

CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION

April 24, 2023

7:00 PM, Room 217, Town Hall

MEETING MINUTES

1. Opening / Call to order – 7:08 PM
 - a. Roll call – *Commissioners in attendance: Bernie Pelletier, David Mello, Joe Campanella, Catherine Diviney; Members of the public: Kim Hughes, Emilee Scott, Jim Fishman, Chris Feely.*
 - b. Approval of minutes – February, March – *approved.*
2. Old Business:
 - a. Working Group Updates
 - i. Earth Day (temporary)
 - *The Earth Day event – done in Connection with the Foundation for West Hartford Public Schools was successful. There were tables from several garden groups, a student group, the recycling coordinator, and clean energy*
 - *The group will continue planning for the upcoming Celebrate West Hartford event in June*
 - ii. Sustainable Land Care (ongoing) – *see attached slides*
 - *Kim Hughes took the group through the attached presentation and discussed a pilot program at Wolcott Park. There was recognition of the need for more education and outreach across the town.*
 - iii. Waste (DEEP pilot project and ongoing)
 - *The DEEP pilot program has started on April 24th! The team is continuing to meet and do outreach to the community. There is the intent of learning from this pilot and drafting a strategic plan for West Hartford.*
 - b. Sustainable West Hartford Commission – ordinance draft, PWF&S Committee Mtg - Thursday, May 4 @ 6 PM. *Commission reviewed new version of the ordinance. There was general agreement that although wording was significantly pared down from the original draft version, it maintained a flexible framework for the Commission to operate as envisioned. Anything specific the group wants can be added into bylaws later – this is the format that the Town's Corporation Counsel and Town Clerk's office is moving too – simpler, shorter ordinances and bylaws. Bernie agreed that people can only read so many words anyway. Commissioners support the ordinance – Bernie and Emilee will attend Public Works Facilities and Sustainability Committee meeting which is the next step before it moves to Council. We are probably looking at adoption in June/July. Commission will continue to meet officially until new one is fully staffed and up*

and running. Jim had a question about who would be reviewing and selecting the new members. Catherine indicated that member selection is up to the Mayor and Council. Typically, they might consult with relevant staff – like her, Energy Specialist, or Katherine Bruns, Recycling Coordinator, but they don't have to.

3. New Business

- a. Operating process for new commission – work to be done in working groups with reports to full commission. *Bernie indicated that he thought tonight's meeting with the presentation by Kim working very well and should be a model for the future Committee. The main take away is that most "work" needs to be done outside the meetings to keep the meeting times manageable.*
- b. Additional working groups? Energy – Buildings, GHG Inventory (ICLEI), Other? *There was general consensus for a "Built Environment" group, which would focus on buildings and possibly more e.g., roads, etc. It was thought the priority actions identified in Todd's homework could also inform what future working groups might be. It was recognized that groups may also be more "functional" oriented, as Ted Newton suggested in the past, to focus on "Communication or Outreach."*
- c. Collaboration with Planning & Zoning
 - i. Todd Dumais homework – (incl. ground mount solar...) *Six Clean Energy and Cons & Env't Commissioners – Bernie, Max, Kim, Ted N, Jim, and Catherine provided their input on Todd's POCD Action matrix. There are some overlapping areas. The POCD action list from Todd Dumais (aka homework) has major actions and sub-actions – we should make it clear which level people are supporting. Bernie indicated that he did not vote for something as a priority that he thought Town was going to work on anyway. Catherine will send a reminder email to solicit input from the other Commissioners by next week. We also want to know what it means when the matrix indicates something is "Underway" or "Incomplete" or blank.*
 - ii. Interface with DRAC. *This was identified at the last meeting and in the matrix as a priority of the group. People agreed that working with DRAC to incorporate sustainability and energy screens or question would be something critical for the future. Catherine will check with Todd to see where this stands.*
 - iii. New projects – UCONN site development– What does group want to do?
 - *Reminder about former public input. Group agreed that Town Council should be reminded that when the Town was considering purchasing this property, residents voiced support for maintaining open space on the property. It was also noted that for the development to proceed as designed the Town would need to approve zoning changes. Catherine will check with Todd on timeline and avenues to be involved. The group does not want this opportunity to pass them by as has happened in the past with other development (e.g., Children's Museum). Some members*

indicated this might be one of the last major parcels in town available for development.

- Potential of the environmental intervention statute Connecticut General Statutes ("C.G.S.") § 22a-19. *Most people felt this was a last resort as it had the potential to hurt relationship with Town Council. However, it is a tool, if needed.*
- Other?

4. Staff Report – *Catherine indicated she had filed the Pre-Award Information paperwork to claim the Town's EECBG (Energy Efficiency & conservation Block Grant) formula grant funding (\$123,000).*
5. Public Comment (limit 3 min each) – *Christine Feely spoke to voice support for work of Sustainable Land Care Working Group.*
6. Agenda for Next Meeting
 - a. *Continue discussion of priorities*
 - b. *Settle Celebrate West Hartford tabling*
 - c. *Working Group updates*
7. Adjournment – *9:10 PM*

Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program or activity of the Town of West Hartford, should contact Suzanne Oslander, ADA Coordinator, at suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov or (860) 561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.

SUSTAINABLE LAND CARE WORKING GROUP

CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION +
CONSERVATION & ENVIRONMENT
COMMISSION

SUSTAINABLE WH COMMISSION

SPRING 2023



WE ARE...

Educators

Community leaders

SYNERGY



grassroots
WEST HARTFORD



The WEST·HARTFORD·GARDEN·CLUB

3

BILLION

Number of birds that have disappeared since 1970.

That is 1 in 4.

80

PERCENT

Portion of flowering plants that depend on insects for pollination

34

BILLION

US economic value of insect pollination services

27

PERCENT

Decline in the number of plant species in New England according to historical record.

WE ARE...

PUTTING BACK MORE THAN WE TAKE

Loyal to the soil

Right plant, right place

Sustainable and just

Climate resilience

On a mission to bring attention to habitat restoration



1

GRAM

A quarter teaspoon of soil
can contain around 10
billion organisms

100

SPECIES

Over 100 tree species
native to CT

48

DAYS

It is expected that by
2050, the number of
extreme heat days will
grow from 4 (current) to
48 affecting communities
of color most.

99

PERCENT

Most insects have a direct
impact on our well-being.
All of them matter. Less
than 1% are considered
'pests'.

COLLAPSE OF THE FOOD WEB



LOSS OF HABITAT

Human activity
Agriculture



PESTICIDES

Pesticides, herbicides
Includes pesticide drift
Paired with chemical nitrogen



CLIMATE CHANGE

Animals and plants know how to
adapt. Just not this fast.

"All species need space in order to dodge the extinction bullet. So far, we have not shared space very well with our fellow earthlings."

- Doug Tallamy



THEN & NOW

TRADITIONAL METHODS

Exclusive focus on aesthetic appeal

Static

'Controls' nature

HARMFUL

Exploitative interpretation of IPM

(Integrated Pest Management)

Introduction of invasive species

Drought intolerant

Maintenance requirements

UNSUSTAINABLE

Contributes to the collapse of food web

Unfriendly in changing climate

Expensive



OUR FUTURE

ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPING

Based on understanding of natural systems
Less rigid, less maintenance, less expensive
"Brains not brawn"

SUPPORTING ECOLOGICAL SERVICES

Feed the soil
Think 'habitat', less 'garden'
Contributor to local water system instead of in demand
Observes natural cycles and systems

CHANGING CULTURAL PRACTICES WHEN TURF IS NEEDED

Mowing high to shade soil and increase photosynthesis
Watering deeply, less often, morning
Overseed to thicken turf, aerate
Commit to organic and natural products (\$)

HOW CAN THE SLCWG (CONTINUE TO) HELP?

SUSTAINABLE BEST PRACTICES RECOMMENDATIONS

The basis for restoring our land spaces and building a healthier and more sustainable community.

SITE INVENTORY & SELECTION

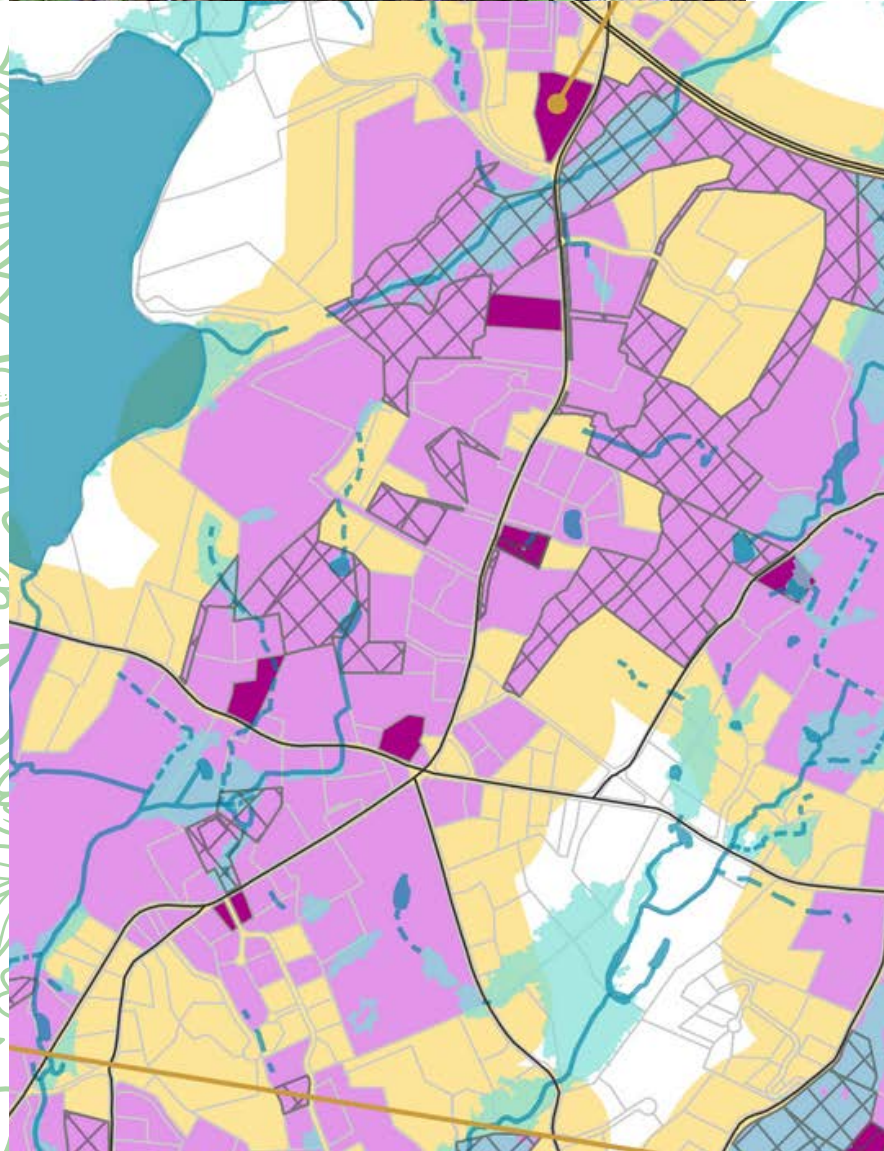
Creation of site selection rubric that helps to prioritize and balance opportunity, budget and effort

SITE DESIGN & PLANNING

Utilize the expertise and knowledge of the SLCWG and partner organizations, short and long-term planning.

SUSTAINABLE AND JUST

Create outreach strategy for every project. Prioritize areas with green space deficit.





STEP 1: ESTABLISH BEST LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

DO NO HARM

Reduce/eliminate chemical pesticides

Avoid plants treated with chemicals

Reduce/eliminate chemical fertilizers

REMOVE INVASIVE PLANTS

REPLACE WITH NATIVE PLANTS

Selection informed by site needs, plants as host and food source

Biodiversity is key, fewer cultivars, in changing climate

Choose from all plant types - trees, shrubs, forbs, grasses

BE MESSY

Beware overmulching, bare patches needed for nesting

Leaf litter for overwintering

Gas-powered equipment a detriment in many ways

STOP mowing native habitat too early

ABOUT THE POLLINATORS

CT HAS 378 SPECIES OF BEES

honey bees, bumbles bees...and mining bees, leaf-cutter bees, mason bees, longhorn bees, sweat bees, squash bees...

BIODIVERSITY IS KEY TO RESILIENCE

We need to understand a pollinator's niche - how and where they live. What is their flight range.

KEYSTONE SPECIES

MORE PATHWAYS, FEWER GARDENS



STEP 2: SITE SELECTION



EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Current habitat, vegetation, invasive
- Soil type, light conditions, moisture levels.
- Size and location, i.e. large, narrow, proximity to street
- Land use history - pesticide use, contamination
- Current land use – ie. road salt

PLANTING REQUIREMENTS

- Site preparation - remove turf, invasives, etc.
- Plant size - seeds? plugs? larger plants? Cost implications
- Plant diversity - bloomers for each season
- Design considerations – formal or wild, height
- Mulch early and continue only as needed

MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

- What is needed? Mowing, watering, weeding
- Installation – volunteers, town staff
- Maintenance – volunteers, town staff
- Staff PD/education?

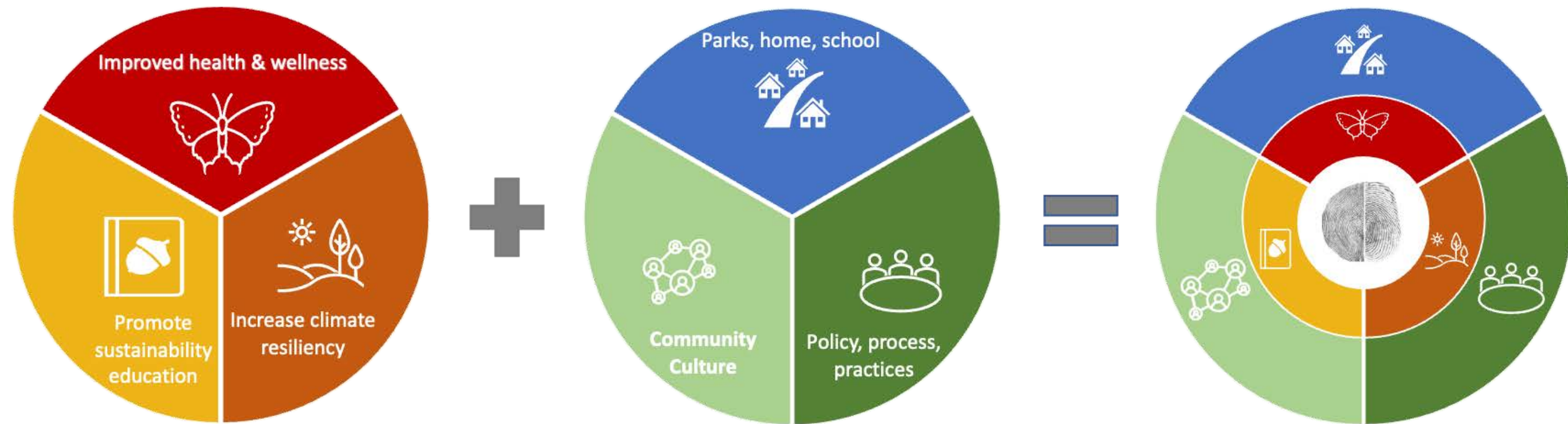
***COMMUNICATIONS**

***BUDGET**

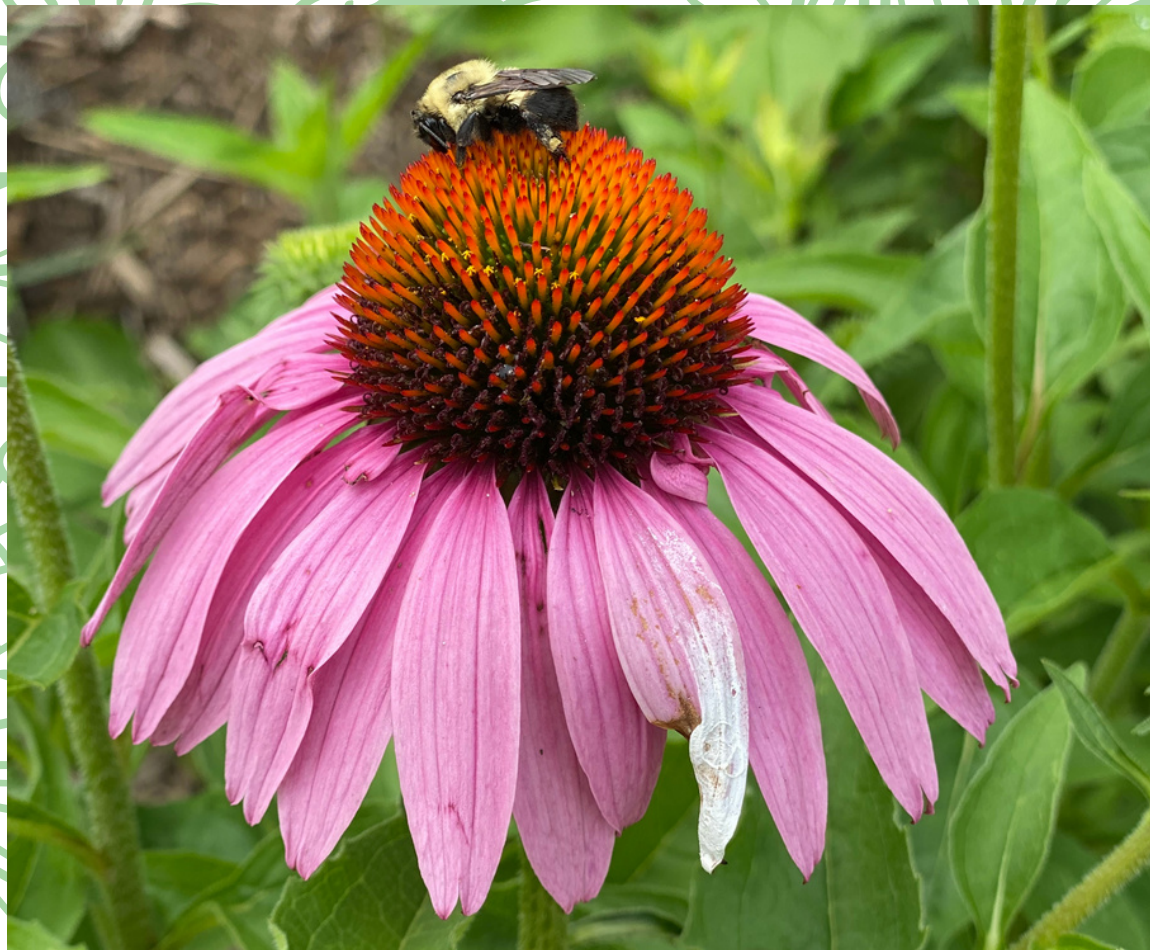
SAMPLE: WOLCOTT MEADOW

PROJECT NAME Wolcott meadow		Partners: TBD		Demonstration garden (Y/N): Explain Yes. Opportunity to create first wildflower meadow and hopefully duplicate in other open canopy areas.	
Location: Adjacent to wolcott school, community gardens		Public Works, Parks & Rec			
Date: April 2023		Non-profit agencies, other		Assign VALUE according to resource requirements: 1=low, 2=med, 3=high	
Submitted by: SLCWG					
Existing Conditions		Site Preparation:		Maintenance Requirements	
Current habitat: describe vegetation, status of invasive plants	grassy turf, no invasives in immediate area	Planting requirements: turf removal, invasive removal, planting schedule (spring/fall)	Site prep will require tilling, as shallow as possible. Fall planting.	Services requested: mowing, watering (inc. frequency), weeding (when)	tilling for site prep, occassional mowing at predetermined schedule since timing is critical to success
	1		2		2
Soil type: light, moisture, clay/sand/loam	Full sun, slope, probably good drainage,	Plant size start with seeds, plugs, larger plants (consider cost implications)	Seeds	Installation: volunteers needed?	Yes, volunteers for seeding, occasional weed maintenance, monitoring for invasives
	1		1		2
Size and location (sq ft): large, narrow, proximity to street	Exact sq. ft TBD. Runs parallel to street, community garden on other side. Long and narrow. Consider 2 sections, mowed perimeter and bisecting pathway. Easy to access.	Plant diversity Spring/Summer/Fall/Winter interest	Be very specific with seed selection to achieve goals for diveristy and seasonal interest. Some	Maintenance Plan: volunteers, town staff	Mowing at predetermined schedule since timing is critical to meadow sustainability
	2		2		2
Current land use: current conditions like prone to road salt damage	mowed turf	Design considerations formal to wild, (scale 1-10)	wildflower meadow, needs for watering and weed suppressing high in early phase	Staff PD/education Describe any training needs	Maybe. Many webinars available specific to NE growing region
	1		1		2
Photos? (Y/N)	Y	Mulch How much (inches or cubic yards), requested type	No mulch needed		
	na		1		
				TOTAL 20	
Communications Plan		Budget Plan			
Signage: Describe design plan Timeline for Completion		Materials (attach plant list): Labor: Maintenance: Grant funding (if any):			

BUILDING A MORE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY



Notable sites: Westmoor Park, athletic turf fields
ID Key partnerships: Youth leadership, business owners, church leaders, school campuses
Quiet Yards: West Hartford movement
Education: Webinars, fairs, workshops
Policy: Pursue pollinator-friendly town ordinance



THANK YOU

*“Nature is not more complex than we think,
but more complex than we can think.”*

*-Frank Egler, traditional horticulturalist
turned plant ecologist*

