

## PE6 Action: Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements

3 — 21 Points



BRONZE PRIORITY



SILVER PRIORITY

### A. Why is this action important?

Local governments are responsible for planning in a number of areas, including housing, transportation, water, open space, waste management, energy, and disaster preparedness. In New York State, these planning efforts can be combined into a comprehensive plan that steers investments by local governments and guides future development through zoning regulations. A comprehensive plan provides communities with a strong defense for regulations adopted in conformance with the plan. Almost 70% of the cities, towns, and villages in New York State have a comprehensive plan, according to a [survey](#).

A comprehensive plan also provides a vision for how a community wants to grow over a 10- to 20-year period and recommends steps for how to achieve that vision. As part of that vision, the comprehensive planning process offers an opportunity for communities to consider how to balance the three “Es” of sustainability: environment, economy, and equity. Because moving toward greater sustainability is often in alignment with mitigating and adapting to climate change, the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program encourages local governments to integrate sustainability into their comprehensive plans.

### B. How to implement this action

Local governments should incorporate sustainability elements throughout the comprehensive plan. Alternatively, they may add sustainability as a standalone chapter to the plan or as a separate plan incorporated by reference, though integration is preferable. These approaches may be taken for a new plan or adopted as an amendment to the existing comprehensive plan.

The steps listed below can be followed to incorporate sustainability into the comprehensive plan, whether as a new plan or as a plan amendment (though the scope of an amendment might be focused on a particular topic, such as a bike and pedestrian plan). As with all planning processes, public outreach and engagement are essential throughout the creation of the plan. The local government should seek diverse participation, ensuring that the process actively involves all segments of the community, and should use a variety of communication channels to inform and engage the public.

1. **Public Outreach and Engagement:** Develop communications strategy. Identify stakeholders from all segments of the community. Launch outreach (i.e., social media, public meetings). Define what sustainability means to the community.
2. **Baseline Assessment:** Analyze existing conditions for land use, economic development, housing, energy, transportation, and natural, cultural, and historic resources.
3. **Develop Goals:** Use media and survey tools to capture the community’s vision. Set goals with stakeholders and subcommittees. Ensure goals address the three “Es” of sustainability: environment, economy, and equity. Determine goals to address the community’s sustainability definition.
4. **Identify and Evaluate Strategies and Actions:** Conduct research on national best practices. Facilitate strategy and action identification process. Develop evaluation criteria and evaluate strategies. Prioritize strategies and actions. Determine strategies to achieve sustainability goals and detail implementation actions.
5. **Integration:** Develop draft plan for review by the community. Integrate comments from community. Assign implementation responsibilities. Finalize the plan.

Local governments should ensure that responsibilities for carrying out the plan are clearly assigned. This will be key to the successful implementation of the newly incorporated sustainability elements. Wherever possible, strategies should also

identify funding sources and should be connected to the community’s annual budgeting process.

Local governments are encouraged to contact the [New York State Department of State Division of Local Government Services](#) for training, technical assistance and legal guidance on comprehensive planning and the [New York State Department of Transportation](#) for guidance regarding transportation projects.

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

If the local government is starting from the beginning with its comprehensive planning process, it can take up to 18 months to complete the plan. Local governments often hire a consultant to undertake a comprehensive plan. Project costs can range from tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars to facilitate a full comprehensive planning process. An amendment to an existing comprehensive plan is likely to cost less than a new plan and in some cases, an amendment may be completed by local planning staff.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

Any local government can complete a comprehensive plan that includes sustainability and climate change concerns. Town boards, village boards, and city or common councils authorize the development of comprehensive plans. Most communities appoint a comprehensive plan committee to coordinate the development of the plan and work with a planning consultant who will facilitate the planning process. If the local government has a planning department, it would certainly be involved as well. Other municipal committees, such as the CSC task force, conservation advisory councils or environmental commissions, can be included to help gather data or provide recommendations on natural resource issues.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

Local governments are eligible for CSC points through completing and adopting a comprehensive plan within the last 10 years that addresses the required and optional (point-based) sustainability elements in the bulleted list below. The plan must identify goals, strategies, and implementation actions for each of the required elements (individually) and for any of the point-based elements. This is the case whether an applicant is adopting a new comprehensive plan or amending an existing plan.

In addition, the plan must describe the public outreach process including information on the variety of communication channels used, the diversity of stakeholders, how stakeholders were meaningfully involved in the plan’s development, and how their involvement is reflected in the implementation of the strategies.

Points are awarded according to the number of point-based elements that are part of the plan, over and above the five required elements. At minimum, the plan must include all of the sustainability elements listed below as required *and* at least one point-based element from the list; such a plan would be eligible for the lowest tier of three points.

	POSSIBLE POINTS
Support alternative modes of transportation (including strategies for bicycles, pedestrians, public transit, and electric vehicles)	Required
Promote smart growth principles in land-use policies	Required
Conserve natural areas (including strategies to designate open space and protect it from development)	Required
Promote a healthy and safe community	Required
Foster equity (including strategies for housing, schools, transportation, recreation, food, and environmental exposures)	Required

Foster green economic development	3
Decrease dependence on fossil fuels and support energy efficiency and renewable energy production	3
Foster the efficient use of natural resources (e.g., water conservation)	3
Promote the development of (or the conservation of) local food systems	3
Minimize solid waste (including strategies to promote recycling and composting or anaerobic digestion of organic materials)	3
Protect drinking water sources from pollution	3
Promote adaptation to climate change (including strategies related to land use and public education and engagement)	3

## F. What to submit

Submit the following documentation to apply for points for this action:

- A copy of the approved comprehensive plan with sustainability elements, adopted within ten years prior to the application date
- A copy of the meeting minutes where the plan was formally approved by the local governing body, or where the amendments were approved
- A memorandum explaining how the plan reflects the sustainability elements, including the specific page numbers where the relevant information can be found (The memorandum should provide details on all of the required sustainability elements and any elements for which points are being requested. It should also note the page number(s) in the plan where the required public outreach description can be found.)

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

## G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- [City of Albany, NY - 2030 Plan](#)
- [Town of Cortlandt, NY – Sustainable Master Plan, Envision Cortlandt](#)
- [City of Ithaca, NY - Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [Town of Southampton, NY – Sustainability Element Update to the Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [Buffalo, NY – Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [American Planning Association, Comprehensive Plan Standards for Sustaining Places](#)
- [American Planning Association, Pilot Program for Comprehensive Plan Standards for Sustaining Places](#)
- [New York State Department of State. 2004. Guide to Planning and Zoning Laws of New York State. James A. Coon Local Government Technical Series. New York State Department of State. Albany, NY.](#)
- Church, D., and C. Traub. 2002. A Practical Guide to Comprehensive Planning, 2nd edition. New York Planning Federation. Troy, NY. Book available via [www.nypf.org](http://www.nypf.org)
- McElfish, J. 2004. Nature-Friendly Ordinances. Environmental Law Institute, Washington, DC. Book available via [www.eli.org/](http://www.eli.org/)
- New York State Department of State. 1998. Creating the Community You Want: Municipal Options for Land Use Control. James A. Coon Local Government Technical Series. New York State Department of State. Albany, NY.
- Nolon, J. 2002. Well Grounded: Using Local Land Use Authority to Achieve Smart Growth. Environmental Law Institute, Washington, DC.
- Van Tine, J. [ed.] 2003. Local Environmental Strategies. Starting Ground Series. Pace University Land Use Law

Center. White Plains, NY. Book available via [www.law.pace.edu/landuse](http://www.law.pace.edu/landuse)

#### **H. Recertification requirements**

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.



## 6.2 Incorporate Smart Growth Principles into Land-use Policies and Regulations

1 – 8 Points

**Please note: This action is only eligible for points as part of applications submitted before January 10, 2020.** It is an older “version 2” action from the 2014 certification manual. The portal website, launched in 2018, replaced this manual. After January 10, 2020, this action will be retired or replaced with an updated “version 3” edition of the action.

### A. Why is this action important?

Most cities and counties have use-based zoning codes that segregate otherwise complementary residential, office, and retail (mixed) uses thereby encouraging a car-centric system of development. By updating local zoning and policies, local governments can encourage smart growth by promoting transit oriented development, compact walkable communities, infill development, and other resource-efficient land-use practices. Smart growth principles applied to zoning can also help protect important open space and natural areas, preserving ecological functions such as stormwater management and flood mitigation in addition to enhancing recreation opportunities.

### B. How to implement this action

The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program encourages local governments to incorporate smart growth principles into their land-use policies. This can be done by comprehensively updating the local zoning or through amendments or policies that promote smart growth. Following a specific approach such as form-based codes, which place a primary emphasis on building type, dimensions, parking location and façade features, and less emphasis on uses, is one method of incorporating smart growth into local zoning. Often, a comprehensive update to local zoning takes place concurrently or subsequent to an update to the community’s comprehensive plan, but it is not necessary to update the comprehensive plan to incorporate smart growth principles into zoning. It is possible to incorporate smart growth principles into local land-use policies through a complementary planning process, such as a local waterfront revitalization plan, or to incorporate the principles into the project review process, such as at the site plan review stage. Local governments can follow the key steps below to implement this action:

- Review existing zoning codes and policies and identify elements that support smart growth, and elements which inhibit smart growth.
- Determine the most suitable approach for updating local land-use policies, either through amendments, a comprehensive zoning update, new policies, or changes to the project review process.
- Draft new elements or policies to promote smart growth.
- Gather public input on the new elements or policies.
- Adopt the new zoning, policies, or processes.

Local governments should include provisions in the updated zoning or policies which address the following smart growth principles, as defined by the [Smart Growth Network](#):

- Mix land uses.
- Take advantage of compact building design.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Create walkable neighborhoods.
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas.
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.
- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective.

- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

The [New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act](#) provides similar smart growth criteria that can also be incorporated into local land-use regulations. CSCs are encouraged to contact the [New York State Department of State Division of Local Services](#) for training, technical assistance and legal guidance on smart growth and the [New York State Department of Transportation \(DOT\)](#) for guidance regarding transportation projects.

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

The timing, costs, and resource needs depend on the extent to which the zoning must be updated to incorporate smart growth principles. For a comprehensive update to local zoning, communities might consider hiring a consultant and combining the zoning update with an update to the community’s comprehensive plan, if applicable. For communities which only need to update portions of the zoning code, this could be addressed with local government staff and planning committee or other external advisors.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

The planning department typically is responsible for local planning and zoning. Communities that do not have their own planning departments may have to rely on a planning board or the county planning department to provide local planning and zoning guidance. Local government committees, such as CSC task force, conservation advisory councils or environmental conservation committees may also be involved.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

Local governments can earn points for this action by demonstrating that the following smart growth principles have been incorporated into local zoning, land-use policies, or processes.

	POSSIBLE POINTS
Mix land uses	1
Promote compact building design and cluster development	1
Diversity of housing opportunities and choices	1
Walkable neighborhoods	1
Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place	1
Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and important natural areas	1
Strengthen and direct development toward existing community centers, hamlets or urban areas	1
Promote density that facilitates non-car transportation options	1

### F. What to submit

Local governments should submit a link or copy of the updated zoning or associated policies and an explanation of how the zoning meets the defined smart growth principles. The zoning may have been updated at any time prior to the

application date to be eligible for points.

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#### **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

- [Smart Growth Online](#)
- [EPA Smart Growth Guidance and Best Practices](#)
- [New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act](#)
- [Form-Based Code Institute Sample Codes](#)
- [Smart Code Central](#)
- [Tompkins County pedestrian neighborhood zone model ordinance](#)
- [Floating zone model ordinance](#)
- [LEED ND Planners Guide and Model Ordinance](#)

#### **H. Recertification requirements**

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.



## PE6 Action: Unified Solar Permit

5 Points

### A. Why is this action important?

The Unified Solar Permit is a standardized permit application designed to streamline the approval process for installing solar in the community. The standardized permit is expected to cut costs by creating a uniform permitting process in municipalities across the State. As local governments adopt the permit, installers and communities alike will save time and resources permitting solar electric systems. An expedited process will allow these standard systems to pass quickly through the jurisdictional review process, freeing up time for all involved parties, decreasing the overall installation time for customers, and allowing non-standard systems the necessary time for detailed review.

By displacing energy from fossil fuel sources, the use of solar energy reduces air pollution and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels transform solar radiation into electricity and are appropriate for many types of public facilities, including schools and public buildings. Solar hot water systems (also known as solar thermal systems) use roof-mounted solar collectors that rely on the sun's energy to produce hot water in buildings. When local governments streamline the approvals process for solar technologies, they increase the demand for renewable energy and set a positive example for residents and businesses in the community.

### B. How to implement this action

This action awards Climate Smart Communities (CSC) certification points for the successful completion of the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Program High Impact Action entitled Unified Solar Permit.

The focus of this action is on streamlining the approval process for solar installation. Municipalities demonstrate completion by submitting a copy of an executed local law, ordinance, or resolution adopting the New York State Unified Solar Permit and a copy of the (October 2016) Unified Solar Permit being used by the applying jurisdiction.

For guidance on implementing this action, see the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Program [Unified Solar Permit Toolkit](#). Municipalities interested in this action can receive free technical assistance from the Clean Energy Communities Coordinators that are available across New York State. To find contact information for the coordinator in your region, visit <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Contractors/Find-a-Contractor/Clean-Energy-Community-Coordinators>. You may also contact [cec@nyserda.ny.gov](mailto:cec@nyserda.ny.gov) for more information.

### C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs

The time frame will be dependent on the size of the municipality and its legislative process. Project costs may include staff and consultant time, where applicable.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

This action is applicable to all local governments that enforce the uniform code for private buildings. In New York State, this responsibility falls to cities, towns, and villages in most cases. The municipal legislative body will adopt a local law, ordinance or resolution adopting the New York State Unified Solar Permit. Municipal attorneys will be involved in reviewing legislative language. The code enforcement officer or staff from the building department may assist in implementation of the program.



## **E. How to obtain points for this action**

Five CSC points are available for local governments that submit documentation showing completion of this Unified Solar Permit action.

## **F. What to submit**

Submit a copy of the approval from NYSERDA that indicates completion of the Clean Energy Communities Program Unified Solar Permit High Impact Action.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

## **G. Links to Additional Resources or Best Practices**

- [NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Program Unified Solar Permit Toolkit](#)
- [NY-Sun Solar Guidebook for Local Governments](#)

## **H. Recertification requirements**

As part of recertification, applicants must submit evidence that the Unified Solar Permit is still in place (e.g., in the form of an official municipal memo). Otherwise, the recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.



## 6.4 Establish Green Building Codes

1 – 6 Points

**Please note: This action is only eligible for points as part of applications submitted before January 10, 2020.** It is an older “version 2” action from the 2014 certification manual. The portal website, launched in 2018, replaced this manual. After January 10, 2020, this action will be retired or replaced with an updated “version 3” edition of the action.

### A. Why is this action important?

Green building codes set a standard for all new construction and major modifications for buildings that can have a long-term effect on reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in a community. The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program encourages local governments to use their land-use authority to help mitigate and adapt to climate change.

### B. How to implement this action

Local governments should first review their existing codes and regulations and identify any requirements that might preclude or inhibit green building and energy efficiency. In addition, local governments might consider forming a green codes task force of representatives with an interest and expertise in energy efficiency and building codes, to work on updating the codes. Local governments should review the New York Energy Conservation Construction Code of New York State (ECCCNYS 2010), ASHRAE 90.1, ASHRAE 189.1, UCC-IGCC 2012IECC, and other best practice resources to inform the code update process. ECCCNYS 2010 addresses the design and construction of energy-efficient building envelopes and the installation of energy-efficient mechanical, lighting and power systems through requirements emphasizing performance.<sup>1</sup> Local governments may adopt their own energy conservation requirements after notifying the state, but these requirements must be no less restrictive than the current ECCCNYS. All proposed revisions to local building codes should be reviewed by the Department of State Division of Building Standards and Codes. Care should be taken to ensure that green building codes provide the flexibility to account for the challenges inherent in upgrading existing buildings and, in particular, historic structures. Any local enactment to supersede the state building code will require approval by the [State Fire Prevention and Building Code Council](#).

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

Costs associated with developing new codes can vary from internal staff time to consultant time for review.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

Local governments with legislative authority can draft and enact a revised building code. Building departments and local government attorneys are the primary officials responsible for this action, although local governments would benefit from involvement of external experts in the building field. Municipal committees, such as CSC task force, conservation advisory councils or environmental conservation committees may also be involved.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

Adopt a local green building ordinance substantially equivalent to the Columbia Law School’s Center for Climate Change Law’s [Model Municipal Green Building Ordinance](#) covering both new construction and major modifications.

POSSIBLE POINTS

Government owned buildings	1
Commercial buildings	2
High-rise multi-family residential buildings	1
One and two-family dwellings	1
Low-rise multi-family residential dwellings	1

## F. What to submit

In order to obtain points for this action, a local government must submit an electronic copy or link to the green building code as adopted within the last five years. Proof that the proposed code change was reviewed and approved by the State Code Council must also be provided.

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## G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- [ECCCNYS 2010](#)
- [ECCCNYS 2010 Overview Presentation](#)
- [Model municipal green building ordinance \(Columbia University\)](#)
- [Urban Green Council NYC Green Codes Task Force](#)
- [Babylon Green Building Certification Code](#)
- [Greenburgh Home Energy Conservation Requirements](#)
- [EPA. Smart Growth and Sustainable Preservation of Existing and Historic Buildings](#)

## H. Recertification requirements

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.

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1. [NY Department of State, Division of Code Enforcement and Administration](#) ↩



## 6.7 Adopt Land-use Policies That Support or Incentivize Farmers' Markets, Community Gardens and Urban and Rural Agriculture

1 Points

2 Points

3 Points

4 Points

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### A. Why is this action important?

Local governments have begun to take an interest in agriculture as a way to address food security, promote public health, support economic and community development, and to improve the urban environment. Increasing the availability of local foods is also an important strategy being used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the long distance transport of food into a region. Rural communities can also promote and preserve agricultural areas through agriculture plans or districts or land preservation.

### B. How to implement this action<sup>1</sup>

According to the March 2010 issue of Zoning Practice, published by the American Planning Association, "In zoning, urban agriculture can be treated either as a district or as a use category." Local zoning regulations commonly permit a wide range of agricultural activities, including raising crops and animals, in designated agricultural districts in rural areas or on the urban fringe. Zoning Practice advises that urban agriculture can also be treated as a use or set of uses that are permitted, conditional, or forbidden, depending on the district. Both of these approaches have benefits, but it depends on the needs and goals of the local government to determine which is the most useful to accomplish local goals. Local governments with urban areas investigating changes to zoning ordinance or policies should consider several questions:

- What are the possible urban agriculture activities in our community?
- What can be allowed in a widespread way with little controversy and what is controversial?
- What can be allowed, but controlled?
- What can be allowed, but only in certain places?
- Are there some places where specific activities should be encouraged?
- Who are the likely participants and how can positive relationships be fostered?

Rural communities may choose to focus on preserving local agricultural areas through agriculture plans, agriculture districts, or partnerships with land trusts to buy agriculture easements. The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program encourages local governments to consult with [DOS's Office of General Counsel](#) regarding policies to incentivize farmers' markets, community gardens, and urban and rural agriculture.

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

This action can be implemented with assistance from a professional planner on staff. For many communities, changes in zoning ordinances and policies can take up to a year to conduct background research, review existing ordinance language, draft new language, consult with a local government attorney and pass new or revised legislation. Consultants and Cooperative Extensions are very helpful resources in crafting the language and determining the most appropriate policy changes to accomplish local goals.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

This action is relevant to any local government. The planning department (or planning board) and local government attorney are the primary officials responsible developing draft language for adoption and for implementing the new policy. The town board, village board, or city or common council will be responsible for adopting new regulations. County governments may develop incentives or assist local governments in adopting these policies.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

To obtain points for this action, the local government must update the local zoning ordinance or adopt new policies that incentivize, promote, or remove barriers to local farmers’ markets, the creation of community gardens, and urban and rural agricultural practices.

	POSSIBLE POINTS
Local farmers’ markets or farm stands	1
Community gardens	1
Urban agriculture	1
Rural agriculture	1

To be eligible for points for this action, local governments are not required to incorporate these policies into their zoning or comprehensive plan; however, they are encouraged to do so to reduce the risk of legal challenges.

### F. What to submit

The revised zoning ordinance or new policy must be submitted electronically to receive points for this action. Local governments must submit a memorandum highlighting the specific sections of the zoning or ordinance that support or incentivize farmers’ markets, community gardens, and urban or rural agriculture.

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### G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- [NY Department of Agriculture and Markets](#)
- [American Planning Association, Zoning for Urban Agriculture](#)
- [Sustainable Cities Institute, Promoting Urban Agriculture: Zoning](#)
- [New York State Codes, Right to Farm](#)
- [GrowNYC](#)

### H. Recertification requirements

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.

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1. [Information in this section was taken from an excerpt of the March 2010 issue of \*Zoning Practice\*, published by the American Planning Association](#) ↩



## P6 Action: GreenLITES

6 Points

9 Points

12 Points

15 Points

### A. Why is this action important?

It is important to improve the quality of New York State's transportation infrastructure in ways that minimize impacts to the environment, including the depletion of irreplaceable resources and the reduction of GHG emissions. To facilitate and recognize transportation project designs that incorporate a high level of environmental sustainability, NYSDOT implemented and uses GreenLITES (Green Leadership In Transportation and Environmental Sustainability), a transportation environmental sustainability rating program.

Other New York State government agencies and authorities, local municipalities, and non-governmental (NGOs) may use GreenLITES to certify their transportation projects. Using GreenLITES is voluntary and offers project Sponsors the opportunity to distinguish their transportation projects based on the extent to which they incorporate sustainable design choices. By participating in this program, sponsors demonstrate the following:

1. They are committed to improving the quality of transportation infrastructure in ways that minimize impacts to the environment, and
2. They have taken intentional steps to show the public they are advancing sustainable practices.

### B. How to implement this action

This action can be implemented by utilizing NYSDOT's GreenLITES voluntary self-certification program for a local transportation infrastructure project. The local government must use GreenLITES Project Environmental Sustainability Rating System Scorecard and submit it to NYSDOT for review before receiving an official certificate. Certification levels include Certified, Silver, Gold, and Evergreen; each varying based on the number of sustainability practices incorporated into the project and the level of impact the project will have in the areas of sustainable sites, water quality, materials and resources, energy and atmosphere and innovation.

### C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs

The time frame, costs, and resource needs vary depending on the project size and certification level sought.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

Any local government (city, town, village, county) can implement this action. Typically, the departments of transportation, planning, or public works would oversee this action.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

Points are obtained for this action by receiving a GreenLITES certification from NYSDOT.

- Certified 6 points
- Silver 9 points
- Gold 12 points
- Evergreen 15 points

## **F. What to submit**

The local government must provide the certificate obtained from NYSDOT.

## **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

- [NYSDOT GreenLITES](#)

## **H. Recertification requirements**

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.

## 6.8 Adopt Green Parking Lot Standards

1 Points

2 Points

3 Points

4 Points

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### A. Why is this action important?

Parking lots, comprised mostly of pavement, have been a dominant feature of our communities to accommodate the automobile. The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program encourages local governments to develop official green parking lot standards. Such standards are designed to reduce the environmental impacts of these sites on communities by incorporating a variety of features, including reduced impervious surface, green infrastructure techniques, and alternative parking surface materials.

### B. How to implement this action

By applying innovative approaches to planning and design, local governments can mitigate the impacts of parking lots. Green parking lot standards are implemented by updating the local zoning code or through the adoption of an ordinance. There are a variety of techniques that can be incorporated into local zoning or policies to create green parking lot standards, these best management practices include the following:

- **Reduce minimum parking requirements** – this can be based on project location or population and allows the local government to encourage projects that are located adjacent to public transit to reduce the demand for parking spaces or implementation of transportation demand management programs which encourage residents to use alternative modes of transportation (e.g., transit, carpooling, biking).
- **Adopt parking maximums and/or area wide parking restrictions** – this technique limits the number of parking spaces in a development or across a larger area (i.e., downtown or a transit oriented development) which can help to maintain the marketability of sites in a district.
- **Reduce stall dimensions** - creating more compact parking spaces and accurate stall size requirements that fit the growing trend in the number of smaller cars on the road.
- **In-lieu parking fees** – an option fee is paid by developers in place of meeting minimum parking requirements. The fees paid by developers are often allocated to local government funds that are established to mitigate traffic impacts or used to provide existing government off-site parking to the tenants and visitors of the new development.
- **Incorporate stormwater management on site** – green infrastructure techniques manage stormwater on site through the use of bio-swales, vegetated buffer strips and bioretention areas.
- **Install colored curb zone markings** – street curb striping or painting is used in drop-off and pick-up zones to clarify parking and other curb use rules. They are generally used to address competing needs, assist in moving people and goods more efficiently, support the vitality of business districts, and create livable neighborhoods. In business districts that include blocks with mixed-use buildings containing residential units, they provide for more efficient transit operations, commercial freight deliveries, and short-term parking flexibility for retail establishments.
- **Install green loading zones** – to encourage the use of zero-emissions vehicles and idle-free solutions. Creation of dedicated zero-emissions curbside loading zone spaces encourages freight and logistics companies to shift toward zero-emissions vehicles. In addition to the health and environmental benefits, green loading zones can produce additional benefits by developing increased roadway capacity, supporting electric-vehicle deployment and usage, and enabling better management, monitoring, and potential monetization of curbside pavement. Green loading zones also provide economic development support for the growing electric-vehicle and related industries in New York State.
- **Use alternative parking surface materials** – a variety of paving materials have been developed to mitigate the



environmental impacts of parking lots. Permeable and semi-permeable alternative pavers such as bricks, gravel, pervious concrete, and turf blocks allow infiltration of stormwater directly into the ground. Using recycled materials, such as reprocessed asphalt or crushed glass, is also an alternative for both environmental and economic reasons.

- **Minimize land cleared for construction** – conserve as much of the vegetation and habitat on site and use native trees and shrubs that require less irrigation.
- **Promote shared parking** – share parking lots with complementary users that need the lot at different times.
- **Increase tree plantings in parking areas** – to support stormwater management and provide shading to reduce the urban heat-island effect.

As with any local zoning ordinance modification, please consult with the local government attorney to determine the appropriate language and process for incorporating these standards. CSCs are encouraged to contact the [New York State Department of State Division of Local Services](#) for training, technical assistance and legal guidance on green parking lot standards and the [New York State Department of Transportation \(DOT\)](#) for guidance regarding transportation projects.

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

This action can be implemented with assistance from a professional planner on staff. For many local governments, changes in zoning ordinances can take up to a year to conduct background research, review existing ordinance language, draft new language, consult with a local government attorney and pass new or revised legislation. Consultants are very helpful resources in crafting the language and determining the most appropriate changes to accomplish local goals.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

Local governments with legislative authority can draft and adopt green parking lot standards. Planning departments (or planning/zoning boards) and local government attorneys are primarily responsible for ensuring the standards are met by applicants. To be eligible for points for this action, local governments are not required to incorporate these policies into their zoning or comprehensive plan; however, they are encouraged to do so to reduce the risk of legal challenges.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

To obtain points for this action, the local government must update the local zoning code or adopt an ordinance to include green parking lot standards. Points are awarded based on the number of best management practices BMPs implemented.

	POSSIBLE POINTS
Implement 1 green parking lot standard, as described above	1
Implement 2 green parking lot standards, as described above	2
Implement 3 green parking lot standards, as described above	3
Implement 4 or more green parking lot standards, as described above	4

To be eligible for points for this action, local governments are not required to incorporate the parking standards into their zoning or comprehensive plans; however, they are encouraged to do so to avoid a New York Civil Practice Laws and Rules Article 78 challenge.

### F. What to submit

A zoning code or ordinance revision that adopts one or more green parking lot standards and was adopted within the past three years must be submitted to receive points for this action.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

## **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

- [DEC, Code and Ordinance Worksheet for Development Rules in New York State](#)
- [U.S. EPA, Green Parking Lot Resource Guide](#)
- [New York, NY, Commercial and Community Facility Parking Lot Zoning – Green Standards](#)
- [New York, NY, Green Loading Zones: The Emergence of Zero-Emission Urban Delivery and the NYC Opportunity](#)
- [Victoria Transport Policy Institute, Parking Solutions](#)
- [San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, Curb Colors](#)
- [WXY architecture + planning, Policy and Planning for the Last Mile](#)
- [Automobile, Current Trends in Small Cars-Small is Big](#)

## **H. Recertification requirements**

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.



## PE6 Action: Complete Streets Policy

4 Points



BRONZE PRIORITY



SILVER PRIORITY

### Why is this action important?

Streets are the main arteries of a community, moving people, goods, and services from one place to another. A Complete Streets approach to designing our roads incorporates safety, livability, and a place for all users – pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transit riders. Complete streets design features recognize that the needs of users vary according to rural, suburban, and urban contexts and they may include, but are not limited to, sidewalks, paved shoulders suitable for cycling, lane striping, bike lanes, share-the-road signage, crosswalks, road diets, pedestrian control signalization, but pullouts, curb cuts, raised crosswalks and ramps, and traffic calming measures. Complete Streets design can include more vegetation to provide shade and a buffer from traffic, and it can include green infrastructure to better manage stormwater. As stated in the [New York State Complete Streets Act of 2011](#), “Complete Streets will contribute to a cleaner, greener transportation system” and “more citizens will achieve the health benefits associated with active forms of transportation while traffic congestion and auto related air pollution will be reduced.”

### B. How to implement this action

Local governments can implement this Climate Smart Communities (CSC) certification action by formally adopting a policy to enable safe access to public roads and appropriate forms of transportation for all by using complete streets design principles for transportation infrastructure projects. Specifically, the policy resolution should set forth the intention to consider the safe and convenient access and mobility on the road network by current and projected users of all ages and abilities, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit users through the use of complete street design features in the planning, design, construction, reconstruction, and rehabilitation (not including resurfacing, maintenance, or pavement recycling) of transportation infrastructure projects undertaken within the municipal jurisdiction.

The policy should define complete streets, including a description of potential design features, and should set forth exemptions, such as roadways where complete streets design features would have an adverse impact on public safety or where the cost would be disproportionate to the need (as well as the factors upon which that determination should be made, such as the land use context, projected traffic volumes, population density, and level of community support). The complete streets policy should also include additional steps necessary for full implementation and measures to assess performance (such as a procedure for reporting on progress to institutionalize complete streets, including a time frame and the assignment of responsibilities) or should formally initiate the process of creating a more detailed complete streets implementation plan, including a timeframe for plan completion.

As with any change in local laws and policies, please consult with the local government attorney for guidance on drafting and enacting a Complete Streets policy. Local governments are encouraged to contact the [New York State Department of State Division of Local Services](#) for training, technical assistance and legal guidance on complete streets policies.

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

For many local governments, resolutions and policy changes can take up to a year to conduct background research, draft new language, consult with a local government attorney and enact. Planning consultants can be resources in crafting the language and determining the most appropriate changes to accomplish local goals.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

Local governments with legislative authority can draft and adopt a Complete Streets policy. Planning departments (or planning boards), public works departments, and local government attorneys are typically responsible for implementing this action. Municipal committees, such as the CSC task force, conservation advisory councils or environmental conservation committees may also be involved.

#### **E. How to obtain points for this action**

To obtain points for this action, the local government must formally adopt a Complete Streets policy that either a) includes the additional steps necessary for full implementation and measures to assess performance, or b) formally initiates the process of creating a complete streets implementation plan, including a timeframe for plan completion.

To be eligible for points for this action, local governments are not required to incorporate these policies into their zoning or comprehensive plan; however, they are encouraged to do so to reduce the risk of legal challenges.

#### **F. What to submit**

Submit a copy of (or link to) the Complete Streets policy, which must be actively in use at the time of submittal, as well as a copy of the meeting minutes where the policy was formally approved.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

#### **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

- [New York State Department of Transportation - Complete Streets Act](#): This webpage includes sample resolutions and policies from local governments across New York State.
- [Smart Growth America – National Complete Streets Coalition](#)
- [City of Kingston, NY, Complete Streets Policy](#)
- [GObike Buffalo - Complete Streets in the City of Buffalo, NY](#)

#### **H. Recertification requirements**

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.



## PE6 Action: Planning & Infrastructure for Bicycling & Walking

2 – 15  
Points

### A. Why is this action important?

Biking and walking are low cost, carbon-free transportation options that help to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increase equity, improve public health, and enhance the sustainability of communities. Biking and walking are often referred to as “active transportation”, meaning that people are using self-propelled, human-powered modes of transportation, rather than cars or other types of motorized vehicles. Local governments can take a leadership role in increasing active transportation in their communities through planning initiatives and through installing infrastructure like paths, bike lanes, and way-finding signage.

### B. How to implement this action

Local governments have a range of strategies they can implement to improve the infrastructure for biking and walking in their communities. This Climate Smart Communities (CSC) action focuses on the following five strategies:

- Develop a bicycle and pedestrian master plan (or similar plan)
- Expand and improve bike and walking paths, bike lanes, and sidewalks
- Improve bike parking
- Improve bike and pedestrian signage
- Develop a bike share program\*

(\*For purposes of the CSC program, a bike share program means the use of non-motorized bicycles with multiple self-service stations enabling point-to-point transportation for short-distance trips, typically fewer than 3 miles. To be eligible for points under this CSC action, the applicant must be engaged in the funding, managing, administering, and/or permitting of the program.)

Often local governments begin this process by developing a bicycle and pedestrian master plan. This can be a standalone plan or incorporated into another planning document, such as a comprehensive plan. Either way, this helps local governments to define their priorities and identify strategies most appropriate for their communities.

To achieve GHG reduction goals, such plans should have a strong focus on strategies for reducing vehicle trips to common destinations, such as to work, school, and shopping centers. To bring down GHG emissions, it is critical to invest in plans and infrastructure that connect common destinations within populations centers, as opposed to investing in walking or biking trails that are purely for recreational purposes (e.g., a loop trail around a lake that is not connected to a downtown area).

As part of this focus on using active transportation for meeting daily needs, plans should include strategies that make it more convenient to bike and walk within the community and that reduce any risks associated with biking and walking.

As part of the planning process, local governments should consider gathering data to better understand resident travel behavior, such as journey-to-work data to measure commute mode share. Local governments should look at existing factors such as the ratio of sidewalk and bikeway lanes to traffic miles, street intersection density, annual rates of pedestrian and cyclist injuries and fatalities, and any existing programs and policies such as [Vision Zero](#) initiatives, traffic calming policies, and related design guidelines.

To be eligible for points for this CSC action, the bicycle/pedestrian master plan (or similar plan) must have been completed

within 10 years from the application date. In addition, local governments are not required to incorporate the bicycle/pedestrian master plans or other policies into their zoning or comprehensive plan; however, they are encouraged to do so to reduce the risk of legal challenges.

Local governments are encouraged to contact the [New York State Department of State Division of Local Government Services](#) for training, technical assistance, and legal guidance on strategies that support active transportation and the [New York State Department of Transportation](#) (DOT) for guidance regarding transportation projects.

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

The timeframe and costs associated with these strategies depends on the strategy selected and the degree to which it is implemented in the community. Local governments may wish to partner with organizations or groups with complementary missions, which may help with developing a bicycle and pedestrian plan, and creating signage or sponsoring a bike share program, for example.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

This action is applicable to all local governments, although some of the strategies are more relevant to more densely populated communities. The planning and public works departments are most likely to have responsibility for the tasks associated with this action; in some communities, this may fall under the department of transportation. In some cases, however, a county or regional council may undertake these efforts with input from local government representatives. Local government staff are also encouraged to work with any relevant community committees, such as conservation advisory councils or biking advocacy groups.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

Local governments can earn points for this action by implementing the strategies listed below:

	POSSIBLE POINTS
Develop a bicycle/pedestrian master plan (or similar plan) applicable to the entire jurisdiction (within last 10 years)	3
Expand and improve bike/walking paths, bike lanes, and sidewalks	3
Improve bike parking	2
Improve bike and pedestrian signage	2
Develop a bike share program	5

### F. What to submit

Submit documentation demonstrating which strategies have been implemented. Provide plans, reports, photographs, program details, websites, or other materials that demonstrate implementation of at least one of the five the strategies listed above. The bicycle/pedestrian master plan (or similar plan) must have been completed within 10 years from the application date and cover the entire community.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

### G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- [DOT Transportation Alternatives Program](#)
- [Victoria Transport Policy Institute, Transportation Demand Management Encyclopedia, Strategies to Make \*\*Cycling\*\* Convenient, Safe and Pleasant](#)
- [Victoria Transport Policy Institute, Transportation Demand Management Encyclopedia, Strategies to Make \*\*Walking\*\* Convenient, Safe and Pleasant](#)
- [Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan](#)
- [Pedestrian & Bicycle Information Center, Case Studies in Promoting Walking & Biking](#)
- [Pedestrian & Bicycle Information Center, Bike Sharing in the United States: State of the Practice and Guide to Implementation, September 2012](#)

#### **H. Recertification requirements**

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.



## PE6 Action: Alternative-fuel Infrastructure

4 – 18  
Points



BRONZE PRIORITY



SILVER PRIORITY

### A. Why is this action important?

Alternative fuel vehicles, such as those that run on electricity or compressed natural gas, can help increase energy security, improve fuel economy, lower fuel costs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as pollutants that cause smog and acid rain. Charging stations are being installed at a wide variety of locations across New York State. In communities large and small, urban and rural, there are sites well-suited to hosting charging/fueling stations for clean vehicles.

### B. How to implement this action

Installing electric-vehicle (EV) or compressed natural gas vehicle (CNGV) infrastructure takes careful planning and coordination. The first steps in supporting alternative fuel transportation infrastructure are to assess the local and regional demand for, and the feasibility of, alternative fueling stations and to evaluate the most appropriate fuel type for the area.

Based on a feasibility study conducted for the City of Albany, NY, there are several initial steps that local governments should take to plan for alternative fuel vehicles:

1. Assess current opportunities to support EV or CNGV infrastructure in the community and throughout the region.
2. Identify criteria for strategic placement of charging/fueling infrastructure.
3. Identify policies and regulations for EV- or CNGV-friendly zoning, infrastructure, and technology.
4. Conduct a thorough review of best practices and their applicability to local conditions.
5. Determine recommendations for optimal locations for siting charging/fueling stations.
6. Develop recommendations on incorporating EVs or CNGVs into the local government fleet.

Local governments should consult with their NYSERDA Clean Energy Coordinator to receive guidance on EV and CNGV infrastructure. Because this action is part of the [NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities program](#), these regional coordinators can provide customized technical assistance to local governments; they can be reached at [cec@nyserda.ny.gov](mailto:cec@nyserda.ny.gov).

Local governments should investigate funding options to support their alternative fuel vehicle planning efforts. Local governments throughout New York State have received funding to install EV charging stations from the US Department of Energy and from state agencies such as the Department of Environmental Conservation, NYSERDA, and the Department of Transportation. See links in Section G for more information.

All infrastructure installations must adhere to the National Electrical Code and State Building Code.

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

This Climate Smart Communities (CSC) certification action can take several years to implement, especially if a full feasibility study is conducted for the local government. The project costs can vary widely depending on whether a consultant is secured, the depth of the study, funding available to support the capital costs of the charging stations, and staff time needed to support this effort. Prior to purchasing equipment, local governments should investigate whether grants are available to offset the costs of installation. DEC has [Municipal Zero-emission Vehicle \(ZEV\) Rebate program](#) that provides rebates to municipalities for costs associated with the installation of eligible ZEV infrastructure that supports public use of



clean vehicles. Program details are available on the program website.

#### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

Any local government can implement this action. The planning department, planning board, or the department of public works are typically responsible.

#### E. How to obtain points for this action

Points are earned for installations completed by a local government of one or more electric vehicle charging stations or compressed natural gas fueling stations. **The charging/fueling station(s) must be owned or leased by the municipality or municipal parking authority.** The use of external funding is permitted.

An electric vehicle charging station must consist of two or more Level 2 charging ports, or one or more direct current (DC) Fast Charge ports. Equipment may be installed any time prior to the application date, but must be active at the time of submittal.

	POSSIBLE POINTS
Install 1 EV charging station or CNGV fueling station	4
Install 2 EV charging stations or CNGV fueling stations	6
Install 3 EV charging stations or CNGV fueling stations	8
Install 4 EV charging stations or CNGV fueling stations	10
Install 5 EV charging stations or CNGV fueling stations	12
Install 6 EV charging stations or CNGV fueling stations	14
Install 7 or more EV charging stations or CNGV fueling stations	16
Make 1 or more EV charging ports or CNGV fueling pumps at any of the stations installed under this action available for public use	2

**NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities:** Local governments that have completed the Clean Energy Communities program [Clean Fleets High Impact Action](#) by installing a CNG fueling station or EV charging station will satisfy the requirements for at least four of the points available under this Climate Smart Communities action, so long as the infrastructure is currently active at the time of submittal for Climate Smart Communities certification. (Those that have completed the Clean Energy Communities Clean Fleets action by deploying at least one alternative fuel vehicle will satisfy the requirements for at least two of the points available under [PE3 Action: Advanced Vehicles](#), so long as the vehicle is currently active.)

#### F. What to submit

Submit documentation to demonstrate the implementation of at least one EV charging station or CNGV fueling station. Such documentation should include when the equipment was installed and proof that the station is still active.

For applicants seeking the two points for making the charging/fueling station available to the public, submit information describing how and when the station is available for public use.

Local governments that have satisfied the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Clean Fleets High Impact Action may fulfill the above submittal requirements by providing documentation from NYSERDA confirming satisfaction, as well as a completed Clean Fleets Certification Form, available in the [Clean Fleets Toolkit](#). This form should be updated to include equipment information and activity status at the time of submittal for Climate Smart Communities (CSC) certification.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

#### **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

- [NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Clean Fleets Toolkit](#)
- [DEC Municipal Zero-emission Vehicle & Infrastructure Rebate Program](#)
- [City of Albany, NY, Electric Vehicle Feasibility Study](#)
- [City of Albany, NY, Electric-Vehicle Readiness Checklist](#)
- [Transportation and Climate Initiative of the Northeast, Electric Vehicle Documents](#)
- [NYSERDA Electric Vehicle Programs](#)
- [US Department of Energy, Alternative Fuels Data Center](#)

#### **H. Recertification requirements**

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements. However, when applying for recertification, applicants must demonstrate that the stations are still in operation.

## 6.12 Implement Strategies That Increase Public Transit Ridership and Alternative Transport Modes

1 – 10  
Points

**Please note: This action is only eligible for points as part of applications submitted before January 10, 2020.** It is an older “version 2” action from the 2014 certification manual. The portal website, launched in 2018, replaced this manual. After January 10, 2020, this action will be retired or replaced with an updated “version 3” edition of the action.

### A. Why is this action important?

By increasing ridership, a community can maximize the benefits of public transportation, including reduced greenhouse gas emissions from single-occupancy vehicles, lower gasoline consumption, reduced congestion, enhancement of personal mobility (especially those without a vehicle), and it provides jobs and other economic opportunities. The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program encourages local governments to develop creative strategies to increase the use of public transportation by residents and visitors.

### B. How to implement this action

There are a number of ways that local governments can implement strategies to increase the use of public transportation. Each of the strategies strives to reduce some of the barriers to transit ridership such as cost of public transit, distance a passenger needs to travel to access transit, shelter at the transit stop, access to bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and parking if the passenger is driving to a central spot to take transit into an urban area. Local governments should start this process by investigating the needs of the community. Who currently takes public transit? What types of public transportation is offered? Where are the routes? Are they serving the existing demand and need for public transportation? After determining the need, local governments can use some of the following strategies to increase ridership:

- Develop shuttle system to trains
- Improve walkways, sidewalks and/or bikeways to trains and buses
- Ensure adequate bike and car parking near bus stops
- Encourage car sharing
- Provide incentives directly to riders or work with local employers to provide incentives to employees for using public transit
- Coordinate with a regional transit agency or neighboring community to expand access to public transit within the region

Although some of these strategies require capital investment, the local government should investigate which options will fit its needs and result in increased ridership. One size does not fit all – local governments should choose the strategies that fit the needs of their population. CSCs are encouraged to contact the [New York State Department of State Division of Local Services](#) for training, technical assistance and legal guidance on policies to promote transit ridership and use of alternative transportation and the [New York State Department of Transportation \(DOT\)](#) for guidance regarding transportation projects.

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

Many of the strategies used to increase transit ridership require staff time to plan and capital investment to fund them; for example, constructing sidewalks and bus shelters and installing bike racks. Regional planning agencies and metropolitan planning organizations are great resources for data and conducting needs assessments. They may also be able to assist with regional coordination between neighboring communities. The timeframe to implement this action can be anywhere from six months to several years, depending on the costs and coordination required to implement specific strategies.

#### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

Any local government can implement this action. However the scale of this action will vary based on the population and location of the community. Departments of public works, transit agencies (where applicable), planning departments, and planning boards are typically responsible for this action.

#### E. How to obtain points for this action

A local government can implement any or all of the following strategies to achieve points for this action:

	POSSIBLE POINTS
Develop shuttle system to trains	3
Improve walkways, sidewalks and/or bikeways to trains and buses	2
Ensure adequate bike and car parking near bus stops	1
Encourage or promote a car-sharing program	1
Provide transit incentives directly to riders or through local employers	1
Coordinate with a regional transit agency or neighboring community to expand access to public transit within the region	1

#### F. What to submit

Local governments must indicate which strategies for which they are seeking points and submit documentation for each strategy that has been implemented. Documentation should include shuttle website and schedules, funding source and photographs of upgraded sidewalks or bikeways, funding source and photographs of bike and car parking near bus stops, specific incentives provided to riders, incentives provided to employees and the employer(s) that offer those incentives, tiered rate structure for transit fares, and any partnerships with regional transit agencies or neighboring communities. These strategies must be actively implemented at the time of submission.

**Please note: This action is only eligible for points as part of applications submitted before January 10, 2020.** It is an older “version 2” action from the 2014 certification manual. The portal website, launched in 2018, replaced this manual. After January 10, 2020, this action will be retired or replaced with an updated “version 3” edition of the action.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

#### G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- [DOT, Transportation Alternatives Program](#)
- [DOT, Public Transportation](#)
- [Huntington, NY, Resident Hybrid/Alternative Fuel Vehicle Parking Fee Waiver](#)
- [Victoria Policy Institute, Transportation Demand Management Encyclopedia, Public Transit Improvements](#)
- [CarSharing.net](#)

#### H. Recertification requirements

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.



## 6.13 Implement a Safe Routes to School Program

3 Points

**Please note: This action is only eligible for points as part of applications submitted before January 10, 2020.** It is an older “version 2” action from the 2014 certification manual. The portal website, launched in 2018, replaced this manual. After January 10, 2020, this action will be retired or replaced with an updated “version 3” edition of the action.

### A. Why is this action important?

Safe Routes to School programs work to encourage students to walk and bike to school through infrastructure upgrades and education. Implementing this action decreases congestion around schools, improves air quality, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and increases the health and well-being of our children. The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program encourages local governments to support the development of Safe Routes to School programs in their communities.

### B. How to implement this action

The National Center for Safe Routes to School recommends the following steps to implementing a Safe Routes to School program:

1. Bring together the right people.
2. Hold a kick off meeting and set a vision.
3. Gather information and identify issues.
4. Identify solutions.
5. Make a plan.
6. Implement the plan and get people moving.
7. Evaluate, adjust and keep moving.

Local governments are encouraged to contact the [New York State Department of State Division of Local Services](#) for training, technical assistance and legal guidance on Safe Route to School programs and the [New York State Department of Transportation \(DOT\)](#) for guidance regarding transportation projects.

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

Safe Routes to School programs require funding and significant staff time to implement. Safe Routes to School funds may be available through the DOT’s Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

Any local government/school district can implement this action. The school department, with assistance from the planning department, planning board, and department of public works, is usually responsible for implementation.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

To obtain points for this action, a local government/school district must make a commitment to, and implement, a Safe Routes to School program for one or more of the schools in the community.

### F. What to submit

Local governments should submit a website and other documents (including education materials) that outline the details associated with the program, including routes and safety features for students, stakeholders involved, funding source, any events and activities included in the program, any metrics associated with successful implementation of the program. The program must be currently active.

**Please note: This action is only eligible for points as part of applications submitted before January 10, 2020.** It is an older “version 2” action from the 2014 certification manual. The portal website, launched in 2018, replaced this manual. After January 10, 2020, this action will be retired or replaced with an updated “version 3” edition of the action.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

#### **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

- [DOT, Safe Routes to School](#)
- [DOT, Transportation Alternatives Program](#)
- [National Center for Safe Routes to School](#)

#### **H. Recertification requirements**

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.



## 6.15 Adopt and Enforce an Anti-idling Ordinance

1 Points

3 Points

**Please note: This action is only eligible for points as part of applications submitted before January 10, 2020.** It is an older “version 2” action from the 2014 certification manual. The portal website, launched in 2018, replaced this manual. After January 10, 2020, this action will be retired or replaced with an updated “version 3” edition of the action.

### A. Why is this action important?

Engine idling is a common problem around schools, rest stops and retail locations. In addition to wasting fuel and polluting the local environment, it contributes to the transportation sector’s portion of greenhouse gas emissions. The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program encourages local governments to adopt communitywide anti-idling policies that require drivers to shut off their engines when not in motion.

### B. How to implement this action

Local governments have the authority to restrict idling within their borders and to set more stringent standards than state and federal governments. Local governments can establish anti-idling policies governing local government vehicles or laws governing all vehicles, and can institute anti-idling programs that include public education and law enforcement. Enforcement and public awareness are crucial to the success of anti-idling laws. The Center for Clean Air Policy has identified methods to encourage compliance with anti-idling laws through public outreach and enforcement:

- Public education – including signage and literature that inform the public about the law and about the environmental damage, waste and health effect of emissions caused by idling
- Penalties – such as fines, for idling infractions
- Enforcement – especially targeted in areas or locations where idling is common<sup>1</sup>

As with any change in local laws and policies, please consult with the local government attorney for guidance on drafting and enacting the new legislation or policy.

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

Anti-idling policies can be implemented within a year with local government staff time and resources. Staff time is needed to coordinate the language of the policy, determine the enforcement mechanisms, and launch a public outreach and education campaign. Funding may be available through the state and U.S. EPA to support signage and education materials, but there are a number of resources available that local governments can tailor for their own needs. For anti-idling policies that are actively enforced and involve fines, the revenue from the fines could cover the costs of the enforcement activities.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

Any local government can implement an anti-idling ordinance. The planning department, planning board, health department, and department of public works are typically responsible for this action.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

Draft, enact, and enforce an anti-idling ordinance and launch a public education campaign.



	POSSIBLE POINTS
Adopt an anti-idling ordinance	1
Enforce anti-idling ordinance	2

To be eligible for points for this action, local governments are not required to incorporate these policies into their zoning or comprehensive plan; however, they are encouraged to do so to reduce the risk of legal challenges.

#### F. What to submit

To earn points for this action, a local government must submit the anti-idling ordinance that was passed, photographs of the signage, electronic copies of the education materials or other outreach conducted on the ordinance. To receive full points, local governments must also demonstrate how the ordinance is actively being enforced. The law may have been passed at any time to be eligible for points.

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#### G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- [Westchester County, NY, Anti-Idling Ordinance](#)
- [State of New York Heavy Duty Vehicle Idling Laws](#)
- [Compilation of State, County, and Local Anti-Idling Regulations](#)

#### H. Recertification requirements

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.

- 
1. [NYS Department of Environmental Conservation](#) ↵



## PE6 Action: Natural Resources Inventory

8 Points

10 Points



BRONZE PRIORITY



SILVER PRIORITY

### A. Why is this action important?

A natural resources inventory (NRI) is a document that inventories the natural resources of an area, both physical (e.g., geology) and biological (e.g., forests), and provides a foundation for municipal land-use and conservation planning. Communities can use their NRIs to identify priorities and determine appropriate strategies for protecting important natural features and the vital services they provide. A complete and up-to-date inventory can be helpful for communities updating municipal plans, developing ordinances or overlay zones, and reviewing development projects, as well as a tool for county or regional planning and project assessment. Maintaining the integrity and ecological health of natural areas is a key part of preventing the release of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that is associated with development. In addition, certain natural, undeveloped areas serve as a buffer against some types of extreme weather that are increasing with climate change; for example, wetlands often have the capacity to absorb floodwaters and, as a result, they help prevent flood damage to infrastructure in developed areas.

### B. How to implement this action

Developing an NRI can be part of an existing effort, such as the development of a comprehensive or open space plan, or it can be a standalone project. Project leaders should work with the public and stakeholders to collect input and feedback.

When implementing this action, local governments should closely follow the process and report components described in the DEC's comprehensive guide: [Creating a Natural Resources Inventory: A Guide for Communities in the Hudson River Estuary Watershed](#). This guide focuses on the Hudson River watershed but the process it describes is applicable to any region. Although the guide includes information on doing on detailed inventory studies, it is not necessary to complete a highly detailed inventory in order to be eligible for points under this Climate Smart Communities (CSC) action, although communities are encouraged to do so. It is required, however, that the NRI cover the entire community. In other words, a local government cannot earn points for an NRI that, for example, only covers one watershed within the physical boundaries of its community. Applicants are encouraged to collaborate with neighboring communities to develop NRIs that cross political boundaries and that are consistent with the overlapping and interconnected characteristics of most natural resources. For collaborative, regional NRIs, each local government that was involved is eligible for CSC points, as long as each applicant demonstrates that it had a substantial role in creating the NRI.

At minimum, for CSC points, the NRI report should include a descriptive summary of each map that is created as part of the NRI process. The narrative should describe each of the resources shown, discuss relevant aspects of resource distribution throughout the study area, draw attention to significant areas of resource concentration or concern, and discuss any major or emerging threats to the resource. The NRI report must also include a short summary of the process that was used to create the inventory (e.g., information on stakeholder outreach and public input, how information was obtained, etc.); this information should show that the process was consistent with the DEC guide. In addition, the NRI report must have been completed within 10 years of the application date to be eligible for CSC points.

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

It should take 12-18 months to develop a basic NRI that pulls together key information. Hiring a consultant to develop maps and text for a basic natural resources inventory typically costs under \$25,000, though it depends on the scope of the NRI. Local governments that want to collect new information to fill data gaps should expect to pay more. A geographic information system (GIS) is vital to creating a good inventory; as a result, some local governments may need to factor in the cost of a GIS as well.

#### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

Any local government can create an NRI. However, due to the overlapping and interconnected nature of many natural resources, local governments may wish to develop the inventory at a regional or county level so as to leverage each other's efforts. A local government committee, such as a conservation advisory council would typically lead the development of the inventory. It may be supported by planning staff or, more typically, a consultant.

#### E. How to obtain points for this action

Local governments can earn eight points for this action by completing an NRI that covers the entire community. The inventory process and report content must be substantially consistent with those described by the DEC publication, [Creating a Natural Resources Inventory: A Guide for Communities in the Hudson River Estuary Watershed](#). An additional two points may be earned for adoption of the NRI through a local law, substantially similar to the model local law in [Appendix G](#) of the guide.

	POSSIBLE POINTS
Create a natural resources inventory for the entire community	8
Adopt the natural resources inventory through a local law	2

#### F. What to submit

Submit a copy of a natural resources inventory (NRI) report completed within the last 10 years that covers the entire community and meets the minimum requirements described above. In addition, provide a description of the process followed for the development of the NRI, if the process is not described in the report. For full points, also submit a clerk-certified copy of the local law adopting the inventory, if applicable.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

#### G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- [Westchester County, NY, Natural Resource Inventory Maps](#)
- [Town of Rosendale, NY, Natural Resource Inventory](#)
- [DEC Creating a Natural Resources Inventory](#)

#### H. Recertification requirements

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.

## 6.18 Develop a Local Forestry or Tree Planting Project or Program

1 – 10  
Points

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### A. Why is this action important?

Preserving the tree canopy in our cities, towns, and communities provides a number of environmental and economic benefits in our communities, including reducing energy use, removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, improving air quality, reducing stormwater runoff and creating a sense of place in urban and suburban areas. The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program encourages local governments to play a major role in planting and protecting trees in their communities.

### B. How to implement this action

A local forestry program can take a number of forms, but should include development of a baseline assessment to focus on the most strategic measures to maintain or expand the local forest and implementation of strategies that work to protect the urban or rural forest. The following strategies can be implemented to build a local forestry or tree planting program:

- Conduct a tree canopy inventory
- Map forested lands
- Enact a tree preservation ordinance
- Implement a large-scale tree planting project
- Participate in one of the State's forest stewardship programs
- Participate in Tree City USA

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

Creating an urban forestry program or participating in a forest stewardship program will require staff time or coordination with local government staff to collect baseline data and develop maps of the existing tree canopy. If the local government would like to enact a tree preservation ordinance, a local government attorney should be consulted. Access to GIS or the U.S. Forest Service's iTree Program is important for effective planning.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

This action is relevant to any local government. The department or staff members responsible for parks, recreation, public works, or planning are typically responsible for these types of actions. Municipal committees, such as CSC task force, conservation advisory councils or environmental conservation committees may also be involved.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

Implement one or more of the following strategies to achieve points for this action:

POSSIBLE POINTS

Conduct a tree canopy inventory	3
Enact a tree preservation ordinance	2
Implement a large-scale tree planting project	2
Participate in one of the State's forest stewardship programs	2
Participate in Tree City USA	1

To be eligible for points for this action, local governments are not required to incorporate these policies into their zoning or comprehensive plan; however, they are encouraged to do so to reduce the risk of legal challenges.

#### F. What to submit

To achieve points for this action, please submit the completed tree canopy inventory, adopted tree preservation ordinance, documentation of a large-scale planting project, documentation of participation in the State’s forest stewardship programs, and/or the adopted and state-approved forest management plan. The tree preservation ordinance may have been completed any time prior to the application date, but the other strategies must have been completed within 15 years of the application date.

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#### G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- [A Municipal Official’s Guide to Forestry in New York State](#)
- [U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Urban and Community Forestry](#)
- [U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, iTree Tool for Assessing and Mapping Community Forests](#)
- [NYS DEC Urban and Community Forestry](#)
- [Tree City USA](#)

#### H. Recertification requirements

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.



## 6.19 Preserve Natural Areas Through Zoning or Other Regulations

2 Points

4 Points

6 Points

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### A. Why is this action important?

Natural areas (including forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, floodplains, and coastal shorelines) play an essential role in communities. They provide clean air and water, stormwater regulation, food and forestry products, scenic areas, outdoor recreation opportunities, and protect important ecological functions. In addition, natural areas often represent a chunk of stored carbon that, if developed, would enter the atmosphere and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Functioning ecosystems also sequester carbon and can help to mitigate a community’s greenhouse gas emissions. For these reasons, the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program encourages local governments to use their land-use authority to preserve natural areas.

### B. How to implement this action

There are several techniques that can be used to focus development into areas best suited for development and preserve open space through local zoning or regulations:

- **Conservation or cluster development zoning** – allows for flexible lot sizes and calls for an analysis of the land’s conservation value to determine the area most suitable for building and for conservation.
- **Overlay zoning** – applies a common set of standards to a designated area that may cross other conventional zoning districts. This allows local governments to protect several larger areas that may encompass several underlying zoning districts.
- **Performance standard zoning** – establishes zones which are based on an allowable environmental impact to the resources of an area opposed to a specific allowable use.
- **Incentive zoning** - provides for a trading agreement between a developer and a local government. In return for maximizing open space a developer is given a bonus, such as increased density on the site.
- **Special use permits** - outlined in the zoning ordinance, the jurisdiction establishes zones that require a special permit to develop to allow for more discretionary review of individual proposals.
- **Subdivision regulations** – govern the manner by which land is divided into smaller parcels. They can include provisions that help to accomplish natural area conservation, such as explicitly protecting wetlands, steep slopes, or floodplains.
- **Site plan review** – may be enacted by separate local law and involves a review of the design for a proposed development on a particular parcel of land. It ensures that the site design meets established criteria, which may include natural resource considerations.
- **Critical Environmental Area (CEA) designation** – is an opportunity available under SEQRA for the protection of natural areas. Local governments may establish CEAs for specific geographic areas within the community containing sensitive or unique features that require protection. Under SEQRA, the potential impact of a Type 1 or unlisted action on the CEA must be evaluated in the determination of significance, ensuring that the resource is specifically addressed during review.

A local government must determine which of these techniques works best for its specific situation. Using a natural resources inventory or other planning effort is highly recommended to determine where zoning ordinances or other regulations may need to be applied. Some local governments may also choose to address these issues as part of the development of a local waterfront revitalization plan. Whichever strategies the local government chooses, it is advised to

seek the counsel of the local government attorney. In addition, local governments should present information, using geospatial software, to local planning boards and to the public to help them visualize the need to conserve existing natural areas and to increase open space where important.

### C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

This action can be implemented with assistance from a professional planner on staff. For many communities, changes in zoning ordinances and other regulations can take up to a year to conduct background research, review existing ordinance language, draft new language, consult with a local government attorney and pass new or revised legislation. Consultants and Cooperative Extensions are very helpful resources in crafting the language and determining the most appropriate policy changes to accomplish local goals.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

This action is relevant to any local government. The planning department or planning board and local government attorney are the primary stakeholders responsible for this action. Municipal committees, such as CSC task force, conservation advisory councils or environmental conservation committees may also be involved.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

To obtain points for this action, the local government must update the local zoning ordinance or appropriate regulations to protect natural areas.

	POSSIBLE POINTS
Develop and implement a local zoning ordinance that helps to conserve natural areas	4
Base local ordinance on strategic conservation of high value areas identified in a natural resource inventory	2

### F. What to submit

Local governments should submit the zoning amendment, ordinance, or other policy that preserves open space. The updated zoning or policy may have been passed at any time prior to the application date.

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### G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- [DEC, 2013 Open Space Conservation Plan Revision:](#)
- [National Lands Trust, Preserving Open Space](#)
- [DEC, Conserving Natural Areas and Wildlife in Your Community](#)
- [DEC, Open Space Protection: Putting Local Plans Into Action](#)

### H. Recertification requirements

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.