

Sustainable CT Recognizes, Supports, and Inspires CT Municipalities

by Alyssa Norwood, Program Manager, Certification and Innovation



Through Sustainable CT, municipalities are streamlining solar permitting for small solar installations, developing more agriculture-friendly practices, and engaging in dozens of other sustainability actions, chosen from a wide-ranging menu of best practices.

Sustainable CT is a new program to recognize thriving and resilient Connecticut municipalities. In its first-ever certification cycle, municipalities of every size and from every county in Connecticut submitted nearly 600 voluntary sustainability actions, chosen from a wide-ranging menu of best practices. The inaugural cohort of Sustainable CT-certified cities and towns will be announced in early October and then recognized at the 2018 annual meeting of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

So How Did It All Get Started?

Sustainable CT was created by towns, for towns. Municipal leaders and residents from across the state, the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, and people from key agencies, non-profits, and businesses partnered to develop the program during 2016 and 2017. The Institute for Sustainable Energy at Eastern Connecticut State University led and coordinated program development, with generous support from a funding collaborative comprised of the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation, Hampshire Foundation, and Common Sense Fund.

This grassroots effort articulated the following vision for Sustainable CT:

Sustainable CT communities strive to be thriving, resilient, collaborative, and forward-looking. They build community and local economy.

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Ted Shafer, First Selectman of Burlington and Sustainable CT board member, speaks in Wickham Park, Manchester, at a 2017 celebration of the completion of the initial Sustainable CT action drafts.



SESSION A3 ■ THURSDAY, OCT 18

All of Connecticut's 169 towns and cities participated in Sustainable CT's development, represented directly by a municipal official, staff person, local volunteer, or by a regional entity representing member municipalities.

Sustainable CT, cont'd

They equitably promote the health and well-being of current and future residents, and they respect the finite capacity of the natural environment.

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So What's Planning Got to Do With It?

Among other requirements, communities seeking Sustainable CT certification must complete at least one action in each of the following nine categories:

- 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

Every single area has deep and important implications for planners, from implementing low-impact development (see the land and natural resources category) to developing a creative placemaking plan (see the cultural ecosystems category). Full action write-ups under each category are available at <https://sustainablect.org>.

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Why Should a Municipality Participate?

This year, municipalities registered in Sustainable CT received wide-ranging free technical support to implement Sustainable CT actions. Support ranged from up to four hours of paid consultation services from selected equity coaches to help implement the Sustainable CT action “Optimize for Equity,” to free support from the Partnership for Strong Communities to assist with the Sustainable CT action, “Design and Implement a Housing Needs Assessment.”

Why Else Should Your Municipality Participate?

Recognition. Put your municipality on the map for its existing sustainability successes.

Inspiration. Inspire other municipalities with your stories and accomplishments.

Peer Learning. Be part of a vibrant, locally-driven network to accelerate the exchange of information, materials and best practices.

The Future. Current and future residents depend on forward-looking, local action now to ensure vibrant economies and healthy, resilient communities in the future.

Resources. Leverage existing funding and connect with our Sustainable CT Fellowship Program to support local sustainability action.

Economic Benefit. Demonstrate municipal commitment to sustainability, and businesses and potential residents may be more likely to locate in your community, growing the local tax base.

Partnerships. Connect with partners — other municipalities, regional entities, business, and nonprofits — to create synergies and alignment with existing, data-driven efforts.

Community Building. Through our uniform platform across municipalities, engage community stakeholders, increasing ownership, legitimacy, and support for sustainability action.

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Put your municipality on the map for its existing sustainability successes.



Sustainable CT, cont'd

Track Data. Utilize our framework to track your municipality's progress on specific sustainability indicators.

Innovation. Be part of a learning laboratory that drives innovation.

How Does My Community Get Involved?

An ever-growing number of Connecticut communities — now nearly 40% — are formally registered in the program.

Sustainable CT is open to all cities and towns in Connecticut. The program is voluntary and participation is free. To register for the program, your municipality first must pass a resolution (a sample template is available for download at <https://sustainablect.org>). The resolution outlines your city or town's intent to seek certification and establishes a Sustainability Team that will implement program actions. Second, designate a municipal elected official or municipal employee to register your community on the Sustainable CT website and submit your resolution for review.

If you still have questions, please email us at info@sustainablect.org, or come find us the morning of Thursday, October 18 at Session A3, "Score Points for Your Planning — Embrace Equity, Economy, and the Environment in Sustainable CT." 🏡

— *Alyssa Norwood manages the certification process and provides legal counsel to Sustainable CT. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree, cum laude, in Biology from Harvard University and her Juris Doctor, with honors, and Master of Public Health Degree in Health Law and Policy from the University of Connecticut. Alyssa formerly*

served as Project Manager for Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging, where she led the state's livable communities initiative and served as a policy expert on wide-ranging health, planning and zoning, transportation, and housing issues.

Johnnycake MT Park design committee meeting with Burlington's landscape architect, BSC Group of Glastonbury, to incorporate possible Sustainable CT initiatives into the design of this former 60-acre farm. (Submitted by Ted Shafer)



Farmer's forum in Woodbridge, eligible to earn points in the Planning category of Sustainable CT. (Submitted by Sheila McCreven)

