

# SUSTAINABILITY



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## BACKGROUND

The City created the Office of Sustainability in 2017 after raising \$350,000 in grant funding from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Partners for Places, and UConn's Connecticut Institute for Climate Resilience and Adaptation.

During its first year, the Office created a comprehensive [Climate Action Plan](#) in partnership with the City's Climate Stewardship Council, the Planning & Zoning Commission, and more than 200 stakeholders. The Plan identifies six action areas: energy, food, landscape, transportation, waste, and water.

Since then, the Office and its three staff members (with two current vacancies) have worked to advance a range of environmental stewardship initiatives that also support economic growth, improve public health, and promote social equity, working with dozens of state and local partners.

## HIGHLIGHTED INITIATIVES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**URBAN FORESTRY GRANT:** The City recently received a \$6 million grant from the USDA Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Grant program to help implement the city's [Tree Canopy Action Plan](#), which was developed in 2020 to guide the City's efforts to grow Hartford's tree canopy from 25% to 35% over the next 50 years. The grant submission envisioned a broad approach to growing the tree canopy, including planting new trees, improving the health of mature trees, and prioritizing neighborhoods with the least canopy coverage, like Clay Arsenal and Parkville.

**PARKVILLE MICROGRID:** In 2017, the City worked with energy suppliers Bloom Energy and Constellation to install and launch one of Connecticut's first fully operational microgrids. The 800-kilowatt microgrid system powers Parkville School, the Dwight Branch Library, the Parkville Senior Center and Charter Oak Health Center, and is designed to also power the CTown and gas station in Parkville if there's a grid outage. The City has a 15-year power purchase agreement with Bloom Energy.

**RESIDENTIAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM:** The City works with Energize CT to help residents achieve energy savings in their homes through its Community Partnership Initiative. The program is targeted at renters in single family homes or multifamily buildings, and the sustainability office has helped engage more than 1,500 residents to increase awareness of energy efficiency solutions.

**SOLAR FOR ALL CAMPAIGN:** Over the last six years, the Sustainability Office has worked with the Connecticut Green Bank and solar energy provider PosiGen to run two campaigns to make solar energy more accessible to Hartford homeowners. Overall, the program has helped connect more than 500 homeowners to affordable solar energy, with no upfront costs and without traditional barriers to entry like credit checks. Enrolled residents save an average of \$1,701 a year.

**POWERING THE CITY OF HARTFORD WITH SOLAR:** Utilizing the State's Virtual Net Metering Program, the City has partnered to support large-scale solar installations that benefit Hartford at locations across Connecticut. The electricity generated is then credited against the City's bills and meters in Hartford. To date, two such solar projects are producing enough solar power to offset 7.2% of all the electricity consumed by City facilities, saving taxpayers approximately \$100,000 per year. Under the State's new NRES program, the City has recently been awarded 13 additional solar projects, to be built at no upfront cost to the City. By the Spring of 2025, these new projects will increase the amount of solar the City generates to offset 69% of total electricity consumption, increasing budgetary savings and dramatically reducing the City's carbon footprint.



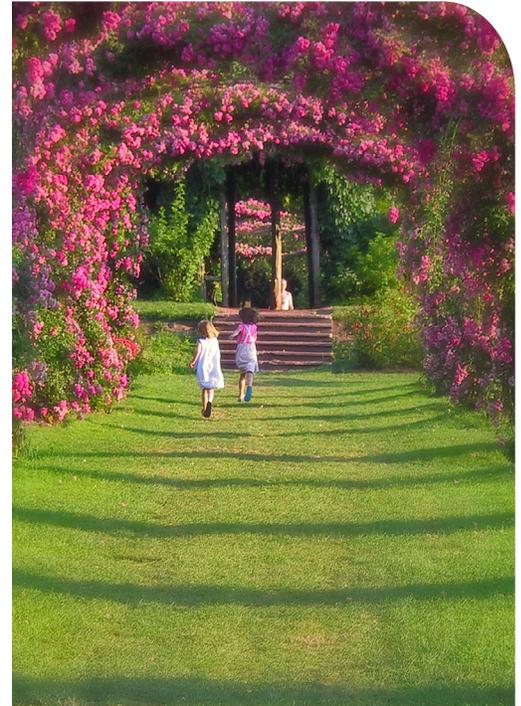
**EXPANDING SOLAR ON CITY OWNED PROPERTY:** In 2015, the landfill located in Hartford's North Meadows was permanently closed, having collected trash from across Central Connecticut for over 75 years. While the riverfront site of the landfill has been spoiled for any future residential or commercial purpose, the City has found a new and environmentally friendly use for the site: placing solar panels on top of the landfill. The current 1 megawatt (MW) solar array saves the city \$205,000 TK in electricity expenses every year, while further lowering our carbon footprint. The City is currently working with a solar developer, who has received an NRES award that will support an additional 4MW array, and the City is working with the developer and with DEEP to finalize the contract, with a goal of installing the panels in early 2025. In addition, the City has received an NRES award to support the installation of solar on the roof of Weaver High School, and is pursuing similar projects at multiple school locations.

**FUEL CELL POWER & SAVINGS:** The Sustainability Office has helped to achieve additional energy savings for the City through the installation of a fuel cell at the Public Safety Complex. This clean power source generates approximately \$100,000 of budgetary savings for the City each year.

**CLOSING THE MIRA TRASH TO ENERGY PLANT:** The City advocated for many years to close the failing trash-to-energy incineration plant in Hartford's South Meadows, which finally shut its doors in July of 2022. The closed plant sits on approximately 80 acres of riverfront land, which requires extensive environmental remediation in order to support any future use. The City successfully advocated for passage of legislation in 2023 that will preserve MIRA reserves for the eventual cleanup of this site, and which established a new board with strong Hartford representation to oversee cleanup and engage the public in the redevelopment process.

**STREET LIGHT REPLACEMENT:** In 2017, the City received a \$5 million grant to convert its existing light fixtures to LED lamps. The City used that funding to upgrade lighting in parks and on City-owned buildings, including parking lots and schools, replacing more than 2,500 lights. At the same time, Eversource has been replacing the lamps they own – which are the majority in Hartford – at their own expense.

**INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENTS:** The Sustainability Office regularly pursues independent assessments of its work. In 2023, Sustainable CT, Connecticut's premier environmental organization focused on galvanizing local climate action, [recognized](#) Hartford as one of only two cities earning its top "Climate Leader" designation. The designation is based on the totality of Hartford's work on sustainability, from converting street lights and improving energy efficiency to implementing a complete streets policy. In 2019, Hartford was also recognized as one of the top 25 cities in the country as part of the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy's clean energy scorecard Hartford [currently ranks](#) eighteenth in those rankings.



The Office of Sustainability participates in and supports a wide range of projects not listed above: initiatives within City government, like complete streets implementation to make our streets more pedestrian and bike friendly, as well as external initiatives run by partner organizations, from tree plantings to food distributions to public education on a range of environmental and related issues. The Office is currently supported by \$229,000 in personnel funding from the Office of the Chief Operating Officer, and its ongoing initiatives are supported by \$7.3 million in grants from State, Federal and other sources.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

Tackling the many challenges posed to Hartford by climate change will be no easy task in the years ahead. The Office of Sustainability can continue to lead this important work for the City by directly implementing or advocating for policies that will make a meaningful difference for our environment. Priorities include:

- **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT:** Identifying opportunities to address Hartford's growing issues with stormwater, including through continued pursuit of a green infrastructure test installation to improve stormwater drainage on Granby Street, in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the State Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the Metropolitan District Commission (which owns and operates Hartford's storm sewers).
- **SOLAR INSTALLATION:** Continuing to pursue solar installation projects at the Hartford Landfill and Weaver High School, as outlined above, and pursue new opportunities at other city-owned properties, including additional schools.
- **PROGRESS ON CLIMATE ACTION PLAN:** Preserving the City's ongoing commitment to the goals laid out in the City's Climate Action Plan, so Hartford can continue doing its part to address climate change.
- **SUSTAINABLE WASTE DISPOSAL:** Supporting and incentivizing the diversion of organic waste from the waste stream and partnering with regional partners and with the State to support the development of an environmentally sound, fiscally sustainable approach to solid waste disposal.
- **CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN THE SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE:** Cultivating symbiotic relationships between the Office of Sustainability with and other City departments, key stakeholders, community-based organizations, Hartford residents, and with other municipalities to increase the effectiveness and visibility of all of the Sustainability Office's initiatives.