Northern Illinois University

Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability (NICCS)

January 2026

Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability (NICCS)

Goals of NICCS program

- To link NIU research with real-world issues and scenarios to enhance sustainability of communities
- To develop solutions to major challenges in our region, and beyond

Four NICCS pillars

- Water Resources
- Environmental Adaptation
- Energy
- Food Systems Innovation

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- To link research conducted on campus to real-world issues and scenarios
- To develop solutions to major challenges in our region, and beyond

Just a few examples:

Water Resources

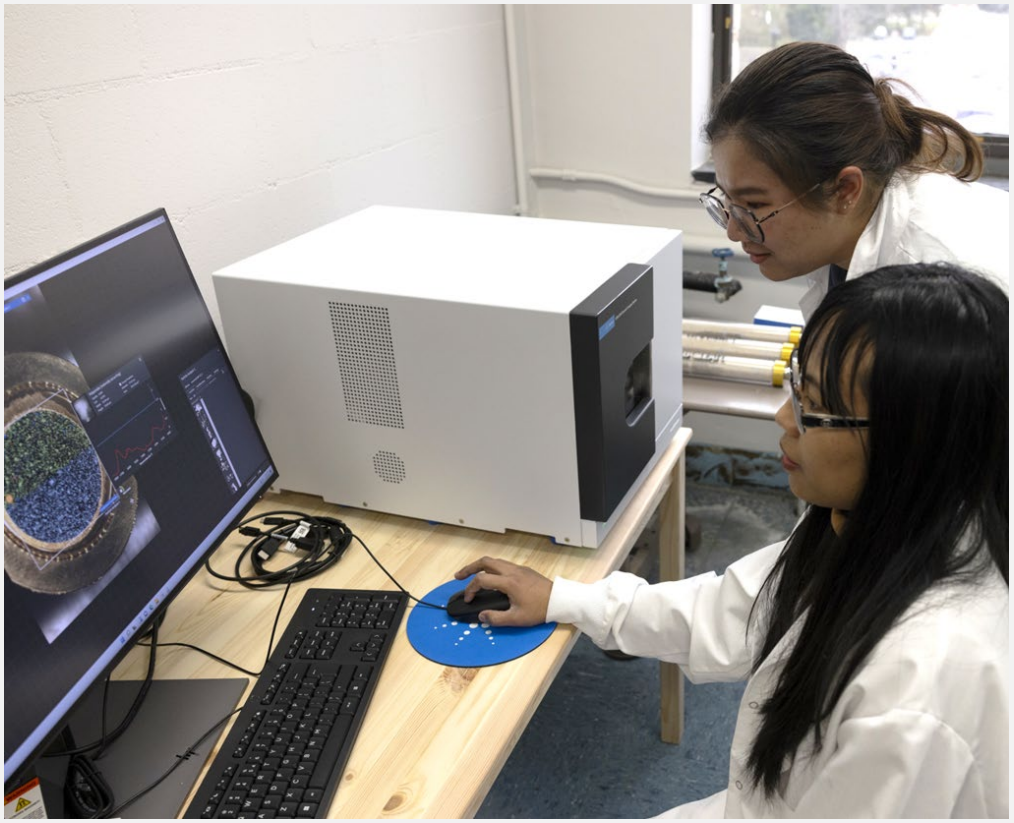
Partnership with DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation District

Water quality studies to inform watershed planning, Clean Water Act funding projects

Water Resources

Partnership with Illinois Tollway

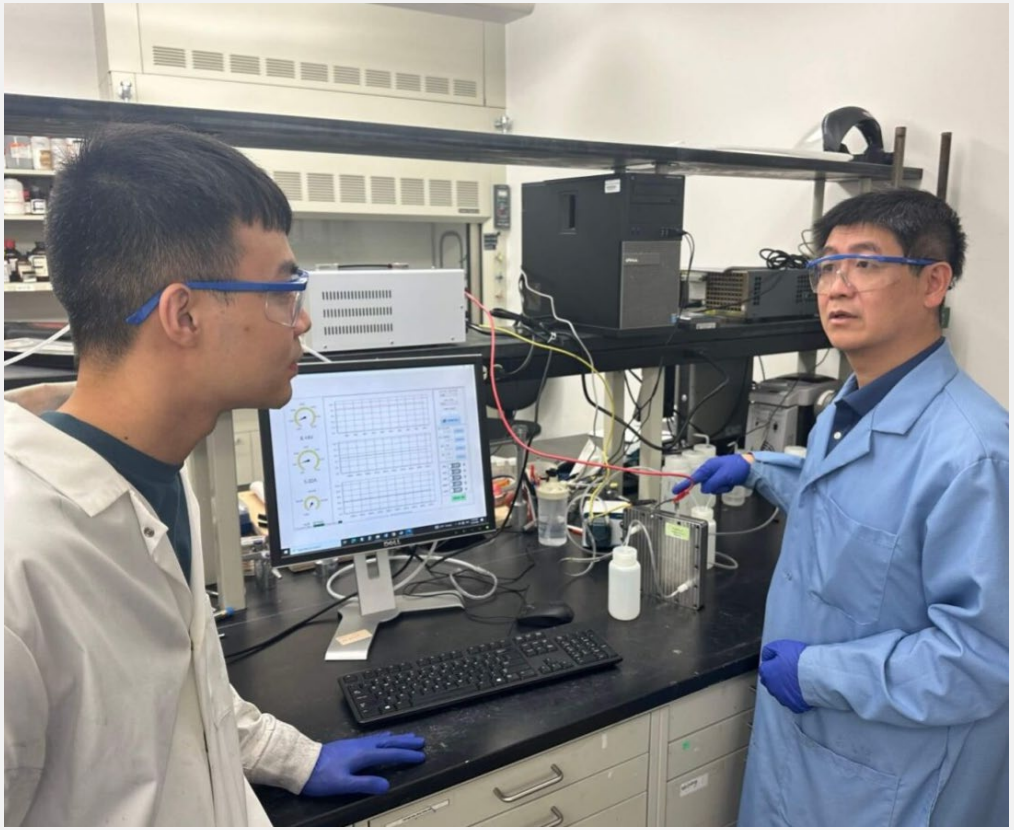
Examination of how erosion control materials contribute to microplastics in surface water and sediments



Energy

Reduction of carbon dioxide in emissions

Lab-based research to investigate electrochemical conversion of CO_2 into ethanol



Energy

Energy Efficiency Research

Using recent energy efficiency upgrades across campus to study real-world efficiency, optimization applications

Environmental Adaptation

Prairie Restoration

Evaluating effects of climate variability on invasive species in restored prairie ecosystems

Environmental Adaptation

Public Opinion of Prairie Restoration

Examining factors in messaging that increase public engagement with prairie restoration

Food Systems Innovation

Bioplastics Development

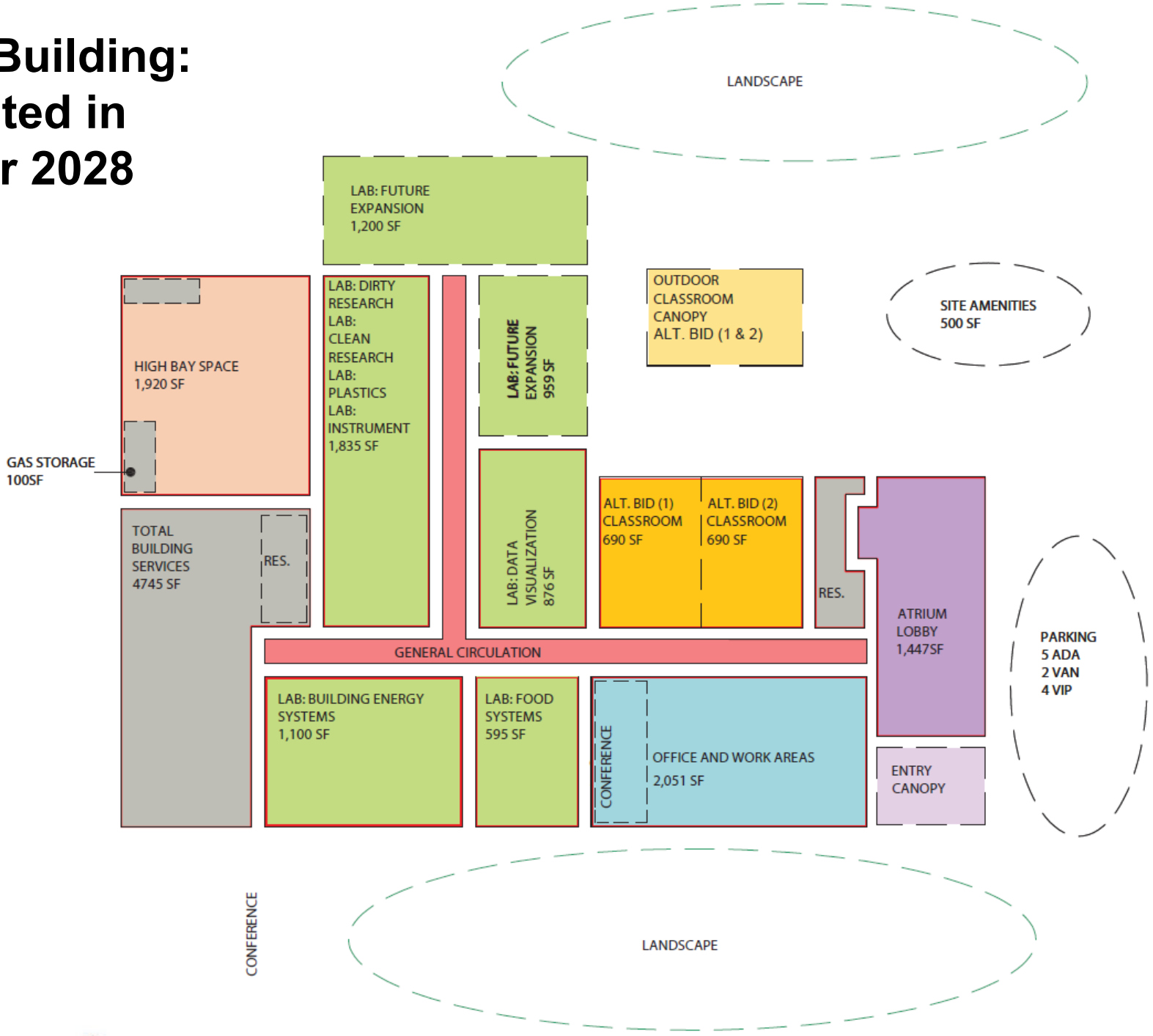
Using waste from commodity crop production to create bioplastics

Food Systems Innovation

Addressing Food Insecurity, Food Waste

Examining the value of food waste reduction programs to address food insecurity

NICCS Building: Completed in Summer 2028



NICCS Building: Completed in Summer 2028

- Bids due on January 26 (next week)
- Contract announced at March 9 CDB meeting
  (Design renderings available shortly after)
- Earth moving to begin in late 2026
- 510 days to complete the building