5.2 Adapt Permitting Process to Promote Sustainable Development

5 – 45 Points

Action Updates

This action was last updated in 2024. A version of this action from the prior program year is available for comparison. Edits are highlighted in yellow.

Objective

Promote and incentivize sustainable development by creating an efficient and user-friendly land use permitting process.

Complementary Action:

- Integrate Sustainability into Plan of Conservation and Development

What to Do

The more you do, the more points you earn.

1. Develop sustainability checklists for zoning and building applicants that identify sustainable site plan design elements. Examples are available in the "Sustainability Concepts in Action" sheet. **(5 points)**

   Submit: Copies of your sustainability checklists currently distributed to zoning and building applicants.

2. Identify applications where expedited permitting is viable and amend zoning regulations to provide an as-of-right (Site Plan) approval process for projects that meet sustainable design standards as established in the regulations (for example, SolSmart). Consider including projects located in distressed/under-developed/vulnerable areas. **(20 points)**

   Submit: Copy of the zoning or regulations; documentation that the regulations have been adopted (such as meeting minutes, a copy of the municipal zoning regulations with relevant portions highlighted, a link to municipal ordinances, or similar verification).

3. Establish or amend your municipal policy for pre-application review.

   The more you do, the more points you earn.

   a. Adopt an internal procedure that recommends review of projects prior to submission of formal plans and applications. The procedure should incorporate a coordinated review by all relevant departments, a coordinated review schedule for approval by all relevant departments, and clearly reference the checklist and standards developed above for sustainable plan review. **(10 points)**

   Submit: A copy of the written procedure describing the pre-application review process.

   b. Review town processes for permitting and create a Development Review Manual that includes a description of the pre-application process established. A Development Review Manual is a step-by-step guide to navigating your municipal land use process from start to finish. **(10 points)**

   Submit: A copy of your current Development Review Manual.

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, building, and fire departments and a representative from the planning and zoning, inland wetlands, conservation, or energy commission 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

- Capitol Region Council of Governments, "Sustainable Land Use Regulation Project"
- US Environmental Protection Agency, "Sustainable Design and Green Building Toolkit for Local Governments"
- New York City Department of Design and Construction Office of Sustainable Design, "Sustainable Urban Site Design Manual"
- Acadia Center, "Community Energy Vision, Action Guide for Connecticut"
- The following resources requirement membership or payment to view:
  - Wayne Feiden, Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Report #582 Local Planning Agency Management
  - Wayne Feiden, with Elisabeth Hamin, Planning Advisory Service Report # 565
  - American Planning Association, Zoning Practice Process Archives

Organizations and Relevant Program

- American Planning Association

Benefits

By reducing permitting hurdles and administrative costs, and providing incentives to developers to incorporate sustainable elements early in a proposed project's design stage, your community can encourage and support sustainable development practices. The guide will have a dual benefit of reducing time and costs to town and applicants for projects.

CT Success Stories

- Greenwich - Oct 2024 Certification
- Stamford - May 2025 Certification
- Mansfield - Oct 2025 Certification
- Stamford - Oct 2025 Certification