

Simsbury Sustainability Plan

Part 1: Energy



Prepared by the Simsbury Sustainability Committee
Draft 2.7 as of October 10, 2025

Overall Vision

In the broadest sense, sustainability refers to the ability to maintain or support a process continuously over time. As articulated in Simsbury's recently adopted 2024 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)¹, our vision of sustainability encompasses environmental, economic and social aspects. Sustainability is not the job of any single department or committee, but must be integrated into every aspect of town life, ensuring that everything we do:

- is in balance with nature
- is equitable and inclusive of the entire community
- minimizes Simsbury's contribution to climate change
- protects and preserves our resources for future generations

Our key aims are to:

1. Promote energy efficiency and the transition to renewable energy
2. Reduce waste
3. Preserve our natural resources
4. Promote a thriving local economy
5. Foster diverse, equitable and inclusive community engagement
6. Encourage sustainable development
7. Foster clean and diverse transportation

The primary role of the Committee is to advise town leaders on sustainability policy. In order to fulfill this role, the Committee seeks to be informed of projects with material sustainability impacts early enough to be able to offer recommendations. Examples include public building projects, HVAC replacements, waste management and other significant projects impacting the aims listed above. Being kept informed can be achieved by:

- ex officio Committee members through their roles in the other boards they serve on,
- staff to the committee,
- input from other public boards and commissions,
- attendance at public meetings and attention to the budget and planning process and
- public input.

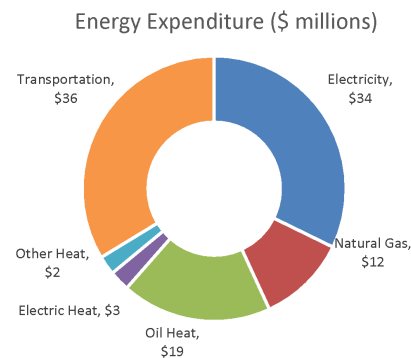
Accomplishing the tasks detailed below will require, in addition to the Sustainability Committee, dedication of resources from town staff. These resources could come in the form of a Sustainability Coordinator, or the assignment of existing staff to sustainability work.

The sections below address Simsbury's sustainability goals in respect of energy. Future versions of this document will comprise other aims listed above.

¹ https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif9751/f/uploads/simsbury_-_2024_pocd_-_effective_010124_0.pdf

Energy Expenditures and Emissions

Simsbury, as a community of 25,000 residents, currently spends roughly \$105 million annually on energy, or \$4,200 per person.² Most of this energy today comes from fossil fuels, including heating oil, natural gas and propane to heat our homes, gasoline for our cars and electricity, roughly half of which is currently produced using natural gas.



In the process, Simsbury emits roughly 215,000 tons of greenhouse gasses (GHG) annually, or roughly 9 tons per person. This estimate is roughly consistent with the current statewide average of 9.7 tons per person.³ In 2008, Connecticut passed the Global Warming Solutions Act, setting a mandate to reduce emissions to 80% below their 2001 level by 2050, or less than 3 tons per person.⁴

We are called as individuals and communities to do our part to achieve these state mandates by reducing our GHG emissions to sustainable levels. In so doing, we have an opportunity to not only reduce our emissions, but also lower our energy costs and improve resilience by reducing the likelihood of outages during extreme energy events. We can do this by:

- Promoting energy efficiency in new and existing buildings
- Encouraging the deployment of solar energy in town
- Transitioning heating and cooling to electric heat pumps
- Transitioning transportation to electric vehicles

Our goal is for Simsbury, including residents, businesses, the town and schools, to use 50% clean, renewable energy by 2030 and 100% by 2040. Below are steps we can take to accomplish these goals.

1. Improve Energy Efficiency of Buildings in Town

a. Town & Schools

- i. Benchmark the energy usage of town and public-school buildings using the existing Energy Star® Portfolio Manager®⁵ resource and present the findings of this exercise annually to the Sustainability Committee.
- ii. Create a schedule of recently completed energy audits of public buildings. Employ energy audits going forward as a tool to improve building efficiency.
- iii. Work with the appropriate town staff (e.g., Engineer, Public Building Committee) and Sustainability Committee members to draft sustainability guidelines for new

² Includes residents, businesses as well as Town and School operations; all figures are from an energy model developed by People's Action for Clean Energy (PACE). Additional information available at <https://www.pacecleanenergy.org/>.

³ CT DEEP 1990-2021 GHG Inventory, https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/deep/climatechange/1990-2021-ghg-inventory/deep_ghg_report_90-21_pre-22.pdf

⁴ Public Act 08-98, <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2008/ACT/Pa/pdf/2008PA-00098-R00HB-05600-PA.pdf>

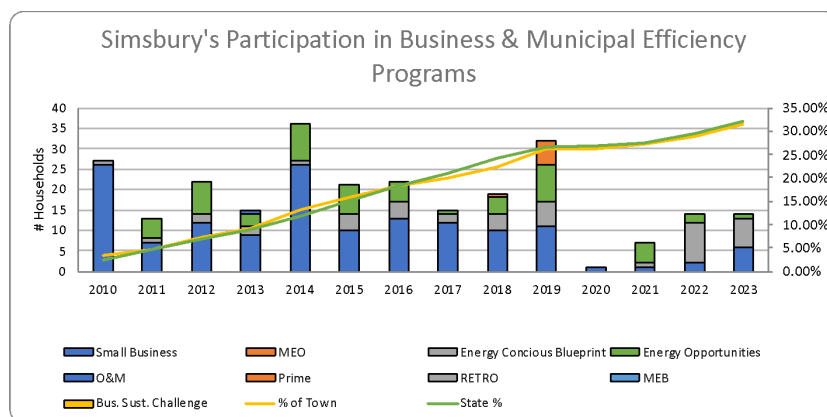
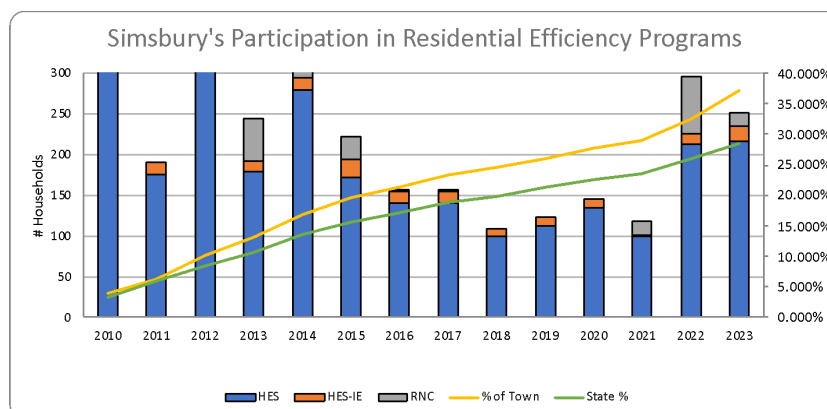
⁵ <https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/benchmark>

construction and retrofits of public buildings. These guidelines should include, but not be limited to:

1. Overall goal(s) (e.g., LEED Gold equivalent)
2. Building envelope performance (e.g., insulation, airtightness)
3. Solar readiness
4. Electric vehicle readiness
5. Battery Storage readiness
6. Consideration given to an all-electric building

b. Residents & Businesses

- i. Promote energy efficiency among residents and businesses, with a goal of achieving 50% participation in utility-run efficiency programs for residents and 50% for businesses by 2030.
 1. *Current participation rates are roughly 37% of Simsbury households and 31% of businesses.⁶*
 2. *Regular promotion campaigns could increase this rate significantly, helping Simsbury residents and businesses to lower their energy bills.*



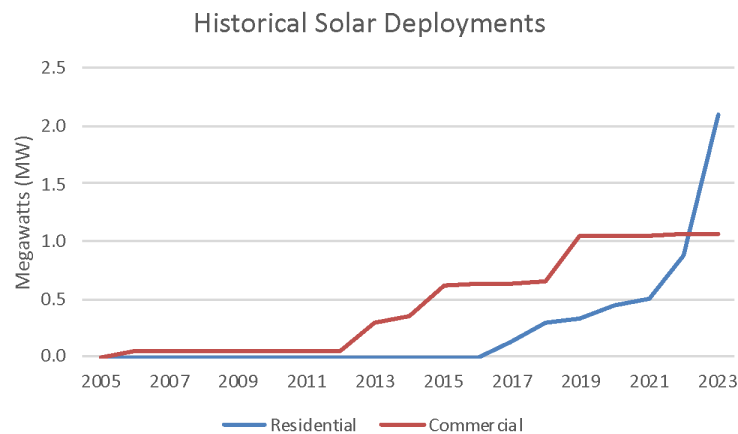
Help all in Town Lower their Energy Costs through Solar & Storage

a. Town & Schools

⁶ EnergizeCT Municipal Energy Dashboard:

https://ctenergydashboard.com/CEC/CEC_PerformanceData.aspx

- i. We call upon the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education to develop specific plans to produce 50% of their own electricity by 2030.
3. *This goal can be achieved by deploying additional solar on building rooftops, parking lot canopies and ground-mounted arrays.*
4. *Currently, the town has three solar arrays (i.e., two at Public Works and one over the skating rink at Simsbury Farms), capable of producing roughly 10.5% of the town's electricity usage.⁷*
5. *Currently, the public schools have one array on the high school, capable of producing 0.3% of the schools' electricity usage.*
- c. Residents & Businesses
 - i. Promote solar and battery storage among residents and businesses, with a goal of producing 50% of our electricity needs with clean energy by 2035.
 1. *At the time of writing, Simsbury currently has 221 residential solar installations totaling 2.1 megawatts (MW) and 19 commercial ones (excluding Tobacco Valley Solar), totaling 1.1 MW. Together, these arrays are capable of producing roughly 2.6% of the town's electricity usage.*
 2. *Regular promotion campaigns could significantly increase Simsbury's ability to become less reliant on the regional electricity grid and reduce energy bills.*
 3. *Electricity needs will increase in the future as we transition to electric vehicles and heat pumps.*

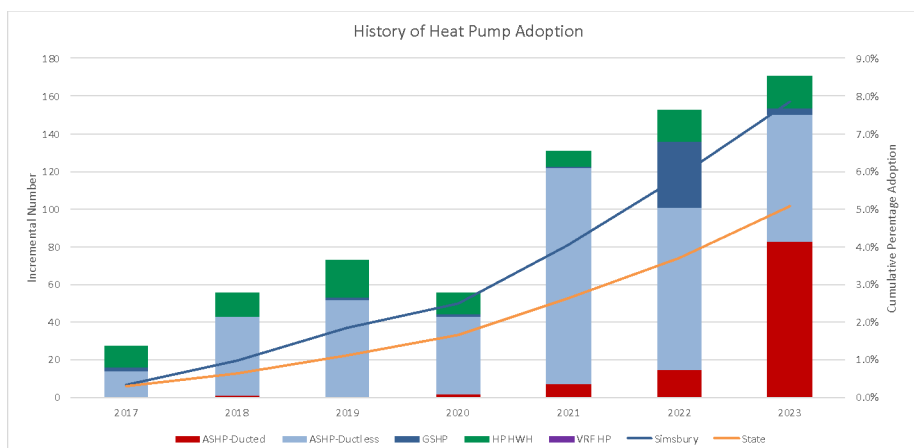


2. Transition of Heating & Cooling to Electric Heat Pumps

- a. Town & Schools
 - i. Develop a schedule of planned replacements to heating and cooling in town and public-school buildings.
 - ii. For all such replacements and new construction, give due consideration to all-electric HVAC systems.
- b. Residents & Businesses
 - i. Promote electric heat pumps among residents and businesses, with a goal of 25% penetration by 2030 for households and businesses.

⁷ Including only municipal buildings, not the entire town.

1. Simsbury currently has at least 569 residential heat pumps⁸, representing roughly 8% of local households, and 7 commercial ones, representing roughly 1% of businesses.
2. The transition to cold-climate, efficient heat pumps will require raising awareness of the benefits of these devices and of the changing landscape of purchase incentives.



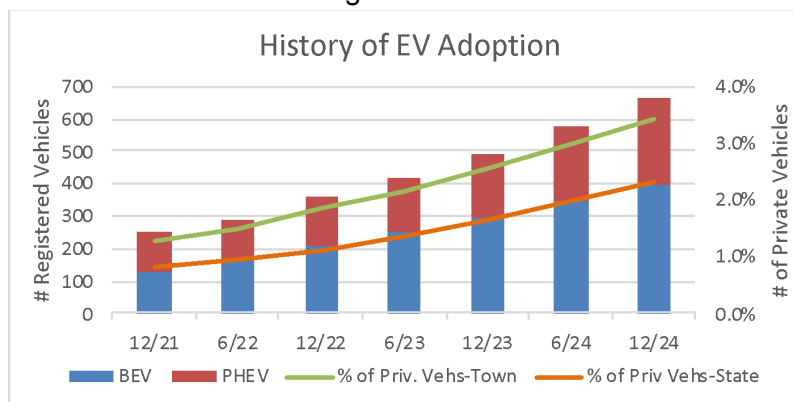
3. Transition of Transportation to Electric Vehicles

a. Town & Schools

- i. Conduct a public outreach campaign to study the future electric vehicle charging needs of residents and businesses. Issue a report on how the town and schools can meet these needs as the public transitions to EVs.
- ii. Assess the feasibility of EV fleet purchases and present electrification plans annually to the Committee. As soon as practically possible, we encourage the schools to invest in electric buses, in accordance with state goals of deploying zero-emission buses to environmental justice communities by 2030 and the entire state by 2040.

b. Residents & Businesses

- i. Promote electric vehicles among residents and businesses



⁸ EnergizeCT Municipal Energy Dashboard:
https://ctenergydashboard.com/CEC/CEC_PerformanceData.aspx