



SUSTAINABLE WEST HARTFORD COMMISSION

March 2, 2026

7:00 PM, Room 407, Town Hall

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order 7:07PM

- Commissioners -Dave Sagers – present, Stephen Sack – absent, Ally Schoenhorn – present, Andrea Yuliano – present, Blake Ellavsky – present, Jonathan Ferrigno – present, Kelly Kennedy – present, Lianne Allen-Jacobson – present, Maura Beaudreault – absent, Pat Wilson – present, Ted Newton - present
- Student Liaison – Mia Magnusson (Hall)
- Staff Liaisons – Catherine Diviney, Katherine Bruns
- Members of the public – Bernie Pelletier, Lauren Oken, Parker Walsh, Dan Walsh, Kathleen O’Connell, Jackie Jamsheed, Madeleine Hexter, Heston Clapp, Bill Gleason

2. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes: Approved (Yes: 9, No: 0)

3. Administrative

- Round of introductions of all who were present
- Discussed need for Vice Chair and Secretary. If no one person steps up it will be assigned on rotating basis.

4. Communications & Community Comment

- Comments on Sustainable WH email: 5 comments on food waste and pumpkins; staff comment on wasteful toilets in town hall; offers from compost vendor and solar company (Ion Pros) to partner with Commission
- Dan Walsh – remarked on uneven sidewalks so that it is dangerous when walking. Filed with the town and was told there were 800 sidewalk reports ahead of him.
- Kathleen O’Connell – (Master Gardener), Reminded that Doug Tallamay speaking 3/11; also reminded members to write in support of SB 00319 – a bill to ban gas powered leaf blowers.

5. New Business

- Speaker: Bill Gleason from the Tree Action Group (TAG) gave an informative and urgent talk breaking down and explaining the results of the town’s [Tree Canopy Assessment](#). Big take away: 21% Tree Canopy loss. Robust Q&A and discussion. **Attached.**

6. Ongoing Business

- Student & Working Group Reports: **Attached.**
 - **Clean Energy Working Group:** Ally Schoenhorn requested approval from group to host Climate Change lecture by Dr. Button, CCSU, 6:30 PM at Town Hall Room 400: Approved (9-0).
 - **Waste Working Group:** Ted Newton – chair -spoke of striking while the iron is hot and meeting with individual Town Council one by one while they are interested after the Municipal Recycling Facility (MRF) tour. Will hold a WWG meeting before the April SWHC meeting to discuss waste reduction and recycling enforcement/monitoring.

- **Student Report** – Mia Magnusson - (Hall High School) – Reported that Dave Goerner, spoke to Hall HS environment club about jobs after college; planted plants in cafeteria with informational posters.
- Report to Town Council /2026 Priorities – Limited time to discuss. Dave, Kelly, and Ted have worked on report. **Attached.** Different from 2024. Dave will defer report presentation to April PWF&S Committee Meeting. Please review the Executive Summary (pages 2-4 – this is the key information. Working group summaries can be added later.
- Updates for Public Works Facilities & Sustainability Committee (PWF&S) – At last meeting 2/12/26/ Catherine & Katherine took advantage of MRF tour to present a “spotlight on waste.” **Attached.** Councilors were interested and followed up by phone immediately after. Waste WG continue to leverage this interest.

7. Calendar Updates:

- Recap recent events
- W 3/11/26 – Dr. Douglas Tallamy lecture, 6:30 PM @ WH Town Hall Auditorium. In-person FULL. Register [HERE](#) for access to the livestream.
- Th 3/12/26 & Th 4/9/26 – PWF&S meeting @ 8 AM
- W 3/25/26 – Climate Change lecture by Dr. Charles Button, CCSU, 6:30 PM @ Town Hall Rm 400
- W 5/13/26 – NBS WG / Sust WH “Less Lawn, More Life” Workshop, 6:30 PM @WHPL
- Spring Film? - Old Forest or Young Meadow – the Marvel of Seeds (w/ Traprock Ridge)
- Sa/Sun 6/7 & 6/8/26 – Celebrate West Hartford

8. Agenda for Next Meeting – 3/30/26

- Nina Arnold and Kirsten Kilbourn to be guest speakers. They will share information about their field trips to other towns, researching the possibility of West Hartford hosting a Repair Café.
- Finalize Report to Town Council

9. Adjournment 9:12PM

Waste Working Group Report – for 2/23/26

The Waste Working Group did not meet in the past month. However, Ted Newton accompanied Kathryn Bruns, Catherine Diviney, a number of Sustainable West Hartford Commissioners and three members of the Town Council to the Material Recovery Facility in Berlin in February 3. This is where the town's recycling is taken to be processed and later sold to buyers who will repurpose the materials.

The three Council members were Lisa Lazarus, Deb Polun and Gayle Harris. They are the chair (Lisa), vice chair (Deb) and minority member (Gayle) of the Council's Public Works, Facilities and Sustainability Committee, which is responsible for Public Works-related services (including waste and recycling).

Following the tour, Catherine, Katherine, Dave and I talked about how we might be able to prompt the town to do some monitoring of waste and recycling bins for compliance. Given that the members of the Town Council who were on the tour were impressed with what they saw, their Council committee may be open to our discussing with them some ideas for improving compliance. While Director of Public Works John Phillips has said he is in agreement with the Commission's recommendation last year on this topic, resources may be an issue.

While we can — and should — do an education campaign on waste and recycling (hopefully incorporating some of what we saw on the tour), it will look quite a bit different if we know that enforcement efforts will begin at some point in the near future.

We're hoping the Committee (and Council) might be willing to back limited town resources for monitoring. For example, having one Public Works employee randomly select different neighborhoods (maybe discretely suggested by the hauler) once each week and sticker those bins that are visibly not compliant, so the hauler doesn't to check and sticker the offending bins themselves. We discussed making this suggestion to the Committee and see their reaction. Since Mr. Phillips usually attends these meetings as well, we can also get his feedback. Katherine and Ted are also planning on meeting with Gayle Harris individually in early March to further this discussion.

If the Committee and John Phillips agree with this approach (or some other monitoring they suggest), an education campaign that publicizes this will happen and why, along with providing information about waste and recycling requirements, would help to the Town manage its waste better — and save it some money.

The above will be the topic of our next Waste Working Group meeting, which is planned to take place before the March Commission meeting.

Ted Newton

Energy Working Group – Meeting held 2/18/26, 5:30 pm virtually.

Hi All - Thanks for those who were able to join last night. Here are the notes and next steps we discussed:

1. Updates on recent events:
 - o Bernie spoke on effort for plug-in solar for CT/legislation in progress
 - o Heating Assistance Program event: Eversource presented - low attendance (may have been weather), but employees were there to help with bills, sign up for programs, more energy efficiency updates. Eversource willing to come again (to Elmwood?)
2. Upcoming Events:
 - o Feb 23 during Commission meeting there will be tree canopy study presentation by the WH Tree Project (Bill Gleeson) -
 - Next steps: Ensure Kelly shares info about them/their upcoming events as part of the newsletter <https://whtreeproject.org/>
 - o Snow removal talk from CT Public Works (John Phillips) at 6:00 in council chambers in Town Hall on Feb 23
 - o Ally shared flyer for event at Town Hall with Dr. Button on climate change on March 25 6:30 PM. (attached)
 - Next step: Ally working to have commission sign off on event on Monday and then get commitment from Mayor's office for her/other representatives to kick-off event
 - Would love student involvement with Q&A's
 - o For future events with the library- they are now requiring 6 months lead time to get events on their calendar.
3. Updates on TEN:
 - o To get access to future projects, Catherine would know about town capital improvement projects, but Dave Sager is still working with Town Council to get advanced notice prior to development projects approval going forward.
 - Kristin Gorski, Town's Economic Dev Manager, would also be helpful to connect.
 - Eric would also be interested to talk to Todd
 - o Potential to incorporate pipping/valves into Veteran's memorial project on refrigeration:
 - Catherine shared that it is going to be difficult to get anything additional added into Veteran's Rink project budget at this time (refrigeration project not full HVAC).
 - Cutting into piping so would be perfect timing to add valves in (would potentially be minimal budget impact)
 1. Catherine can approach Rink Management to discuss if there is an opportunity to add change to budget- could be used for backup heat source (doesn't need to be geothermal)
 2. May need to involve Duane Martin/Todd in to discuss (building dept and planning) to get their approval
 - o There is a bill going through legislation to push TEN and get involved earlier than later
 - **Next steps:** share with Todd the TEN checklist working group created: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1iAuVsVm4iXjmydF2-6kUjcdafp_kdRI/edit?usp=sharing&usq=100690938598657264835&rtpof=true&sd=true

- o Bernie has combined the “TEN” working group into the Energy Working group here going forward
- o PWF&S (Public Works, Facilities, & Sustainability Standing Committee) meets second Thursday at 8 AM - Councilors may be interested in hearing about efforts this group has made on TEN checklist- Catherine could be liaison and could convey this
 - **Next step:** let Catherine know if interested in speaking at a committee meeting and she could share link or Catherine can share TEN working document with committee.
- 4. Sustainability Checklist addition for developments:
 - o DRAC- does not feel they are able to add sustainable checklist (can make suggestions but don't feel they have authority to make changes)
 - o Stamford has checklist here that Catherine/Mike shared: <https://www.stamfordct.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/5370/637986838641570000>
 - 1. Checklist is energy, resilience, recycling similar to LEED certification - point system and rating system can be published so that Town Council can impartially judge development projects
 - **Next Step:** Catherine will contact Stamford about possibility of coming to speak to working group about the checklist: how it has been working/impacts seen
- 5. **Action needed:** review 2025 Energy Working Group Summary that Bernie put together and provide comments/updates by 2/23 if possible so we can share with Commission all that was accomplished. (Attached document)
- 6. Future Events and opportunities:
 - o Grant writing: AARP Community Initiatives: not just for seniors: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/info-2026/2026-challenge.html> opportunity for grant to be submitted by March 4
 - **Next step:** Discuss with commission
 - o Eversource Main Street program: <https://www.eversource.com/business/save-money-energy/energy-efficiency-programs/main-streets>
 - Unclear if this Eversource program is related to the State of CT Main Streets program which towns pay to be part of.
 - May have some issues with commercial landlords and ongoing development work in WH Center and other commercial districts.
 - **Next Step:** Catherine and Econ Dev to discuss with Eversource if there is an opportunity especially on Park Road
 - o Dan shared that his KO students are interested in projects/partnership with commission going forward (Spring class is on propaganda, Fall Class is climate change) to do projects or assist in other ways.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if I missed anything!

Thanks,
Ally

THE TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD SUSTAINABILITY
COMMISSION PRESENTS:

CLIMATE CHANGE: WHERE WE ARE & WHAT WE CAN DO



FEATURING

Dr. Charles E. Button

Professor of Geography & Sustainability, Central
Connecticut State University

Kick-Off Remarks By:
Mayor Shari Cantor

- ✓ The current scientific state of climate change
- ✓ Practical actions individuals can take
- ✓ Steps municipalities can implement to build resilience

Followed by audience Q&A



Event Details



West Hartford Town Hall
Room 400



March 25, 2026 · 6:30 PM



About Dr. Button

Dr. Charles E. Button is a nationally recognized sustainability scholar with more than 30 years of experience working with NGOs, businesses, academic institutions, and government agencies. He has received the Connecticut Governor's Climate Change Leadership Award, the Green Circle Award (CT DEEP), and a Literati Award for sustainability research.

2025 Energy Working Group - Summary of Activities

Support for Small Business Energy Efficiency

- Conducted targeted outreach to the local business community to promote the Small Business Energy Advantage (SBEA) program, which reduces energy costs through turnkey efficiency upgrades.
- Introduced an SBEA contractor to the Elmwood Business Association to expand awareness and participation.
- Produced an informational SBEA video in partnership with WHCi: <https://youtu.be/672Q5P3D6ro>

Residential Energy Efficiency Campaigns

- Developed and launched a digital advertising campaign on WeHa.com to encourage participation in the Home Energy Solutions (HES) program.
- Result: 80 resident leads generated for HES.
- Established a pilot collaboration with West Hartford's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to assist residents with health and safety barriers identified during HES assessments.

Sustainable Building & Planning Support

- Created a draft New Building Sustainability Checklist to help integrate sustainability criteria into municipal building and development projects.

Thermal Energy Network (TEN) Exploration

- Formed a local working group to participate in TEN4CT (Thermal Energy Networks for Connecticut) initiative: <https://www.pacecleanenergy.org/ten4ct/#grant>
- Began identifying potential West Hartford projects suitable for future state grant and loan funding once available.

Community Engagement & Public Events

- Organized a combined Sun Day & National Drive Electric Week event on September 20, drawing strong participation from residents, nonprofits, and clean energy stakeholders.

Technology Exploration & Market Scanning

- High-efficiency replacement windows: <https://www.luxwall.com>
- Smart indoor air quality systems: <https://gpsair.com/smartIAQ>

February 19, 2026

Nature Based Solutions Working Group Meeting Agenda and Minutes

Attendees: Andrea Yuliano, Chris Feeley, Pat Wilson, Nancy Cooner

Old Business:

1)Letter RE: Westmoor park. We discussed the fact that the letter to be sent to stakeholders of Westmoor Park was intended to be completed and sent in December. At the current point, the letter still has not been approved by the Commission, and submitting this in the next couple weeks will not be as timely as it should have been. We decided as a group to table this letter and focus on the upcoming Less Lawn More Life Campaign instead. We will let the Commission know at the meeting Monday.

2)Wolcott Pollinator meadow weeding: We don't have the training dates or weeding dates yet, but the training is estimated to be late spring, and the weeding will be from June-September. Chris Feeley reached out to the Garden Club and spoke with Beth Ann Loveland-Sennett. Beth Ann will give us the contact information for Master Gardener candidates who need hours. (The Wolcott meadow has already been approved for master gardener hours.) Andrea emailed the UCONN extension (Elizabeth Adler) to ask if there are any master gardener candidates there as well, and has not received a reply yet. Lauren Oken (WH resident) was at last commission meeting, and emailed Andrea to offer her time, as well as of a few of her co-workers. We will add them to the list as well. Nancy Cooner offered her time as well.

3)Less Lawn More Life Campaign: The next NBS meeting will be planning for the Less Lawn More Life presentation in May. Suzanne Sayers has offered to present. No other details have been worked out yet.

New Business:

1)We will keep the Nature Based Solutions meetings to the 3rd Monday of the month for 2026 at 5PM.

2)Short discussion on how we can support other groups aligned with Sustainable WH such as the Tree Action Group to create more momentum for initiatives. We will ask for discussion about this at next Sustainable WH Commission meeting.

3) Short discussion about representation on Town Council for Sustainable WH commission, and how we feel there is a lack of support. We don't know how to increase exposure. Get on Town Council agenda?

ANNUAL REPORT

2025



A greener tomorrow
starts today

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Key Accomplishments for 2025



Strengthened communication with town staff. Identified Town Council liaison; held monthly meetings with Town Manager; deepened relationships with town personnel.



Enhanced resident communication. Launched community email **newsletter** averaging 2,700 readers per issue; presented **WHCi** talk shows on waste and energy efficiency; developed content for “**Cool West Hartford**” website; continued **Facebook** and **Instagram** presence.



Engaged hundreds of residents at Celebrate West Hartford booths; Sun Day Electric Showcase; Wolcott Pollinator Habitat Open House.



Promoted **food scrap drop-off program**, diverting over **32,000 pounds** of food from the waste stream. Doubled pumpkin recycling at **33,000 pounds**.



Prepared land and Installed plants to establish the **Wolcott Pollinator Meadow**, via leadership from West Hartford Garden Club and Leisure Services and Public Works staff.



Drafted **sustainable development checklist**, modeled on City of Stamford guidelines, intended to signal the town’s commitment to sustainability for new construction.



Secured Town Council resolution to include West Hartford in the **Federal Highlands Region**, making West Hartford eligible for future federal grants for land conservation.



Established coalition for **Thermal Energy Networks (TENs)**, which use heat pumps and ground-source heat exchange to move thermal energy where it’s needed, creating a smart infrastructure for climate-friendly heating and cooling.



With Community Development staff, visited successful **bioswale green infrastructure** project in Bristol, to consider as a model for the use of green infrastructure in climate resilience and flood mitigation.

2026 Priorities

The following priorities emerged from our November 2025 brainstorming session. To facilitate steady progress and measurable success, the commission and working groups are currently defining SMART goals with specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound parameters, along with modest budgets to enable our 2026 work and grant-seeking posture. We welcome the support and participation of Town Council, Town Staff, residents, businesses, and institutions in pursuing these priorities and making West Hartford **cleaner, greener, cooler, and more sustainable**.



Expand tree canopy. Promote to and educate Town and residents to reverse the significant 20-year loss of tree canopy.



Expand native habitat.



Reduce and divert waste.

- Expand and further promote the town's food scraps drop-off program.
- Explore the economic case for the town offering and/or negotiating curbside pickup of food scraps.
- Identify the most common contaminants in waste and recycling and create a resident education campaign to avoid them.



Monitor Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD). Work with appropriate commissions and staff to track and implement specific conservation goals in the POCD.



Strengthen local food systems.



Shift to clean energy and increase efficiency.



Promote active and alternative transportation.



Launch “Cool West Hartford” website to promote sustainability practices for residents, businesses, and institutions.



Connect to Sustainable CT framework. Identify actions within the framework supporting our 2026 priorities, and work with the Town's Sustainable CT 2027 Certification Committee to implement.



Promote climate resilience through green infrastructure.

Promote Town and residential use of green infrastructure (e.g. trees, bioswales, rain gardens) to reduce stormwater flooding and heat island.

Recommendations to Town Leadership



1. Institutionalize Sustainability for Fiscal Resilience

Operational Integration: Transition from a reactive to a proactive model by embedding sustainability as a core lens for all municipal decision-making. By integrating sustainability criteria at the earliest stages of Town planning, budgeting, and procurement, West Hartford can avoid costly retrofits and ensure every tax dollar contributes to resilient, future-ready infrastructure.

Professionalize Oversight: Formally establish a Sustainability Office to centralize leadership, like the proven models in **Westport, New Haven, and Greenwich**. At a minimum, sustainability impact analyses should be expanded across all departments to eliminate silos and ensure these values are never an afterthought.

2. Strategic Implementation of Adopted Town Plans

Accountability to Existing Goals: Commit to the rigorous implementation and monitoring of the Conservation section of the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and the Clean Energy Plan. These documents provide the existing mandate; the Commission serves as the partner to ensure their success.

3. Support and Scale High-Impact Initiatives

To achieve measurable results in 2026 and beyond, the Commission seeks active partnership (regular strategy sessions, timely follow up) in the following:

- [SWHC to List priority areas] See 2026 Priorities
- [SWHC to identify supporting Sustainable CT Actions]
- [SWHC to identify best practices from other municipalities]
- [SWHC to help identify grants/community match funds]

4. Modest Operating Budget

Allocate a modest annual budget (suggested \$5,000–\$10,000) for public educational events and materials. This investment eliminates the current need for volunteers to pay for supplies out-of-pocket and ensures professional outreach for town-wide initiatives.

PURPOSE & DUTIES

Commission Purpose

The Sustainable West Hartford Commission, a merger of the former Conservation and Clean Energy Commissions, was established by ordinance adopted June 13, 2023 as [Part 1, Article XVI](#) of the Town Code.

As described in Town Code [§ 5-72](#), the Town Council established this 11-member body to:

- Promote practices leading to greater environmental, social, and economic sustainability.
- Ensure a high quality of life for present and future generations by fostering an inclusive, resilient community.
- Encourage the responsible use and conservation of energy and natural resources.

Duties and Responsibilities

As described in Town Code [§ 5-77](#), [Duties and responsibilities](#), the Commission shall:

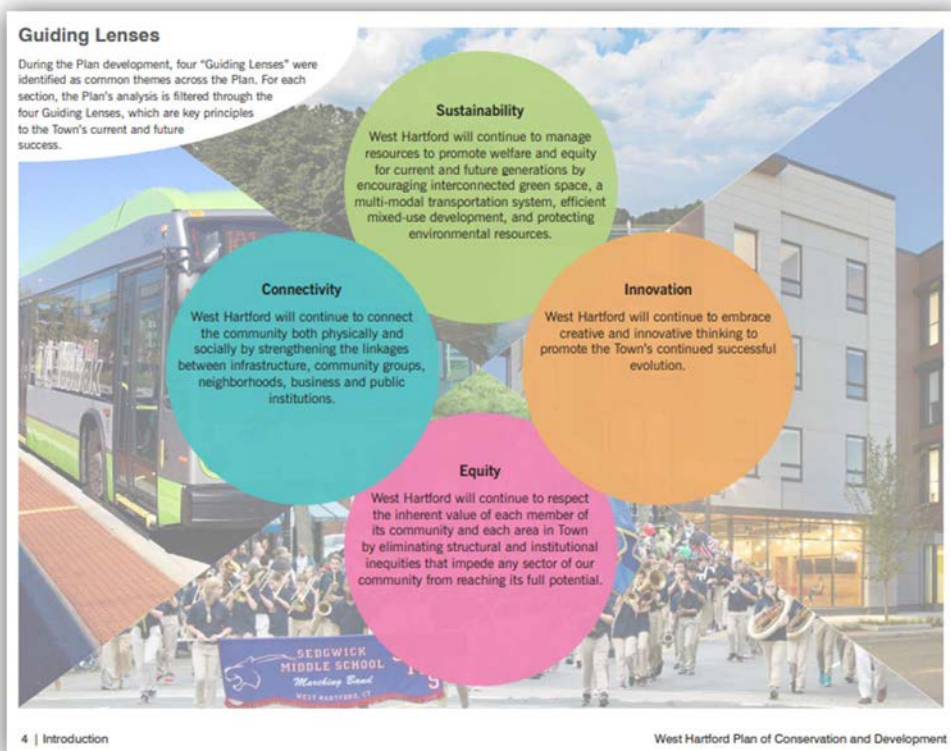
- Identify and prioritize concerns and issues relating to long-term environmental, social and economic sustainability** of the Town of West Hartford with due consideration of local, regional, state, national, and global contexts.
- Advise and make recommendations to the Town Manager** on policies, programs and proposals regarding sustainable practices including, but not limited to, environmental and ecological resources, air, water, energy, land, waste, materials management, transportation, climate change, equity, and environmental justice.
- Collaborate with and serve as a resource for Town Council, Town departments, boards, commissions, and committees of the Town, and the community at large** in order to advance a comprehensive, integrated approach to sustainability.
- Develop and encourage efforts, relationships and resources to **educate and act on sustainability** within our community and beyond and to serve as a **community liaison** for issues, ideas, and proposals.
- File an **annual written report** with the Town Council. Such report shall include a summary of current sustainability initiatives, as well as recommendations for future sustainability initiatives and policy.

Supporting Authorities

Our work serves as the primary engine for implementing the sustainability goals of the Town's **Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)**. By coordinating across Energy, Waste, and Nature, we serve as the central advisory resource for the Town Council and residents alike.

- The Town of West Hartford's [2020-2030 Plan of Conservation and Development](#) recognizes sustainability as a “**Guiding Lens**” and key principle to the Town's current and future success.
- In January 2022, the Town of West Hartford [declared a Climate Crisis](#) “that requires immediate action.”
- The Town's [Energy Plan](#) aspires “for our **entire** community to use 100% clean energy by 2050.”
- Mayor Shari Cantor highlighted sustainability as a top priority in her [2025 State of the Town](#) address.
- Mayor Cantor's September 2025 proclamation urging residents to adopt clean energy practices [\[link needed\]](#).

West Hartford Plan of Conservation and Development 2020-2030, page 4:



2025 WORKING GROUP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ENERGY



Priority: Shift to Clean Energy and Increase Efficiency

The Energy & Buildings working group focuses on high-impact residential electrification and ensuring new capital projects meet high efficiency standards.

Support for Small Business Energy Efficiency

- Conducted targeted outreach to the local business community to promote the Small Business Energy Advantage (SBEA) program, which reduces energy costs through turnkey efficiency upgrades.
- Introduced an SBEA contractor to the Elmwood Business Association to expand awareness and participation.
- Produced an informational SBEA video in partnership with WHCi: see <https://youtu.be/672Q5P3D6ro>.

Residential Energy Efficiency Campaigns/Home Energy Solutions

- Developed and launched a digital advertising campaign on WeHa.com to encourage participation in the Home Energy Solutions (HES) program.
- Result: 80 resident leads generated for HES.
- Established a pilot collaboration with West Hartford's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to assist residents with health and safety barriers identified during HES assessments.

Development Review / Sustainable Building & Planning Support

- Drafted **sustainable development checklist**, modeled on City of Stamford guidelines, intended to signal the town's commitment to sustainability for new construction and integrate sustainability criteria into municipal building and development projects.
- Proactively engaged with the Town Planner on major projects like **1800 Asylum** and the **Elmwood Community Center** to advocate for LEED standards, EV-ready infrastructure, and solar-ready roofs.
- Created a draft New Building Sustainability Checklist to help Thermal Energy Network (TEN) Exploration

- Formed a local working group to participate in TEN4CT (Thermal Energy Networks for Connecticut) initiative: <https://www.pacecleanenergy.org/ten4ct/#grant>.
- Began identifying potential West Hartford projects suitable for future state grant and loan funding once available.

Electric Showcase

Coordinated this flagship public event on September 20, 2025 at Town Hall featuring EVs, e-bikes, and heat pumps, and more, in connection with Sun Day and & National Drive Electric Week. This "owner-to-neighbor" event provided hands-on education for hundreds of residents, nonprofits, and clean energy stakeholders.

Technology Exploration & Market Scanning

(These bullets need a preface for context.)

- High-efficiency replacement windows: <https://www.luxwall.com>
- Smart indoor air quality systems: <https://gpsair.com/smartIAQ>

Residential Solar

Promoted residential solar projects in newsletter to take advantage of federal tax benefits before they expired. Did we recently note number of residential solar installations in WH?

Clean Heat Outreach

Leveraged the newsletter to demystify heat pump technology, resulting in a surge of inquiries regarding federal tax credits and state incentives.

2025 WORKING GROUP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

WASTE



Priority: Reduce and Divert Waste

2025 marked a new chapter for Waste. Following the 2024 Town Council decision not to pursue Unit-Based Pricing, the Commission pivoted to a voluntary Food Scrap Drop-Off Program. While the Food Scrap Drop-Off Program shows excellent grassroots momentum, **total town diversion remains at 1.4%**, requiring a more proactive and deliberate town-wide strategy to scale-up participation.

Food Scrap Drop-Off Program

- **Promoted five drop-off sites:** Town Hall, Norfeldt Field, Eisenhower Park, Westmoor Park, and the Brixton Street Recycling Center.
- Registration grew to **904 users** by late 2025.
- Residents diverted **32,208 pounds** of food scraps between May and September—a **140% increase** in monthly weight since the program started in April.
- **The Challenge:** Overfilled bins at the Westmoor and Town Hall sites show that resident demand is currently outpacing capacity. More drop-off sites are required in 2026.
- **Link:** <https://www.westhartfordct.gov/town-departments/public-works/food-scraps-drop-off-program>

Pumpkin Recycling

Doubled pumpkin recycling from 16,100 pounds in 2024 to **33,000 pounds** in 2025. We know that's just a start—for a town of 63,000 residents those numbers could be higher.

**3 MILLION Pounds
Each Month**

Food waste makes up about 24% of our trash, and West Hartford throws out over 3 million pounds of garbage every month.

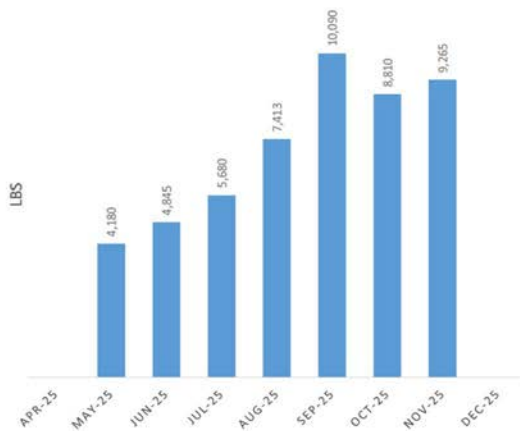
40% of Connecticut's trash is being trucked out of state, so reducing trash also reduces the environmental and financial burden on all of us.

2025 WORKING GROUP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

FOOD SCRAP METRICS



WH Drop-off Food Scrap Program: Waste Impact



Results, since May 2025

- 50,283 lbs total diverted
- Increase in lbs for first 4 months
- Monthly total has doubled since start of program

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

Goal, by Dec 2025

- 2% or 20,000 lbs each month
- Future outreach will be to focus on food waste *reduction*

WH Drop-off Food Scrap Program: Climate Impacts



2025 WORKING GROUP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS



Priority: Expand Native Habitat and Tree Canopy

Update Town Planting Policy

This Planting Policy intends to maximize the use of appropriate native plants and low-impact management on municipal properties to help mitigate the effects of habitat loss and fragmentation from development and the proliferation of non-native/exotic plantings in our town landscapes. Native plants are essential for maintaining healthy ecosystems. There is currently no planting policy and non-native species (some tending toward invasive over time) continue to be utilized.

The suggested planting policy is consistent with the:

- ✓ 2020-2030 West Hartford Plan of Conservation and Development.
- ✓ 2022 Town of West Hartford Resolution Declaring a Climate Crisis.
- ✓ The 2024 Pollinator-Friendly Community Resolution.
- ✓ Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWIG.UCONN.edu), an authority on invasive plants in Connecticut and the Town of West Hartford. It is, therefore, a reference and resource for the Town of West Hartford's Leisure Services, Public Works, and Engineering Departments.
- ✓ State of Connecticut General Assembly Bill #190 introduced by the C

Nature Based Solutions working group leaders continue requests for further thoughtful discussion with stakeholders. Pat Wilson is liaison with Helen Rubino-Turco. Need Town stakeholders willingness to discuss

Wolcott Pollinator Meadow

Traditional landscaping has left many towns with acres of open space planted with non-native grasses and other ornamental species. These spaces require frequent maintenance like mowing and pesticide/fertilizer applications which are harmful to humans, pets and all living things. It costs money and offers no value to the ecosystem services that keep our air, water and soil healthy. It strips animals of much-needed habitat and contributes to the biodiversity loss that affects our food web. Converting the area in front of the Wolcott Community Garden offers beauty and habitat and eliminates the need for costly maintenance. In recognition of the

benefits to our community, the Wolcott Pollinator Garden Project was supported by Leisure Services, Public Works, and the Sustainable West Hartford Commission, all of whom have provided ongoing assistance and support.

Initial plant installation completed late Spring 2025 (project was initiated in summer 2024). Presented to the public September 2025, at Welcome the Pollinator Habitat community event. (estimated 75+ residents attended.)

Committee needs to get the word out to the community that volunteers are needed. We would like to cast a wide net. It would also be a good investment for the town to offer more hands-on support which would allow them to gain and retain knowledge of meadow installation and maintenance for future projects.

Need DPW resources, minimal hours required to be on-site learning about native plants and meadow management. Help establishing a way to directly contact the entire West Hartford Community-need more exposure to public.

Tighten & connect to exec summary: With West Hartford Garden Club and Leisure Services, hosted a Pollinator Pathway Open House to advance the transformation of acreage at Wolcott Park into a native meadow, a multi-year project involving professional site prep and community "winter sowing."

Firefly Magic 2025?

Over the last 20 years, The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation reported that 14 percent of the 171 species of fireflies in North America are threatened with extinction, impacting local populations. The primary drivers of the decline in Connecticut include the loss of habitat (meadows, marshes, and forests), the use of pesticides and lawn chemicals, and light pollution.

Many people also remember fireflies as a special part of summer nights and childhood. Based on the above information, the Backyard Magic/Firefly Campaign was designed to bring awareness to these special insects and inspire WH residents to create firefly habitat space in their back yards.

Public beta tested-need town support for further expansion. Interacted with an estimated 200 residents of West Hartford at Celebrate West Hartford June 2025. No further ability to track results.

Need budget for advertising/outreach. Town adoption of (above) Planting Policy would also support fireflies.



2025 WORKING GROUP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH



Priority: Engaging the Community for Climate Action

Community Newsletters

Beginning with an April Earth Day edition, we published 6 newsletter issues reaching 2,700+ subscribers per issue. Archives: [Nov](#) | [Oct](#) | [Sept](#) | [July](#) | [May](#) | [April](#).

Social Media

Continued Facebook engagement. Re-established commission's Instagram account. Leveraged WHCi expertise and YouTube for short and longer form video.

Events

Created new posters and educational materials for tabling, focusing on actionable steps like Home Energy Assessments and Active Transportation for **Celebrate West Hartford, Electric Showcase**, and **Sun Day** events.

Website

Developed content for a resident-focused climate action website on the Town's platform. Editing, design, and town review, and launch expected in early 2026.



2025 WORKING GROUP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SUSTAINABLE CT



A State Leader in Sustainability

Sustainable CT is a voluntary certification program to recognize thriving and resilient Connecticut municipalities. A grassroots, municipal effort, Sustainable CT provides a wide-ranging menu of best practices. Municipalities choose Sustainable CT actions, implement them, and earn points toward certification.

West Hartford's collective efforts culminated in achieving **Gold-level certification** [when] and the **Climate Leader Designation** [when]—the highest honors currently available in Connecticut.



Our Impact

Text

Heading

Text

Next Steps?

[Integrate checklist actions with commission priorities and activities]

ABOUT US

2025 Sustainable West Hartford Commission Members

Back: David Sagers (Chair), Andrea Yuliano, Kim Hughes, Ally Schoenhorn, Bernard Pelletier (Secretary), Stephen Sack (Vice Chair), Ted Newton.

Front: Pat Wilson, Catherine Diviney (Staff Energy Specialist), Kelly Kennedy, Mia Magnusson (Hall HS Student Representative)

Not pictured: Jonathan Ferrigno, Christy Matthew, Erica Kahn (Conard HS Student Representative), Katherine Bruns (Staff Recycling Coordinator).



Energy Working Group

list

Waste Working Group

list

Nature-Based Solutions Working Group

list

Staff Liaisons

Catherine Diviney, Energy Specialist

Katherine Bruns, Recycling Coordinator



[Commission Website](#)



[Email](#)



[Facebook](#)



[Instagram](#)

Staff liaisons to Sustainable WH Commission:

Catherine Diviney, Energy Specialist, Plant & Facilities, catherine.diviney@westhartfordct.gov, 860-561-7581

Katherine Bruns, Recycling Coordinator, Public Works, katherine.bruns@westhartfordct.gov, 860-561-8107



- The Sustainable WH Commission had to postpone Jan 26 events to **Feb 23** because of the snow:
 - **Mon, Feb 23, 6 - 7 PM, Sustainable Snow Removal Presentation** (John Phillips, Director of Public Works) @ Rm 314, Town Hall. Education on the Town's snow removal practices and policies and how to best management snow at home. This event qualifies for 5 points towards Sust CT 2027 certification. It will be livestreamed by WHCi: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsW-vMD4rNA>
 - **Mon, Feb 23, 7 - 9 PM, Sustainable WH Commission meeting**, @ Rm 407, Town Hall. Guest speaker: Bill Gleason of the WH Tree Project, presentation and discussion of preliminary results of WH's Tree Canopy Study.
- Spotlight on **Waste**



A group of 12 – including Councilors Lazarus, Polun, Harris, commissioners, and town staff toured All American Waste's state-of-the-art Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in Berlin, CT, on Feb 3.

Check out a fun Instagram reel of the tour on @westhartfordrecycles using this QR Code.



On Feb 4, there was a full house at Katherine's [recycling and waste reduction presentation](#) at Noah Webster Library.

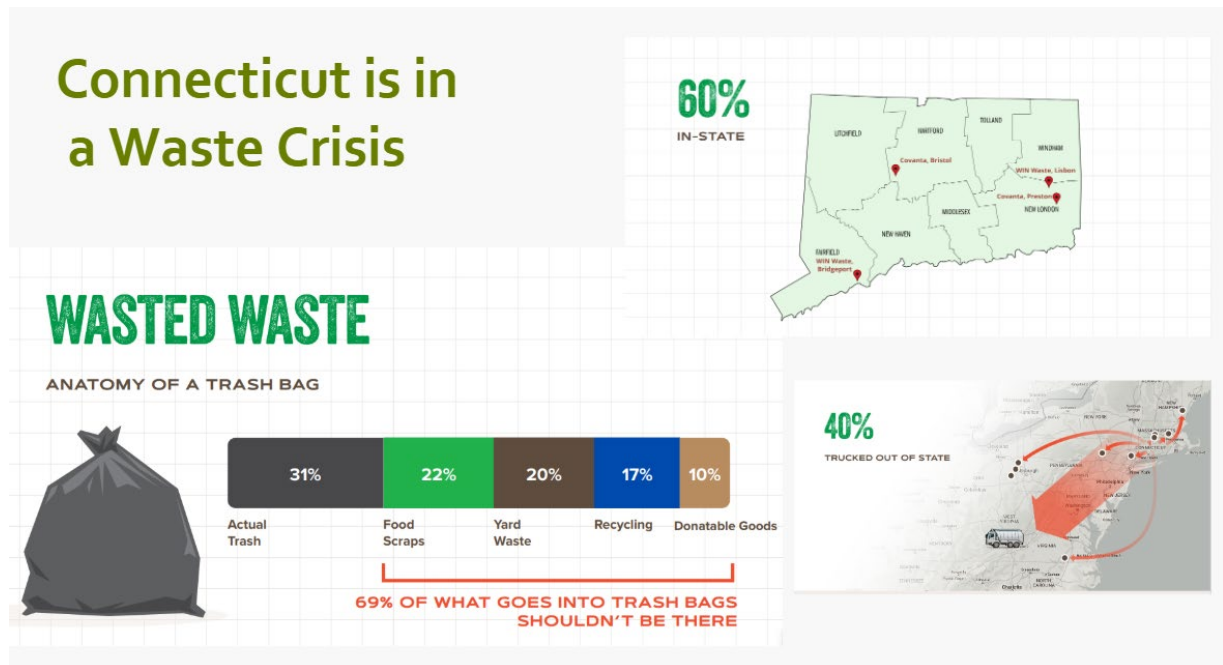
Despite upbeat tours, videos, and presentations, we know that waste in CT is a serious issue.

After going on this informative, eye-opening tour, we welcome this Committee and the Council's thoughts on *what should be next for West Hartford?*

Some of our big take-aways from the tour were:

1. The Facility Operator saying *"If you get it to us, what CAN be recycled, WILL be recycled."* We witnessed first-hand the effectiveness of their combined technology and manual operations: sorting out contamination (e.g., plastic bags/film, clothes, small or odd items, even a microwave!) and achieving material recovery rates over 95-97%.
2. The facility is not at full capacity; it can take more recycling.
3. The Town gets paid a small amount for the value of its recycling.

Waste audits conducted in West Hartford as part of the research conducted for Pay-As-You-Throw in 2024, showed that **69% of what goes into a trash bag should not be there.**



Having opted not to pursue Pay-As-You-Throw, the Town needs to continue to explore alternative ways to address our waste. For example:

- **22% Food Scraps.** Despite a successful start to the drop-off program, this program is not the long-term solution. Even with additional drop-off locations, this voluntary program will only realistically divert 1-3% of food scraps. How will we address the remaining 20%?
- **20% Yard Waste.** Why do people continue to put yard waste in the trash? What changes are needed to existing Town yard waste programs and efforts to capture this 20%?
- **17% Recycling.** Recycling is the law. This 17% should be going to All American's MRF; how do we get it there?
- **10% Donatable Goods.** How do we make it easy for people to donate items that could be put to better use, helping community members in need, and reducing waste?
- **31% Waste.** Waste is waste; it cannot be diverted, but it can be reduced. Enhanced efforts around waste reduction (e.g., consumption habits and use of disposables) will benefit all categories.

While education plays a key role in efforts, it is not enough. The Town already has local ordinances in place which allow for monitoring, enforcement, and fines. The Town also has the ability to separate the cost of waste from general budget, modify collection schedules, or develop more convenient ways and partnerships to enhance participation. Let's explore how we can implement these strategies and which is the best next step for West Hartford.

**A CONVERSATION ON
SUSTAINABLE SNOW REMOVAL
WITH WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR
JOHN PHILLIPS**

**February 23rd 6 -7 pm
Town Hall Rm 314**

Event will be live-streamed by WHCi at:



click or scan



**Come learn about the town's snow removal practices
and policies and how best to manage snow at home.
Q & A to follow presentation.**

Sponsored by the Sustainable West Hartford Commission



Connecticut is in a Waste Crisis

WASTED WASTE

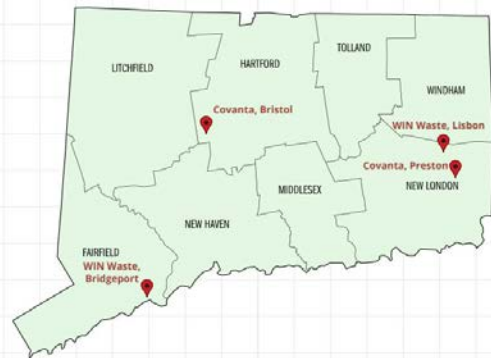
ANATOMY OF A TRASH BAG



69% OF WHAT GOES INTO TRASH BAGS
SHOULDN'T BE THERE

60%

IN-STATE



40%

TRUCKED OUT OF STATE



Why is reducing waste so important?

We have run out of room for our CT trash!

When we throw things "AWAY"... away is a place



- 40% of our trash is trucked out of state – approximately 1 MILLION tons in 2024
- 24% of this trash is food waste
- FOOD IS NOT TRASH (and is easy to remove)
- Single use products create too much trash
- What single use item can you say no to?



All American MRF – Berlin, CT



Single Stream Recycling



- Made recycling easier
- Increased collection volume
- Misleading – people put a lot of material in the blue bin wishing it were recyclable = “wishcycling”

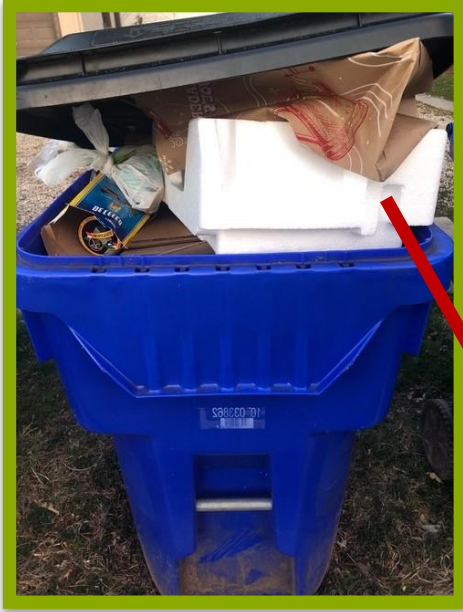
“Did you know that recycling is mandatory in Connecticut? Everyone must recycle. That includes residents whether living in a single or multi-family building, every business including non-profits, and all public and private agencies and institutions (e.g. colleges, hospitals, local and state government agencies). It's the Law!”

(CT DEEP website)

Greenwashing & Wishcycling



Wish Cycling



Styrofoam



Metal pot



Tools

???



We can create less waste!

**24% of
trash
is food!**

(food is NOT trash!)

Recycling
triangle numbers
don't mean item
is recyclable!

**Average person
throws away
4.9 lbs of trash
a day**

2.7 LBS IN 1960

**Avg family of 4
throws away
\$2000 worth of
food**

**Only 9% of all
plastic produced is
recycled**

****Avoid
single use
when
possible!***

West Hartford's popular residential food scrap drop off program has collected over 66,600 pounds of scraps in 10 months



Drop off locations:

- Town Hall
- Eisenhower Park
- Norfeldt Field
- Recycling Center

Yes!
Separating
food scraps
is another
form
of recycling!

What can be recycled?

- Fruits and vegetables
- Meat, poultry, and fish
- Breads and grains
- Liquids, fats, oils, and grease
- Eggs and dairy products
- Packaged food
- Coffee grounds
- Desserts



Compost services powered by

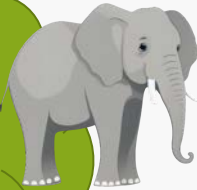


WHPS Cafeteria Food Scrap Program?

96.11 tons food scraps
diverted 2022-2025!
(Paine's, Inc)



That's about 14
ELEPHANTS
worth of scraps!



School	Enrollment #	Potential Diversion/week
Aiken	397	441 lbs
Braeburn	348	392 lbs
Bristow	319	361 lbs
Bugbee	346	390 lbs
Charter Oak	479	541 lbs
Duffy	512	578 lbs
Morley	306	345 lbs
Norfeldt	360	407 lbs
Smith	352	398 lbs
Webster Hill	379	395 lbs
Whiting Lane	367	415 lbs
Wolcott	362	409 lbs
Total		4761 lbs per week!

Coming Next: KP and Sedgwick!

If you think you are
too small to make
a difference, try
sleeping with a
mosquito.

- Dalai Lama

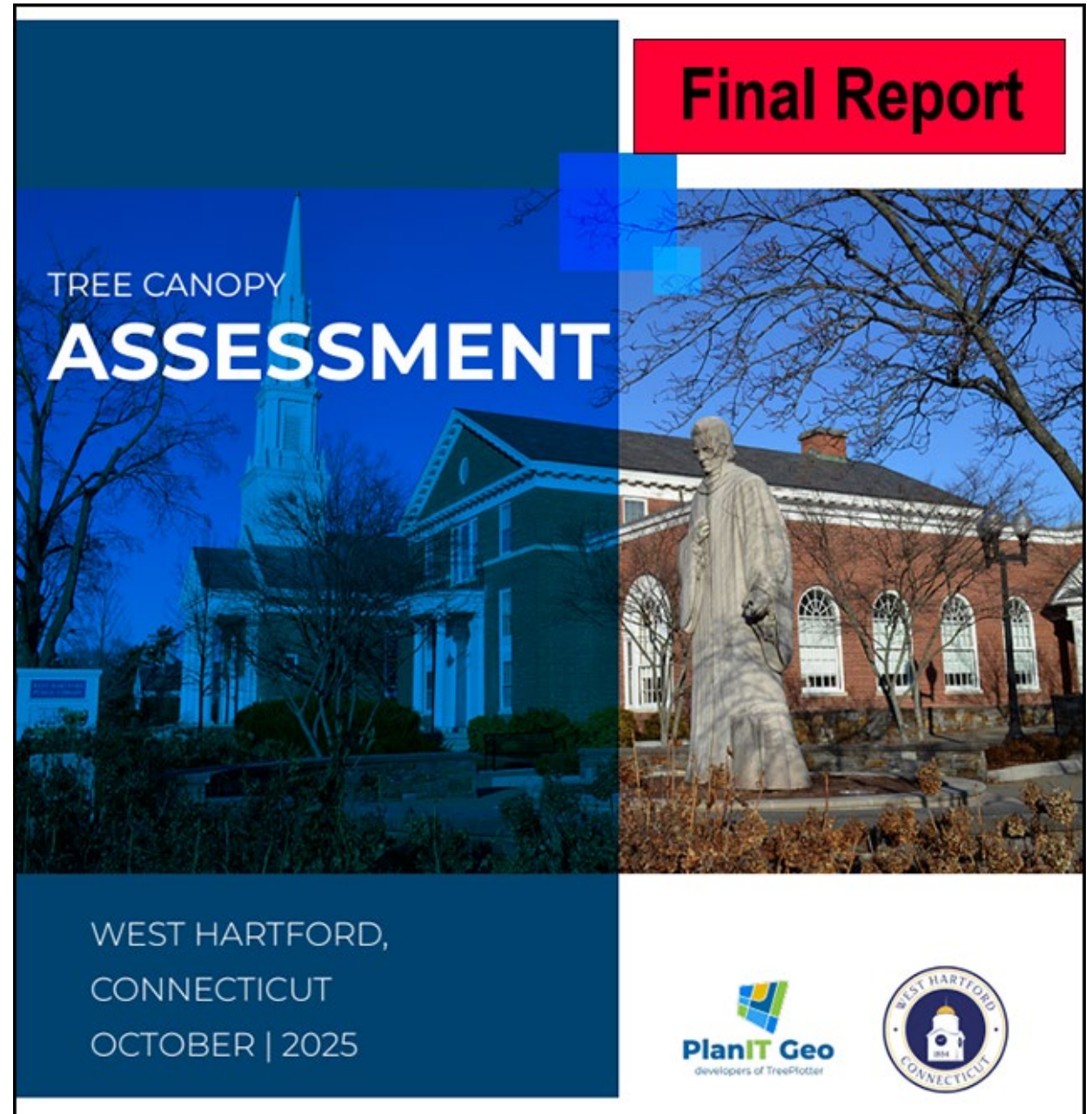


TREE CANOPY ASSESSMENT

Part 1: “The LOSS”



TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD
*Prepared by PlanIT Geo for
West Hartford Leisure Services*



WELCOME



*The “Wolf Tree”, a very large, iconic
White Oak tree in Bugbee Forest*

“The Players”

UTC Study = Urban Tree Canopy Assessment

(Raw Data delivered in DEC. 2024)

FINAL REPORT issued by Leisure Services Dec. 2025

Tree Action Group(TAG) = Town Group tasked with Urban Forestry Advisory role via **West Hartford Leisure Services**

Funding via American Rescue Plan Act

Study Performed by PlanIT Geo, leading provider of geospatial/forestry technology services (software, GIS mapping, analysis)

USEFUL TERMS

- **Tree Canopy:** Tree Coverage of an area, usually reported by ACRES or % of total land studied
- **UTC = Urban Tree Canopy**, includes suburbs, also referred to as Tree Canopy or TC
- **UTC Study/Assessment:** The scientific measurement (satellite) of a specific area's Tree Canopy delivered via raw data
- **Final Report** released on Town website:
Feb. 2026

Link: <https://www.westhartfordct.gov/town-departments/leisure-services/parks/trees/actiongroup>



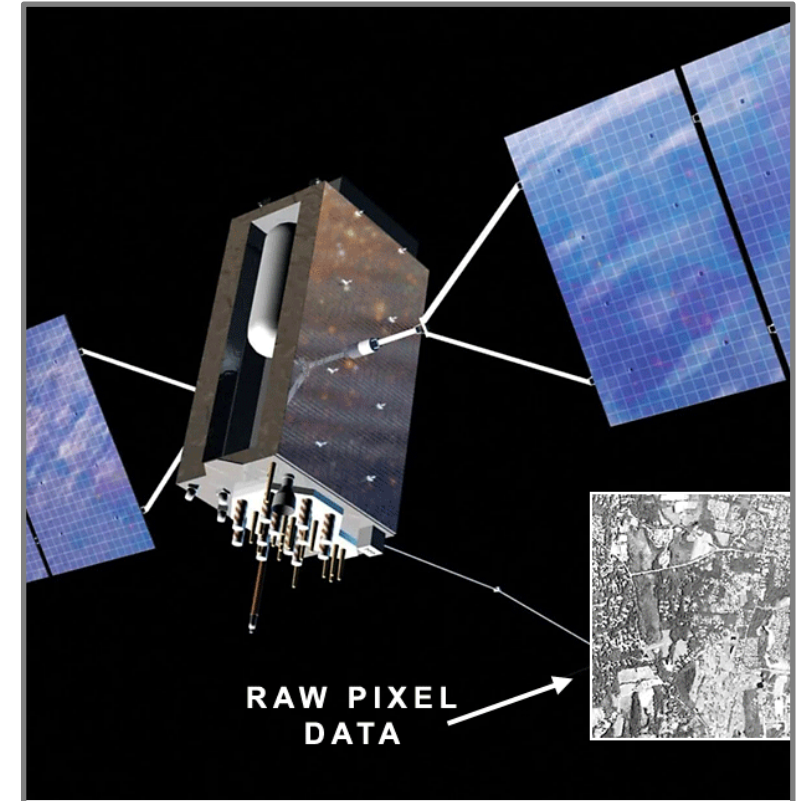
Invisible fungal disease (Heartrot) plus a minor wind-storm toppled this mature White Pine (32" DBH) at Westmoor Park.

WeHa UTC Study – Satellite Geospatial Imaging

- *CAPTURED RAW DATA FROM:*
- **July, 2010**
- **August, 2023**
- *UTCs only performed when trees are “leafed out”*

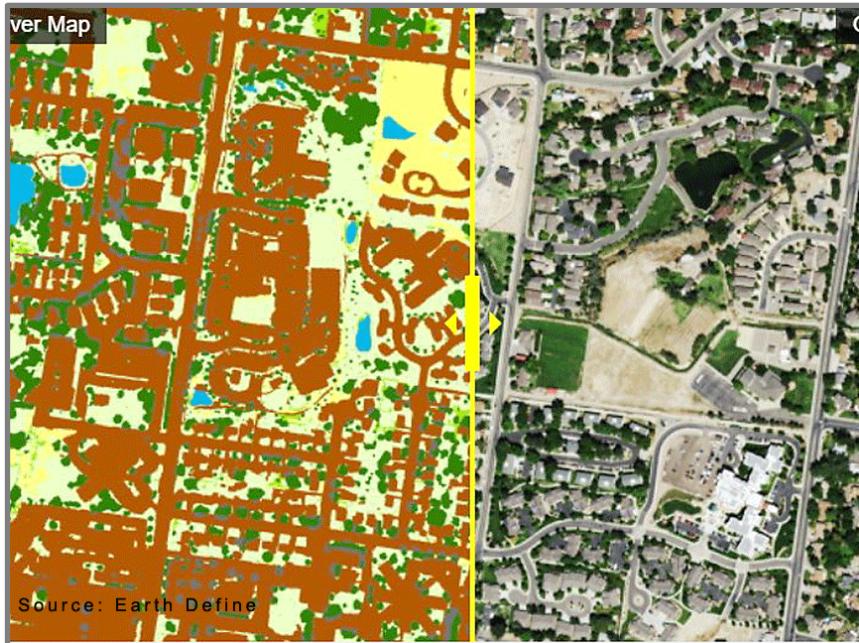
Methodology, Data Source

- High-res, 60 cm sq. per pixel – highest resolution available
- Data Source, *Earth Define*, Redmond, WA
- Analysis by *PlanIT Geo*, Arvada, CO

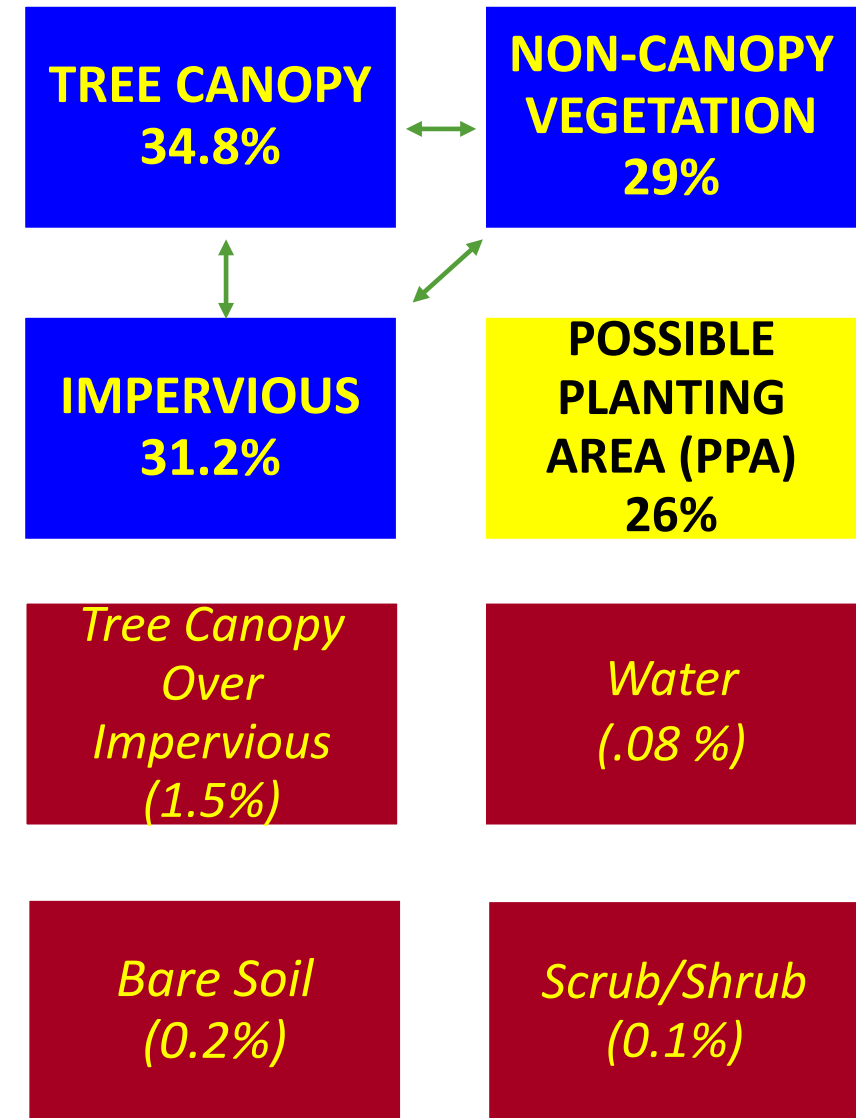


*Science, Technology, & Data Capture for Study
was state-of-the-art*

ANALYSIS STEP 1: “LAND CLASSIFICATION”



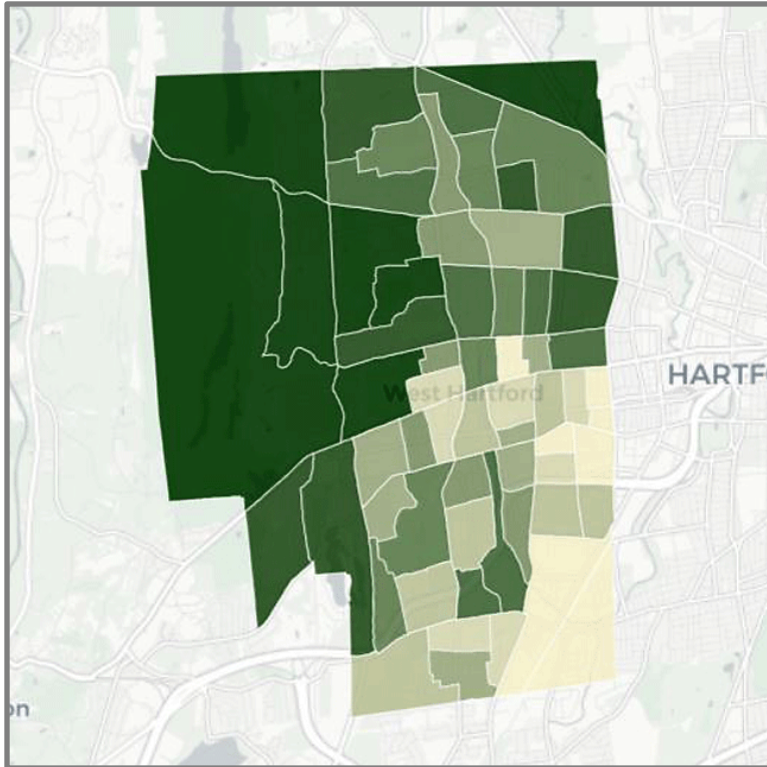
Each pixel evaluated as TC, H2O, Impervious, etc.



Percentages not exact due to rounding.

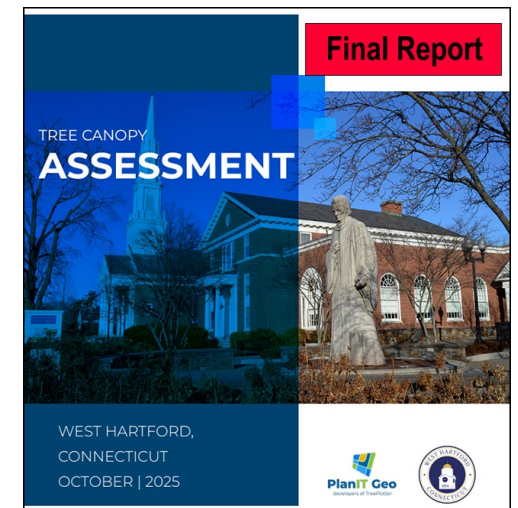
PPA is a “sub-set” of Non-Canopy Vegetation (grass & low shrubs)

ANALYSIS STEP 2: “GEOGRAPHIES” (GIS MAPS)



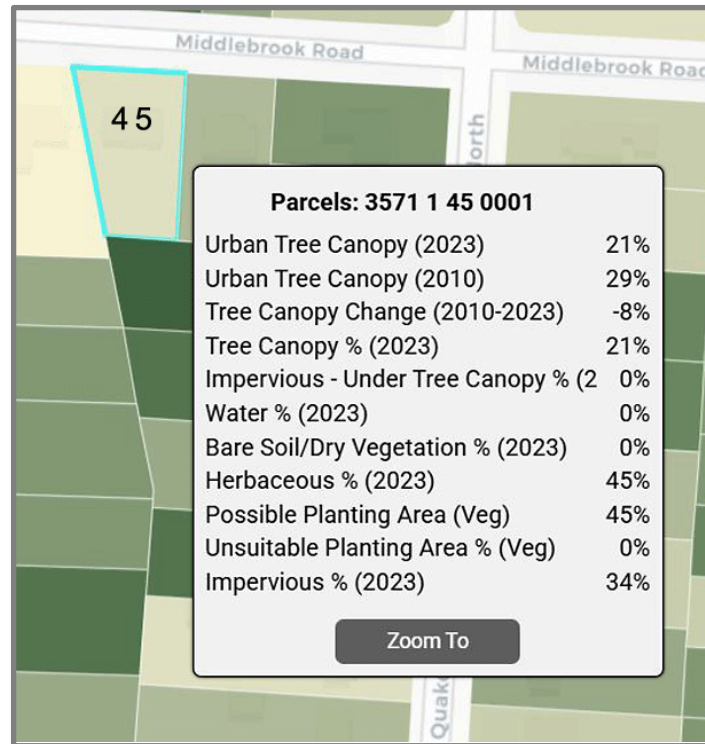
Some geographies are standard (Town Boundary),
others are by request of the client (Town).

- **NET – West Hartford (minus MDC)**
- **School Districts**
- **Parks**
- **Parcels**
- *Town Boundary*
- *Census Blocks*
- *R.O.W.*
- *Zoning*



ANALYSIS STEP 3: MICRO-DETAIL BY INDIVIDUAL PARCEL

- Detailed Info - ALL Town Parcels
- 80+ % of Parcels LOST Canopy
- Key Tool for developing **Planting Plans**
- Often used in tandem with Town *Inventory* tools...
- Will be available on Town GIS Maps in early 2026



Tree **CANOPY** Info
45 Middlebrook

Tree **INVENTORY** Data
45 Middlebrook



WHAT'S A GOOD TREE CANOPY %?

“A **healthy suburban tree canopy** in a forested state is considered to be in the **40% - 60% range.**”

Source: American Forests, Jan. 2017, Ian Leahy



Logo Source: American Forests

BENCHMARKS

- DOWNTOWN/INDUSTRIAL = 15%
- **URBAN RESIDENTIAL = 25%**
- **SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL = 50%**
- **FOREST = 70% to 100%**
(2002, American Forests)

GROWTH/LOSS METRICS

- **0 % to +1,2,3 % = VERY GOOD, GROWING**
- **-1 % to -5 % LOSS = CONCERN, NEEDS ANALYSIS**
- **-6 % to -15 % LOSS = ALARMING, NEEDS *DRAMATIC REMEDIATION***
- **> -15 % LOSS RARELY SEEN = *EMERGENCY ACTION NEEDED***

WeHa RESULTS: OVERVIEW



WEST HARTFORD NET GEOGRAPHY

Note: MDC Land = 14% of Land within Town Boundary

- nearly unchanged 2010 – 2023; 90% Forest
- **NOT INCLUDED** in “West Hartford Net”.

- **2010: 46% Tree Canopy**
- **2023: 37% Tree Canopy**
(below min. for Suburban TC)
- **Gross Change: -9% Total Land (NET Geography)**
- **-20.6% TREE CANOPY (LOSS)**

Source: PlanIT Geo Raw Data, exact acreage figures. Percentages in presentation and final report may vary slightly due to rounding.
-20.6% is usually rounded to – 21%.

WeHa RESULTS - 2



Large, mature trees are West Hartford's most valuable ecological forest asset, and incur HUGE environmental future debt when they are cut down before their time.

21% TREE CANOPY LOSS EQUALS:

- **1,114 Acres** of Tree Canopy Lost
- **EST. 45,000** total Trees Removed*
- EST. annual loss: 3,500 trees mixed sizes
- **EST. >16,000 Trees** 18-inch DBH or greater
- “**Healthy**” to “**Unhealthy**” Tree Canopy % by Suburban Standards
- Strongly qualifies for “**Emergency Action Needed**” category

** Tree Canopy Studies are not intended to give exact stem counts or Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) analysis. That is the role of INVENTORY studies. The USDA Forest Service **FIA** tool plus WeHa Inventory analysis were used to prepare these estimates.*

WeHa RESULTS - 3



Major Park with multi-use recreation, open space, and more than 500 trees. Trees include 57 species and average 20 inches DBH.

Source: WeHa Inventory, Primary Research, 2025

FERNRIDGE PARK

- 30-acre Parcel, centrally located
- *Now, **IMAGINE** – no pond, no pool, no splash pad, no basketball court, no tennis courts, no baseball field, no playgrounds, and no parking Lots*
- *IMAGINE, the entire park covered only by trees...*

WeHa RESULTS - 4



THE LOSS

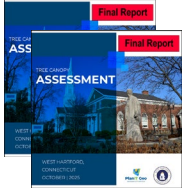
WEST HARTFORD LOSS

- Now, **IMAGINE** – no pond, no pool, no splash pad, no basketball court, no tennis courts, no baseball field, no playground, and no parking lots
- **THE ENTIRE AREA COVERED BY TREES**

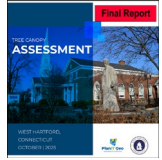
X 37

**Completely
Forested
Fern
Parks**

Source: 1,114 Canopy Acres ÷ 30 acres = 37.13, PlanIT Geo, BG



PUBLIC / PRIVATE BREAKDOWN

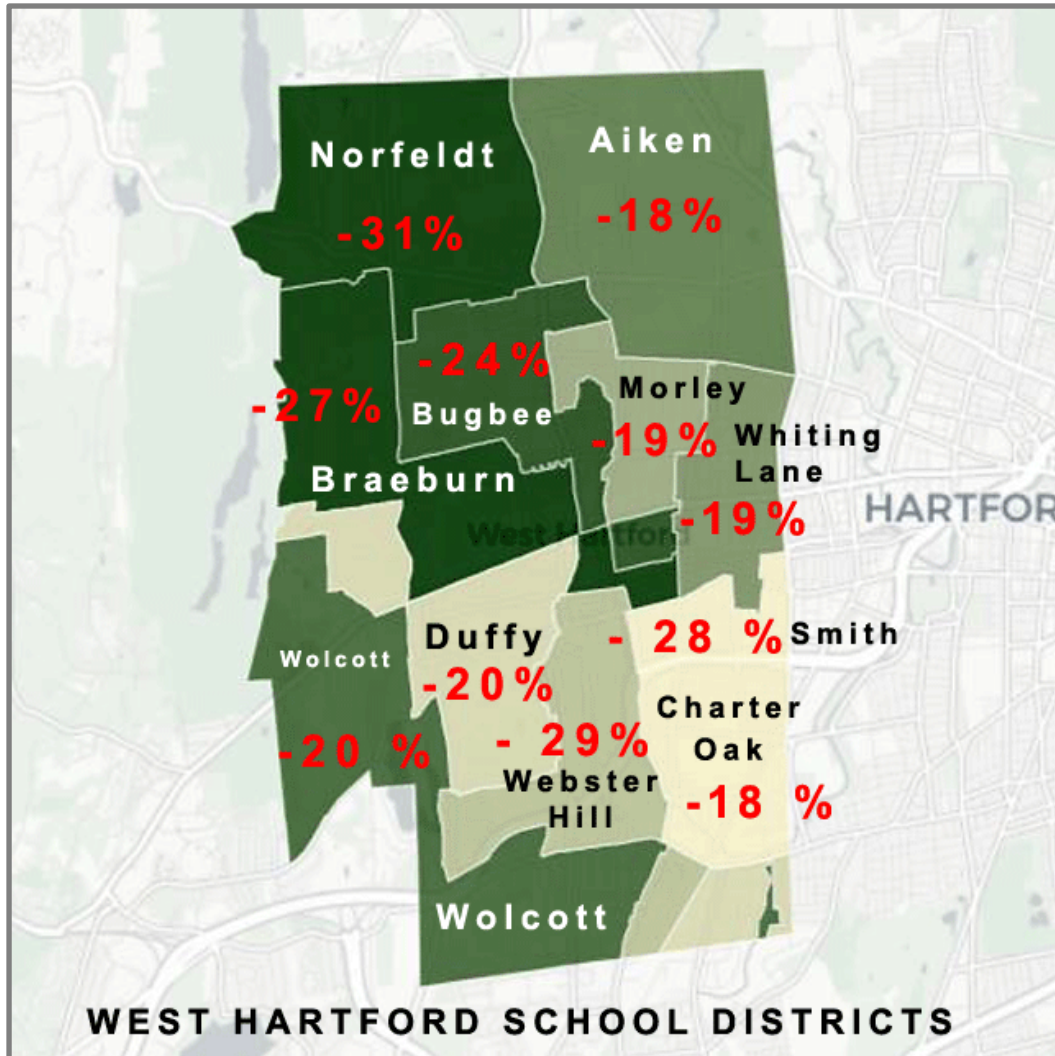


“The majority of loss occurred on private property. Parks and school property fared better.”
source: PlanIT Geo Report

- **PUBLIC LAND** = app. 20%*
includes MDC/R.O.W.
- On Average, Parks/Schools lost **8– 11 % canopy**
- Less than Private Land, but still in need of **Remediation**
- **R.O.W. Loss** similar to private sector loss

* Source: Data from Town Records, GIS Maps, PlanIT Geo

- **PRIVATE LAND** = app. 80+ %
- On Average, “**Devastating**”. 30+% average losses on negative parcels
- **80%** of Private Town Parcels LOST Canopy
- Some parcels **LOST 80%** of their TC
- *Data permanently available on Town GIS Maps in early March, 2026*



EVERY VOTING/SCHOOL DISTRICT *LOST* *SIGNIFICANT* CANOPY

- **Highly-Forested Areas** *LOST* as much or more than traditional, low-forested Town areas (South & Southeast)
- **ALL Zoning Districts** *LOST Significant* Canopy
- **ALL Census Blocks** *LOST Significant* Canopy

FINAL TAKEAWAY 2010 - 2023



- **21% Canopy Loss** is not a casual or incidental loss
- The loss of 1,114 acres of tree canopy is ***catastrophic*** and ***unsustainable***
- Serious **Habitat Loss** is still ***accelerating*** and the Town will fall below Urban Standards without ***emergency*** measures
- **Replacing** and **replanting** tree canopy and habitat is a long-term, difficult challenge
- The **disproportionate** loss of mature habitat (large, old trees) is particularly devastating to our environment

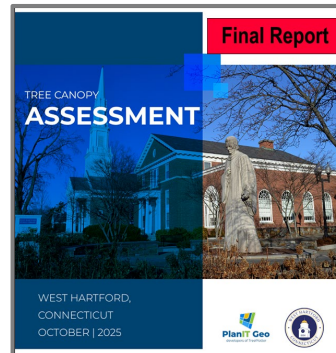
West Hartford Tree Canopy Assessment

QUESTIONS

Part 1: “The LOSS”

TREE CANOPY ASSESSMENT TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD

*Data, Final Report Prepared
by PlanIT Geo
for West Hartford Leisure Services*



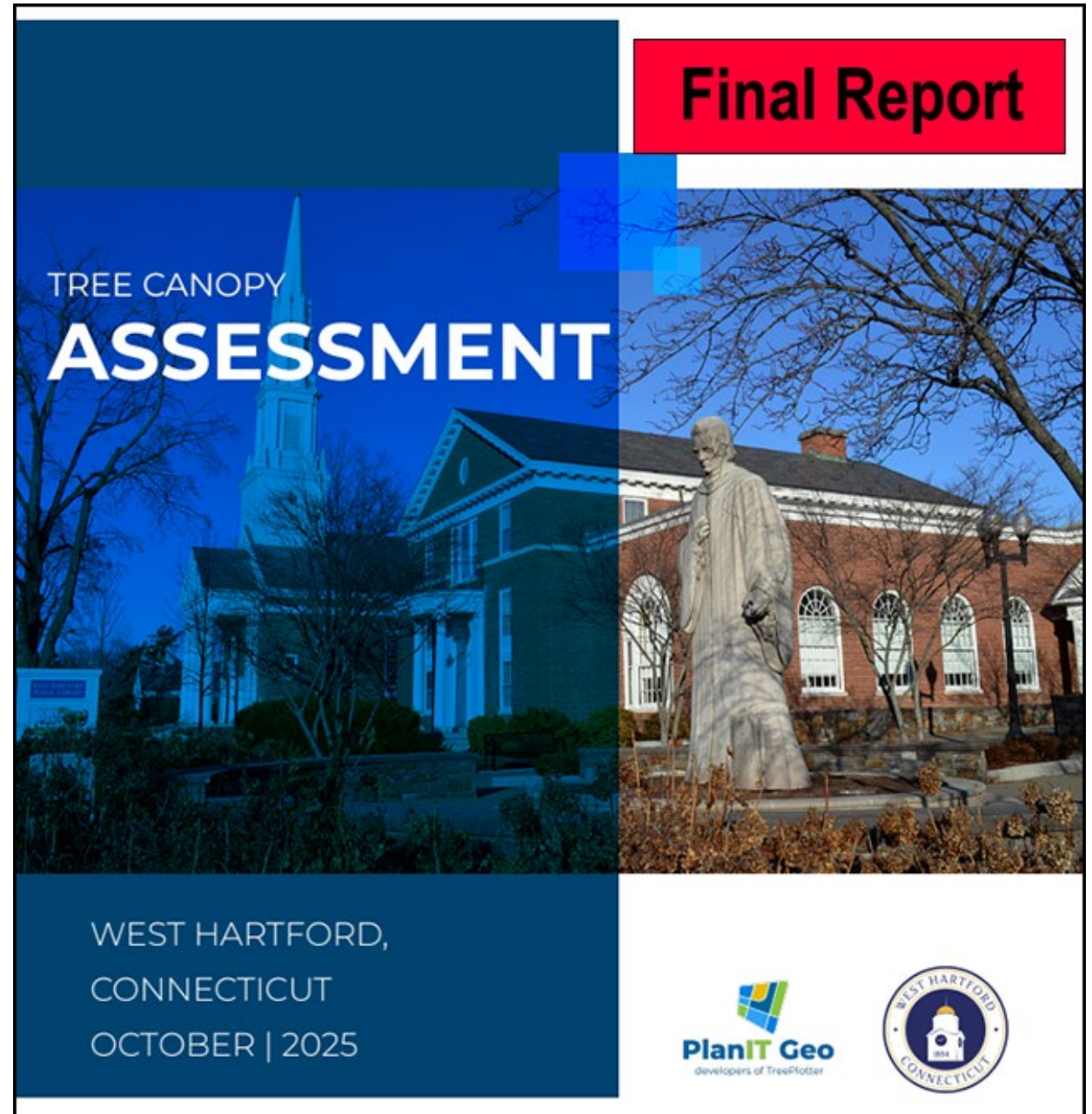
TREE CANOPY ASSESSMENT

PART 2 “WHY”

Are Our Trees Disappearing?



Comments & Analysis
Bill Gleason, Co-Chair, TAG



BACKGROUND

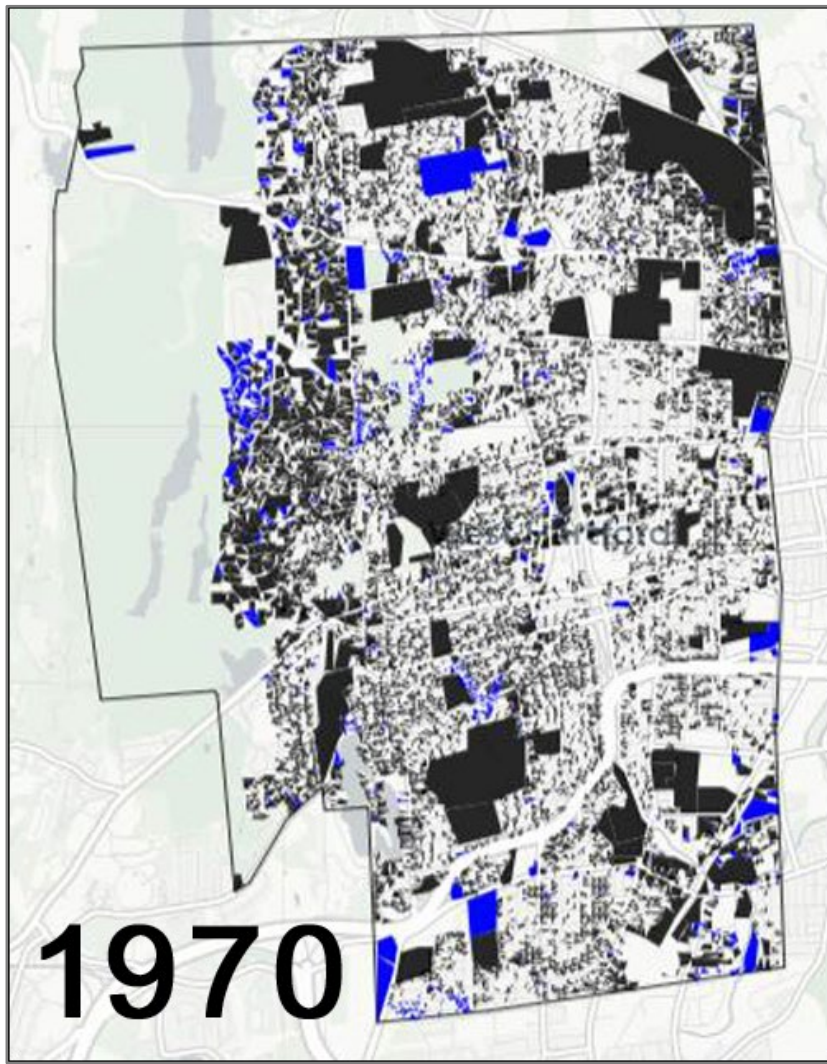
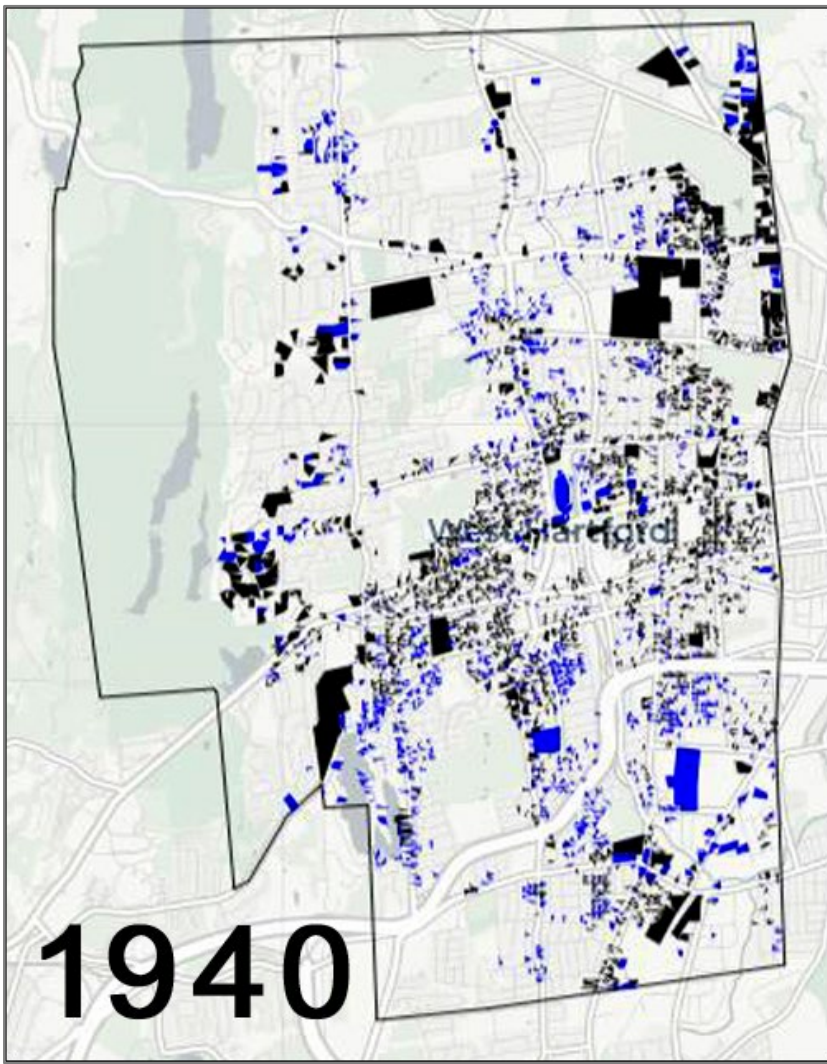
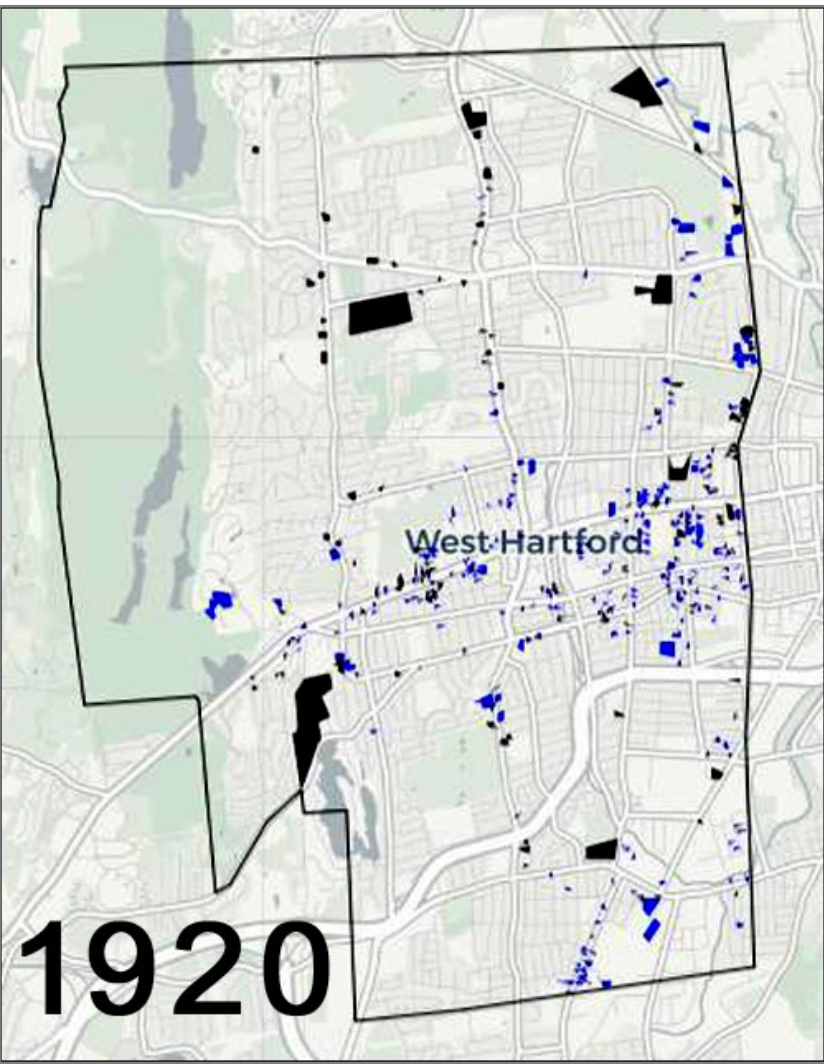


A rare street scene in today's West Hartford

- WeHa long admired as an affluent, leafy suburb...
- Now ***“Unhealthy”*** as a suburban tree canopy
- ***Unsustainable*** rate of decline will continue without action
- **WHY did this happen?**
- *Town History provides the proper insight and overview*



1934: North Main St. to Mountain Road (92 years ago)



WeHa Neighborhood Development 1900 – 1970

Source: WeHa Town Website, GIS Maps

Major Contributing Factor(s)

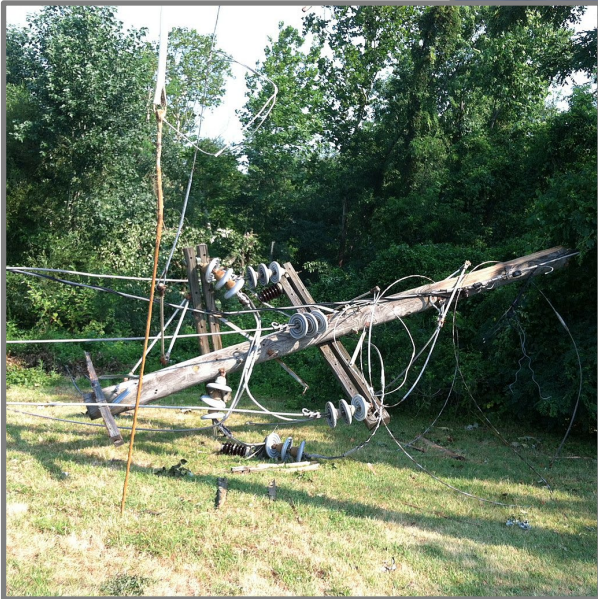


AGING “GEN 1” NEIGHBORHOODS *feature* AGING “GEN 1” TREES

*Many Tree Species planted in “new” neighborhoods in the 1910s, ‘20s, ‘30s have reached their natural life span – **in record numbers****

* And joined by many trees from the ‘50s, ‘60s post WW-II housing boom...

Major Contributing Factor(s)



STORMS

*Most FREQUENTLY mentioned
“PRIMARY CAUSE” for loss.*

Inaccurate.

STORMS - 2



This is **NOT** the result of the October Storm in 2010. This is the recent clear-cutting on Trout Brook Drive for new apartment buildings.

SIGNIFICANT CT HURRICANES

(*partial list*)

1938: “The ‘38” Hurricane, Flood

1954: Hurricane Carol

1955: Hurricanes Connie & Diane

1985: Gloria

1991: Hurricane Bob

2010: *October “Ice” Storm*

2012: Hurricane Sandy

2020: *Tropical Storm Isaias*

*What Made the October Storm
& Isaias Different?*

STORMS - 3



*Black Birch, Westmoor Arboretum.
Native Northeast Trees are naturally more storm
resistant due to evolutionary history and
adaptation.*

Source: *Frontiers In Forests & Global Change*

- Both Storms were remembered as **Huge Electrical Outages** – not significant **Deforestation Events**
- No ***Rush to Replant*** as with historical storms
- Trees were (and are) blamed for the outages – Not decades of **Neglected Maintenance** by power companies
- Residents took advantage of **Free Tree Disposal** to cut healthy trees down
- Trees acquired a reputation for being **Dangerous** – and cutting increased

Major Contributing Factor(s)



“Mini-Forest Habitat” created with wood chips in early years, then filled in with native plants and leaf litter.

FAILURE TO REPLANT

*THE MOST
OVERLOOKED &
MISUNDERSTOOD
FACTOR*

FAILURE TO REPLANT - 2



Ted Goerner, founder of WH Tree Project, leads a planting seminar. WHTP has planted over 6,000 young trees in Town since 2020 – all from community funding.

- **Large Front Yard Trees** are now a vanishing species in West Hartford...
- **Oaks Were Cut Down**, Dogwoods and shrubs were replanted, if anything
- *Still **Significant Inventory** of old, mature trees reaching replacement age*
- **Deforestation Trend is Accelerating** with new construction projects in 2025, '26, '27
- Preservation of old, large trees and Forest Habitat need to become **Top Priorities**

Major Contributing Factor(s)



*Some of the 34 Healthy Trees cut down
by new Homeowners on one Town
parcel in March of 2025.*

NEGATIVE ATTITUDINAL SHIFT

Trees are: *“messy”, “bad”, “going to fall on my house”, “increase insurance”, “dangerous”*

Other Contributing Factor(s)



High Density new development often lacks ecologically significant planting/habitat space.

SECONDARY REASONS

- *(Over?)* **Aggressive Protection** of Electrical Grid
- **No “Dis-Incentives”** (Permits) to healthy tree removal
- **Inadequate** Canopy Replacement Strategy for New Development
- **Failure to Replant** most R.O.W. loss by Town
- **Increasing Cost** of Tree Maintenance/Replacement
- *“Don’t Like Leaf Bagging System”*

CONCLUSION/TIMELINE



*An increasingly common scene
in West Hartford neighborhoods...*

West Hartford Tree Canopy

- **1900:** Rural Farmland – Very Low TC
- **1910 On:** Suburban Development & Private TC Development Evolve
- **1920 – 60s:** Public Land (Parks, Schools) developed, Development peaks by '60
- **TC PEAKS** around **1995** at 52% (*est.*)
- **1995 – 2010:** ***Decline Begins*** with oldest Neighborhoods...
- **2010 – 2023:** ***Decline Accelerates*** to *Unsustainable Levels, More Areas*
- **2023 On:** ***Decline Continues***

*Significant Loss was inevitable due to natural aging of trees. **Failure to Replant over three decades** is the real driver of permanent loss and ecological/environmental debt.*

West Hartford Tree Canopy Assessment

QUESTIONS

PART 2

“WHY”

Are Our Trees Disappearing?



*Comments & Analysis
Bill Gleason, Co-Chair, TAG*

230 Newington Road

2026
Scheduled
Clearcut/Development



TREE CANOPY ASSESSMENT

PART 3: “THE FUTURE”



Analysis by Bill Gleason
Co-chair, Tree Action Group, “TAG”



PLANT OR SAY GOODBYE?

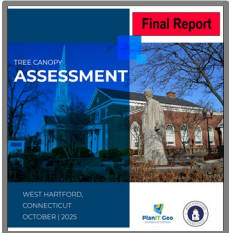
OPENING



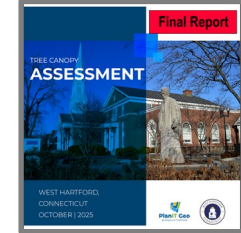
*The UConn White Oak. Large trees
DISPROPORTIONATELY contribute to
positive ecosystem health.
IF WE LET THEM GET OLD.*

A DAUNTING CHALLENGE

- Replacing 45,000 trees in West Hartford is a **huge challenge PLUS** Town is losing more each year
- Replacing **Habitat** is even more difficult
- Town Land, minus MDC/R.O.W, is a small fraction of total Tree Canopy. **Important** and **valuable**, but small %
- Very little planning at this stage for Private Land, 80% of all Town parcels



TOWN RECOMMENDATIONS: TCA FINAL REPORT



“NEAR-TERM” RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Gain Insight into TC Loss to Build a Resilient Community Forest*
2. *Create and Implement Tree Planting Plan*
3. *Integrate Tree Canopy Goals into Town Planning*
4. *Engage the Community and Partner with Private Landowners*
5. *Leverage Tree INVENTORY Data to Protect and Enhancing [sic] Biodiversity (started in Jan.'25*)*

“LONG-TERM” RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Develop a Tree Management Plan*
2. *Establish Guideline to Address Maintenance Concerns*
3. *Expanding Tree Planting Through Strategic Investment*

Sources: Tree Canopy Assessment, PlanIT Geo & WHLS, 2025

**Source: TAG. 2025 WeHa Inventory, 4,726 trees, 2025 public database*



ANALYSIS OF TCA FINAL REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Generic**, not Specific Recommendations
- **Planning**, not Action Steps (except INVENTORY)
- Focused almost **exclusively** on Town Public Land



TOWN LAND - 2

- Public Canopy Loss LESS than Private but still **URGENT**
- Species Diversity is **LOW**
- Invasive Species **HIGH**
- Most Parks & Schools have **MAJOR SHORTAGES** in young trees (0" – 12" DBH)

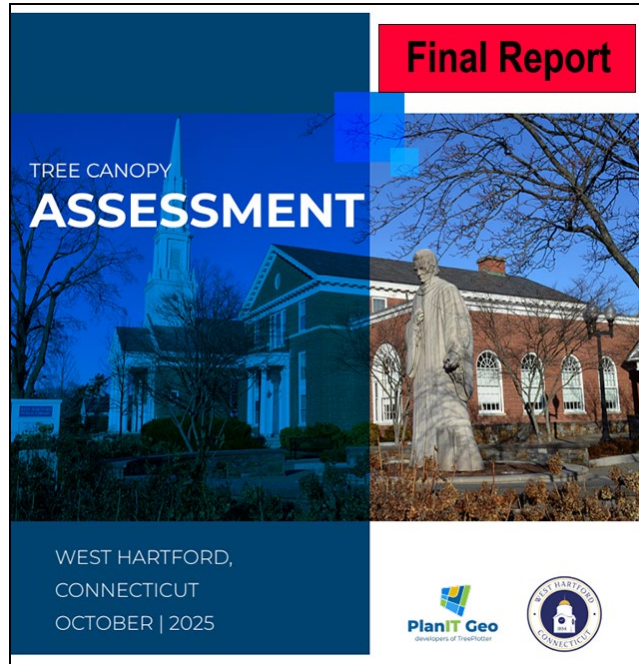
Inventory / Web Hill



TOWN LAND ***DOES*** HAVE ISSUES



TOWN LAND - 3



FINAL TAKEAWAY

FINAL TAKEAWAY – TOWN LAND

Town Land faces SIGNIFICANT Canopy/Habitat Issues:

1. Nearly ALL public parcels have **surplus** of mature trees, **shortage** of young trees.
2. Current standard is 1:1 Stem Replacement – consider **changing** to a Canopy Replacement Strategy
3. Departments, Groups, Programs, etc. are in place to create, execute planting plans
4. **Funding** an issue, **Timing**, **Urgency**
5. OVERALL TOWN PRIORITY: **MEDIUM/HIGH**
6. *Degree of Difficulty: 5/10*

PRIVATE LAND



*NO DETAILED PLAN
CURRENTLY EXISTS FOR
LARGE-SCALE TREE CANOPY OR
FOREST HABITAT REPLACEMENT ON
PRIVATE LAND
IN WEST HARTFORD*

PLANT OR SAY GOODBYE

- If Tree Canopy and Habitat is not replaced, it disappears
- CT has lost 30% of its bird population since 1970, pace is accelerating*
- The majority of TC is on private land, not public (80% private parcels)
- No detailed plan for private land exists
- **OVERALL TOWN PRIORITY:
HIGH/EMERGENCY**
- Degree of Difficulty: 9/10

(*Source: Audubon, CT Bird Index, Habitat Loss & Effects)

PRIVATE LAND - 2



Biomass increases with the cube of the trunk diameter. A 30-inch diameter tree has 316x the biomass of a 3-inch sapling. TEN 3-inch saplings, together, only have about 4% of the benefits of the single larger tree...

Source: Jenkins, Chojnacky Equations

SOLUTION PUNCH LIST

- Define Problem, Research ☒
- Set Target Goals, Timeline
- Define Participants, Roles
- Funding
- Leadership
- *Execute*: Promotion, Events, Public Education, Media

PRIVATE LAND - 3



1:1 Stem Replacement is not the sustainable choice for reforestation. It would take 120 years for a single tree to reach the size and environmental benefits of this Red Oak.

DISCUSSION: TARGET TC

What is the goal (Tree Canopy %) for Private Land in West Hartford in 10 years? 20?

- 40% (Suburban minimum)
- 35%
- 30% (Urban residential)
- 25%
- 20%

PRIVATE LAND - 4



AN ALL-OF-TOWN APPROACH is probably the only viable option for a successful ten-year, or perhaps permanent initiative/project.

DISCUSSION: WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE

- Businesses, Non-Profits, and Home-Owners are primary participants
- Public Land stakeholders are secondary participants
- Virtually all parts of Town Government are *facilitators* (Town Council, DRAC, Zoning, Sustainability, Engineering, Leisure Services, Legal, DPW, etc.) of change

PRIVATE LAND - 5



New Development nearly always causes significant large tree/canopy loss. Current replacement strategies are inadequate.

DISCUSSION: FUNDING, LEADERSHIP

THIS EXTENSIVE AMOUNT OF CANOPY LOSS (-21%) is well beyond the ability of a Town group, Commission, or single Department to correct...

- **FUNDING:** Current thinking would rely on Fed./State Grants and/or private donation, tiny budget \$\$
- **LEADERSHIP: WHO WILL LEAD?**

PRIVATE LAND - 6



CANOPY REPLACEMENT? *Where do you even put a tree that will have any significant habitat impact on very high-density properties?*

DISCUSSION: PUBLIC EDUCATION, etc.

Samples:

1. Public Events: Talks, Tree Tours, Planting Seminars, Senior Centers, etc.
2. Arbor Day, Earth Day, School Planting Events
3. Article Marketing, Media Outreach key to reaching large numbers of residents.

Tough Ask: *To get true broad-based support, we must change the perception that trees are dangerous, messy, electricity killers, and will fall on your car and house.*

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF WEST HARTFORD?



New Development: 1 West Hartford



Mature Trees

- *First ever* TC REPORT provides excellent snapshot of “**WHERE WE ARE**” today*
- “**LOOK BACK**” feature to 2010 allows Town to see a longer term, truer picture of TC loss*
- Where we “**WANT TO GO**” as a Town is up to residents and leadership to decide
- Current Tree Canopy-Habitat loss is **NOT SUSTAINABLE** and will be very difficult to reverse and/or return to suburban levels



* We are one of a few Towns our size to do a TC Assessment, and even fewer to use “Look Back”. **Grateful Thanks** to our Town for doing so.

TREE CANOPY ASSESSMENT

PART 3: “THE FUTURE”

THANK YOU



Analysis by Bill Gleason
Co-chair, Tree Action Group, “TAG”



PLANT OR SAY GOODBYE?