

Towns and Cities “Caught on Tape” Leading by Example

What do East Hartford, Stamford, Tolland, Simsbury, South Windsor, Mansfield, Middletown, Hartford, and Avon have in common? They are all featured in DEEP’s new video series on community sustainability.

Last spring the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) began videotaping and conducting interviews around the state — in town halls and schools, out on the streets, and even on the roof of a municipal building. The result of this effort is a series of videos that “bring to life” the success stories of Connecticut’s towns and cities — hopefully inspiring additional



Interviewing Mark Fenton in East Hartford prior to a downtown walk audit.

municipalities to reduce their energy use and to create more sustainable communities. The project was done in partnership with the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and Middlesex Community College’s Corporate Media Center. The funding was provided by The Emily Hall Tremain Foundation through the Clean Energy Finance and Investment Authority (CEFIA). The videos are being used to support the DEEP’s **Lead by Example** municipal outreach and marketing campaign as well as **CRCOG’s Sustainable Capitol Region** Initiative.

Check out and share the videos posted on both DEEP’s [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#) (ctdeepvideos) and discover some ways to help your community become more sustainable.

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Staying Green, Even in the Winter

Whether it's winter, spring, summer or fall, the Connecticut Convention Center and the Connecticut Science Center usher in the season with a commitment to the environment. Through design features, operating practices and technology, these two Hartford attractions have reduced pollution and energy consumption from the operation of their facilities.



The New England winter season brings snow and ice — and for a few months out of the year, there's a lot of fueling up snow blowers and spreading ice melt chemicals on walkways. The Connecticut Convention Center has found a way to eliminate both and it's being used on the Mayor Mike Peters Bridge — the 270 foot long pedestrian bridge (see *photo at left*) that connects the Convention Center to the Science Center. The bridge is 33 feet wide, made of concrete and also provides access to the Marriott Hotel and the Riverfront. During construction, it was decided that the most efficient and least costly means of providing energy to the three buildings, the Convention Center, the Science Center and the Marriott Hotel, was to construct an on-site Central Utility Plant. The "CUP" as it is called, provides steam

and chilled water for heating and cooling as needed throughout the year. The CUP has an added winter benefit: it is used to keep snow and ice from accumulating on the Bridge using a radiant heating system.

Here's how it works — during construction of the walkway, a series of pipes were laid under the concrete; the pipes contain glycol, an anti-freezing agent. A sensor that resembles a hockey puck was also installed on the bridge. When the sensor detects moisture and the temperature gets below 34 degrees, the Snow-Melt System utilizes steam generated by the CUP to heat the glycol which is circulated through the pipes. The pipes radiate heat that keeps the surface clear of ice and snow. It is important that the bridge be kept free of snow and ice, since it functions not only as a means of getting pedestrians from one building to the next, but also as a safe area for occupants of the Science Center in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Installation of the Snow-Melt System cost approximately \$400,000 but the added safety and the avoided annual costs of labor, fuel, equipment and other materials are well worth the investment. The system also reduces air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions that would have been generated from snow clearing equipment and water pollution from run-off of de-icing chemicals.

Homeowners and businesses can also install outdoor radiant heating systems and in some situations they are worth the investment. On average, they can cost around five thousand dollars to install. Operating costs are dependent on your energy source. There is a trade-off between pollution resulting from snow blowing and de-icing chemicals versus the electricity or gas needed to run the system.

The Connecticut Science Center has installed a 6,000 square foot **green roof** that cuts down on energy use and reduces air and water pollution. The building received a LEED Gold rating from the **US Green Building Council** and contains many energy efficient and sustainability features which you can read about on their [webpage](#).

In Westport, it's BYO Bags



In an effort to encourage the use of reusable checkout bags, the Town of Westport enacted a **highly effective ordinance** in 2008 banning the use of plastic bags for retail checkout of purchased goods. The ordinance, the first of its kind in Connecticut and a model for other municipalities, states that only reusable bags and/or recyclable paper bags are to be provided as checkout bags to retail customers. The ordinance was developed and sponsored by the four members of District 4 of the Westport Representative Town Meeting. It applies to all retail stores, sidewalk sales, farmers' markets, flea markets and restaurants. It excludes sales of goods at yard sales, tag sales, other sales by residents at their home, and sales by non-profit organizations.

Effective Public Education Brought Success. A public meeting first was held with retailers to discuss the proposed ordinance and obtain their feedback. As a result of their input, exceptions were made for thick reusable plastic bags and certain types of purchases that needed the protection of large plastic bags. A provision also was included allowing retailers six months after the passage of the ordinance to use up their existing inventories of plastic bags.

A town-wide contest was held inviting local citizens to create art designs for reusable shopping bags. Publicity on the contest and an award ceremony for the winners was provided through local newspapers and a television channel. A month-long exhibit for all of the bag design entries was held at the Town Library to help educate residents about the new ordinance. This promoted residential acceptance of the program – increasing environmental awareness and instilling local pride. The Chamber of Commerce and local businesses then sponsored the initial production of the bags. The Town of Westport reusable bags were first sold on an exclusive basis through the Library and then by the PTA as a fundraiser at many area schools. The remaining bags then were sold through local stores. A reception sponsored by a branch of an international bank was held for merchants to introduce the ordinance and explain its provisions.

Alicia Mozian, Westport Conservation Director, attributes the success of the program to the education of retailers and residents. She has not had to levy a single fine for non-compliance in the three years since implementation. Plastic bag litter on local beaches and around town now is greatly diminished. The success of the ordinance has made it a model for other communities and the Westport sponsors have helped many other communities throughout the country introduce similar programs. The four members of RTM District 4, Jonathan Cunitz, Liz Milwe, Jeff Wieser and Gene Seidman, received an Environmental Merit Award from the U.S. EPA in Boston in April, 2009, in recognition of their ground-breaking efforts.



This car decal was given out to remind people to bring their reusable bags into the store.

Ask Eartha

I hate to throw perfectly good things away, but it's pretty hard to figure out how or where to get things fixed or whether they can be recycled. It seems that now more than ever the stuff we use in everyday life is destined to be replaced within a year or two!

Barbara D., Falls Village, CT

I have good news — many people are starting to turn to a new “R” — Repair — before they recycle. And repairing before recycling makes good ecological sense. Although we always encourage recycling, it does consume resources and create some greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants. Repairing and mending is the best option, because it saves the water, the energy, and the materials necessary to make the object. But in many cases local repair shops have gone the way of the passenger pigeon. The master repairers—electricians, contractors, upholsterers—have been sidelined by the planned obsolescence economy.

Enter the “repair and share” mentality. An **art installation** in the Netherlands sparked a journalist with a new baby to do more than write about the waste of millions of tons of electronics sent for recycling. Martine Postma decided why not start a gathering place where people could bring their broken products and others would donate

their “repair” expertise to help fix them or alter them for another useful purpose. Dubbed **repair cafés**, there are now more than 30 in that small country.

Right here in the U.S., groups like the **Fixer Collective** in Brooklyn, NY and **Sustainable West Seattle** are springing up and meeting regularly, a la the “repair café.” They have inspired almost 40 **tool sharing libraries** around the country.

You can easily start planning a repair and share get-together in your own community by using the helpful resources at **Repaircafe.org**. Recruit some local repair experts (it could be you if you're handy) and invite others who are interested in fixing or tinkering. Find a work area with decent lighting and heating and internet access for looking up repair solutions. Then gather up tools and manuals and hold a repair night where people enjoy camaraderie while helping fix a cell phone, a toaster, or other gadgets.



If you'd like to figure out how to repair something yourself:

- **HowStuffWorks.com** has a series of repair manuals for basic consumer items
 - **iFixit.com** is the “world's largest online repair community” with step-by-step repair guides and a repair question/answer forum
 - **RepairClinic.com** makes it easy to find the parts you need
- For guides on starting a tool library in your community:
- **New American Dream**
 - **Share Starter**

As the fixers say, the world can't sustain throwing things away before the end of their useful life. So good luck with your repairing and let us know how it goes!

Eartha

Eartha answers selected environmental questions. Email your question to **judith.prill@ct.gov** and watch future issues for your answer.

Not sure what to do with unwanted items in your home or garage?
For a guide, visit **www.ct.gov/deep/whatdoidowith**



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