



Hebron, Windham and Coventry each received awarded bronze 'Sustainable CT' certifications for commitments to sustainability. Hebron, left, was honored for many projects, including a beautified center of town that includes this walkway near the Douglas Library. Examples of Coventry's work, above, include solar panels that were installed on top of its town hall. Roxanne Pandolfi | Staff

Honors for sustainability

Three local towns certified for environmental improvements

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Far from a mandate, achieving "Sustainable CT" status is a desired designation for municipalities because it rewards community improvements that help the town and environment.

And, locally, three towns — Windham, Coventry and Hebron — have achieved just that.

The trio of towns was recently awarded bronze "Sustainable CT" certifications in recognition of municipal commitments to sustainability.

The awards will be given out during the annual Connecticut Conference

of Municipalities Conference Oct. 30 at Foxwoods Resort Casino.

Like the other towns, Hebron Town Manager Andrew Tierney said his community will be able to use the "Sustainable CT" logo on the town website, a badge of honor for any municipality.

"We're really ecstatic," said Tierney. "They give you points for everything you do to make the town better and the community better. We're very happy."

According to a press release from the Institute for Sustainable Energy at Eastern Connecticut State University, which administers the program, 22 Connecticut municipalities in the state were certified,

including 17 that achieved "bronze" status.

Currently, silver is the highest certification level, followed by bronze.

Windham Town Manager James Rivers said 92 percent of the projects Windham submitted were eligible for consideration.

He said Windham has been doing many good things that keep the town sustainable.

"It's not just about the environment," Rivers said.

Sustainable CT was started last year and the Institute for Sustainable Energy announced the certifications this week.

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Three local towns certified for their environmental improvements

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“Congratulations to our 2018 certified Sustainable CT communities,” Lynn Stoddard, executive director of the Institute for Sustainability, said in a press release. “We are inspired by your leadership and eager to share your accomplishments in building efficient, thriving and resilient communities.”

Certifications are awarded in nine areas: thriving local economies; well-stewarded land and natural resources; vibrant and creative cultural ecosystems; dynamic and resilient planning; clean and diverse transportation systems and choices; efficient physical infrastructure

and operations; strategic and inclusive public services; healthy, efficient and diverse housing; inclusive and equitable community impacts; and innovation action.

“The committee of three worked extremely hard for the bronze certification,” said Windham Town Council member Dawn Niles, chairman of the committee that worked on the application, in a release. “The work was made easier by the amount of work that this community has already done toward making us a sustainable community. We are extremely happy to be recognized for our efforts.”

Sustainable projects Windham has been involved with over the years include

installing a microgrid at Windham Middle School, installing LEED bulbs in street lights and taking water quality control measures.

Rivers said, while the certification program recognizes what the town is currently doing, it also inspires the town to do more.

He said the town is striving to get silver certification next, with one possibility toward that being improvements to affordable housing.

“We have a lot of things that we are working on that, I think, will get us points in the future,” said Rivers.

Coventry Town Manager John Elsesser said the certification is an “honor.”

“It is an outside measure-

ment of our achievement and it also allows us to know what areas to concentrate on, to look at the whole area of sustainability,” he said.

Recently completed sustainability projects in Coventry include evaluating the impact of solar power (Coventry Town Hall has solar panels on its roof); improving affordable housing, a goal outlined in the plan of conservation and development; and increasing building efficiency by converting town facilities to natural gas.

Elsesser said 200 points were needed for bronze and at 340 points for silver. Coventry was 60 points away from getting silver.

He said one area in which

improvements can be made is creating more opportunities for the public to provide input about town projects.

“It’s a process and not just a one-time thing, so we’re looking forward to the feedback,” Elsesser said.

Hebron’s Tierney said the application required a “lot of hard work,” noting staff and volunteers, including members of the green committee, contributed.

“It’s a great award,” he said. “It’s a benchmark that shows Hebron is moving in the right direction and congratulations to all the other towns that received this award.”

Tierney said the Hebron Green Committee is active in town and was involved in

organizing a personal document shredding event that will be held Saturday, Nov. 17, from 10 a.m. to noon in the RHAM High School parking lot.

He also mentioned the town updated its plan of conservation and development, which was finished a couple years ago, and revised zoning regulations last year.

Tierney said staying on top of policies and procedures “helped us achieve the bronze status award.”

Chronicle staff writer Traci Hastings also contributed to this report.

For more information, visit www.sustainablect.org.

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