5.1 Integrate Sustainability into Plan of Conservation and Development

5 – 60 Points

Action Updates

This action was last updated in 2025. A version of this action from the prior program year is available for comparison. Edits are highlighted in yellow.

Objective

Integrate sustainability principles into land use planning.

Complementary Action:

- Adapt Permitting Process to Promote Sustainable Development

What to Do

The more you do, the more points you earn.

1. Plan of Conservation and Development **(up to 60 points)**

   a. Include at least four Hazard Mitigation Plan goals into your most recent Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). There is one required goal (indicated), and you may select the other three goals from the list below. **(5 points)**

   Hazard Mitigation Goals:

   - **REQUIRED:** Adopt land use policies in the POCD that encourage land protection within natural hazard areas and discourage development or redevelopment within natural hazard areas.
   - ***OPTIONAL:*** Clearly identify up-to-date natural hazard areas and map them on the future land use map.
   - ***OPTIONAL:*** Provide adequate space for expected future growth in areas outside of natural hazard areas.
   - ***OPTIONAL:*** Identify/Incorporate an action to undertake an evacuation and shelter plan to deal with emergencies from natural hazards.
   - ***OPTIONAL:*** Adopt transportation policies that limit access to natural hazard areas.
   - ***OPTIONAL:*** Adopt economic development or redevelopment strategies that include provisions for mitigating natural hazards.
   - ***OPTIONAL:*** Institute infrastructure policies that limit extension of existing facilities that would encourage development in areas vulnerable to natural hazards. Limit extension of existing facilities and services that would encourage development in areas vulnerable to natural hazards.
   - ***OPTIONAL:*** Adopt a policy to harden/protect existing critical facilities and important cultural resources that are located in vulnerable areas.

   Submit: A copy of your current, adopted POCD, and a completed worksheet 1.

   b. Incorporate at least three sustainability concepts as policy from the list provided below. For each concept toward sustainability selected, you must describe how the concept was included in your POCD as

implementable policy and include page(s) where referenced. For a list of examples of how you might include each concept, see the "Sustainability Concepts in Action" sheet. **(20 points for first three concepts, 5 points per additional concept)**

- **Concept 1:** Land Use Patterns
- **Concept 2:** Compatible Physical Development and Stewardship
- **Concept 3:** Municipal Programs and Operations
- **Concept 4:** Community Character and Livability
- **Concept 5:** Economic Vitality and Resilience
- **Concept 6:** Resilient Infrastructure
- **Concept 7:** Other

Submit: A copy of your current, adopted POCD and a completed worksheet 2. For a list of examples of how you might include sustainability concepts in your POCD, see the "Sustainability Concepts in Action" sheet.

c. Engage in intentional and ongoing public outreach and participation on planning issues. Below are examples of potential strategies, which go beyond outreach in developing the POCD (which is a critically important process, but not eligible for points under this action). **(5 points per activity, up to 15 points maximum)**

- Create an implementation score card of POCD actions and review through multiple public forums on an annual basis;
- Engage community residents and other municipal departments to provide meaningful feedback on local planning efforts, including a strategy to promote equity and inclusivity in planning;
- Partner with schools, local businesses and other stakeholders for educational outreach on planning, which could include a “Planning Listening Tour”;
- Create a series of fact sheets on pertinent planning topics for web posting and dissemination;
- Through the collaboration across municipal departments, develop a series of “Planning Pop Ups” to build visibility for planning efforts and land use commissions and open houses to showcase the site plan review process or other land use decisions;
- Conduct “How To” video conferences on using local GIS and CTECO databases and mapping; or
- Other innovative strategies to engage in intentional and ongoing public outreach and participating on planning issues.

Submit: A brief overview of outreach (suggested 5 sentences maximum), including target populations (if any), dates of any events, and at least one example of materials disseminated or created, which could include flyers, fact sheets, photographs, articles, letters, newsletters, presentations, or digital communications. For websites, submit both a hyperlink and a screenshot of the relevant webpage(s).

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the “Partners” box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality’s role. If you collaborate with other municipalities, each community will receive points. For additional information, please see the "Partners Guidance Document".

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

Staff from the planning and zoning, engineering, emergency management, public works, town council, and fire departments and representatives from the planning and zoning, inland wetlands, conservation, and energy commissions could be helpful in implementing this action.

Funding

If available, below are potential funding sources specific to this Action. For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the Sustainable CT Grants Portal, which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the Support for Your Town page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- Urban Act Grant Program
- Sustainable CT Community Match Fund
- State Funding Readiness Project

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- American Planning Association, "Policy Guide on Planning for Sustainability"
- State of CT, Office of Policy and Management, "Conservation & Development Policies: the Plan for Connecticut 2018-2023"
- American Planning Association, "The Sustainability Policy Framework,"
- American Planning Association, "Service Report Number 560 Hazard Mitigation: Integrating Best Practices into Planning,"
- Capitol Region Council of Governments, Sustainable Land Use Regulation Project
- Land Use Law Center, Pace University & US Green Building Council, "Technical Guidance Manual for Sustainable Neighborhood Development Rating System to Evaluate and Amend Local Plans, Codes, and Policies"
- Acadia Center, "Community Energy Vision, Action Guide for Connecticut"
- Sustainable CT Equity Toolkit

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- American Planning Association
- Connecticut Conservation Districts

Why This Matters

Chapter 126 Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires each municipality to update a Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD) at least once every ten years through its designated land use commission. Although this statute prescribes several elements to be included in the document to guide growth, development, and preservation, your community can address its unique context and initiatives by identifying overarching strategies and incorporating specialized analyses or studies.

Your POCD is your community's guide and policy document and should be the basis for infrastructure and development related decisions, particularly in capital budgeting and project reviews. Integrate the principles of sustainability into the plan to ensure that they become part of your community's development.

Historically, planning and zoning separated commercial and residential uses. This practice promoted car-dependent sprawl. Increasingly, communities around the country are pursuing Smart Growth, transit-oriented development (TOD) and other sustainable, supportive planning and zoning strategies that promote more compact, walkable, mixed-use, environmentally sensitive communities with a range of transportation and housing choices. Demand for such communities comes from individuals at all points in their life.

Benefits

The POCD provides a framework for consistent decision-making. It establishes a long-range vision for the community and provides guidance and recommendations on future land use. As a vehicle for strategic planning, your land use commission may also identify implementation actions through which it achieves its intended goals. These implementation actions often stipulate either the creation of, or edits to, legally-enforceable zoning regulations, and mechanisms to guide development and protect resources. Including sustainability practices provides breadth and depth to multiple areas such as hazard mitigation, site design, transportation, economic development, infrastructure, and housing.

Results include reduced greenhouse gas emissions, enhanced sustainable economic development, reduced transportation costs, increased active transportation, and community cohesion, and more types of housing and more availability of affordable housing.

CT Success Stories

- Essex - Oct 2022 Certification
- New Haven - Oct 2022 Certification
- Bolton - Sep 2023 Certification
- Clinton - Sep 2023 Certification
- Groton - May 2024 Certification
- Old Saybrook - May 2024 Certification
- Manchester - Oct 2025 Certification
- Roxbury - Oct 2025 Certification
- Clinton - May 2026 Certification