



SUSTAINABLE WEST HARTFORD COMMISSION

October 27, 2025

7:00 PM, Room 407, Town Hall

MEETING MINTUES

1. Call to Order: 7:02
 - ***Jonathan Ferrigno – present***
 - ***David Sagers – present***
 - ***Stephen Sack – present***
 - ***Ted Newton – present***
 - ***Kim Hughes – absent***
 - ***Kelly Kennedy – present***
 - ***Pat Wilson – present***
 - ***Christy Matthews – absent***
 - ***Bernie Pelletier – present***
 - ***Ally Schoenhorn – present***
 - ***Andrea Yuliano – present***
 - ***Student Liaison – Mia Magnusson (Hall) present***
 - ***Staff Liaisons – Catherine Diviney (present) and Katherine Bruns (present)***
 - ***Members of the community – Parker Walsh, Daniel Walsh, Robert Miller, Catherine Wang, Mike Cocca***
2. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes: ***Approved by all present (9-0)***
3. Administrative: ***N/A***
4. Communications & Community Comment (max 3 min each):
 - ***VIA EMAIL to SWH: Catherine mentioned several resident inquiries about getting involved → responded with invitations to attend Commission meeting. Also, inquiry by Tesla about participating in community events → responded about Commission's EV event in fall.***
5. Ongoing Business
 - Student Rep Report: ***The Vermiculture project was successful. An environmental cleanup is planned. Students encouraged to share photos for social media.***
 - Working Group Reports: ***(attached)***
 - ***Energy: January 20th meeting with Citizens Advisory Commission, Eversource, and the Community Renewal Team is planned – the goal is to educate residents about energy assistance programs and encourage energy efficiency. There was discussion of participating in the TEN4CT which explores the potential for geothermal and networked geothermal in town.***
 - ***Nature based solutions: Town officials planning a tour of “green infrastructure” in Bristol that is being organized by Amy Petras. Pat Wilson suggested that 2026 feature seasonal outreach education sessions. Discussion of the loss of tree canopy in town (down 21% over the last 20 years). Follow-up was suggested to intensify efforts for tree planting and tree care.***

- **Waste: the drop off food waste program is exceeding expectations. Additional pickup bins and locations are being implemented. Discussion to raise awareness and continue community outreach. It was decided to get statistics from both the Town's drop-off program AND Blue Earth pick-up customers, if possible, to better understand the full volume of food waste diversion in WH. These data eventually to be reported regularly on the Cool WH page when finished. The pumpkin collection effort is going to be continued.**
 - Food Waste Drop-off Graphs: **Graphs and stats were reviewed (attached). Agreed to publicize monthly on Cool WH site when finished.**
 - Sustainable Development Checklist: **no progress**
 - Cool West Hartford Website & Launch Plans: **all draft sections received. Progress started on reviewing/editing materials – potential to launch site in December.**
 - Newsletter & Social Media: **Newsletter approved to send out. Kelly reports that open rates continue to be high. Jonathon encourages video creation and reposting / sharing of SWHC postings.**
6. New Business
- Sustainable CT Overview: **Catherine provided overview of the program and process and efforts to coordinate town departments. Renewal is due August 2027. Commission may wish to select several “key” actions to recommend Town works on. (attached)**
 - Planning & Priorities for 2026 (see last year's [Report to Town Council](#)): **This discussion is moved to November and is the only agenda item in November. (attached)**
7. Staff Report: **N/A**
8. Calendar Updates:
- 10/30 – FVWA (Aimee Petras) Tour of Bristol Edgewood School w/ Town staff
 - 11/1 to 12/1 – Pumpkin Drop-Off Recycling @ Town Hall, DPW, Westmoor Park
 - 11/5 – Sustainable CT 2027 certification planning meeting (Town)
 - 1/20 – Energy Assistance Presentation (TBD) co-host w/ Senior Citizens Advisory Commission
9. Agenda for Next Meeting – 11/24/25: **2026 planning**
10. Adjournment

Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program or activity of the Town of West Hartford, should contact Suzanne Oslander, ADA Coordinator, at suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov or (860) 561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.

The Energy Working Group met on October 15th at 5PM.

In attendance - Catherine Diviney - Stephen Sack - Lianne Jacobson - Bernie Pelletier

Next meeting November 19th at 5PM

Meeting Recap:

Energy Outreach to Seniors and Income Constrained Residents

The group discussed plans for a joint event between the Sustainable West Hartford Commission and the Senior Citizen Advisory Council (SCAC), tentatively scheduled for November or December. Catherine reported that the SCAC meets on October 21st to discuss the event details, with Eversource lined up as a speaker to present energy assistance programs. Bernard noted that 80 West Hartford residents had already signed up for the HES program, and Stephen shared his knowledge of various state and local programs available to help residents with heating costs.

Next steps

- Catherine to follow up with Liz Buczynski (Asst Dir Social Services) after the October 21st SCAC meeting to determine next steps for the joint event.
- Catherine/Liz to contact Eversource to schedule their presentation for the joint event.
- Liz to help coordinate whether the event will target just seniors or both seniors and other income-eligible people.
- Energy WG to assist with co-hosting, co-branding, and promoting the joint event once details are finalized.
- Bernie to continue tracking sign-ups from the WeHa advertisement.

Thermal Energy Network Exploration

Lianne, Catherine, and Bernie introduced the idea of “Thermal Energy Networks”. These are networked installations that share geothermal resources in multiple buildings. You can learn more here:

TEN4CT - PACE
pacecleanenergy.org



We are forming a group to explore the potential for such networks in our town.

Here is an invitation to the next meeting:

We are excited to invite you to our 4th [TEN4CT \(Thermal Energy Networks for CT\)](#) meeting, taking place online on **Thursday, October 30, 12:30–1:30 PM**. Our speakers will be:

- **Jared Rodriguez** is a noted proponent of community Thermal Energy Networks (TENS) as a means to support both neighborhood decarbonization and local economic development. Exploring the viability of a particular TEN becomes an exercise in community building and collaboration. Jared will explain his approach to developing TENS and take your questions, concerns and comments. He has worked with HEET, Building Decarbonization Coalition, the

New York villages of Haverstraw and Ossining, and Vermont Community Thermal Networks (VCTN), among others. Along with Debbie New from VCTN, he wrote [How to Develop a Thermal Energy Network, A practical guide to adding Thermal Energy Networks to decarbonization plans for your community](#)

- **Lianne Allen Jacobson** is part of the TEN4CT team and will talk about an exercise we've developed that fits in perfectly with Jared's approach to TENS. '**Step One: Creating a Coalition for a Thermal Energy Network**' will allow you to begin identifying opportunities for TENS in your community. You can work on this at home independently or in small groups. No worries, everyone gets an 'A'.

To join this online meeting, [PLEASE REGISTER HERE](#).

Don't hesitate to invite anyone you think might be interested.

NbS Agenda and Minutes

Monday, Oct 20, 5 PM (Virtual)

Attendees:

Madz, Danielle, Aimee, Andrea, Pat, Kim

1. Ideas:

- a. winter event and a spring event, with Doug Tallamy coming to town in March as the meat in that sandwich. The events could be include webinar, workshop, meeting, whatever. Just to keep the education of our residents on the front burner.
- b. Establishing a Miyawaki Forest at one or more of the elementary schools, expanding the Firefly Project for the spring, a "Do the Math" campaign for pollinators.

2. Old business: Pat

- a. Planting Policy - let's move it forward, goal of reaching an end-point before Spring - Earth day?

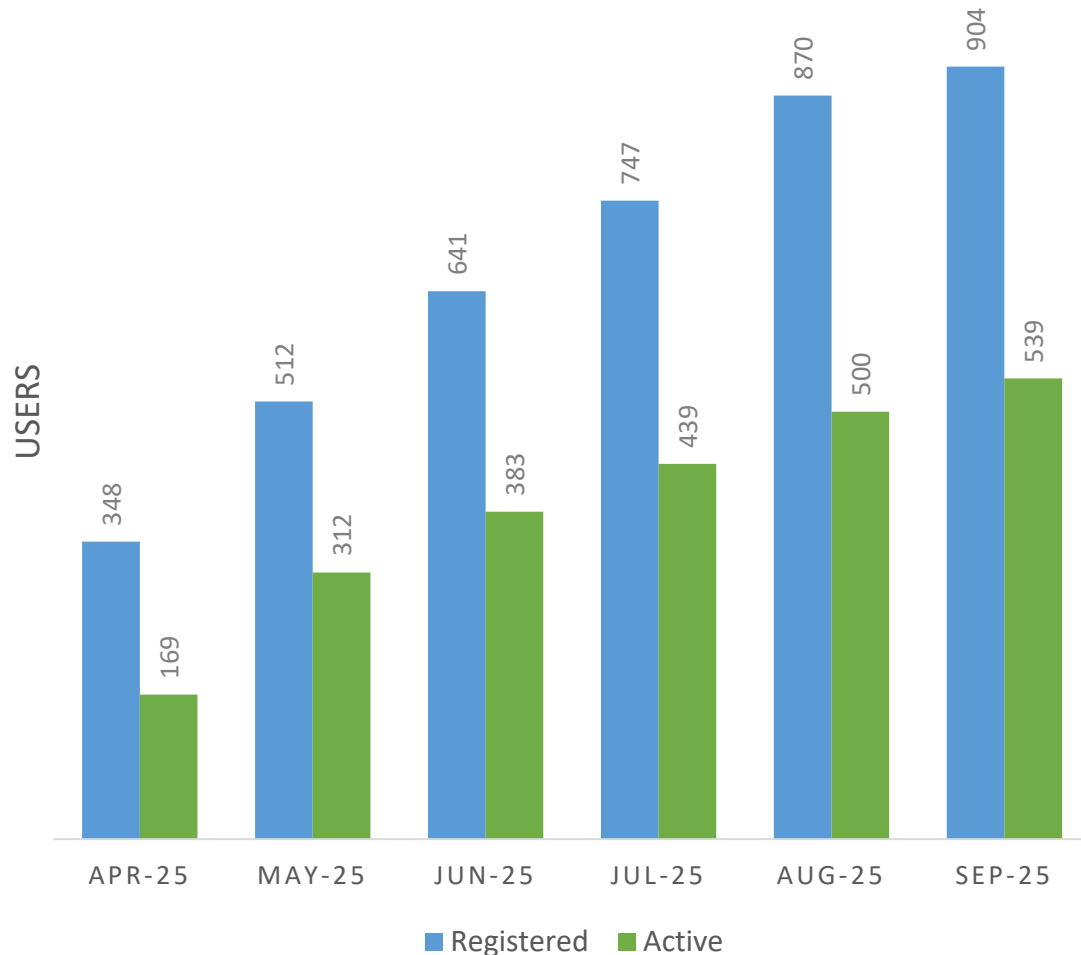
3. New ideas:

- a. Winter and Spring
 - i. Spring - planting policy
- b. Miyawaki -
 - i. Will kids respond well?
 - ii. It's a start! You don't need a lot of space
 - iii. How to execute?
 - iv. Who? Wolcott
- c. Gas-powered leaf blowers - on-line talk about virtual meet
Vincent Giordano in Ridgefield is spearheading efforts to have the state shift to electric lawn care equipment and is in touch with all the towns that have passed laws banning gas-powered leaf blowers.
- d. Wolcott Woods, Bugbee gardens, Braeburn - zachary_vose@whps.org
- e. Spring event!!? <https://www.lesslawnmorelife.com/>

4. Homework

- a. Library - Pat will call to get details
- b. Leisure Services - Pat
- c. Miyawaki Forest - Andrea will get more info and connect with Zachary Vose
- d. Gas powered leaf blower - Suzanne
- e. Follow-up email with various links
- f. Do the Math - Andrea

WH Drop-off Food Scrap Program: Participation



Results, since April 2025

- **904** registered users!
- 50-60% of registered users are **active** users
- Registered and active users increased every month

Keep in Mind...

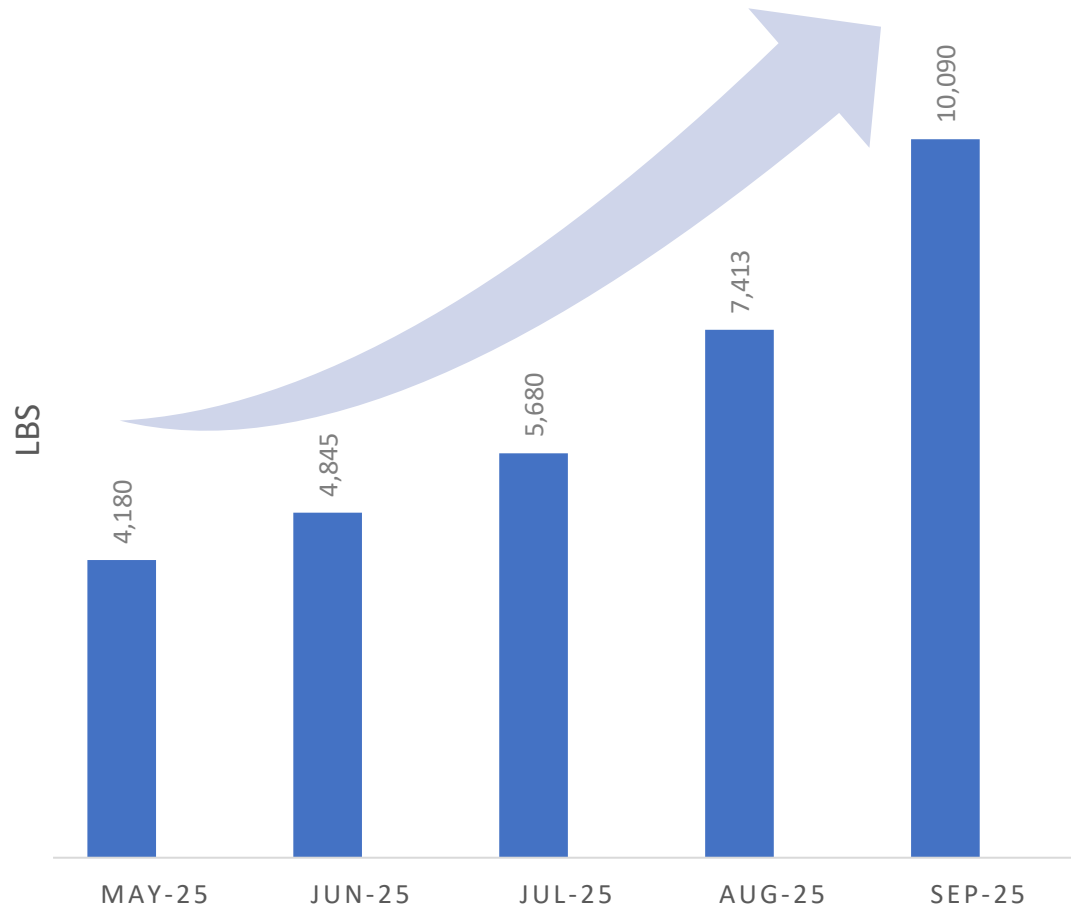
- About 30 WH residents have cancelled their personal Blue Earth subscriptions since start of program
- There are 26,272 households in West Hartford
- 539 active users = 2% of WH households
- Outreach purposefully cutback in Sept due to capacity constraints (4 drop-off bins often full)
- We can/should do better

1-2% is
typical for
drop-off

Goal, by Dec 2025

800 active users or 3% of WH households

WH Drop-off Food Scrap Program: **Waste Impact**



Results, since May 2025

- **32,208 lbs** total diverted!
- **+140%** increase in lbs diverted
- Increase in lbs every month

Keep in Mind...

- West Hartford throws away about **725,000 lbs** of food scraps each month
- 10,000 lbs = **1.4%** of food waste diverted
- Waste diversion is not waste **reduction**
- Program faced some capacity constraints (4 drop-off bins often full; 10 more bins to be added in 2026).
- We can/should do better

1-2% is typical for drop-off

State of CT has set a 2030 goal of 40% waste diversion

Goal, by Dec 2025

- **2% or 20,000 lbs each month**
- Additional outreach, also focused on food waste **reduction**

WH Drop-off Food Scrap Program: Cost Analysis

Costs	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2
Initial infrastructure (4 bins)	(\$14,000)		
Operational, Outreach & Promotion	(\$10,000)	(\$10,000)	(\$10,000)
Contractual (Blue Earth/pick-up)	(\$1000/mo)	(\$24,000)	(\$25,000)
Additional infrastructure (10 bins)		(\$44,000)	
Total	(\$36,000)	(\$78,000)	(\$35,000)

Benefits*	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2
Tip Fee Savings (\$67/t v. \$102 /t/MSW)		\$2,200	\$4,200
*ignores cancelled Blue Earth subscriptions @ -\$67/t		Est avg. 10,700 lbs/month	Est 20,000 lbs/month
Total		\$2,200	\$4,200

Net	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2
	(\$36,000)	(\$75,000)	(\$25,800)

How many lbs are needed to break even? Remember, WH throws out est. 725,000 lbs per month or 8.7 million lbs per year.

- To cover annual \$35k → 167,000 lbs per month (23%)
- To cover initial fixed cost \$104K → 500,000 lbs per month (69%)

Is this program is a loss-leader path to something else (e.g., mandatory/curb-side, reduced trash pickups)? OR do we recognize/quantify enviro value?

WH Drop-off Food Scrap Program: Climate Impacts





[Sustainable CT](#) is a voluntary certification program to recognize thriving and resilient Connecticut municipalities. Sustainable CT provides a menu of best practices (or actions) that promote economic well-being, enhance equity, and respect the finite capacity of the natural environment.

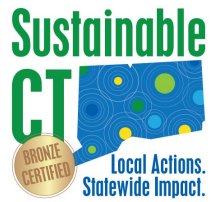
Municipalities choose Sustainable CT [actions](#), implement them, and earn points toward [certification](#).

The program also provides technical assistance, [funding](#), and encourages partnership, peer learning, collaboration.

13 Action Categories

1. Inclusive and Equitable Community Impacts
2. Thriving Local Economies
3. Well-Stewarded Land and Natural Resources
4. Vibrant and Creative Cultural Ecosystems
5. Dynamic and Resilient Planning
6. Clean and Diverse Transportation Systems and Choices
7. Renewable and Efficient Energy Infrastructure and Operations
8. Inclusive Engagement, Communication and Education
9. Strategic Materials Management
10. Optimal Health and Wellness Opportunities
11. Healthy, Efficient and Diverse Housing
12. Effective, Compassionate Homelessness Prevention
13. Innovative Strategies and Practices

WEST HARTFORD'S JOURNEY



3 years goes quickly.

2018

2021

2022

2024

2027

2030

Certification is good for 3 years.

Per Sust CT - No plans to add additional certification level for 2027.

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS



Certification Requirements

2025 Bronze Certification

2025 Silver Certification

2025 Gold Certification

Number of Equity Toolkits required to complete in Action 1.1, [Optimize for Equity](#)

1

3

4; Including ALL actions in Category 1, Inclusive and Equitable Communities

Total Action point requirements

200

500

750

Complete at least 1 action in each of the Categories 1-12.

required

required

required

Achieve the [Climate Leader Designation](#)

optional

optional

required

Complete Action 8.6, [Collaborate with Other Municipalities on Sustainability Actions](#).

optional

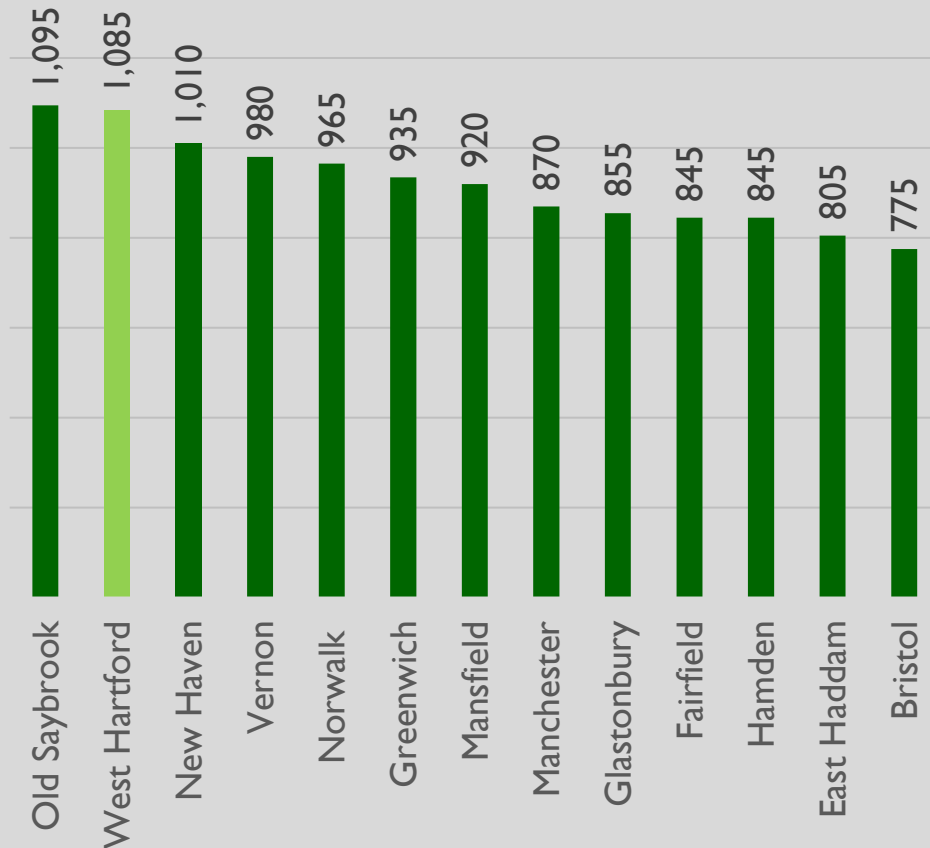
optional

required

Note: Actions, points, and certification point thresholds are for **2025** and may change for future certification cycles.

COMPARED TO OTHER TOWNS

Sustainable CT: Total Points



- Towns can learn from each other!
 - 139 registered communities
 - 67 certified – 36 Bronze, 19 Silver, 12 Gold
 - 20 climate leaders
- Old Saybrook has strengthened regulations to improve climate resiliency as outlined in its POCD.
- New Haven's has done transformative work in community engagement & equity and green workforce development.
- Greenwich has adapted its permitting process to include a checklist that promotes sustainable development.
- Glastonbury has an ordinance for tobacco-, cannabis-, and smoke-free recreation areas.
- Fairfield has Dark Night Skies zoning regulations.
- Bristol works with partners, like Farmington River Watershed Association, and other municipalities on watershed planning, education/outreach, and land acquisition.

2024 – 1,085 POINTS – BY DEPT

Sustainable CT Categories	Responsible Department	Actions	Pts
1. Inclusive and Equitable Community Impact	Adrienne	7	75
2. Thriving Local Economies	Kristen, Lisa	9	90
3. Well-Stewarded Land and Natural Resources	Duane, Helen, John	14	115
4. Vibrant and Creative Cultural Ecosystems	Renee, Kristen, Laura (WHPL)	6	35
5. Dynamic and Resilient Planning	Duane	5	80
6. Clean and Diverse Transportation Systems and Choices	Duane, John	14	160
7. Renewable and Efficient Energy Infrastructure and Operations	Bob P, John, Duane	9	195
8. Inclusive Engagement, Communication and Education	All Dept, Renee	6	70
9. Strategic Materials Management	John	4	75
10. Optimal Health and Wellness Opportunities	Helen, Bob M (Emer Ops)	6	95
11. Healthy, Efficient and Diverse Housing	Duane	3	30
12. Effective, Compassionate Homelessness Prevention	Helen	4	40
13. Innovative Strategies and Practices	All Dept (2024 – Bob M, Laura)	2	25



Sustainability Commission 2025 Accomplishments

2025 Focus – Town Connections

- Established Town Council Liaison
- Monthly mtg w/Town Manager
- Department relationships
 - Planning and Zoning, Public Works, Leisure Services, Community Services
- Sustainable CT Planning
 - Inter-departmental task force formed

2025 Focus –Resident Outreach

- Monthly Newsletter (stats)
- Social Media – FB/Instagram (stats)
- Public Events
 - Celebrate West Hartford (Exhibited)
 - EV Showcase (Organized - #?)
 - Wolcott Pollinator Garden (Organized - #?)
- Increased volunteer base (#)
- Developing Cool West Hartford

2025 Sustainability Initiatives

- Support new food scrap diversion program launched from 2024 initiative (stats)
 - Wolcott Pollinator Garden
 - Inclusion in Federal Highlands Act Region
 - Public Events
 - Celebrate West Hartford
 - EV Showcase
 - Sustainable development checklist
-



Sustainability Commission 2026 Planning

Achieving Priorities - Challenges

- Need to define priorities, but also...
- Volunteer nature of Commission limits capacity for breadth of issues/impact
- Need to structurally build sustainability into Town processes/decisions/budgets

2026 Planning – Priorities

- Define priority areas
- Define specific actions
- Identify supporting Sustainable CT [Actions](#)
- Document
- Discuss/Present Town Council PWFS Subcommittee

2026 Planning – Resources/Approach

- Volunteer work from Commissioners, others
- Ideally need Sustainability office
- At least expand sustainability into other departments (Sustainable CT group?)
- Event budget
- Find grants/community match funds?
- Work with like-minded municipalities on influencing state action?

Sustainability Areas for Priority

- Greenhouse Gas reduction
 - Energy/Net Zero/Building/Efficiency/Solar/EV
- Environment
 - Habitat/pollinators/gardens/yards/water quality/invasives
- Waste
 - Waste Reduction/Food scraps/Recycling
- Climate Resiliency
 - Stormwater/Green Infrastructure/Urban Canopy/Low Impact Development/Land Conservation
- Transportation
 - Mass transit/biking/walking/Air Quality

Based on Bridgeport, Greenwich, Westport,
Ridgefield, Stamford, Glastonbury, Bristol, Fairfield

