



Town of Clifton Park

Public Education & Engagement Strategy for Climate Adaptation and Mitigation | 2023-2024

Background and Objectives of the Climate Smart Communities

The [Climate Smart Communities \(CSC\) Certification Program](#) is a New York State program that helps local governments take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate. The program offers grants, rebates for electric vehicles, and free technical assistance. Under this program, the Town of Clifton Park, together with other communities across NY State, has made a commitment to act by passing the CSC pledge. Certified communities are the foremost leaders in the state; they have gone beyond the CSC pledge by completing and documenting a suite of actions that mitigate and adapt to climate change at the local level.

PE9: Public Education and Engagement Plan Development

Clifton Park is committed to identifying solutions and taking action for mitigating climate change and adapting to its inevitable consequences.

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 (GHG) emissions as part of preventing further climate change. Outreach efforts provide opportunities to collaborate with nontraditional stakeholder groups, start conversations about the community's future, deepen a sense of identity and social cohesion, and identify innovative ways to reduce GHG emissions and build community resilience to climate change.

In order to reach, engage, and educate the residents of Clifton Park, the Climate Smart Task Force has developed a Public Education and Engagement Plan.

Strategy for Adaptation and Mitigation

Outreach Goals and Scope of Communicating Climate Change Impacts

- The primary goal of our community engagement strategy is to increase awareness and understanding of climate change, and its impacts, while promoting preparedness among community members.
- The goal is to encourage conversations about climate change and facilitate learning opportunities with Town employees, residents, students, visitors, collaborators, and other interested parties.
- The scope of our outreach program will encompass both climate change mitigation and adaptation, highlighting the importance of building resilience to climate-related hazards.

Community Engagement Methods

- **Public Workshops and Presentations**: The CSC Task Force conducts educational workshops and presentations in community centers and at public gatherings to provide information on weatherization, energy conservation, electric vehicles, and waste minimization.

- **Online Platforms and Social Media:** The CSC Task Force posts events on social media and utilizes the Town website and social media platforms to share educational materials, tips, and resources for disaster preparedness and climate change.
- **Direct Mail to Town Residents:** The Town of Clifton Park through its Parks & Recreation Department publishes a Recreation Booklet, twice a year, with about 30 pages of public programs and events for youth, and all ages, including relevant community events regarding the environment and climate awareness. This hard-copy Recreation Booklet is mailed to every residential property owner in town twice a year, so it is a valuable way to reach residents who may not be tuned into social media and online platforms. The Recreation Booklet is also [available online](#).
- **Community Events and Fairs:** The CSC Task Force, often in partnership with other municipal committees and groups, participates in local events, fairs, and festivals to engage directly with community members, distributes informational materials, and demonstrates practical examples of proactive measures to help the environment. Currently, the Town holds multiple events per year such as Winterfest and FarmFest. In 2024, Clifton Park will host its 31st Annual FarmFest the weekend of Sept. 14-15, 2024, advertised in the Town of Clifton Park - Parks and Recreation's "Recreation Booklet" for Spring & Summer 2024.

Audiences

The Town aims to engage a variety of stakeholders through various means of outreach, such as public trainings/meetings, publicly posted/available educational materials, and targeted events. The Town strives to include all members of the community. Much of the engagement has focused on Town operations/facilities and residential members of the Town.

Key Partnerships and Stakeholders for Current and Future Partnerships

Key Partners - The Climate Smart Task Force collaborates with various partners in the community, including the following organizations. This list is not all-inclusive and will continue to develop over time.

Community Partners

- GREEN Committee - an Environmental Advisory Committee to the Town Board
- Clifton Park Tree Committee
- Clifton Park Open Space, Trails & Riverfront Advisory Committee
- Clifton Park Environmental Conservation Commission
- Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library

Regional Partners

- Capital District Regional Planning Commission
- Capital District Clean Energy Hub
- Capital Region Transportation Council (Capital District Clean Communities Coalition)

Stakeholders are all community members, local businesses, schools, and any other agencies residing in the Town of Clifton Park. We will collaborate with various partners in the community, including the local government, the local library, and fire departments.

Strategy for Adaptation and Mitigation - Ongoing Program Development

The Climate Smart Task Force will continuously evaluate and update our engagement strategy based on feedback, emerging needs, and an evolving understanding of climate change impacts. Regular assessments will be conducted to measure the effectiveness of our outreach efforts and identify areas for improvement.

Previous and Ongoing Actions Taken by the Town of Clifton Park

The Town of Clifton Park has held events that address environmental concerns and energy conservation. All events include educational components to inform and inspire residents to take climate action either through adaptation or mitigation.

2023-2024 Adaptation Engagement and Education

- o **Arbor Day Celebration** – April 27, 2024: Hosted by the Town of Clifton Park and the Clifton Park Tree Committee to celebrate Arbor Day and the ways in which trees improve the health of the community and planet. (page 4 of [2024 Spring-Summer Rec Booklet](#))
 - **Tree Seedling Giveaway** – April 2024 Arbor Day Event (page 8 of [2024 Spring-Summer Rec Booklet](#))
- o **Local Farmers’ Markets** - Weekly, May-Sept 2023 & 2024 - Advertised by the Town to promote buying and supporting local agriculture and farmers.
- o **Trails Awareness and Education:** The Town’s Open Space, Trails & Riverfront Committee and Open Space Coordinator delivered a public presentation at the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library about the trails network in town, and how to find trails near your own neighborhood through online maps and resources. The Town has many miles of trails and sidewalks that offer transportation routes for residents as an alternative to vehicles, as a means to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- o **Conservation of Local Farmland / Agricultural Resources:** the Town of Clifton Park permanently protected about 71 acres of active farmland through the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets Farmland Protection Implementation Grant and Saratoga County Farmland Protection Grant in 2023, on Maple Hill Farm of 110 Ashdown Road in the Town of Clifton Park. This project and taking the action to protect farmland permanently for all of the public benefits, was publicly discussed at public town board meetings, in 2018, in 2019, and on Nov. 6, 2023, when the Town Board authorized TB Res. 239 of 2023, the signing of the contract with the property owners for a Deed of Conservation Easement for \$405,575.

2023-2024 Mitigation Engagement and Education

- o **Residential Weatherization Training** – Friday, March 3, 2023, at Grooms Tavern: The Clifton Park GREEN Committee, in partnership with National Grid, presented an energy and money-saving weatherization program for Clifton Park residents. Attendees were provided with free weatherization kits to take home that included window kits, door sweeps, pipe insulation, and light switch gaskets, among other supplies.

- o **Repair Cafes** – February 17, 2024, and May 18, 2024 at the Clifton Park Senior Center, residents learned how to repair their broken household items.
- o **Give-Away Weekend** – May 3, 2024, through May 5, 2024: A weekend to promote reuse and repurposing of household items. (page 4 of [2024 Spring-Summer Rec Booklet](#))
- o **Transfer Station Tour** – February Winterfest 2023 offered a tour of the Transfer Station for all residents displaying all the recycling they offer free of charge.
- o **Clifton Park ReStore Partnership** – Ongoing/year-round 2023-2024 at the Transfer Station: The Committee initiated the partnership with Habitat for Humanity to place a collection point for nearly new items and building materials to be donated for the “ReStore” retail store program. For more information click on [Clifton Park and ReStore Flyer](#)
- o **Composting Pilot Program** – Launched Spring 2024 in partnership with the Clifton Park Transfer Station. The initiative is being piloted with 40 families/participants who will be permitted to drop off food scraps during operating hours. Everyone who registers must go through a brief training program, after which they will be given the lock code for dropping off food scraps. [Food Scraps Composting Pilot Program 2024](#)
- o **Yard Waste Composting** – Occurs every year from April – November 2023-2024, the town offers yard waste curbside pickup for residents and composts it for the residents use annually; for more information go to [Transfer Station Yard Waste Pickup](#)
- o **Pumpkin Smash** – November 2023 and 2024, the town partnered with a local farm and churches to smash old pumpkins and then compost them. ([Pumpkin Smash](#))
- o **Winterfest** – 2023-2024, each year the GREEN committee educates residents on electric vehicles, buses, and electric yard appliances.
- o **New Life for Old Stuff**: This resource is posted on the [Clifton Park GREEN Committee’s webpage](#) to encourage the public to find “New Life for Old Stuff” rather than throwing away items and contributing to landfill emissions.
- o **Recycling Education**: Included an educational clip on page 9 of the [2024 Spring-Summer Rec Booklet](#) to educate residents about recycling.
- o **FarmFest 2023**: The weekend of Sept. 16-17, 2023 was the 30th Annual Farm Fest in the Town of Clifton Park, which was an educational opportunity and engagement event for the community to learn about local food sources, through on-farm tours, historic tours, apple-picking opportunities, hayrides, farm animals, horse rides, food and music and more, as a self-guided tour and celebration of farming. Buying locally grown and produced food can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation of long-distance food. Supporting local farmers also helps keep land in farming use locally for food security.

The Town of Clifton Park has also responded to the effects of climate change in the following ways:

- Established stream-crossing culvert projects to repair and increase the size of culverts to ensure proper preparation for larger storm events.
- Conducted free educational seminars for residents to learn more about climate related issues such as energy conservation and solar installations.
- Participated in the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) Clean Energy Communities (CEC) Program.

- Participated in the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Program. (Spring 2024)
- Eliminated the regular use of Roundup on town properties. (page 31 of [2024 Spring-Summer Rec Booklet](#))

Future Community Actions

The Town of Clifton Park will develop plans to take the following actions.

- Participate in the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) Clean Energy Communities (CEC) Program.
- Partner with various local conservation groups to spread information on climate change mitigation.
- Update the Town's 2010 Government Operations Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory to assess our current greenhouse emissions from years 2022-2023.
- Complete a CEC Energy Audit on the Town Hall to assess potential energy efficiency and HVAC measures to reduce GHG emissions and costs.
- Complete a municipal government fleet inventory to understand the emissions from the town vehicle inventory.
- Conduct free educational seminars for residents to learn more about climate-related issues such as energy conservation and solar installations.
- Participate in the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Program.
- The Town of Clifton Park was awarded \$25,000 in grant funding in 2023 through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets for hiring a consultant to guide and help the town conduct a Town Farmland Protection Planning project engaging with the local farmers, landowners, government, and the entire public. Per Town Board Resolution 131 of 2024 (5/20/2024), the Town authorized Community Planning and Environmental Associates to help develop and prepare an agricultural farmland protection and enhancement plan for the Town of Clifton Park. This project is slated to kick-off in Summer 2024 and be completed by November 2025. This project will include the resource inventory and analysis of farming resources, including understanding natural resources, of lands, soils, and waters of the town, and include climate mitigation and climate adaptation considerations for farming in the community.
- The Town of Clifton Park was awarded a grant in 2023 from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to conduct an Urban Tree Inventory and Analysis and Management Plan, which is in the grant contract development phase. The Town anticipates advancing this project, which will be a public planning project and include public participation, in 2024-25, working in close collaboration with the Clifton Park Tree Committee, Town Board, the Planning Department, the Buildings and Grounds Department, and the Highway Department.