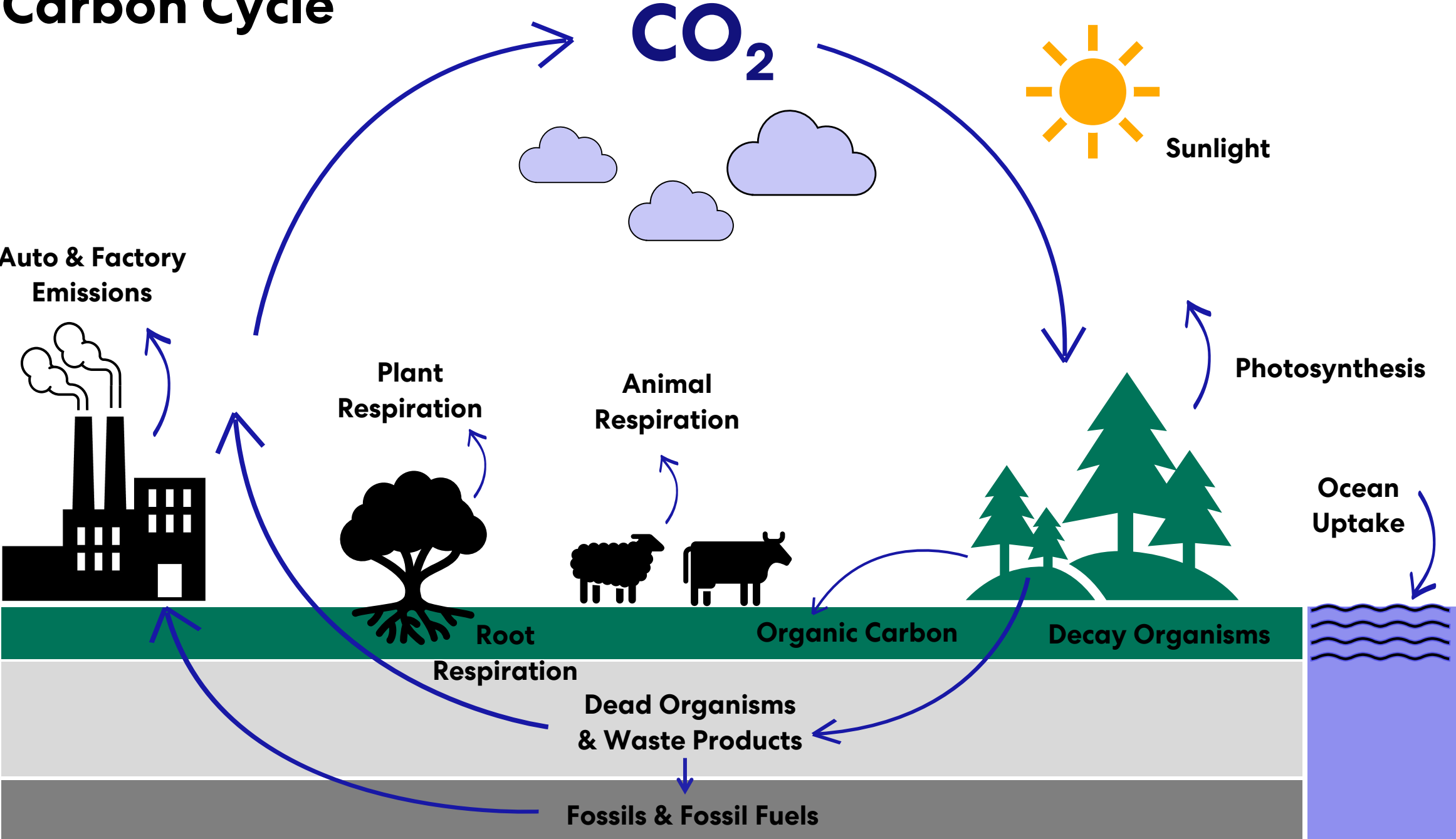




The **carbon cycle** refers to the series of processes by which **carbon compounds are interconverted in the environment**, involving the incorporation of carbon dioxide into living tissue by *photosynthesis* and its return to the atmosphere through *respiration*, the decay of dead organisms, and the burning of fossil fuels.

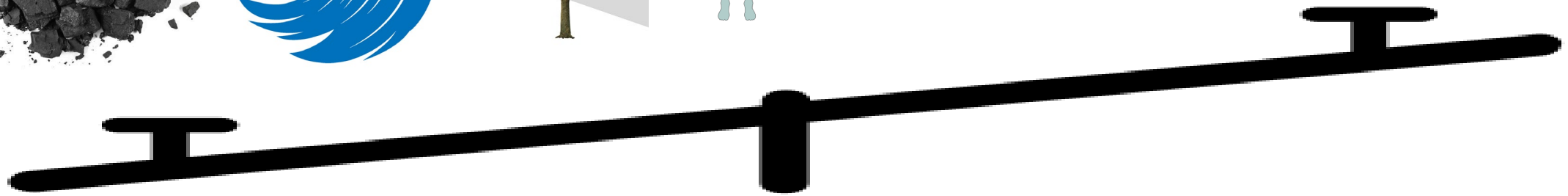
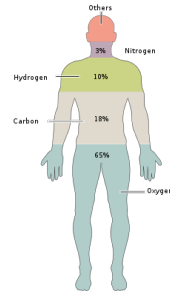
In a chemical reaction mass is neither created nor destroyed. The carbon atom in coal becomes carbon dioxide when it is burned. The carbon atom changes from a solid to a gas but its mass does not change.

Carbon Cycle



A **global carbon budget** determines the input of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere balanced by output (storage) in the carbon reservoirs on land or in the ocean.

Carbon naturally cycles between a few global **reservoirs**: rocks and sediments, the oceans, living organisms including plants and animals, and the **atmosphere**.



Sources "The Global Carbon Budget" *Climate Central*, <https://www.climatecentral.org/climate-matters/the-global-carbon-budget-2023>

1960s

GLOBAL CARBON BUDGET

Atmospheric CO₂



Human-Caused CO₂ Emissions

Fossil Fuels Deforestation

Natural CO₂ Storage

Land Ocean

1970s

GLOBAL CARBON BUDGET

Atmospheric CO₂



Human-Caused CO₂ Emissions

Fossil Fuels Deforestation

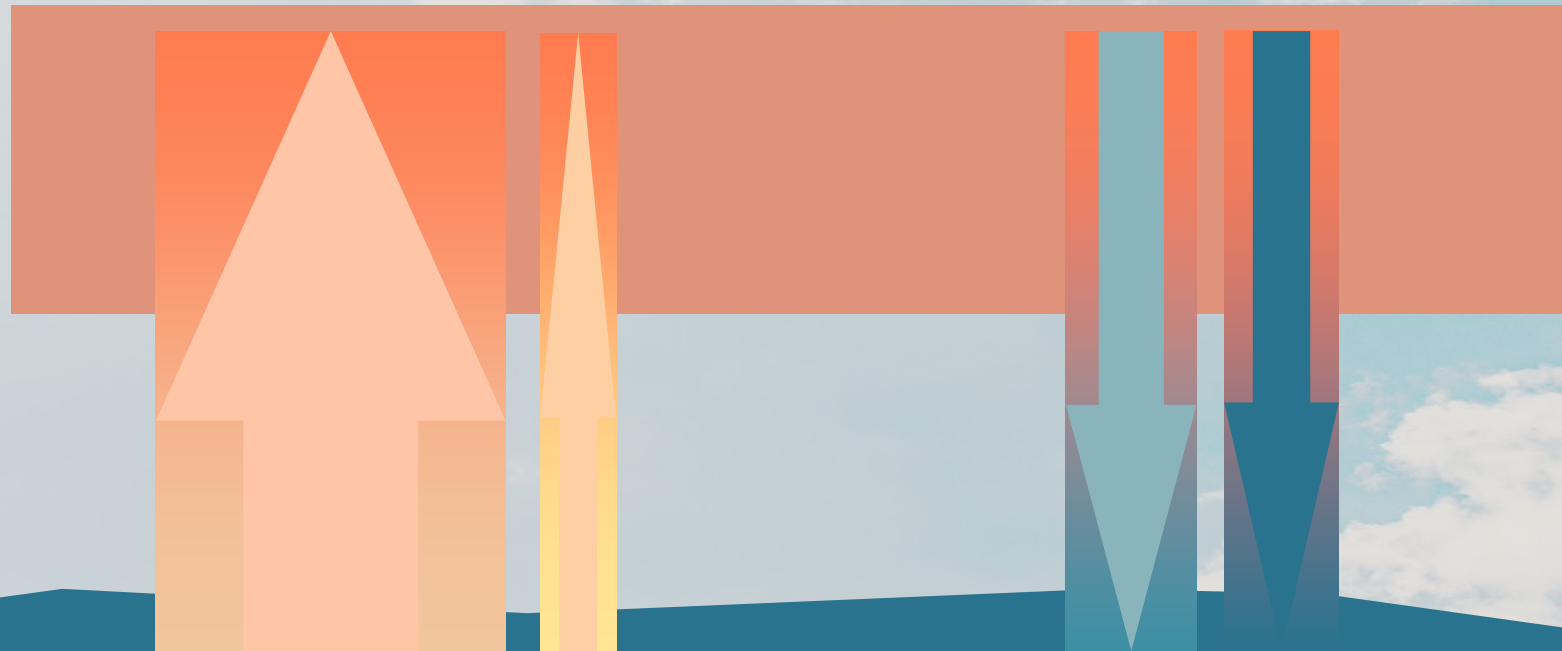
Natural CO₂ Storage

Land Ocean

1980s

GLOBAL CARBON BUDGET

Atmospheric CO₂



Human-Caused CO₂ Emissions

■ Fossil Fuels ■ Deforestation

Natural CO₂ Storage

■ Land ■ Ocean

1990s

GLOBAL CARBON BUDGET

Atmospheric CO₂



Human-Caused CO₂ Emissions

■ Fossil Fuels ■ Deforestation

Natural CO₂ Storage

■ Land ■ Ocean

2000s

GLOBAL CARBON BUDGET

Atmospheric CO₂



Human-Caused CO₂ Emissions

Fossil Fuels Deforestation

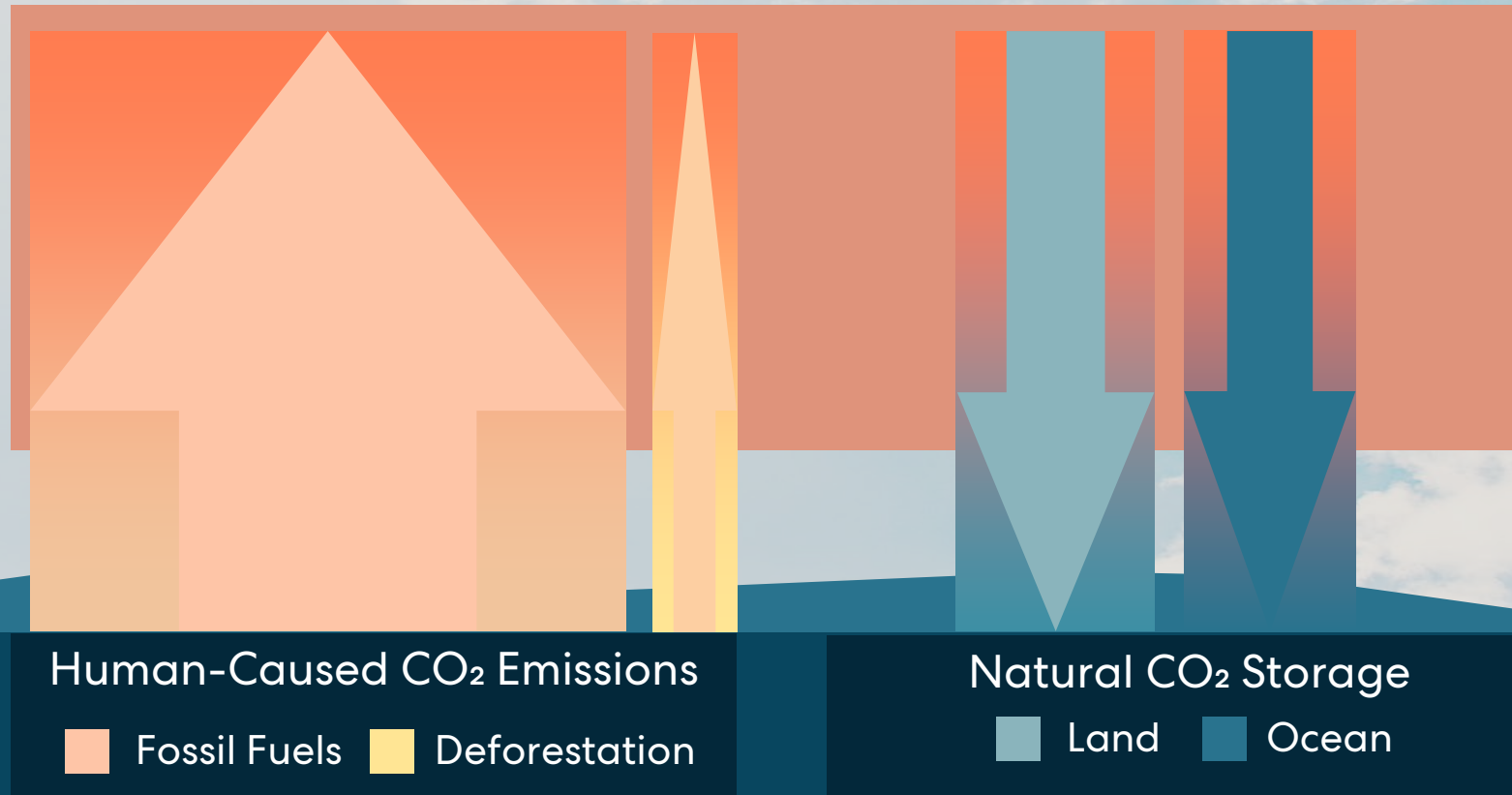
Natural CO₂ Storage

Land Ocean

2010s

GLOBAL CARBON BUDGET

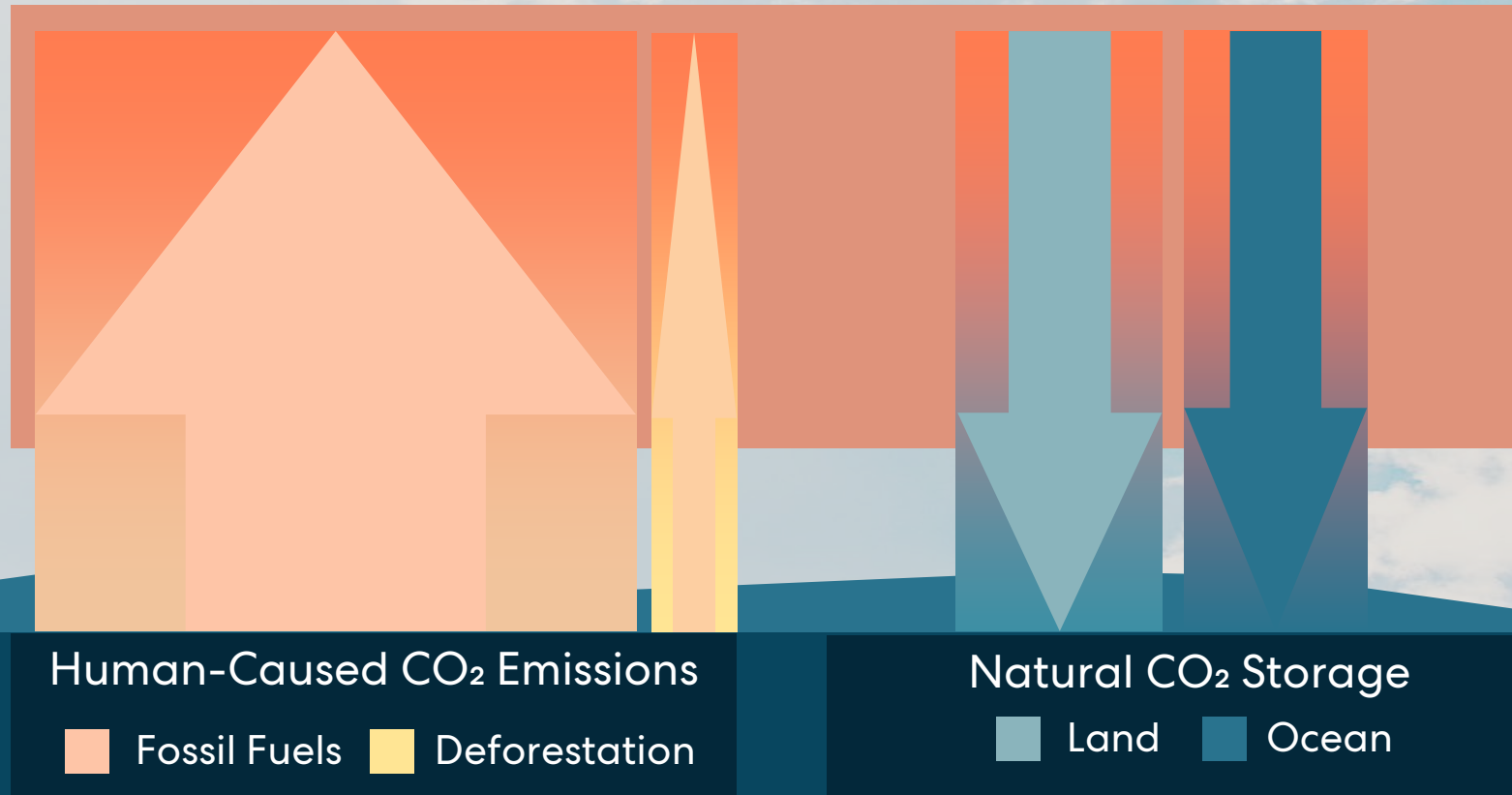
Atmospheric CO₂



2020 - 21

GLOBAL CARBON BUDGET

Atmospheric CO₂

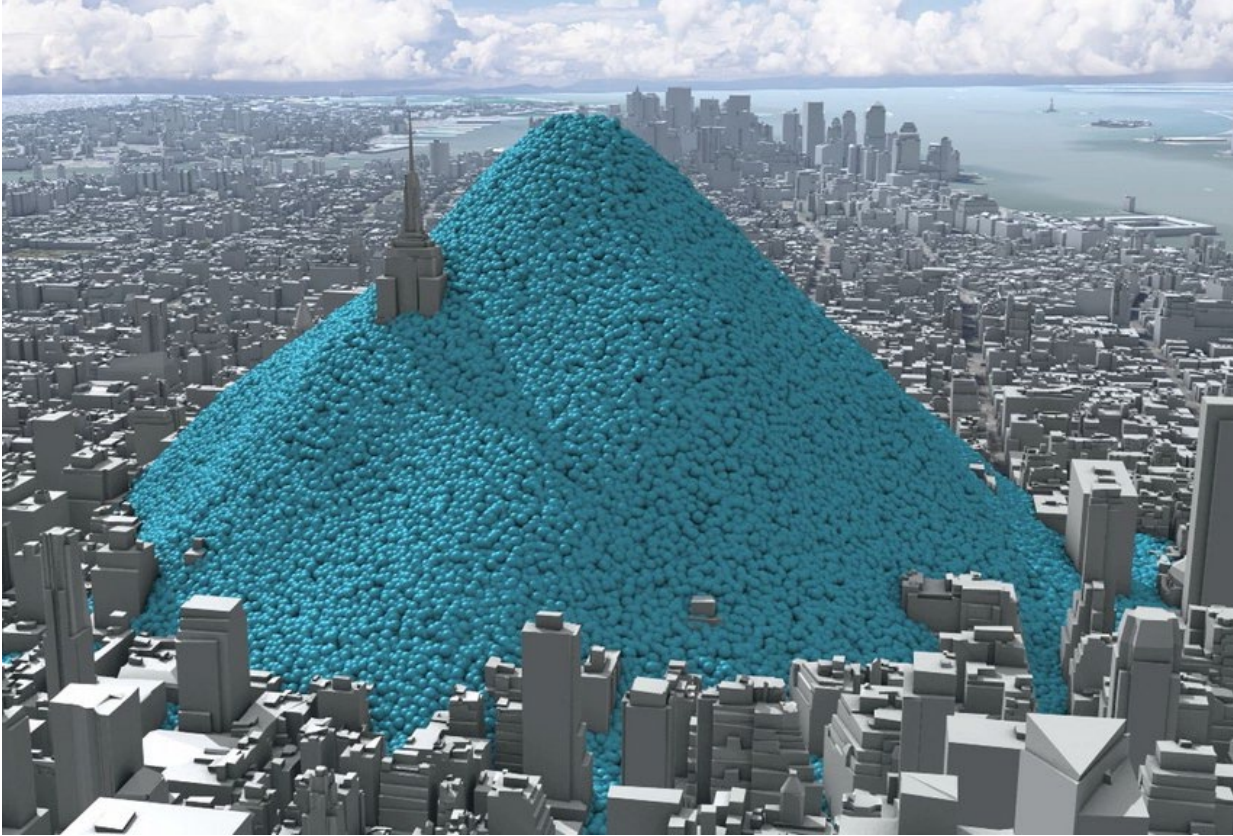


Carbon dioxide is Earth's most important **greenhouse gas**: a gas that absorbs and radiates heat. Unlike oxygen or nitrogen (which make up most of our atmosphere), greenhouse gases **absorb heat** radiating from the Earth's surface and **re-release it in all directions**—including back toward Earth's surface.

Visualizing CO₂e and Carbon Footprint



1 ton



54 million tons (per year)

Carbon Footprint

The amount of greenhouse gases emitted by a person, group, process, or thing.



Average Person in US



Average K12 School



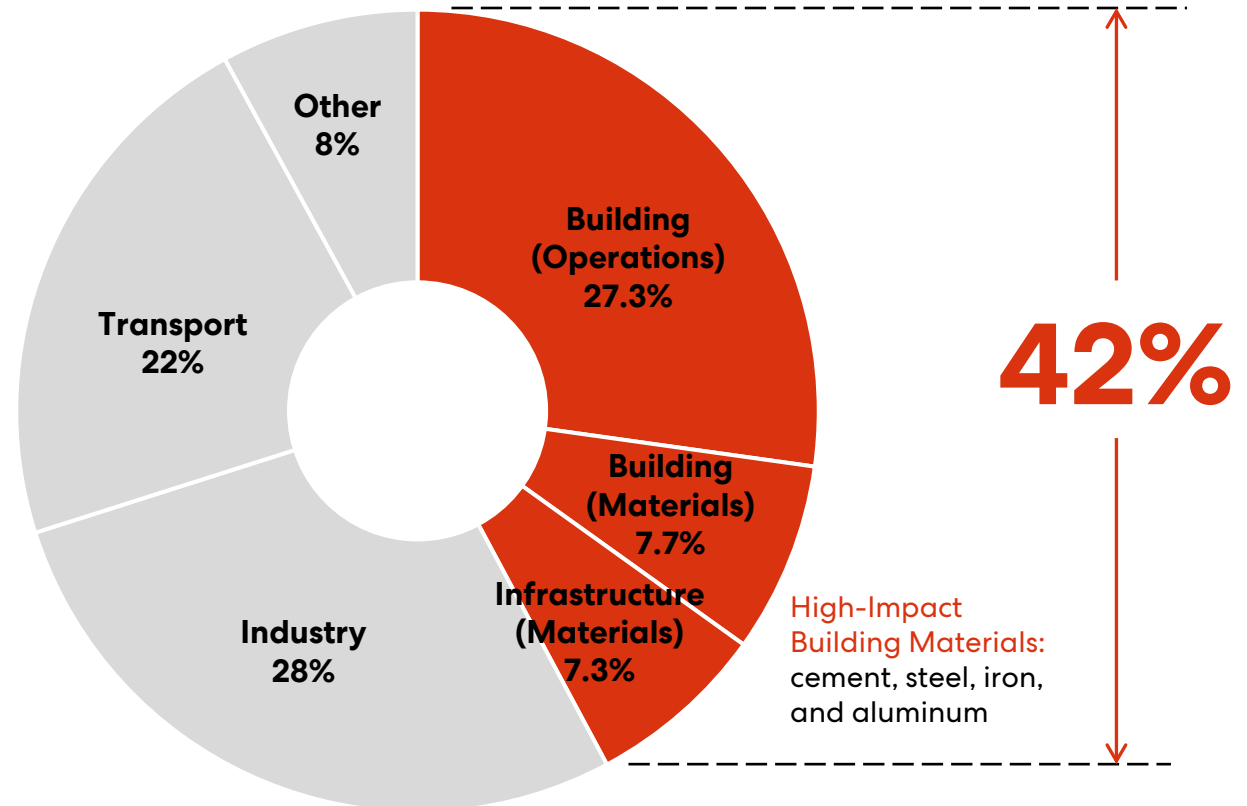
All US K12 Schools

Sources: Calculate Your Carbon Footprint. *The Nature Conservancy*. <https://www.nature.org/en-us/Fast Facts>. National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=84>
It Has to Be A Priority: Why Schools Can't Ignore the Climate Crisis. *Education Week*
<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/it-has-to-be-a-priority-why-schools-cant-ignore-the-climate-crisis/2022/05>

The built environment is responsible for **42%** of annual global CO₂ emissions

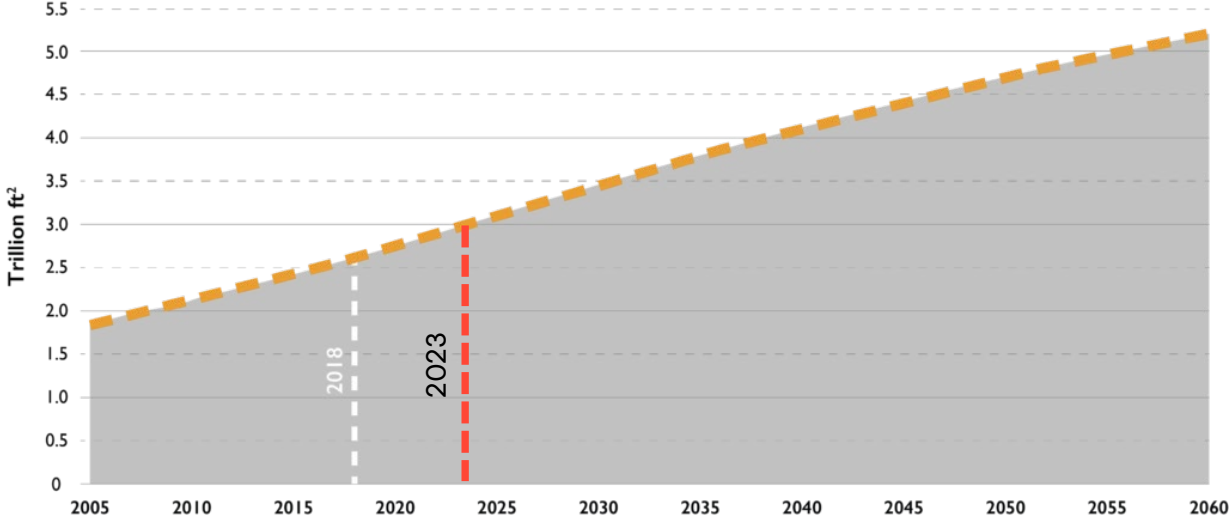
Of those total emissions, operations are responsible for approximately 27% annually

TOTAL ANNUAL GLOBAL CO₂ EMISSIONS



Carbon Context

Global Building Stock will double in area by 2060



Global Floor Area Growth

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Source: UN Environment Global Status Report 2017
Data Source: IEA (2017), World Energy Statistics and Balances



The equivalent of
adding an entire
New York City
every month for
40 years

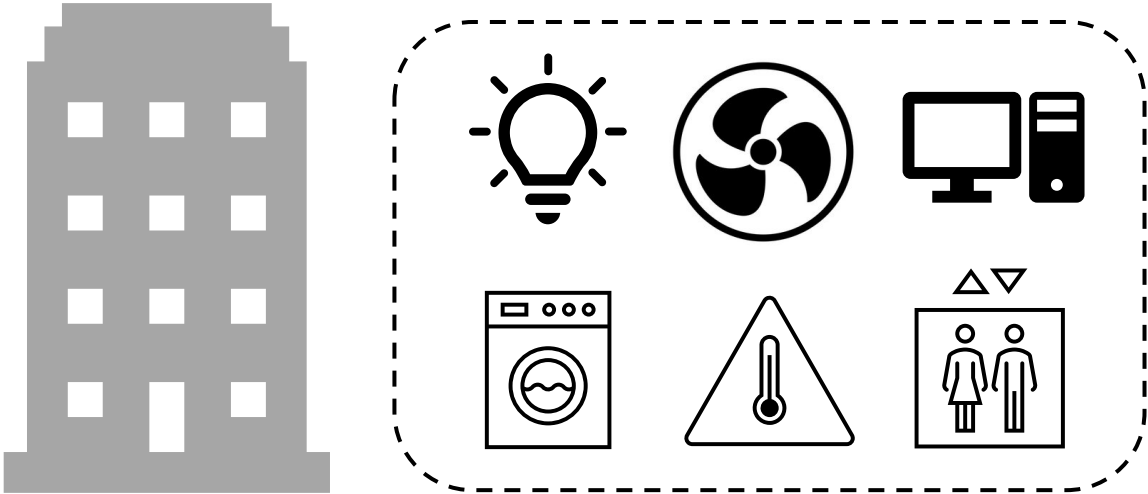
Embodied Carbon vs. Operational Carbon

CO₂ emitted in extraction, manufacturing, transportation, and installation of all materials & processes to make the building



Embodied Carbon

CO₂ emitted in operation of the building



Operational Carbon

U.S. Grid Fuel Mixes Based on eGRID 2020

Iowa:

57% Wind, 24% Coal, 12% Natural Gas, 5% Nuclear

Illinois:

58% Nuclear, 18% Coal, 14% Natural Gas, 9% Wind

Minnesota:

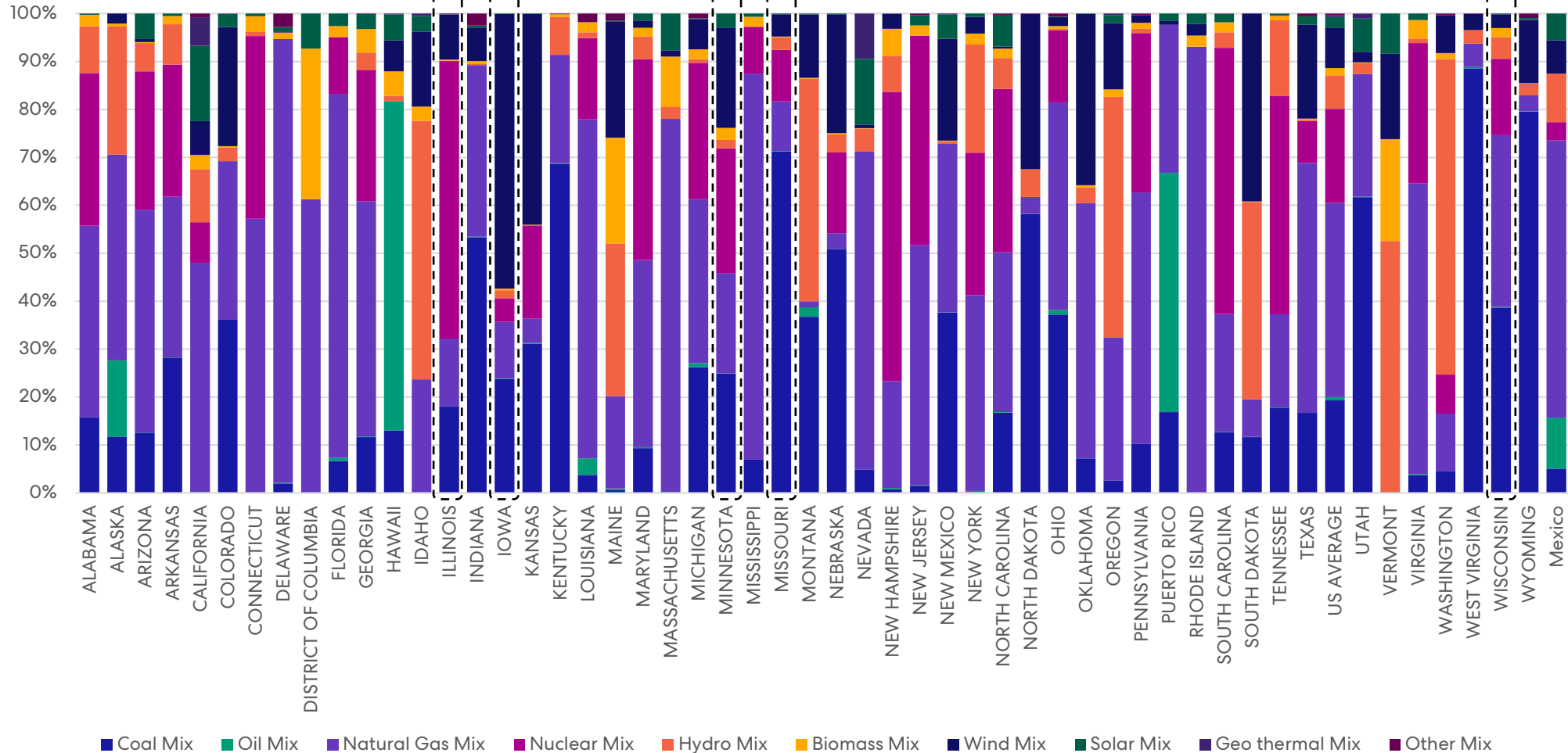
25% Coal, 21% Natural Gas, 26% Nuclear, 3% Hydro, 21% Wind, 3% Solar, 2% Biomass

Missouri:

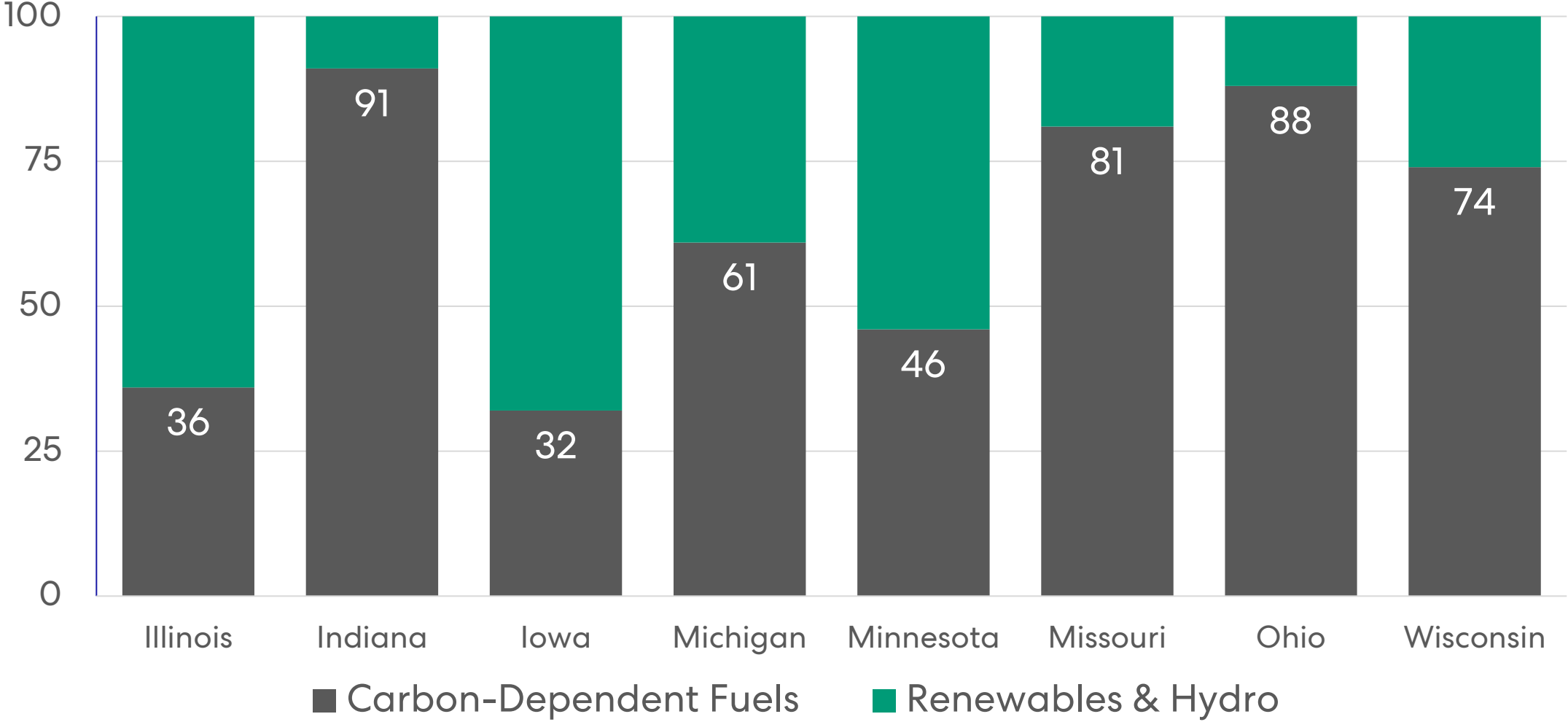
71% Coal, 10% Natural Gas, 11% Nuclear, 2.5% Hydro, 5% Wind

Wisconsin:

38% Coal, 36% Natural Gas, 16% Nuclear, 5% Hydro, 2% Biomass, 3% Wind

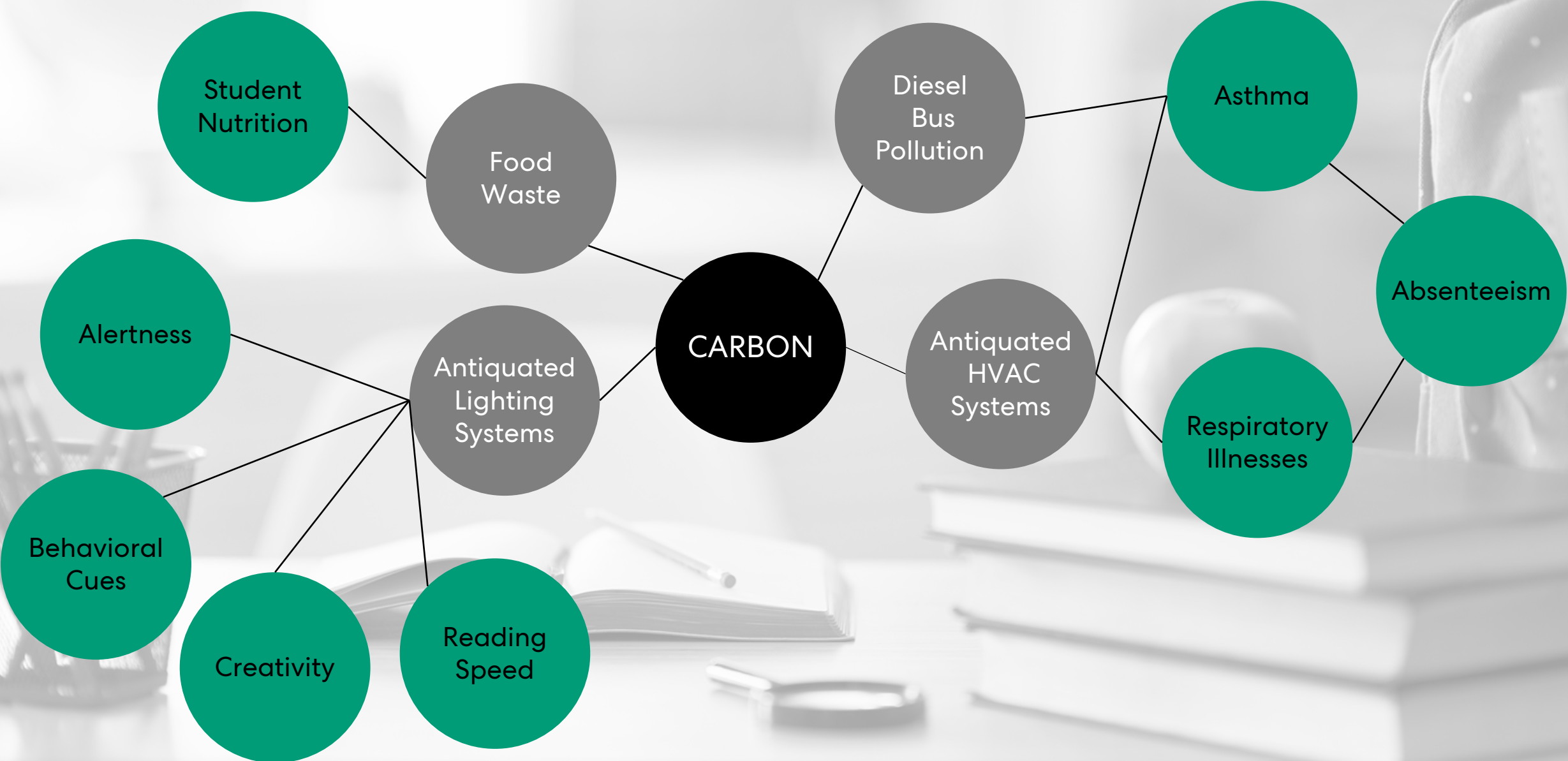


Midwest State's Grid Fuel Mixes Based on eGRID 2020



Carbon's Impact

Carbon's Impact on Health & Learning



Air Pollution Impacts Student Performance

Study of the impact of **ambient air pollutants** and association with **average academic test scores** of **3rd to 8th grade students** conducted from 2010 to 2016

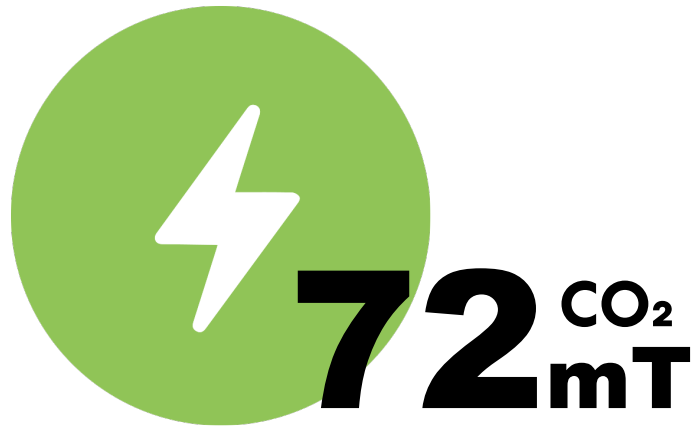
Lower average test scores in Math and English language / arts

Nationwide study aggregates more than 250 million academic achievement tests from 10,921 US school districts

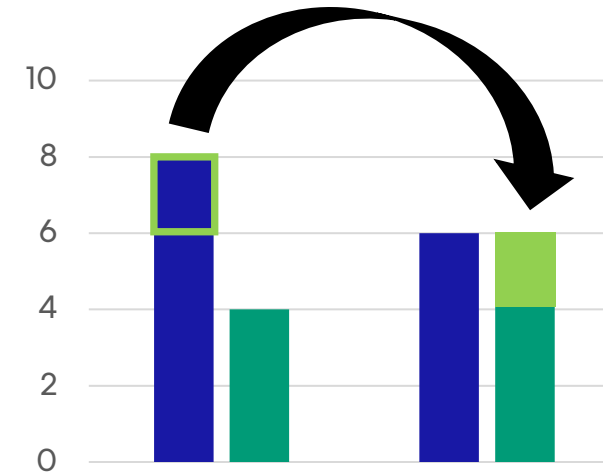
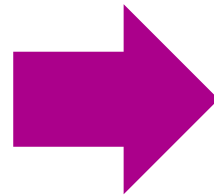


December 2021 issue of research journal of the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology
Authors: Wenxin Lu, Daniel A. Hackman, and Joel Schwartz. Published by Wolters Kluwer Health, Inc.

Budget Impacts of Carbon Reduction



K-12 schools annually spend \$8 billion on energy (second only to salaries) and emit an estimated 72 million metric tons of carbon dioxide.



An average school solar system has 900-1,200 panels and generates 300kw. Solar projects can save school districts millions of dollars over a solar project's 25-year life. This money can be reallocated to teaching and learning priorities.

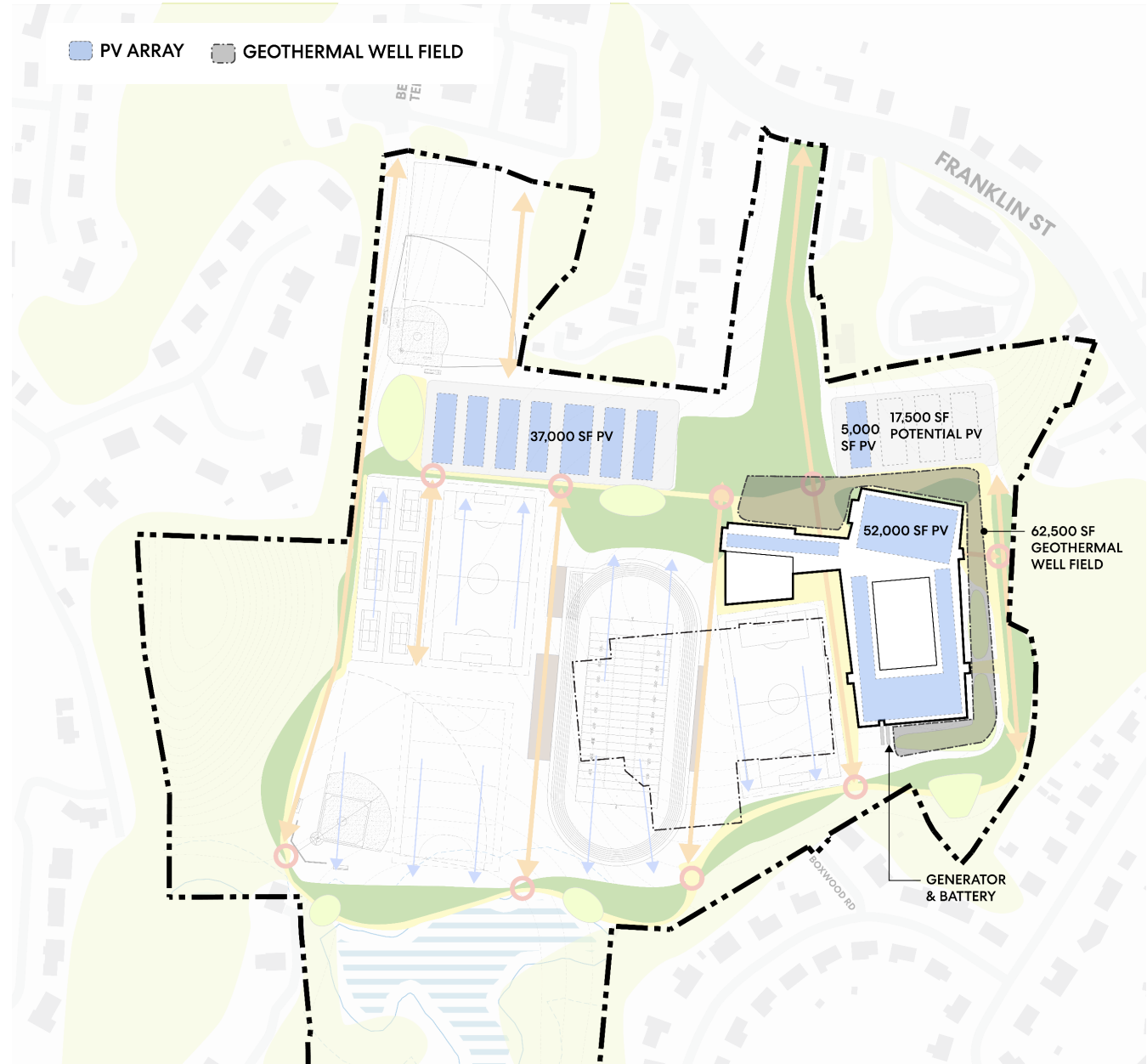
Sources: "It Has to Be A Priority: Why Schools Can't Ignore the Climate Crisis." *Education Week*, <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/it-has-to-be-a-priority-why-schools-cant-ignore-the-climate-crisis/2022/05>
Why Develop School Food Waste Reduction Programs?. Natural Resources Council of Maine, <https://www.nrcm.org/sustainability/school-food-waste-reduction-programs/>

High-Performance Building

- **Closed Loop Georexchange System**
 - Energy use intensity target (EUI) of 25
 - Allows for zero net energy
 - Additional Incentives from state and Utilities
 - No fossil fuels, additional water savings
- **Solar Power Purchase Agreement**
 - Low upfront costs to Owner
 - Powers an all-electric building
 - Reduced electricity bill
 - Contract to be approved at town meeting

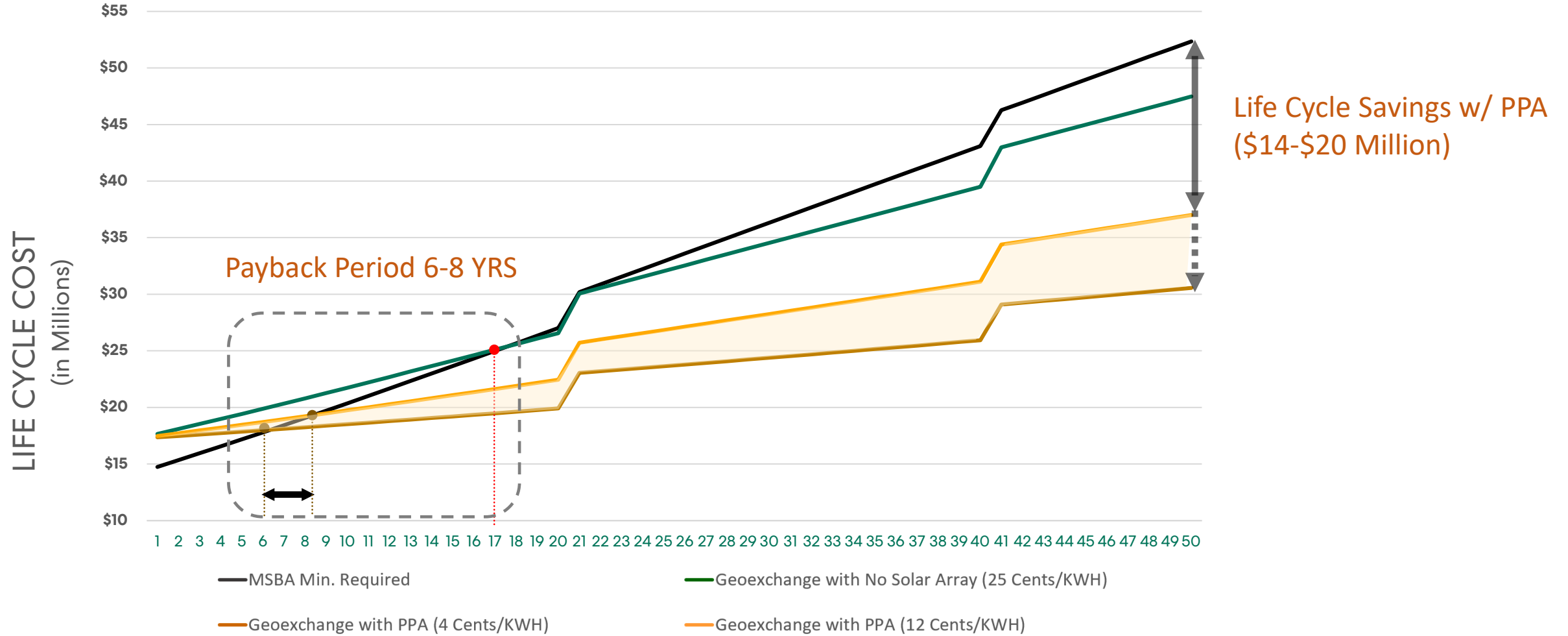


Study for Stoneham High School
Stoneham, MA

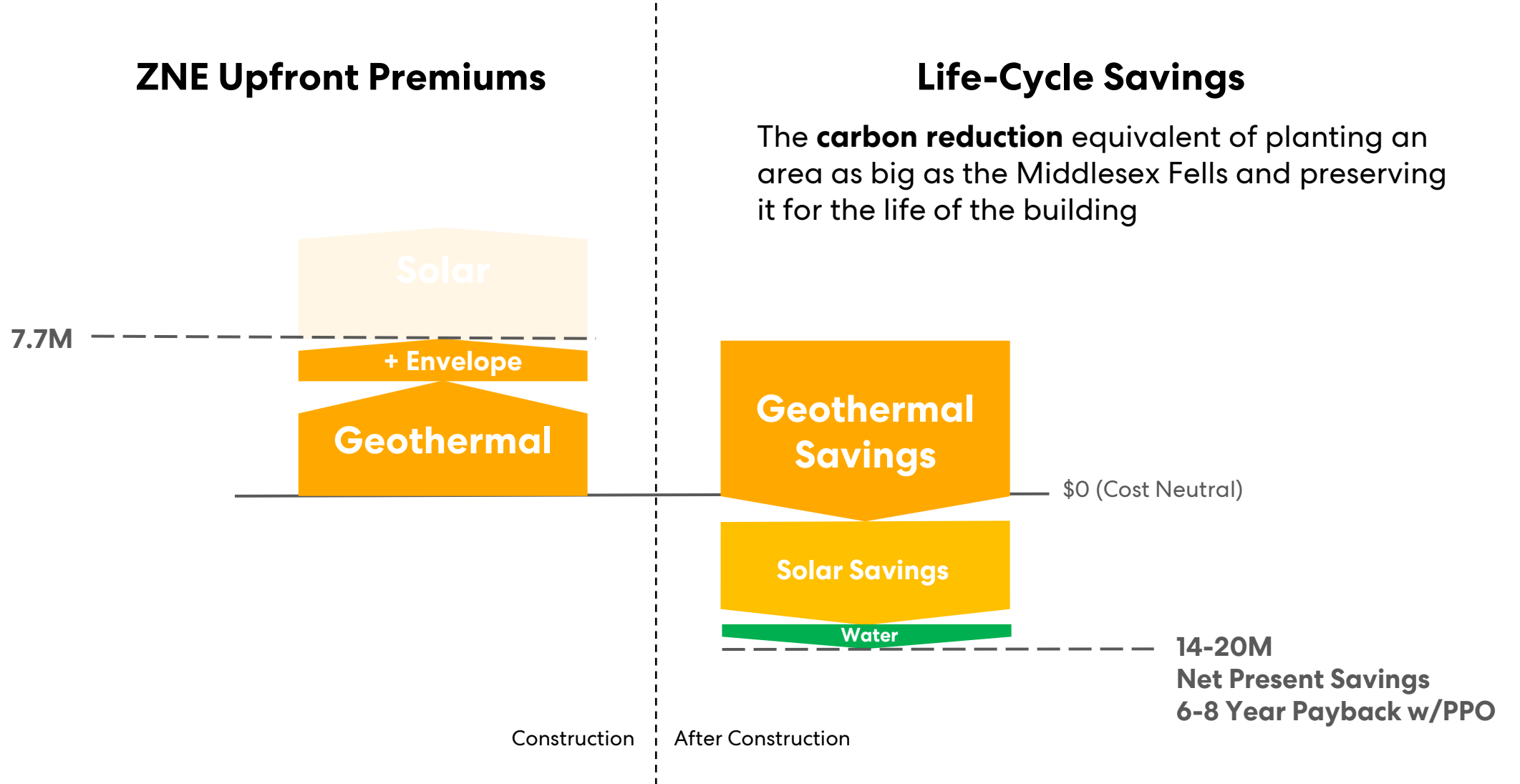


Life Cycle Cost Assessment

CUMULATIVE CASH FLOW: CAPITAL, OPERATIONAL, MAINTENANCE & REPLACEMENT COSTS



ZNE Savings to Stoneham



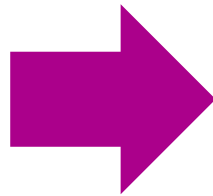
“Think about the economic advantages. If you’re producing your own energy, that’s huge and should be available to all schools”

- Laura Schifter
Founder, K12 Climate Action Plan

*Source: “Why Schools Need to Look at Their Own Carbon Footprint” Harvard Graduate School of Education,
<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/21/11/why-schools-need-look-their-own-carbon-footprint>*



School districts waste 530,000 tons of food (excluding milk) annually, resulting in nearly 2 million metric tons of carbon dioxide and landfill fees of **\$41 million.**

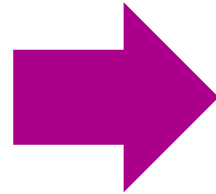


With **minimal interventions**, elementary schools participating in a food waste reduction program cut waste by 14%. If all schools achieved this we would avoid 200,000 tons of CO₂ and save \$6 million.

Sources: "It Has to Be A Priority: Why Schools Can't Ignore the Climate Crisis." *Education Week*, <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/it-has-to-be-a-priority-why-schools-cant-ignore-the-climate-crisis/2022/05>
Why Develop School Food Waste Reduction Programs?. Natural Resources Council of Maine, <https://www.nrcm.org/sustainability/school-food-waste-reduction-programs/>
Food Waste Warriors. World Wildlife Organization. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/food-waste-warriors>



Lighting costs account for 17% of a typical school's energy end uses, or 12 million metric tons of carbon dioxide.



K12 schools can save 45-60% on energy use by optimizing lighting equipment. Adding controls and dimming can increase savings to 70%.

*Source: "Better Buildings: K-12 Lighting Toolkit" US Department of Energy,
<https://betterbuildingssolutioncenter.energy.gov/k-12-lighting-toolkit>*

“Lighting is one of those investments where the ROI is attractive and visible, often the first step in major school energy efficiency upgrades.”

- US Department of Energy

*Source: “Better Buildings: K-12 Lighting Toolkit” US Department of Energy,
<https://betterbuildingssolutioncenter.energy.gov/k-12-lighting-toolkit>*

Life Cycle Financial Modeling

Life Cycle Cost Analysis for HVAC Options

30 year life-cycle cost analysis for three HVAC system options.

Type of Analysis Public Sector Lifecycle Analysis
 Type of Design Alternatives Independent
 Length of Analysis 30 yrs
 Discount Rate 2.25 %

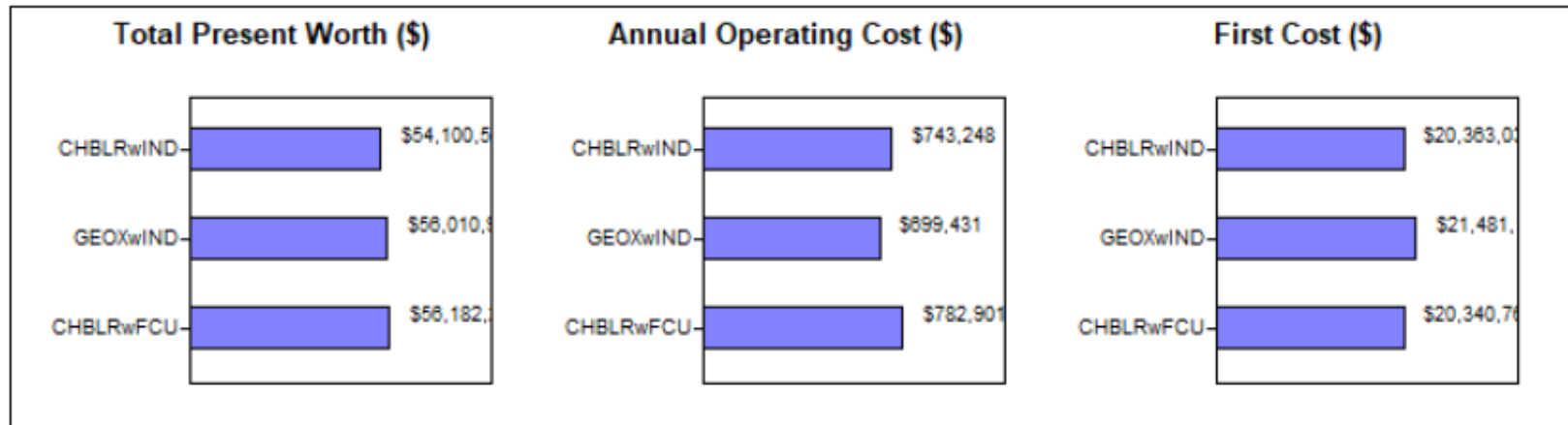


Table 1. Executive Summary

Economic Criteria	Best Design Case for Each Criteria	Value (\$)
Lowest Total Present Worth	Chiller/ Boiler with Induction	\$54,100,534
Lowest Annual Operating Cost	Geo-Exchange with Induction	\$699,431
Lowest First Cost	Chiller/ Boiler with Fan Coil Units	\$20,340,759

Table 2. Design Cases Ranked by Total Present Worth

Design Case Name	Design Case Short Name	Total Present Worth (\$)	Annual Operating Cost (\$/yr)	First Cost (\$)
Chiller/ Boiler with Induction	CHBLRwIND	\$54,100,534	\$743,248	\$20,363,034
Geo-Exchange with Induction	GEOXwIND	\$56,010,898	\$699,431	\$21,481,139
Chiller/ Boiler with Fan Coil Units	CHBLRwFCU	\$56,182,200	\$782,901	\$20,340,759

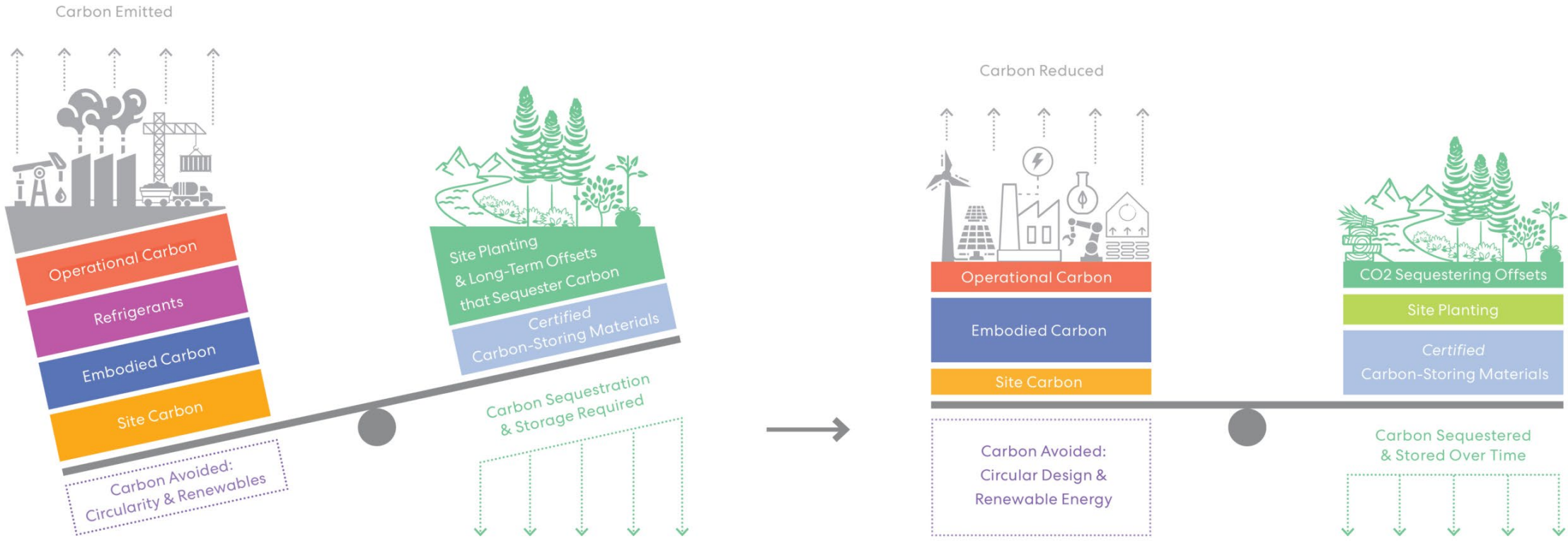
“It is arrogant for a design team to present to me only the first costs associated with building systems...it shows me you think the project ends when your design work is done.”

-Client, Stoneham High School

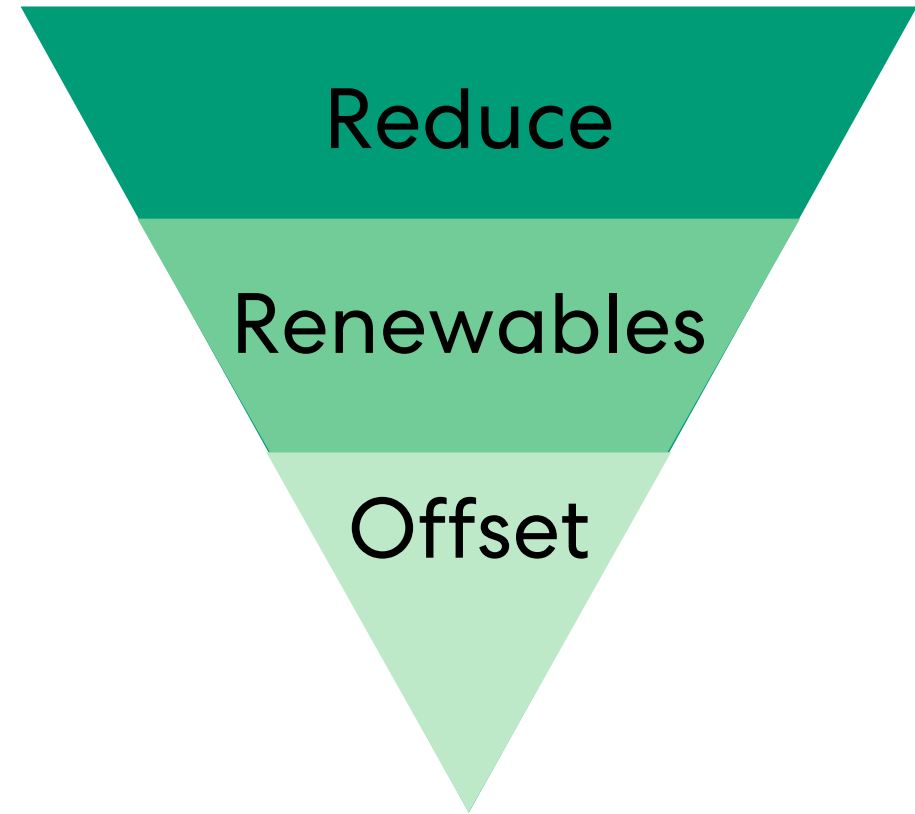
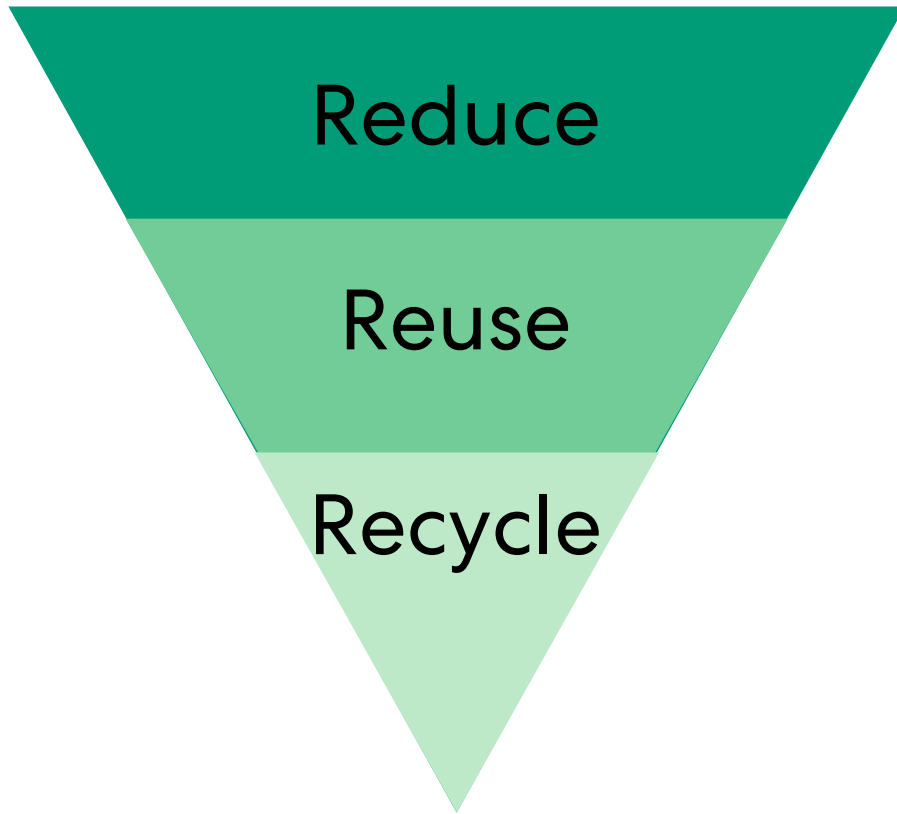
Carbon Reduction Tactics

A “**Net Zero Whole-Life Carbon**” asset is where the sum total of all asset-related **GHG emissions**, both operational and embodied, are minimized, meet local carbon, energy and water targets, and with residual “offsets” **equal zero**.

Carbon Balancing



Carbon Balancing



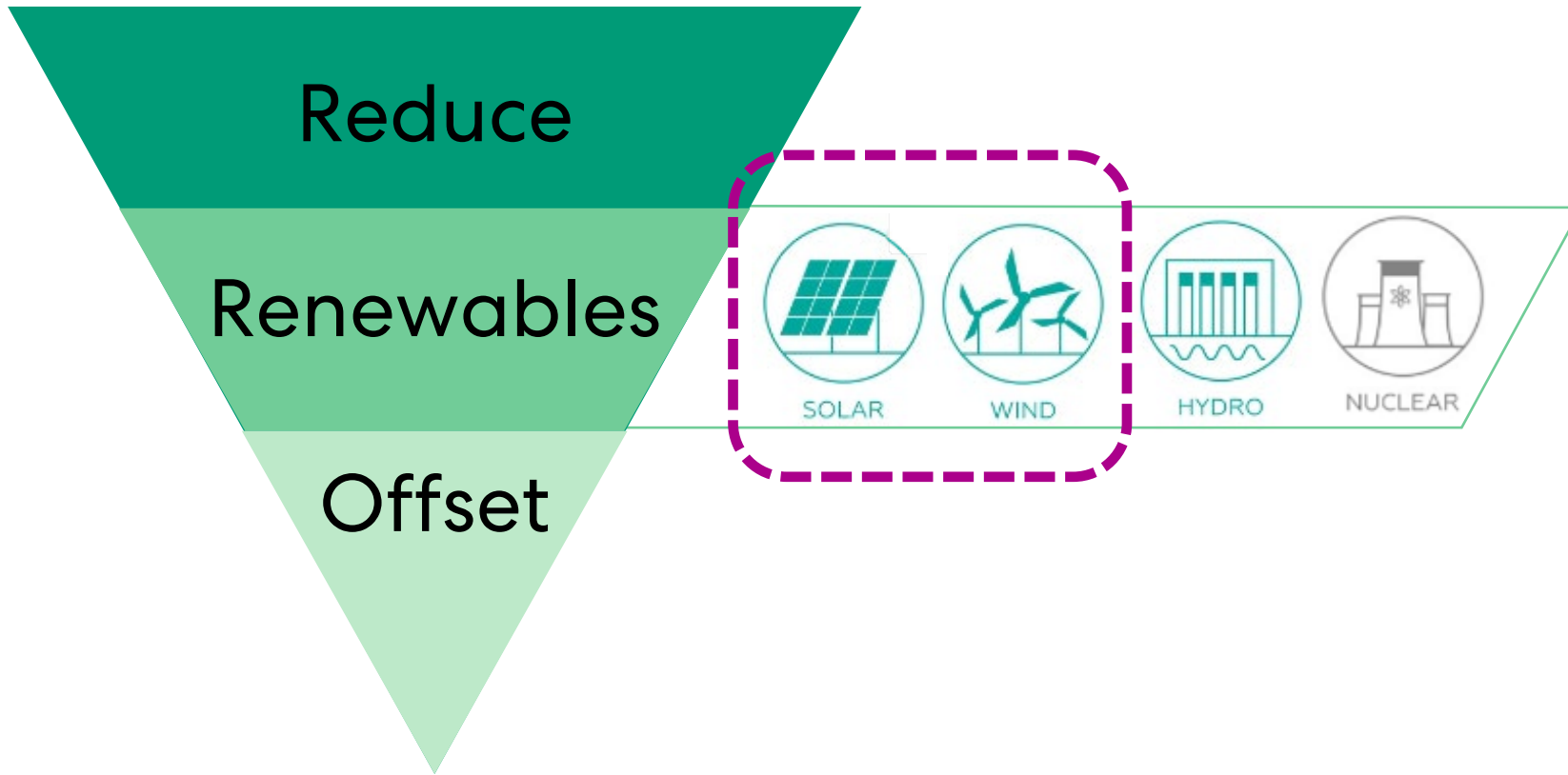


Reduce

Renewables

Offset





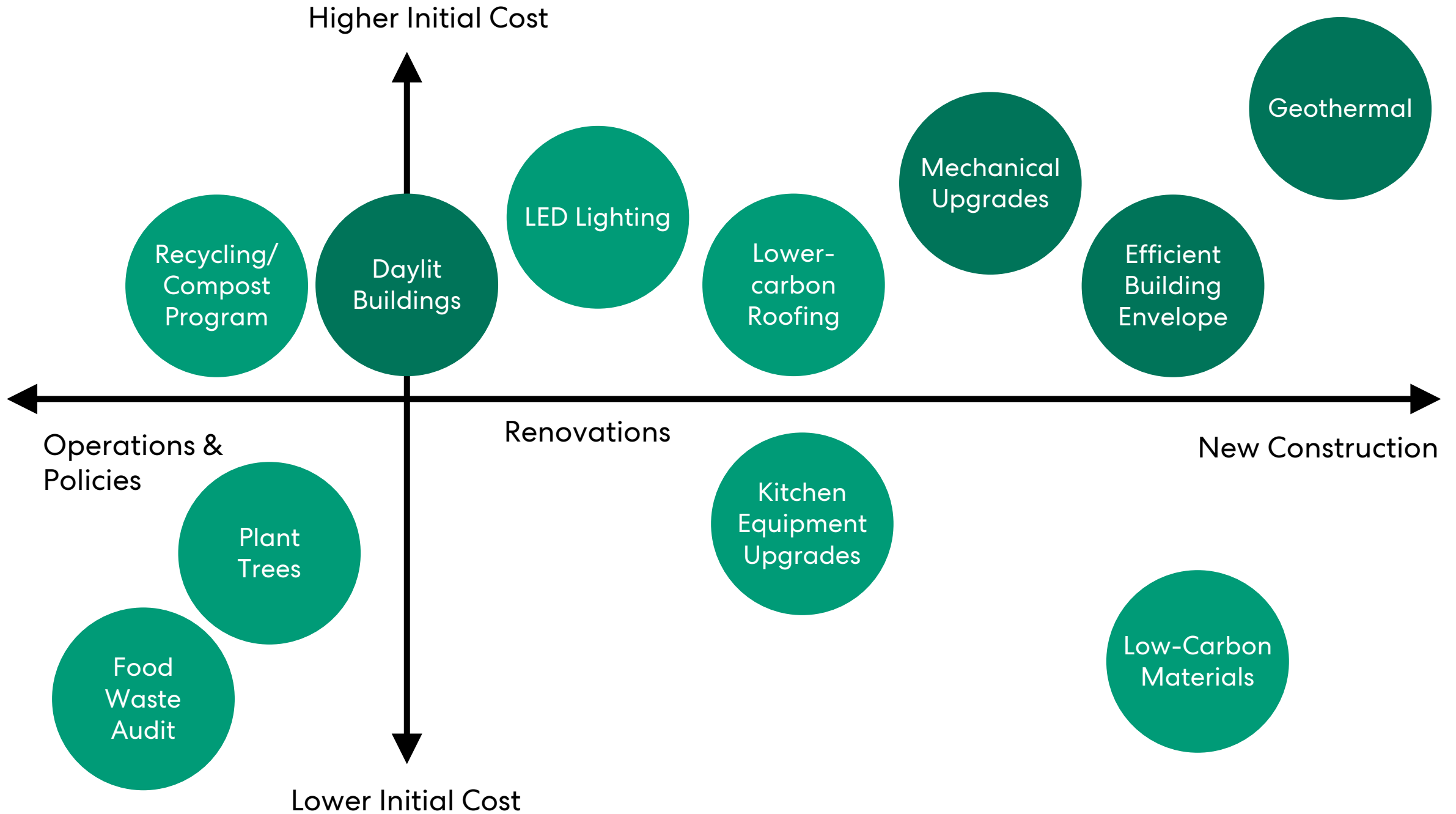


Reduce

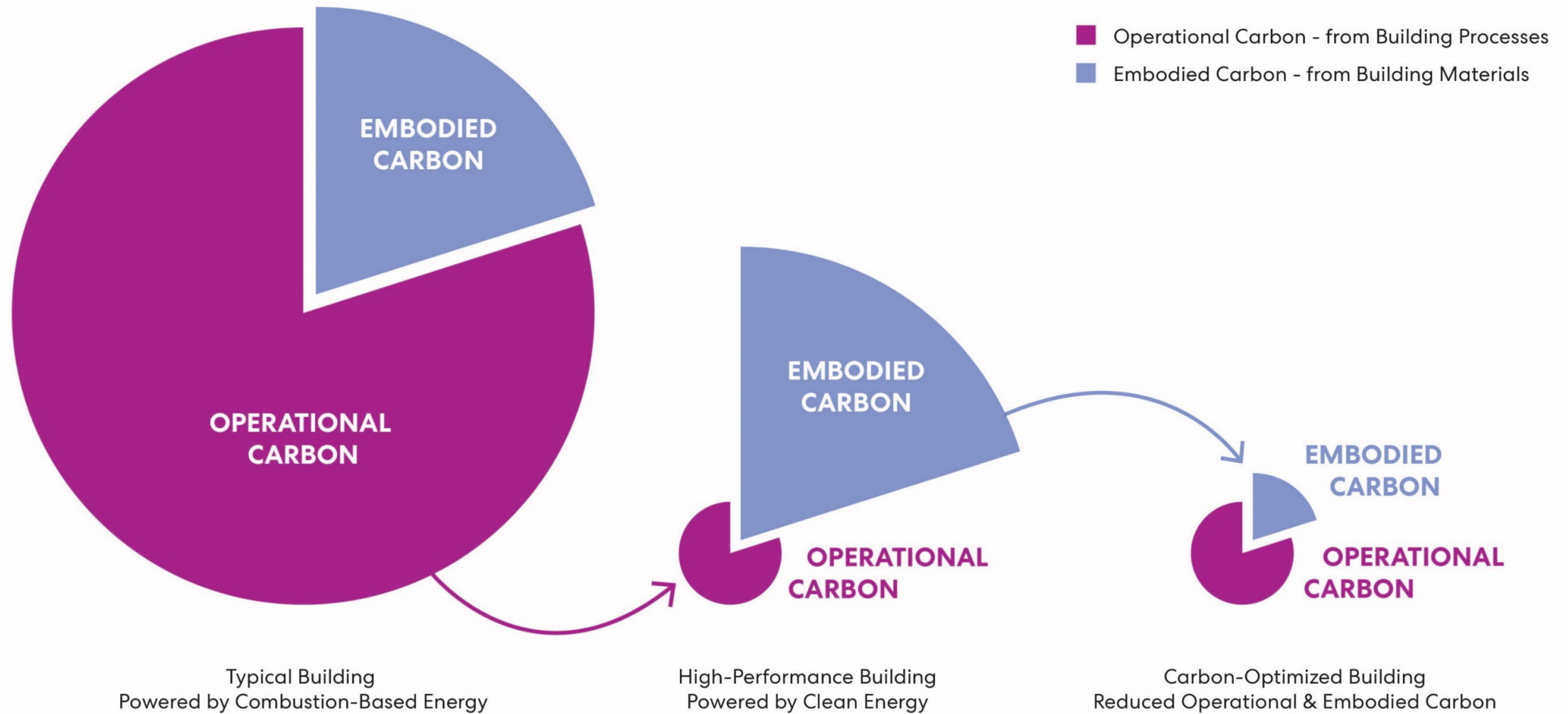
Renewables

Offset





Reducing Operational & Embodied Carbon



Embodied Carbon—Up Front Design Decisions

Make carbon smart decisions up front.

Envelope: Consider quantity of glass

Structure: Timber < Mixed < Concrete/Steel

Interiors: Less is more

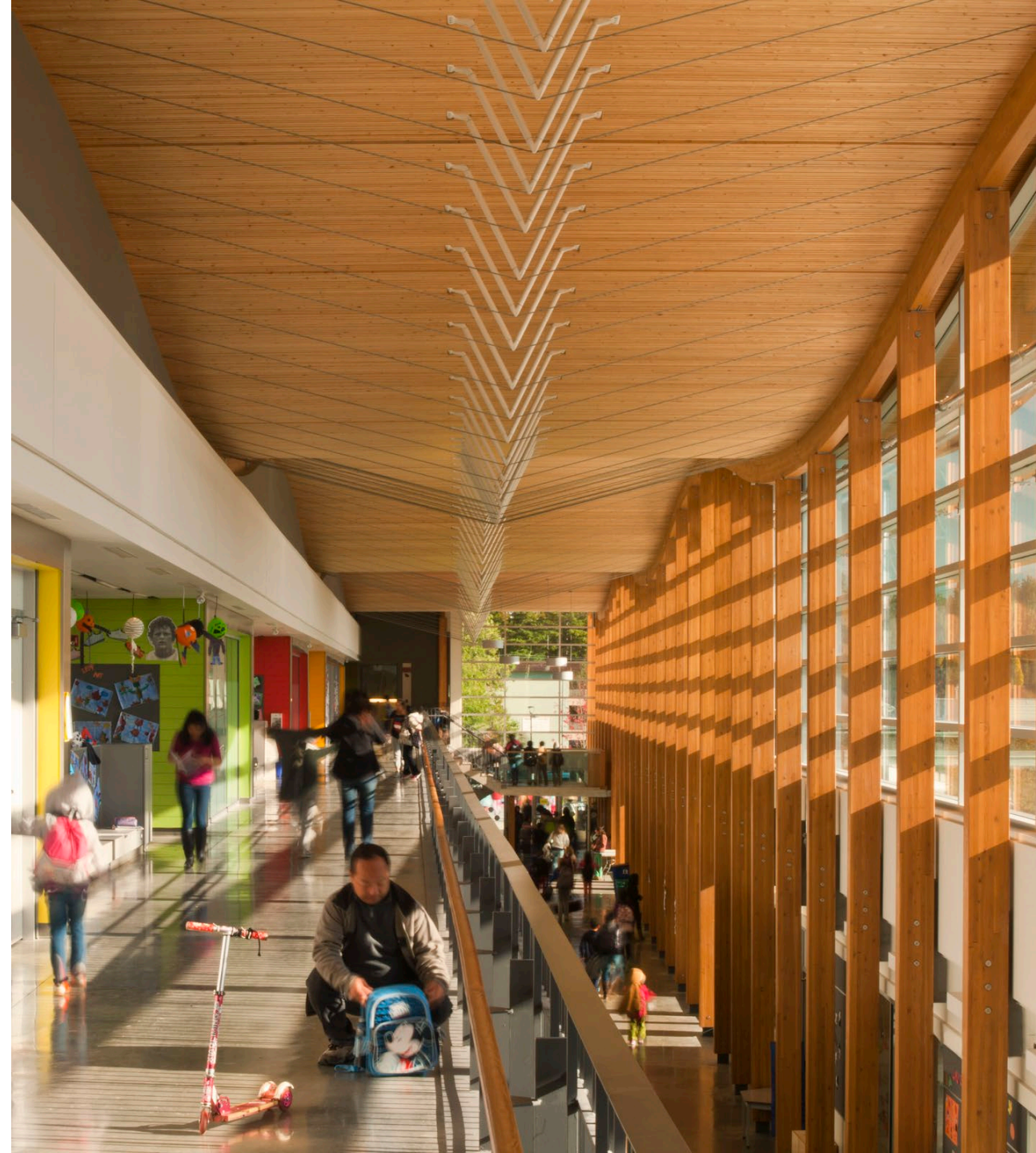
Site: Trees and native plantings

* Retain/ Salvage existing (if applicable)



Samuel Brighthouse Elementary School

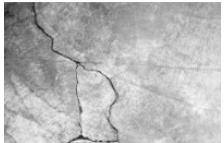
Richmond, BC
Photo by Nic Lehoux



Embodied Carbon Material Type & Quantity

Identify Hot Spots

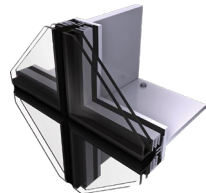
Perform a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)
to determine high impact material
categories



Concrete



Steel



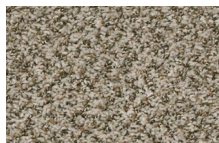
Glazing Assemblies



Insulation



Gypsum



Carpet

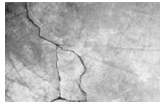


Lisle Elementary School
Lisle, Illinois

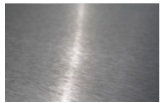


Embodied Carbon—Material Type and Quantity

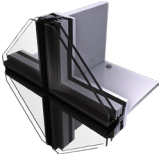
Optimization



Concrete



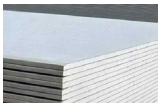
Steel



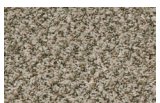
Glazing Assemblies



Insulation



Gypsum



Carpet

Search for Lower Carbon Solutions



Product Comparison Schedule

Spot Section	Product Type	TYPE MARK/KEY	PRODUCT	MANUFACTURER/CATION	Notes	ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT				
						EMBODIED CARBON (Conservative)	EMBODIED CARBON (ICL Baseline)	EMBODIED CARBON (Achievable target)	EMBODIED CARBON (Actual)	
DIVISION 4 - MASONRY	Brick Veneer		Standard Brick	ACME	*Local? Elgin (113 miles) or Denton (200+ miles) plants are nearest. Also note most bricks are made with coal. Not sure. Advise to explore.					
	Thin Brick	?	Bullitt	BullMason	USA					
CONCRETE	Precast			Clay	What is 4th process? Not able to adjust concrete mix	0.202 kgCO2e/lb		0.102 kgCO2e/lb	?	
	Ready-Mix		3,000 psi	Central Concrete	USA. Seems to be doing some great things re: research and implementation or able to no rebid/cost			133 - 685 kgCO2e/yft ³ (depending on mix ratios)		
			4,000 psi	Central Concrete	USA. Seems to be doing some great things re: research and			187 kgCO2e/yft ³		
DIVISION 5 - METALS	Steel		Rebar	CMC	*Local? Sequim, TX			0.70 kgCO2e/yft		
			Structural Steel (Hot Rolled)	CMC	*Local? Midlothian, TX, uses L&F			0.403 - 0.404 kgCO2e/yft		
			Cold Formed Steel	EMCO	*Local? Dallas, TX			0.411 - 0.799 kgCO2e/yft (depending on light or heavy shape)		
DIVISION 5 - FINISHING	Gypsum Bd		EcoSmart	USG	*Local? Sweetwater and Galena Park, TX			0.555 kgCO2e/yft		
			CertainTeed Type X	CertainTeed	USA			213 kgCO2e/1000' ft		
			AirRenew Essential Type X	CertainTeed	USA			170.344 kgCO2e/1000' ft (depending on thickness)		
DIVISION 7 - THERMAL AND MOISTURE PROTECTION	Plywood and OSB		Softwood Ply	Roxburg Forest Products	USA			157 kgCO2e/yft ³		
			Roof membrane	TPO	EverGuard Extrusion	USA			60th percentile (good)	
	Blown Insul		Jet Stream Ultra Blowing Wool by Knuf	Knuf	USA	*Using natural mineral wool blown in applications are the best way to reduce impact			0.0276 kgCO2e/yft	
			Blowing Wool Fiberglass	CertainTeed	USA	Materials such as wool, straw, sheep wool, cork, and sheep wool naturally sequester carbon and store it over their useful life. Using these materials can reduce the carbon footprint of your building			0.155 kgCO2e/yft	
	Board Insul (Walls) (used 6'-0" for walls)		Earthwool	Knuf	USA	Specific blown in insulation instead of egg and spray foam insulation			0.156 kgCO2e/yft	
			CurtainRock	Rickwood	USA	Blow-in fiberglass and cellulose insulation have a significantly lower embodied carbon impact than rigid insulation and spray foams. Also, if foot properties (tested) to studs or rafters, spray foam insulation can trap over time and spray foam can crack with building movement or settling, creating a thermal bridge and generally making the moisture condensation and wall assembly degradation. Using high-density blown in stone foam insulation (over 2.0 pcf) can help minimize thermal bridging, minimize embodied carbon, and improve the operational performance and lifespan of a building			0.209 kgCO2e/yft	
	Board Insul (Roof)		Thermafiber Mineral Wool	Owens Corning	USA	Blow-in mineral wool insulation (MWO) uses foam insulation, and spray foam, where close to a wall - that the insulation itself does not generate based products that require significant energy to manufacture resulting in high embodied carbon footprint. Where climate and product requirements allow, specify lower carbon alternatives.			0.226 kgCO2e/yft	
			Cellular Polyiso Rigid Insul	Carlisle Sys/Tec Systems	USA	*Available from Texas source (Temple, TX)			0.194 kgCO2e/yft	
	Foamed Insul		TopRock DD	Rickwood	USA				0.178 kgCO2e/yft	
			HFO Open Cell	?		only industry wide data available			0.146 kgCO2e/yft	
DIVISION 8 - OPENINGS	Blanket		Sustainable Insul Fiberglass Blankets (R-21 to R-30)	CertainTeed	USA			0.0336 kgCO2e/yft		
			Thermafiber Mineral Wool	Owens Corning	USA			0.0507 - 0.153 kgCO2e/yft (based on density)		
			EcoTouch Pink Fiberglass Batt and Owens Corning	USA				0.450 - 0.632 kgCO2e/yft (based on R-value and facing)		
Windows	Curtainwall		ConformBatt	Rickwood	USA			0.142 - 0.201 kgCO2e/yft (depending on R-value)		
			Wood Doors	Assa Abloy?				128 kgCO2e		

Embodied Carbon Test Case: Roof Replacement

Product Comparison

Product A



PVC Single-Ply Roofing

60 mil thickness

613 g CO2e/sf

Product B



PVC Single-Ply Roofing

60 mil thickness

677 g CO2e/sf

Product C



PVC Single-Ply Roofing

60 mil thickness

725 g CO2e/sf

11.2 tons CO2e

Saved on 100,000 sf roof



Requires **13.4 acres** of US forests

1 year to sequester this much carbon



Embodied Carbon Test Case: Roof Replacement

Equal Product Performance, Significant Environmental Impact



PVC Single-Ply Membrane Roofing

60 mil thickness

613 – 725 g CO₂e/sf

11.2 tons CO₂e

Saved on 100,000 sf roof



Modified Bitumen Roofing

2-ply SBS

622 – 835 g CO₂e/sf

21.3 tons CO₂e

Saved on 100,000 sf roof



EPDM Roofing

60 mil thickness

537 – 660 g CO₂e/sf

12.3 tons CO₂e

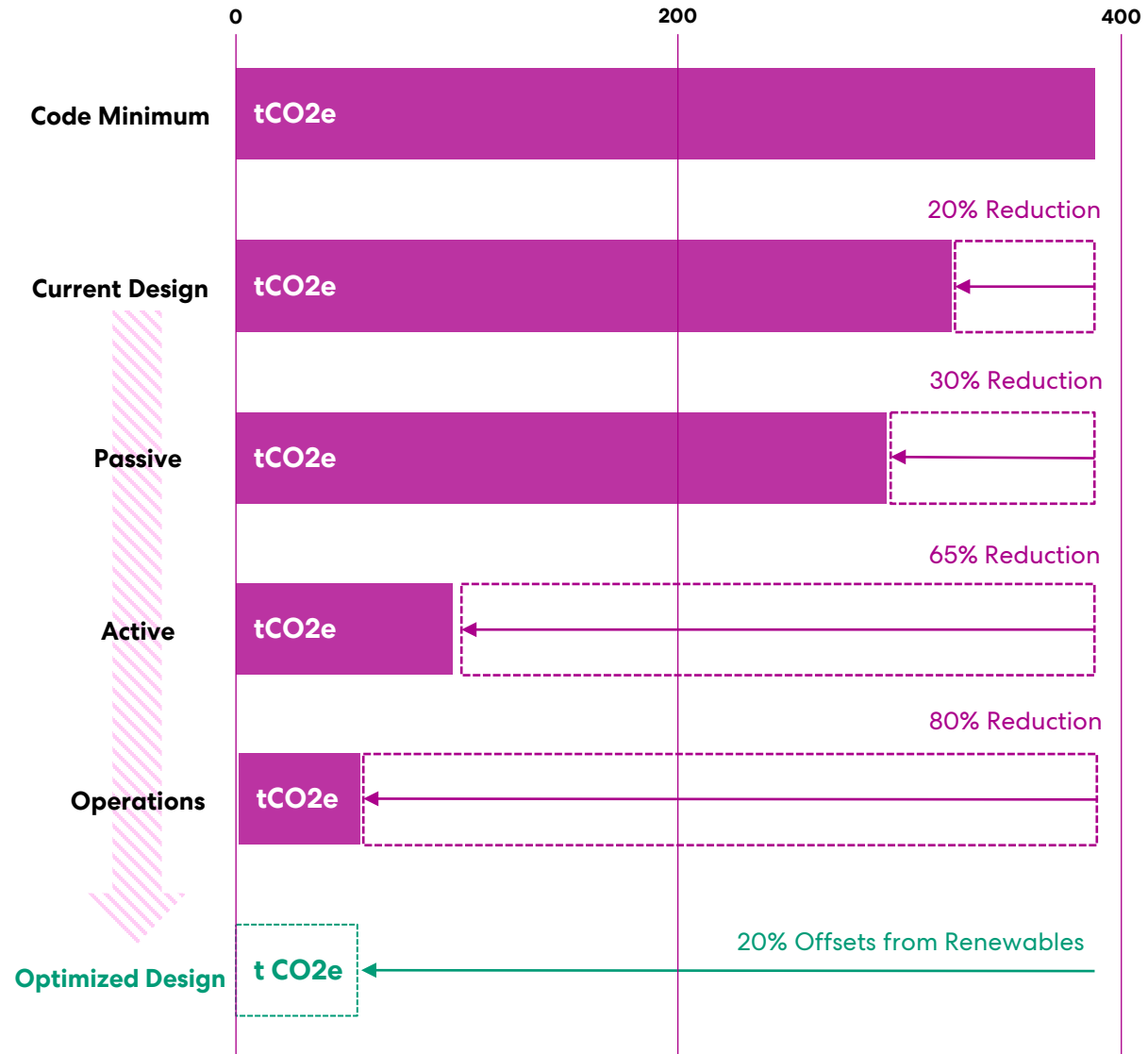
Saved on 100,000 sf roof

Charting the Path to Net Zero Operational Carbon

- 1 High-performance building envelope
- 2 Smart building orientation and massing
- 3 Efficient building systems
- 4 Efficient controls and operations
- 5 Embed Renewables onsite

Path to Zero Operational Carbon Design

Carbon Reduction Measures, Predicted GWP from Building Operations



Design Features

- Prescriptive Envelope
- Requirements for Electrification of Cooling, Heating, and Domestic Hot Water Systems

Design Features

- Window U-0.35
- Window SHGC 0.40
- Wall R-18
- Roof R-43

1. Passive Strategies

- Window to Wall Ratio 40%
- Window U-0.20 SHGC 0.35
- Wall R-25
- Roof R-55

2. Active Strategies

- Heating and Cooling GeoExchange HP
- Heat Recovery and Economizer
- Electric Tankless DHW

3. Operations Strategies

- Daylight Sensors
- Daylight Controls
- Lighting Schedules
- Energy Saving Lighting and Equipment Power Densities

4. 100% Offset from On-Site Renewable Strategies

- Roof PV
- BIPV
- Parking Lot Canopy Mounted PV



1. **Waste Heat** – 50% energy improvement
2. **PV Array** – Net Zero Energy
3. **Geo-exchange** – Net Positive Energy

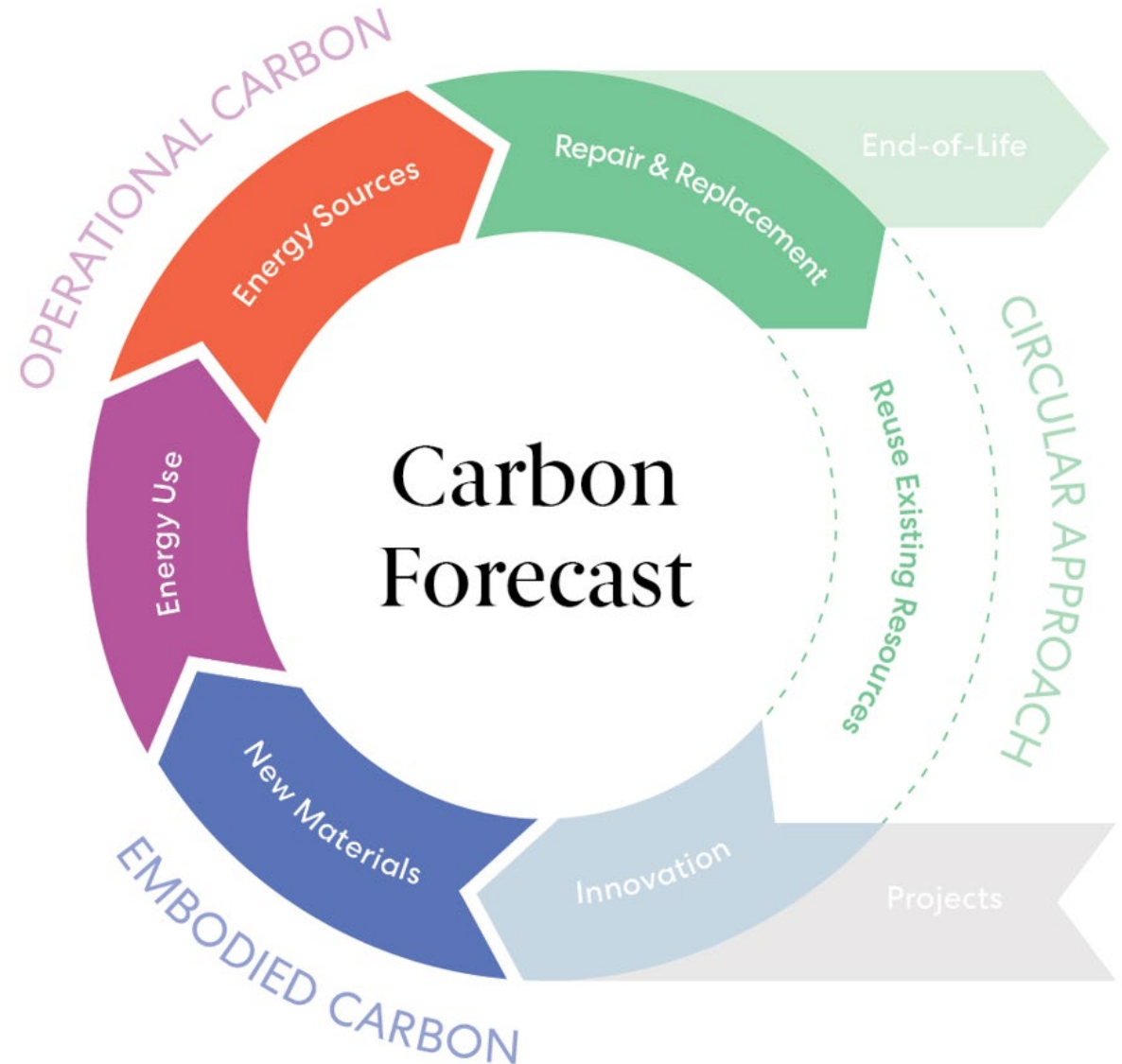
Phillips Academy Andover, Snyder Center



Carbon Forecasting

A Path to Net Zero Carbon Buildings

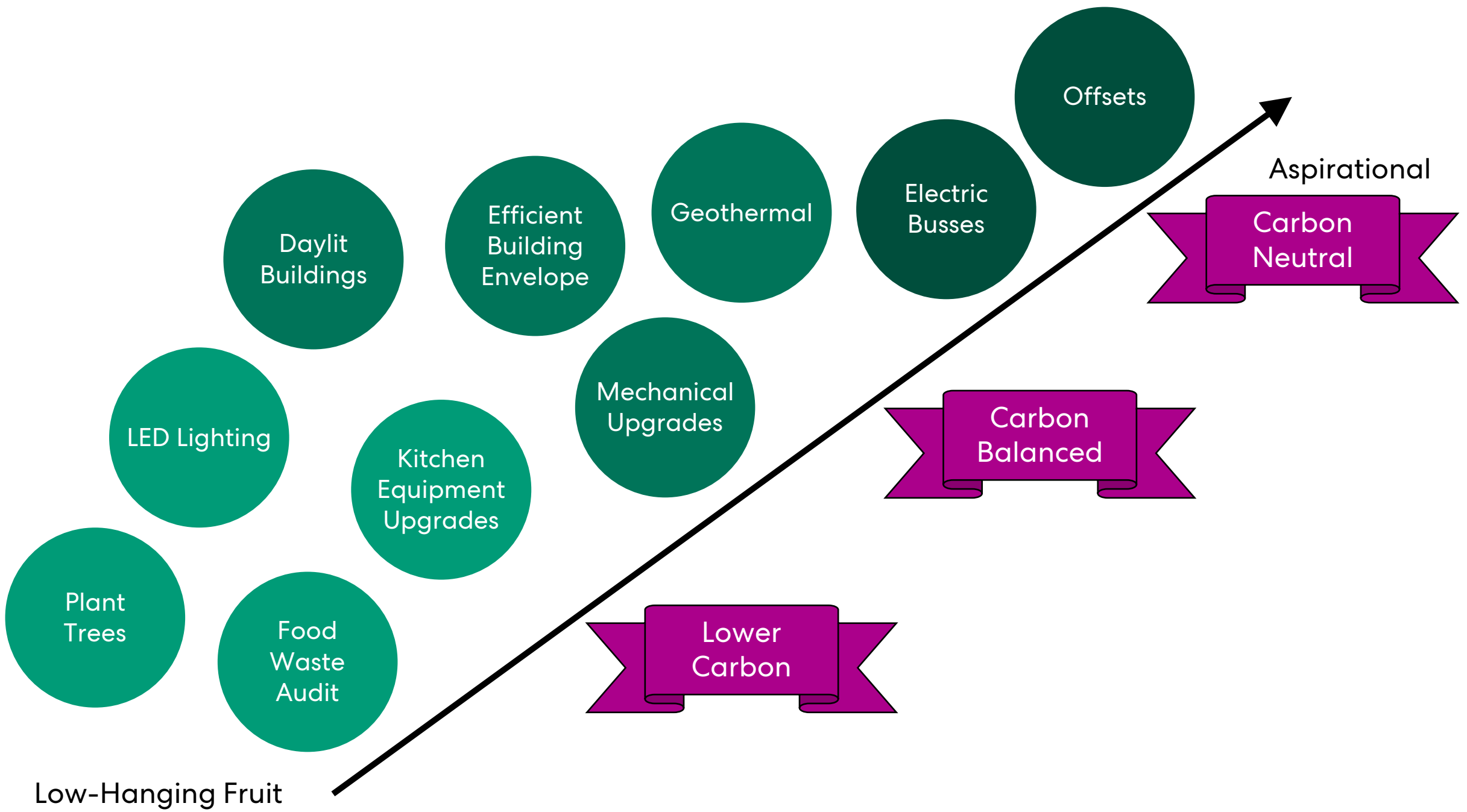
1. Innovation in design of high-efficiency buildings
2. Source materials with lower embodied carbon
3. Reduce energy use in manufacturing, construction, and operations
4. Utilize sustainable energy sources
5. Extend longevity through operations and maintenance
6. Thoughtful reuse of existing resources



Call to Action

“Do what you can,
with what you have,
where you are.”

- Theodore Roosevelt





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