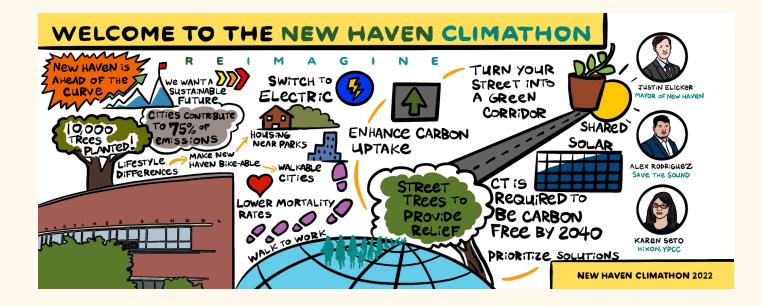
Climathon Action Guide

Sustainability tips for individuals, families, and neighbors. Actions good for you and the planet!

This guide is curated by <u>Reimagining New Haven</u> in the Era of Climate Change. Our goal is to raise awareness of the local impacts of climate change, engage with our diverse communities, and catalyze action.



In this Action Guide, You'll Learn:

How to Protect the Long Island Sound How to Get Around Sustainably How to Recycle and Reuse the Things You Buy How to Retain Rainwater for Reuse How to Compost How to Compost How to Eat Sustainably How to Increase Your Energy Efficiency How to Stay Cool in Hot Weather How to Make Your Lawn a Habitat How to Protect Your Home from Sea Level Rise & Storms How to Become a Climate Activist

I. Living (More) Sustainably

How to Protect the Long Island Sound

Our rivers, harbors, and the Long Island Sound are treasures for nature and recreation. To safeguard them, avoid using excessive amounts of fertilizer on your lawn or garden. When it rains or when snow melts, the primary chemicals in fertilizer (particularly nitrogen and phosphorus) wash into waterways or leach into groundwater through the soil—eventually reaching waterbodies. <u>According to the EPA</u>, high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus can cause eutrophication (overabundance of nutrients) which leads to hypoxia ("dead zones"), ultimately killing fish and decreasing aquatic life. Excess nutrients can also cause harmful algal blooms in freshwater systems, disrupting wildlife and producing toxins harmful to humans.

Completely avoid use of pesticides and herbicides. Similar to fertilizers, pesticides can contaminate soil, water, turf, and other vegetation. The chemicals often kill many more organisms than the insects or weeds they target. Pesticides can be toxic birds, fish, beneficial insects and plants. This is the case for both insecticides and herbicides but insecticides are most toxic.

The Dirty Deeds

★ If you have a septic system, make sure it is <u>functioning</u> <u>properly</u> by inspecting your system and pump every 3-5 years. Some signs of system failure include: water and/or sewage backing up into the home, slow draining bathtubs, showers, and sinks, bad odor around the septic, or algal blooms in nearby ponds or lakes.

- \star When you walk your dog, scoop up the poop.
- ★ Unclogged and prevent clogged household drains by disposing of hair, cat litter, wet wipes, condoms, menstrual items, and paper towels in the trash can.
- ★ Never put food waste, fat, oil, or grease in the kitchen waste disposal. I don't care who said what, don't pour that oil down the sink drain! Leave it in your customary used oil cup/bottle you keep on the side of the stove then, when you're ready to let go, pour it into a coffee can or another disposable container and <u>discard it in the trash</u>.
- \star <u>Never dump paint</u> or medications down drains.
- \bigstar As always, don't litter!

How to Get Around Sustainably

Drive Less: Highway vehicles release about 1.4 billion tons of greenhouse gasses (GHGs) into the atmosphere each year—mostly in the form of carbon dioxide (CO_2) —contributing to global climate change. Each gallon of gasoline you burn creates 20 pounds of GHG. That's roughly 5 to 9 tons of GHG each year for a typical vehicle. Walk, ride a bike, take the bus, consolidate trips, and carpool to the store or to work. By driving less, you save money while saving the planet!

Use Electric Vehicles: <u>Electric vehicles</u> have a much smaller carbon footprint than traditional vehicles with internal combustion engines. The average EV in the US today produces emissions equivalent to a gasoline car that gets 73 miles per gallon. Plus, electricity is cheaper than gasoline, producing a median yearly savings of over \$770. EV's tend to be significantly more expensive than comparable conventional vehicles, but the state currently offers an <u>incentive</u> <u>program</u> to help make EV purchases more affordable via rebates. <u>CHEAPR-CT</u> Hydrogen and Electric Automobile Purchase Rebateoffers point of sale rebates on eligible new and used EVs. The type of vehicles dictates the maximum rebate amount. There is the CHEAPR Standard rebate and Rebate+ which provides additional incentive for eligible individuals. Rebate+ qualifying individuals must meet one of these criteria:

- 1. Reside in an Environmental Justice (EJ) Community or Distressed Municipality
- 2. Participate in a qualifying state or federal income qualifying program
- 3. Have income less than 300% of the Federal Poverty Level

Let's zoom out to the global context. Yes: EVs will facilitate progress by <u>reducing greenhouse gas emissions</u> that vehicles produce, and thus reducing the negative impact of ecological and human health impact of air pollution which disproportionately impact environmental justice communities. And: EV batteries will require an exponential increase in <u>lithium mining</u> from indigenous communities across the globe. This would predictably lead to land grabs, water shortages, and ecological destruction—exacerbating social and environmental injustices.

Keeping a global perspective on climate solutions allows for us, as a collective, to act with international solidarity and make decisions that benefit as many people and harm as few people as possible. Let's reimagine climate solutions with that always in mind. Fly Less: Air travel is the most carbon-intensive mode for getting around! A roundtrip flight from Bradley International Airport in Hartford to Miami produces 0.7 metric tons of CO2 equivalent. That's like burning 784 pounds of coal. On the other hand, avoiding this flight is as climate friendly as carpooling for eight months!

Promote Safe, Clean and Nearly Free Transportation:

Shoutout to Local Change Agents!

- ★ <u>Safe Streets</u> Coalition of New Haven: Reimagining the transportation system to foster the health, safety, equality, and vitality of the community.
- ★ New Haven Coalition for Active Transportation (NCAT): Want to learn how to ride a bike? <u>NCAT</u> provides free and accessible education programs for children and adults for all forms of non-motorized transportation. Bicycle rider education classes taught by League of American Bicyclists instructors.
- ★ Bradley Street Bicycle Co-Operative (<u>BSBC</u>): A community bike shop and working space - a place for learning about and sharing in the cycling culture of New Haven. Members work on their own bikes and volunteers refurbish donated bikes to donate or sell. Instruction in bicycle maintenance is available from trained staff and volunteers. It's also a great event space and cultural hub in the community—hosting zine fairs, movie nights, and the occasional party or two!

How to Recycle and Reuse the Things You Buy

Reduce Reuse Recycle Makes a Comeback

Much of what we consume isn't really used up. Making things takes energy and disposing of them does, too. So please don't waste energy. Get in the habit of recycling everything from clothing and paper to food scraps.

Using New Haven's Recycling System: Every house and small apartment building in the city should have a large blue bin for recycling a wide range of materials. If you need one, call <u>Resident</u> <u>Services</u> at (203) 946 - 7700.

Not quite sure what's recyclable in CT? Find out today using <u>this</u> <u>tool</u>! Not sure *how* to recycle something? <u>Ask the Waste Wizard</u>!

Join the Zero Waste Movement: "Zero waste" means conserving natural resources through responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of all products, packaging, and materials without burning or discharging them into the environment. While much effort has been put into zero-waste design and distribution, there's a role for individuals and households as well.

Environmentalist Béa Johnson wrote the book on living a zero-waste lifestyle sharing her core principles, the five Rs:

- 1. **Refuse** the things that you do not need
- 2. **Reduce** the things that you do actually need (downsize & donate & drop off)
- 3. **Reuse** what you consume
- 4. **Recycle** only what you cannot refuse, reduce or reuse
- 5. **Rot** (compost) the rest of your waste

Compost Your Uncooked Food Waste: On average, households produce eight to 10 pounds of food scraps per week. Instead of wasting them, you can compost them! "<u>Composting is nature's way of recycling!</u>" To put it simply, if it grows, it will decompose. Composting speeds up that process, helping decomposers like bacteria and fungi do their job. The <u>end result</u> is a nutrient rich soil for growing food that can mitigate drought issues. Composting, by reducing solid waste, also reduces greenhouse gas emissions!

Start composting by setting aside your food scraps in a small compost container (tight close with some air) and putting them outside once a week either in a backyard compost bin or to a compost collection service like Peels & Wheels of New Haven.

What You Can Compost at Home	What to Avoid Composting at Home
Nitrogen-Rich Material ("Greens")	Meat, fish and bones
Food and vegetable scraps	Cheese and dairy products
Most grass clippings and yard trim	Pet waste and cat litter
Coffee grounds and paper filters	Produce stickers
Paper tea bags (no staples)	Fats, oils and greases
Eggshells (crushed)	Glossy paper
	Treated or painted wood
Carbon-Rich Materials ("Browns")	Aggressive weeds/weeds with seeds
Dry leaves	Diseased and pest-infested plants
Plant stalks and twigs	Compostable food service ware and compostable bags*
Shredded paper (non-glossy, not colored) and shredded brown bags	Cooked food (small amounts are fine)
Shredded cardboard (no wax coating, tape, or glue)	Herbicide treated plants
Untreated wood chips	Dryer lint

Table 1: Use this table created by the US EPA to know exactly what you can and cannot compost.What You Can Compost

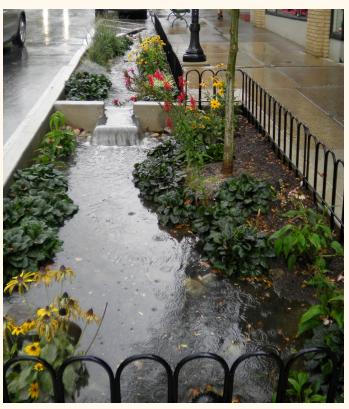
If you register for <u>Peels & Wheels Composting</u>, an employee will pick it up using a bike-powered cart and take care of the rest. The non-profit organization composts the scraps, turning waste into fertile soil for you to use.

How to Retain Rainwater for Reuse

Retain: Sometimes when it rains, it pours. Rain Barrels can help <u>prevent runoff into storm sewers</u> and overloads sanitary sewers. New Haveners can <u>get a free barrel</u> and have free water for your plants!

Rain Gardens: Interested in a beautiful solution to a rainwater runoff issue? You can create a rain garden soak the to rainwater into the ground! They are inexpensive, can soak up to <u>30%</u> more water than grass which reduces flooding, and divert pollutants from clean water bodies. Using native plants bonus benefit for the is ิล environment! Pro Tip: You can make your garden edible too!

Photo Caption: example of street rain garden.



How to Eat Sustainably



Choose a Plant-Based Diet: Plant-based diets are more sustainable than diets rich in animal products because they use fewer natural resources and are less taxing on the environment. Plant based diets: Produce ~50% less greenhouse gas emissions; require about 25% less energy for food production; and have a 40% smaller environmental footprint.

Photo Caption: Vegan traditional Jamaican meal.

We promise it's not *all* tofu. Many of your <u>favorite dishes</u> can become plant-based with a little creativity and some animal product substitutes! Dishes can be delicious and nutritious, <u>improving your health</u> and lowering your risk of heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and other chronic illnesses!

By the way, most industrial farms use chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides, which wash into our streams and kill plants, insects, and animals. Moreover, global-warming-caused droughts and floods are likely to affect the food supply chain, availability and price of foods. We experienced this during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change has <u>already altered</u> the growing season and yield of foods like almonds, quinoa, cacao, coconuts, and avocados!

Try these local alternatives!

Grow your own food: <u>Gather New Haven</u> manages six farms and over 50 community gardens to promote public health and community development, most notably through the <u>Farm-Based</u> <u>Wellness program</u>. Why not try it?



Photo Sources: Bridgeport's Green Village Initiative Reservoir Community Farm & IOBY, respectively.

Food buyers' clubs, a <u>national directory of co-ops</u> enable members to purchase organic fruits and vegetables at discount prices.

Shop at Local Farmers' Markets: <u>CitySeed</u> operates six community farmers' markets in New Haven, two of which are open year-round. With more farmers of color throughout the state, residents have more culturally relevant produce to look forward to! CitySeed doubles the value of SNAP at all farmers' markets and the Mobile Market. Use SNAP on any SNAP-eligible products at the CitySeed Farmers' Markets and CitySeed will match you.

That's double the fruits, vegetables, and seedlings!

II. Use Energy Sustainably

How to Increase Your Energy Efficiency

There are many simple methods for reducing your carbon footprint at home. First, you can start with turning off lights and TVs in rooms that are not in use and dialing down the temperature on your thermostat in winter. When you're ready to bump it up a notch, make your home more energy efficient by consulting with I-Heart-My-Home. More efficiency in your home = more money in your wallet. You can install a solar energy system on your property or share solar (SCEF) with the community. You can purchase electricity from alternative-energy suppliers.

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) offers several assistance programs, including <u>home-energy assessments</u>, <u>weatherization assistance</u>, and the Statewide Shared Clean Energy Facility (SCEF). SCEF, as regulated by DEEP and Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA), allows low-to-moderate income residents in environmental justice communities to subscribe to a <u>shared renewable energy</u> system. The goal of SCEF is to remove barriers (e.g., high installation costs, unsuitable rooftop orientation, shaded property, or because they rent instead of own their properties) preventing access to renewable energy.

<u>Energize Connecticut</u> provides Connecticut consumers, businesses, and communities with resources and information they need to make it easy to save energy and build a clean energy future by offering <u>energy-evaluations</u>. United Illuminating, the electrical utility for south-central Connecticut, offers <u>services</u>, <u>products</u>, <u>and advice</u> for people seeking to reduce their energy footprint and help address climate change. UI, CNG, or SCG customers with residential service can apply for instant rebates up to 75% off for certain products.

I Heart My Home CT offers services to help homeowners, landlords, and tenants (renters) make home improvements for health, comfort, energy savings, and lower utility bills—all starting with a <u>1 on 1 home energy counseling</u>!

The federal government's High-Efficiency Electric Home Rebate Act (HEEHRA) provides consumer rebates to enable low- and moderate-income families to electrify their homes. Projects include heat pump HVAC Systems, heat pump water heaters, electric stoves, and upgrading insulation and sealing. When details are finalized, information will be available at <u>energy.gov</u>.

How to Stay Cool in Hot Weather

High temperatures kill hundreds of people every year in the United States, and the situation is expected to worsen due to global warming. The young, ill, homeless and elderly –and people who can't afford air conditioning–are most vulnerable to negative health impacts like heat stroke. The 'Urban Heat Island' effect exacerbates this issue in cities like New Haven. Cities with large structures, concrete coverage, and lack of greenspace and tree canopy can be from 5 to 22 F warmer than rural areas with ample greenspace and fewer heat-absorbing surfaces and structures.

According to a <u>New Haven study</u>, predominantly-minority neighborhoods that were redlined tend to be warmer and

communities of color tend to suffer disproportionately from heat related illness. The study found 'The Hill' and 'Dwight' both redlined-neighborhoods with the least tree coverage and farthest from a body of water, had the most 'hot spots' and highest average temperatures (Howard, 2021).

In Connecticut, gas and electricity <u>cannot be shut off</u> during the winter or the summer if doing so would lead to dangerous scenarios and such customers have submitted to their utility a medical protection form completed by their medical provider.

If you're experiencing extreme heat (e.g heat wave) search for Cooling Centers in your area on the <u>211 website</u>. If there are no designated Cooling Centers nearby, try to cool off at your local library, senior center, grocery store, or other public locations. If you're turned away for any reason (e.g loitering), reference the heat advisory and 211 listing public spaces as de facto cooling centers when necessary. <u>Try to drink more water</u> than usual, stay out of direct sunlight, and wear lightweight, bright clothing.

Treehuggers Unite!

To help our homes and neighborhoods stay cooler amid rising temperatures, consider adopting a tree. FREE TREES! New Haven's Urban Resource Initiative offers free street trees to residents, businesses and groups, as long as you commit to watering the tree for three years after planting. In April of 2022, URI planted its 10,000th tree. Celebrate this milestone by getting your own free street tree today! You can choose from a catalog of trees, assessing the variety, and finding the best fit to ensure ecological compatibility. By the way, there are at least 21 other reasons to adopt a tree, like providing oxygen, combating climate change, cleaning the air, and being beautiful. Check out the full list here.

How to Make Your Lawn a Habitat

Grass lawns are a central element of achieving the American Dream, yet lawns are tremendously hurtful for the environment. They are natural wastelands, making it difficult for birds and other wild things to survive. Fertilizers and herbicides wash off into our rivers. Lawn maintenance burns fossil fuels and creates pollution. Also, they're kinda boring. Instead of sticking to the lawn you were told to want, try planting wildflowers, gardening for climate change, and growing a Pollinator Pathway in your backyard!

Leave the Leaves! The leaves enrich the soil, suppress the weeds, and give <u>wildlife a winter home</u>. This way you can ditch your gas-powered leaf blower and <u>solve the massive, super dirty</u> <u>pollution problem</u> they create. Everybody wins!

How to Protect Your Home from Sea Level Rise & Storms

The level of the Long Island Sound is projected to rise approximately 20 inches by 2050. Combined with storm surges, that puts at risk homes on the coast and in low-lying areas. The first step is to be <u>aware of your vulnerability</u>. UConn's CIRCA, the CT institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation offers a variety of tools, reports, and projects <u>focused on Sea Level Rise</u> in Connecticut.

There are several options for owners of threatened homes, none of them great and all of them expensive: lift the building on its foundation, build a sea wall or protect the shoreline with natural measures; and, finally, abandon the building. <u>Government</u> <u>programs</u> help soften the financial blow of leaving coastal dwellings. Unfortunately, renters' rights laws have not caught up to issues of the <u>climate crisis</u>, <u>leaving renters</u> with little opportunity to prepare. Leases are often restrictive, prohibiting renters from making adjustments to their home. Moreover, administration of such recovery programs have long been inequitable. After Hurricane Sandy, five intake centers for HUD recovery were opened in CT, there was one intake center in East Haven. A <u>report</u> <u>on 'unmet needs</u>' estimated \$142,679 for New Haven. The hurricane causes combined sewer overflow into the New Haven Harbor due to severe flooding in Long Wharf, the Hill, and Downtown. This flooding temporarily halted rail yard operations, ultimately requiring repairs; and damaged over 500 units of low income and elderly housing, including many units in the Church Street South HUD Housing Complex.

Another method for responding to Sea Level Rise is preserving the coastlines themselves. This can be done in the form of Living Shorelines (a soft green approach) or through Coastal Structures (a hard, gray approach). Living shorelines soften the water impact, reduce erosion, attract wildlife, store carbon, and beautify the waterbody. However, they have limited capacity for wave exceptionally attenuation during strong storm surges. Nevertheless, they fall into the category of nature-based solutions. Coastal structures, like berms, seawalls, are more durable in those instances but take a toll on the environment given the hard materials in use. Ensuring environmental justice in the climate resiliency process requires actively and intentionally engaging members of the community when evaluating solutions and proposing infrastructural changes to repair and prevent these issues. Community members must have an equal say in the planning process as municipal leaders make decisions that will affect their lives everyday!

How to Become a Climate Activist

<u>Reimagine New Haven</u> with us! Help raise awareness, engage with communities, and catalyze action. Artists, scientists, and neighbors unite at <u>reimaginingnewhaven.org</u>!

Join the <u>New Haven Climate Movement</u> to help press the city, New Haven public schools, and the state of Connecticut to reduce our collective carbon footprint and furthering climate justice for all. The Movement includes electrification, education, cycling, resilience planning, and improving public health. Their mission is to address the root causes of climate change and social inequity, prioritizing accountability, cooperation, empathy, reparations, and humanization throughout their work!

According to Mayor Justin Elicker, climate change is the issue most frequently raised to the Mayor and Board of Alders. In 2022, the City of Haven received a <u>\$5 million federal grant</u> to address Climate Change and allocated \$2 million to various residential investments, \$2 million went to carbon footprint reduction efforts, and \$1 million to create the Office of Climate and Sustainability. Go! New Haven Go!

Take action to Save the Long Island Sound from pollution by volunteering to help with letter writing, joining the activist network or a coastal cleanup team, or volunteering for other projects. Save the Sound safeguards our coastline and serves as strong advocates for <u>clean energy</u>, <u>climate and resiliency</u>.

<u>Plant seeds with Doreen Abubakar</u>, the leader of the New Haven Pollinator Pathway, and her Community Place-Making and Engagement Network engages local youth in growing and selling native plants. She also leads Citizen Sciences projects in the city to advance climate literacy and civic action!

Connect with the <u>Build Better Connecticut Coalition</u> to join the campaign to require homeowners to disclose energy efficiency and cost data when selling properties. Contact Melissa Kops at 203-824-5001, melissa@ctgbc.org for more information.

Advocate for better renewable energy regulations for all residents. Join the <u>Coalition for Sensible Solar Regulation</u>, a group of 30 organizations already advocating for reform. Your contribution can be as simple as writing letters and sending emails that support their recommended legislation. Easy-peasy!

Climate change is expected to force millions of people to leave their homes and migrate to other countries to escape crises like hurricanes, famine, drought. Hurricane Maria forced 130,000 Puerto Rico to migrate to Connecticut alone. Junta for Progressive Action, which provides a variety of social services to the Latinx community of Greater New Haven, was essential in helping these climate migrants through the Junta disaster resettlement program. In New Haven, Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (better known as IRIS) receives immigrants and helps them find homes and jobs. Climate-change-caused dislocation alone is not yet a trigger for receiving services, but you can start helping now by <u>sponsoring a refugee family</u>!

Intersectionality: Ensure that your activism recognizes the disproportionate impact that women, the LGBTQIA, low-income, and BIPOC communities face in order to develop equitable climate solutions! Intersectionality is the key to environmental justice.

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- $54. \ \ New \ \ Haven \ Climate \ \ Movement: \ \underline{http://newhavenclimatemovement.org}$
- 55. Take Action with Save the Sound: <u>http://savethesound.org/take-action/</u>
- 56. Community Placemaking and Native Plants: <u>http://www.cpeninc.com/Native-Plants</u>
- 57. Build Better Connecticut Coalition: <u>https://www.buildbetterct.org/coalition</u>
- 58. Coalition for Sensible Solar Regulation: <u>https://solarforct.org/</u>
- 59. IRIS, Sponsor a Refugee Family: https://landingpage.irisct.org/communitycosponsorship/
- 60. How to Collaborate for Environmental Justice, TEDx: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POswLCBn5eI