

Ten Steps to Municipal Resilience

Information for a More Resilient Connecticut



It is getting warmer and the sea level is rising. It is now clear that these changes in our environment are consequences of greenhouse gas released into the atmosphere by humans. Internationally coordinated action is urgently required to cap and reduce the rate of these emissions. A recent report by the Governor’s Council on Climate Change concluded that even if the most effective policies get adopted soon, air temperatures are getting warmer and mean sea level in Connecticut will rise up to 20 inches by 2050 and will continue to increase until at least 2100. We must all take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions since these changes will have costly and dangerous impacts in our state. In the meantime, municipalities can increase their resilience to the foreseeable impacts of climate change by considering the following ten steps:

1 Build adaptation into infrastructure investments to avoid future costs.

To minimize future costs and social disruption, municipalities should integrate climate change adaptation into all planning decisions and investments. Every town’s Plan of Conservation and Development and Hazard Mitigation Plan, for example, should enhance long-term resilience. Routine repairs and improvements that recognize future risk will yield a high return on investment.

2 Resist development in the 2020 floodplain.

Higher mean sea levels will increase the frequency of flooding in areas that are currently flood-prone. Enforcement of existing policies will reduce risk to people, property, and the town’s tax base and make new commercial and residential development less vulnerable.

3 Develop a resilience project pipeline.

In many towns, there are several areas at-risk that need attention. Having resilience projects identified or underway will increase the likelihood of winning state and federal adaptation grants and increase support for the local share of the costs.

4 Take advantage of existing programs.

Towns should use locally accurate, science-based risk assessments to identify and prioritize projects and evaluate the costs and benefits of adaptation alternatives. CIRCA and many other organizations offer support for planning and engagement. Towns should also expand participation in the FEMA Community Rating System since it builds resilience and saves citizens money.



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Visit CIRCA's Resilient Connecticut Planning Tools webpage for information to help take action on these 10 steps:
resilientconnecticut.uconn.edu/planning-tools

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5 Use inclusive planning approaches.

The entire community must be engaged in adaptation needs, priorities, and project design. After all, they will live with what is built and will pay much of the cost. Broad consultation is essential to ensure public support and to identify needs of the most vulnerable.

6 Organize to win federal resilience and adaptation funds.

Most resilience projects will take years to plan, fund, and implement. An office that coordinates sustained planning, proposal development, and advocacy will enhance success.

7 Plan for the local share of the costs.

A resilience project pipeline will require local cost-sharing so a strategy for raising funds is essential. For example, Public Act 19-77 allows a municipality to create a resiliency reserve fund and Public Act 21-115, "An Act Concerning Climate Change Adaptation," also provides municipalities with a suite of voluntary tools to fund climate resilience including establishment of storm-water authorities and a new Environmental Infrastructure Fund within the Connecticut Green Bank.

8 Take action on existing vulnerabilities.

Many towns have identified areas that are vulnerable to flooding and high winds and temperatures. It is useful to assess why resilience projects identified as a need have not been implemented and to assess the cost of further inaction.

9 Prioritize emergency preparedness and recovery planning.

Prioritize preparedness for storms by incorporating climate change into your local and regional emergency planning and identify "Community Lifelines" that must function in the aftermath of a disaster. Lifelines are essential to human health and safety, and sustain the operation of critical government and business functions.

10 Track changes in climate projections and policies.

Scientists around the world are working to check and refine climate predictions and new results should be expected. And governments, including our own state, are increasingly developing new resilience and adaptation approaches. Towns should track changing climate projections and assess the importance and value of implementing innovative policies in their community.

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