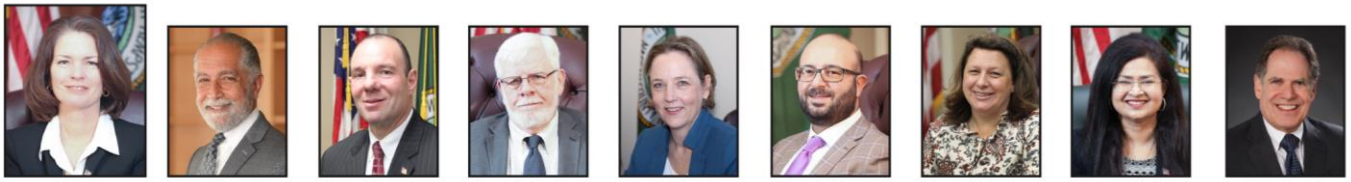
The Town of North Hempstead Climate Smart Communities Education and Engagement Plan

August 23, 2022

The Town of North Hempstead
Climate Smart Communities Leadership Team



Town Supervisor **Jennifer DeSena** | Council Member, District 1 **Robert J. Troiano** | Council Member, District 2 **Peter Zuckerman** | Council Member, District 3 **Dennis J. Walsh** | Council Member, District 4 **Veronica Lurvey** | Council Member, District 5 **David A. Adhami** | Council Member, District 6 **Mariann Dalimonte** | Town Clerk **Ragini Srivastava** | Receiver of Taxes **Charles Berman**

TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

Elected Officials:

Jennifer DeSena, Supervisor
Mariann Dalimonte, Council Member
Veronica Lurvey, Council Member

Town Staff and Consultants:

Meagan Fastuca - Environmental Specialist; Planning and Environmental Protection
Michael Levine - Commissioner of Planning and Environmental Protection
Wes Sternberg - Planner; Planning and Environmental Protection
Victor Thomas - Department of Public Works
Eileen Kraneberg - Executive Assistant to the Parks Commissioner
Joseph Canzoneri Jr. - Plans Examiner, Building Department
Mitch Pitnick - Town Board Department
Department of Solid Waste Management Staff
Mindy Germain - Consultant for CSC, Eco Leap, LLC
Sarah Oral-PE - LEED AP BD +C, Civil Engineering Director Cameron Engineering

CSC Task Force Members:

Harriet Becker
Jean Celender
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Patrick Farrell
Jael Ferguson
Carol Frank
Paula Groothuis
Patricia Katz
Rosemary Mascali

PURPOSE

The primary objective of the Town's Climate Action Planning (CAP) is to create an engaging, inclusive, community–wide process that identifies and prioritizes goals, strategies, and initiatives that will conserve energy and reduce GHG emissions both from Town operations and throughout the community.

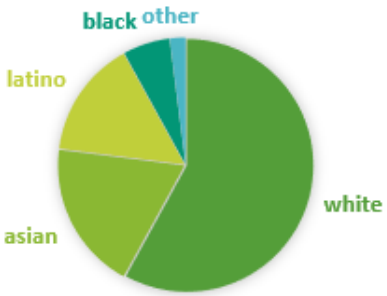
The purpose of the Education and Engagement Plan, within the broader CAP, is to build a common understanding among the public about climate change science, share how we are seeing impacts locally, build widespread ownership of solutions and create a common vision of our future.

TARGET AUDIENCE

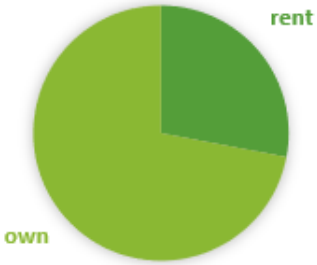
The Town of North Hempstead is governed by a seven-member Town Board, which includes a Supervisor and six councilmembers. The Town has a population of over 237,000 constituents. This public engagement plan is intended to reach the residents and businesses within the Town. As shown in the 2020 census, the population of North Hempstead is diverse and educated with more than one third of households speaking two or more languages and almost all owning a computer. The plan engages a broad group of community stakeholders to ensure outreach penetrates across age, socioeconomics, ethnicity, race, and “at risk” communities.

NORTH HEMPSTEAD 2020 CENSUS DATA AT A GLANCE:

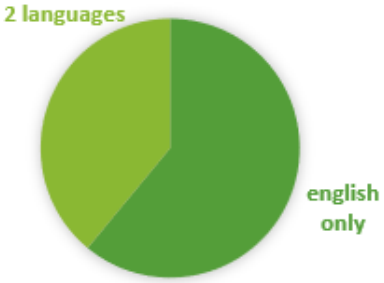
RACE



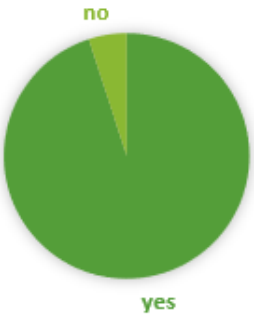
RENT OR OWN



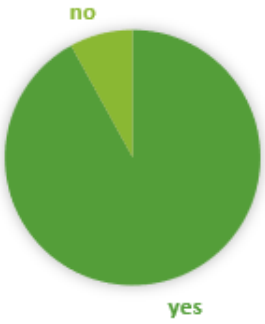
LANGUAGE AT HOME



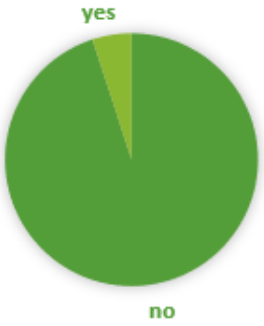
OWN A COMPUTER



HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA



AT POVERTY LEVEL

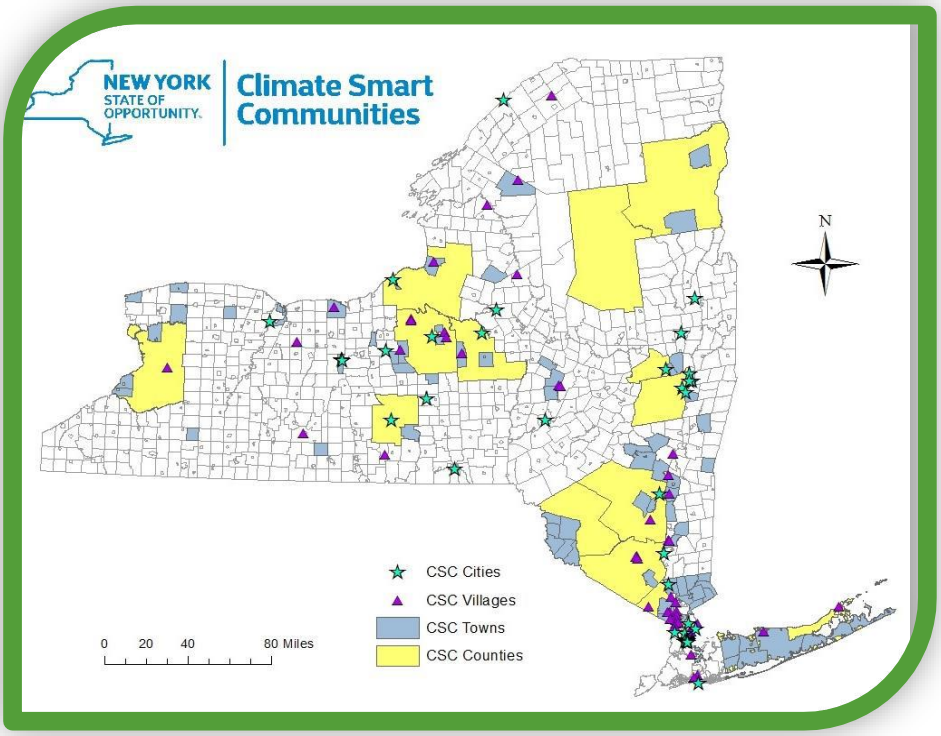


Background and Objectives of Climate Smart Communities

Climate Smart Communities (CSC) is a New York State program that supports local governments in leading their communities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to the effects of climate change, and thrive in a green economy. The goal of CSC is to provide municipalities with ways to locally reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and advance energy saving measures as well as other sustainability initiatives through the development of a Climate Action Plan. This will ultimately help the Town of North Hempstead reduce its impact, adapt, and thrive with the changing climate.

In the spirit of North Hempstead's steadfast commitment to protect the environment, create resilient communities, and ensure equitable and fair climate solutions for its residents, the Town Board took the CSC pledge and adopted a resolution to appoint a CSC task force, consisting of nine local environmentally minded residents.

This public education and engagement plan is designed to ensure that the community is engaged in the task force's climate action work to realize a sustainable and resilient future for The Town of North Hempstead.



CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Public education, outreach, and engagement are critical to preparing communities for the effects of climate change and to enlist the public in taking steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Without widespread public awareness of what is at stake, it is impossible to make meaningful change on this issue.

As part of our climate education and engagement plan, the Town of North Hempstead will develop and implement a program focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Our strategy will include:

- a benchmark survey of the Town to evaluate issues, perceptions, and beliefs around climate change among residents
- an educational and interactive forum aimed at facilitating a dialogue about climate change
- virtual and live workshops focused on sustainable transportation and drinking water resiliency
- compilation of a comprehensive list of stakeholders
- a climate action website
- a climate action social media plan

This document serves as a detailed plan for this strategy.

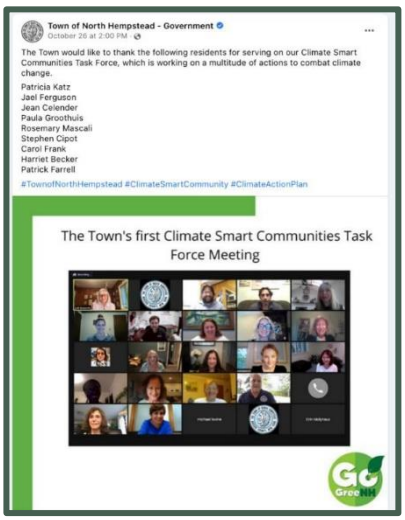
CLIMATE WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

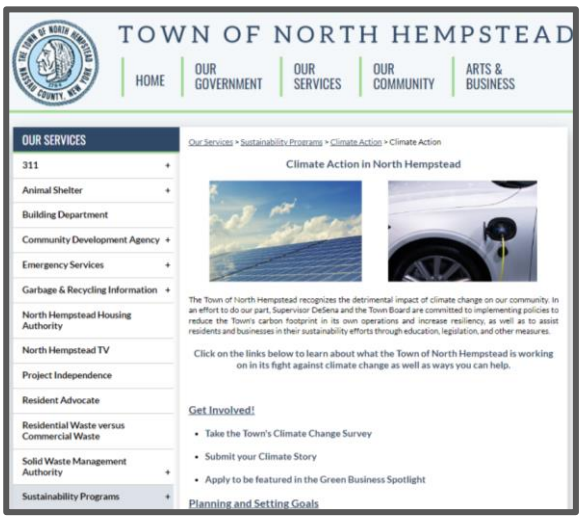
The Town of North Hempstead's Facebook page and website are important tools for public education and outreach regarding sustainability actions. The Town will use these pages to educate residents on sustainability initiatives tied to the Climate Action Plan under a new Go GreeNH umbrella.

Mission: To engage and inspire residents, businesses, and municipalities, throughout the Town of North Hempstead, to participate in actions that will foster ecological balance, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and help North Hempstead adapt to a changing climate, ensuring a healthy, resilient community now and in the future.

Go GreeNH social media and website content will include:

- Information about the basics of climate change
- A copy of our Climate Action Plan
- Dissemination of our climate survey
- The Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Promotion of public workshops and events to help residents mitigate and adapt to a changing climate
- Public tools, resources, and incentives to help residents mitigate and adapt to a changing climate
- A variety of opportunities to get involved
- Opportunities to ask questions
- A celebration of good work happening across the Town





Images from the Town's Facebook page and climate action website

IDENTIFYING VULNERABILITIES, CHALLENGES & PRIORITIES

The first step to scaling up our Climate Smart Community initiative is for the members of the community to participate in identifying and discussing climate threats, challenges, and priorities. This will assist in developing an outreach plan that targets the community's concerns and will be most effective at tackling locally specific climate issues. We aim to learn:

- How individuals FEEL about climate change
- What people believe is the greatest obstacle to solving climate change
- How aware they are about the Town's current efforts to combat climate change
- How frequently do they already engage in sustainable practices
- How worried they are about climate change
- Have they ever felt unsafe from climate-related natural disasters
- Which Town programs they are most interested in

To get as much feedback from as many diverse voices as possible in the community, it will be important to advertise this survey across many platforms (press releases, social media, emailing or mailing a letter to constituents, in-person community events). We will ensure that any materials are accessible for a wide array of reading levels and include the range of languages relevant to our community.

We plan to work with our stakeholders to maximize our reach and make this survey as statistically significant as possible. When the public feels their voices are heard, they will trust the process, support it, and feel empowered to be involved in future local climate action.

An important part of this process will be following up with community members with survey results. Not only will this inform and further engage, but it will also serve as a benchmark to measure progress in the future.

EDUCATE COMMUNITY & FACILITATE DIALOGUE

CLIMATE STORIES PROJECT

An Educational and Artistic Forum for Sharing Personal Stories about Climate Change

It is important to develop outreach activities that describe the causes and effects of climate change in the community and how residents can work together to build a better future, in partnership with the Town. To that end, the “Climate Stories Workshop” took place on January 26, 2022, on Zoom. This was an educational and artistic forum for explaining climate change and sharing personal stories to build an inclusive and effective movement to confront the climate crisis. Stories will be collected and shared with the entire community as part of this education plan.

The Climate Stories Workshop first taught individuals the basics on climate change and its impacts. This allows conversations about personal impacts, ranging from destruction due to natural disasters to observed changes in seasonal weather patterns. The program was developed by Dr. Jason Davis, a musician and environmental educator. Participants came away with a deeper engagement with climate change as a vital human issue and can better understand their own relationship to the changing climate in North Hempstead.

Members of the Global Climate Stories Network

EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

The **Transportation Innovation Series** provided education to help our Town reduce greenhouse gases from vehicles, which represent 31% of overall emissions on Long Island. This event took place over multiple dates and informed residents of the impact of transportation on the environment and best practices for sustainable transportation. We partnered with the US Green Building Council of Long Island, Transit Solutions, Drive Electric Long Island, Let's Move Long Island, and local EV dealerships to roll out this series of public engagement events. Workshops included:

- **Don't Drive (yourself crazy)- Wednesday, February 16, 2022 @ 7PM (virtual)**
  - Detailed extensive green mobility options in the Town, including local train, bus, shuttles, paratransit, and more through a fun game of virtual Bingo. Winners received a $50 gift card to a local restaurant of choice.
    Facilitated by: Transit Solutions

- **Walk or Bike North Hempstead!- Wednesday, March 23, 2022 @ 7PM (virtual)**
  - Walking and biking can provide many health, environmental, social, and economic benefits. Attendees discovered North Hempstead's shop and stroll scenes, walking and hiking trails, and biking opportunities.
    Facilitated by: Let's Move LI

- **Electric Vehicles 101- Tuesday April 12, 2022 @ 2PM, Clinton G. Martin Park, New Hyde Park**
  - Attendees learned the basics about electric vehicles. Then they got to see many vehicles in person and heard from dealerships and EV owners during an EV Show and Tell.
    Facilitated by: Drive Electric LI

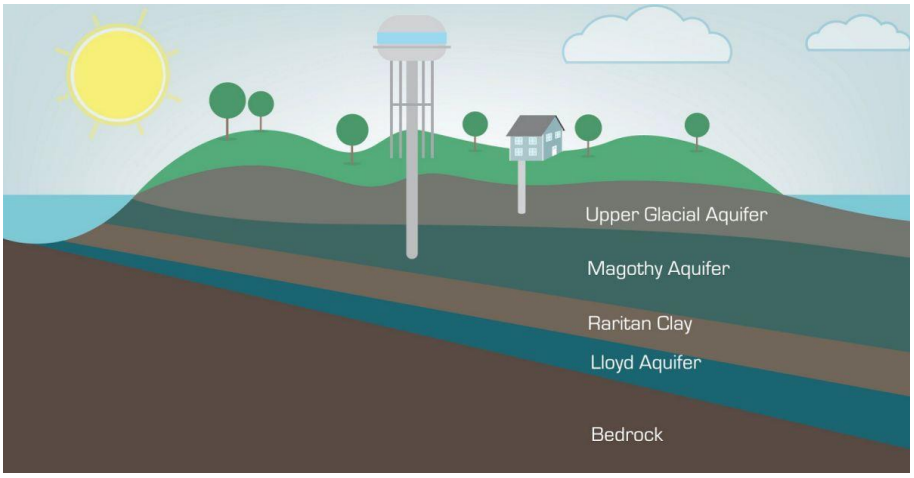
EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

The **Water Protection and Conservation Event "Under Our Feet: The Resiliency of Our Drinking Water"** called for a shift in the "water culture" of our community. Water resource management and protection are of the utmost importance in our region since residents rely upon groundwater as their sole source of drinking water. Threats to this supply include contaminants, saltwater intrusion via sea level rise, increased demand, and wastewater management. This event aimed to raise the awareness of these realities so that we can mitigate threats and adapt to our new normal. For this program, we engaged the following panelists:

- Mr. Sam Adler, 13 Years Old, ToNH Middle School Student dedicated to water conservation in his community
- Dr. Sarah J. Meyland, Associate Professor of Environmental Technology and Sustainability at NYIT and Founder of Water for Long Island
- Mindy Germain, Commissioner of Port Washington Water District providing a local water district perspective
- Meagan Fastuca, ToNH Environmental Specialist focused on sustainability initiatives

We educated community members that water is an irreplaceable resource and focused on tools and actions residents can take to conserve, leading into peak season.
Key takeaways:

- We live over our drinking water, our decisions trickle down.
- With a changing climate and sea level rise, conservation is a must to avoid saltwater contamination.
- How residents can change their behavior to conserve water.
- My decisions matter.
- By conserving water, I am also reducing waste and conserving energy.



Depiction of Long Island's aquifer

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

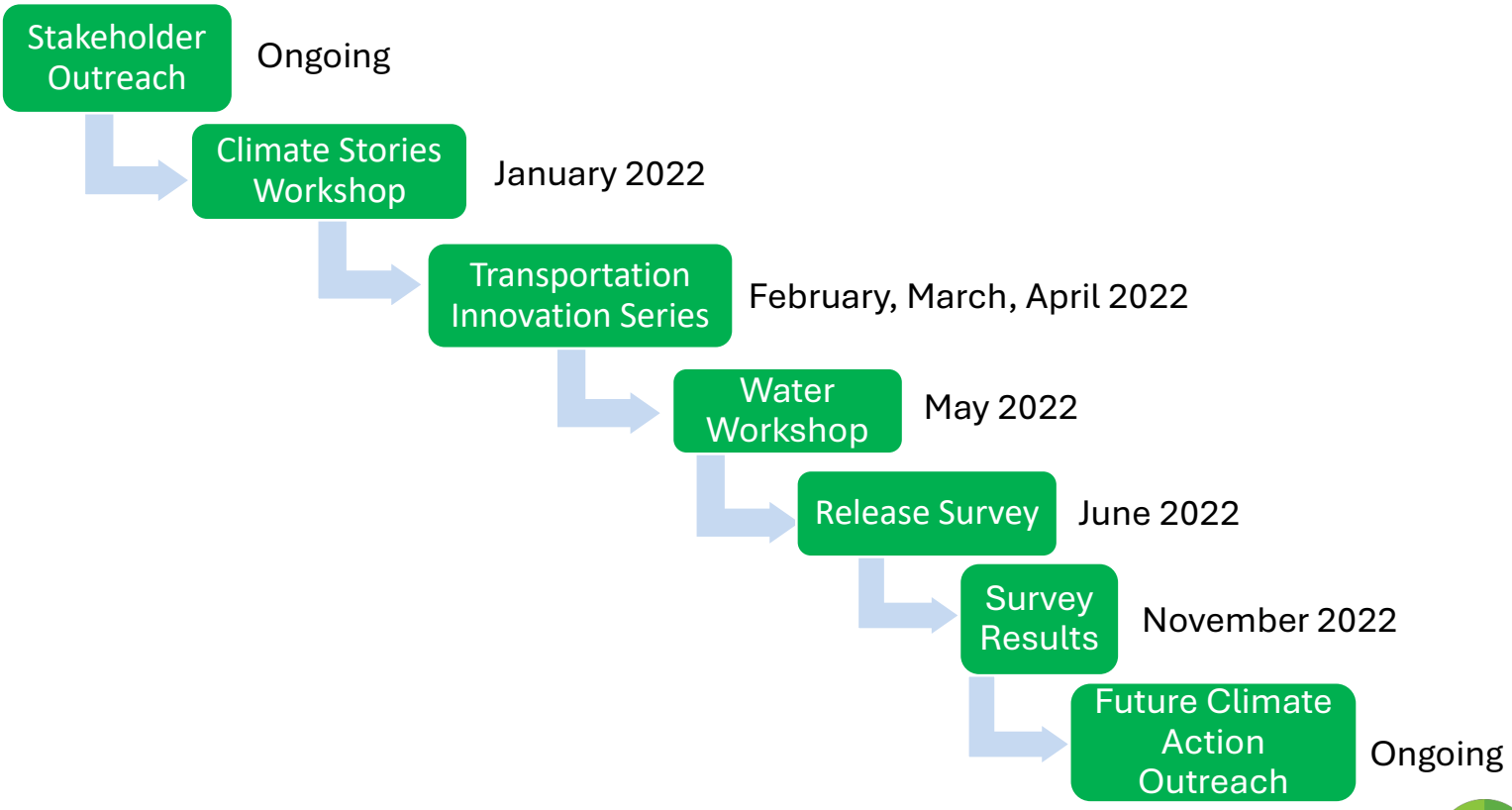
The strategies, principles, and goals highlighted in this plan have been and will continue to be used to inform, empower, and motivate our diverse community. From residents, local merchants, elected officials, emergency responders, and more, this plan will educate about future impacts of climate change, adaptations, risk management, and reducing the Town of North Hempstead's contribution to the global carbon budget. The following are stakeholder groups that the Town has engaged to broaden outreach:

Villages
Non-Profits
Libraries
Civic Associations
School Districts
Colleges and Universities
Outreach Centers and Food Banks
Business Improvement Districts
Chambers of Commerce
Utilities
Other

IMPLEMENTATION

The formation of the Town of North Hempstead's Climate Smart Communities Task Force is an important step to prepare residents for the effects of climate change and to enlist the public in taking steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to create a healthier, more resilient future.

This Plan provides a practical guide which the CSC Task Force will follow during 2022 and beyond. The CSC Task Force plans to take a flexible approach, periodically reviewing accomplishments and updating the plan as needed. The knowledge built from outreach efforts will help guide how the Town communicates to specific groups about climate change, as well as how to integrate climate issues into existing programs and initiatives.

A key component in implementing our plan is partnering and collaborating with neighboring and regional organizations and governments to help us engage a wider range of influencers and stakeholders. Through leveraging and sharing information, our plan connects the Town with our local community more effectively.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH TIMELINE