

## NEMSN Profile: Northampton, MA

### Community Profile<sup>1</sup>

<i>Area (sq. Miles):</i>	34.2
<i>Population:</i>	28,602
<i>Population Density:</i>	835.20
<i>Households:</i>	11,484
<i>Median Age:</i>	38.8
<i>Median Household Income:</i>	\$59,274
<i>Poverty Rate:</i>	17.10%

### City Department:

*Title:* Department of Planning and Sustainability

Central Services, Department of Energy Resources

*Staff:* Chris Mason: Energy Coordinator, Wayne Feiden: Director of Planning and Sustainability

#### *Responsibilities:*

*Department of Planning and Sustainability:* Identify and implement the community vision for sustainability, economic prosperity, a healthy community, and sustainable transportation.

*Central Services-Department of Energy Resources:* Move Northampton toward more sustainable use of energy and significantly reduce the community's greenhouse gas emissions.

*Programs/Policies:* Northampton PILOT Program, Land-fill Solar Array, Single Use Plastic Bag Ban, Clean Energy Road Map, Energy & Sustainability Commissions, Solarize Northampton, social equity, affordable housing, reduction in single-occupancy vehicle trips, create bicycle and pedestrian friendly community, preserve open space, incorporate green housing into development.

*Frameworks:* Compact of Mayors, STAR Communities

### Interview:

#### **What have been your biggest successes in the past 2-3 years?**

- Finished LED streetlight conversions.
- Finished energy efficiency programs at water treatment plant.
- Finished PV array, which is about to be connected.
- Doubled and tripled allowable density within walking distance of downtown and village center.
- Expanded multi-use (bicycle) trail network
- Increased open space by 0.6% per year for twenty years
- Created 125 affordable and mixed income housing units downtown.
- Built community consensus on climate adaptation, from prohibiting development on the 500 year floodplain (as a surrogate for the 100 year

- floodplain with climate change) to mandating street trees that can withstand expected climate, to planning for health impacts of climate change.
- Developed incentives and requirements for green infrastructure and city pilot program to show case low impact development/green infrastructure
  - Transformed state highway into walk able livable city street
  - Developed recreation opportunities on the river and in playing field within walking distance of neighborhoods
  - Expanded community gardens opportunities
  - Improved built environment to encourage exercise as a way to address chronic disease
  - Implemented Pavement to Parks program to green downtown.
  - Conservation Project, 125 acres bought to be kept as green space; but worried about what will do to property prices.
  - Carving out 12 lots for houses and 3 of them will be affordable houses; small 2 bedroom (designed by the firm that wins the design contest.) There will also be a bike path going through development that will meet NH's traffic mitigation requirement.

**Given the range of your priorities, which do you consider to be your top priorities?**

- Integrating sustainability in environment, social equity, and community economy to create comprehensive solution
- Updating Sustainable Northampton as a cross cutting blueprint
- Adopting a climate adaptation plan.
- Starting project to get LEDs in schools. Currently have a project to get 250k in but looking to expand.
- Continue with renewable thermal project "Heat Smart Northampton" increase market share of ground source heat pumps; this will be for all NH and other smaller targets.
- Thermal imaging, which is being funded by Grinspoon Foundation apart of "Energy Save" program. This will feed into the HeatSmart Program. \*town does not own data.
- Need energy and HVAC upgrades to middle and high schools.
- Couple of PV systems are going in (one with battery storage) and working with a nonprofit to target low-income population.

**Please explain why you have chosen these strategies?**

We prioritize projects at two scales. First, projects that promote integrated solutions, systems thinking, and not looking at individual issues in isolation. Second, projects that take advantage of low hanging fruit, easy projects that make measurable differences.

**How important are metrics to identifying the progress of the programs and policies?**

Very important. We use the STAR Communities rating system for a consistent third party

methodology and verifications of sustainability across the city, sometimes supplemented with other metrics.

**What resources are needed to complete your strategies and priorities? Are they currently available to you? If not, do you know where/how to obtain them?**

There are never enough resources, especially for a middle-income community like ours. As a result we rely heavily on outside grants (federal, state, foundation, and others), community donations, supplemented by a city commitment to staff, to some basic funding, a willingness of the city to borrow for projects that have short payback periods, and various revolving funds.

**How has the local community promoted its sustainability efforts to members in the community?**

Through various means:

1. Public committee structure: Energy and climate mitigation, through our energy and sustainability commission. For climate mitigation, climate adaptation, land use, and transportation, through our planning board, for open space through our conservation commission, and for all activities through our city council.
2. Public outreach: We use traditional media, social media, special events; special shows for outreach for a variety of projects.
3. Non-Traditional: We use a variety of methods from tactical urbanism projects, community solarizing events, etc. to inform the community.
4. Planning: We engage and empower the community whenever appropriate by getting them involved in decision making, from traditional public hearings on plans to interactive activities such as health impact assessments and low-income targeted focus groups.

**What are your top 3 barriers that you consider to be beyond the control of the municipality, which have limited your ability to implement sustainability initiatives?**

1. Limited resources to fund staff and implement projects are by far the biggest barriers.
2. State and federal actions that are not consistent with our sustainability initiatives, such as road infrastructure that makes it easier for lower density sprawl, moving public facilities away from urban centers, etc.
3. Market-driven investment strategies that focus on short term returns and therefore make some investments (e.g., deep energy retrofits) with a longer payback period, more difficult.

## Sustainable Profile<sup>2</sup>

### *Overview*

- Solid Waste Reduction & Recycling
- Food & Agriculture
- Transportation
- Storm Water
- Energy
- Development
- Greenhouse Gas Reduction
- Climate Preparedness
- Equity & Economics
- Community Engagement

### Sustainable Plans

	Targets/Goals	Published Plan	Metrics/Reporting
Solid Waste Reduction & Recycling			✓
Food & Agriculture			
Transportation		✓	✓
Storm Water			✓
Energy		✓	✓
Development		✓	✓
GHG Reduction		✓	✓
Climate Preparedness		✓	✓
Equity & Economics		✓	
Community Engagement		✓	
Totals		7	7

*Data Source: University of New Hampshire Sustainability Institute: Program Implementation Survey 2017*

### Solid Waste Reduction & Recycling

#### *Top Priorities*

- Decrease the community and city's use of natural resources.

#### *Strategies*

- Accepting trash on a fee per bag basis, to create incentive for more recycling which, we accept for free.
- Aggressive promotion of recycling at our retail-level solid waste transfer station.
- Recycling events for hard to recycle objects (Christmas trees, large plastic items, etc.)
- Supporting recycling and low energy practices in city operations (e.g., promoting use of recycled content paper and supplies, using bicycle-driven trash haulers for downtown street rubbish bin collection)
- Update audit reports of waste generation and disposal to allow review for improvements in reuse, recycling and waste reduction.

## Food & Agriculture

### *Top Priorities*

- Preserve and encourage agricultural uses in designated areas, with a focus on protecting both farmland and farmers.

### *Strategies*

- Purchase farmland and development rights to farmland at risk of development.
- Support farmers markets and other mechanisms to support local farmers.
- Advocate for farmers, including farming nuisances, over those who come to the nuisance and object to long term farming practices.
- Understanding the balance between herbicide use that allows no-till agriculture and reduces the erosion from tilling farmland and an otherwise hope to reduce toxic chemicals.
- Monitor the trends of farmland utilization and production and be ready to act when there is the need for public policy support.
- Work with Agriculture Commission to farmers needs and address those needs.

## Transportation

### *Top Priorities*

- Expand the network of rail trails and mixed-use trails.
- Expand the network of sidewalks, safe cross walks, and walking paths and
- Expand the network of cycle tracks, bicycle lanes and bicycle infrastructure (e.g., bicycle lockers, bicycle repair stations)
- Expand car sharing options
- Expand park and ride lot options
- Expand and maintain transit for both transit-dependent riders and choice riders both regionally and, by way of Amtrak, connecting outside the region.
- Expand transportation demand management approaches that reduce transportation demand.
- Require traffic mitigation (fees or improvements) from projects adding vehicle trips outside of urban core areas.
- Promote a Vision Zero concept of no traffic deaths being acceptable
- Prioritize bicycles and pedestrians and make all roads complete streets for all means of transport
- Create bicycle sharing program
- Ensure the safe and efficient transportation of goods and people by motor vehicles, bicycle, foot and any other means.

### *Strategies*

- Ensure that environmental impacts are considered and adverse effects are minimized on all transportation projects.

## Storm Water

### *Top Priorities*

- Safeguard and improve the quality of the City's surface waters to ensure use for safe public use.
- Ensure that new development does not increase peak flows of storm water runoff or degrade water quality.
- Upgrade the City's aging storm water management system.

### *Strategies*

- Create a volunteer water-quality monitoring group.
- Adopted citywide storm water utility for reliable funding and equitable financing.
- Require intermediate and large projects do not increase peak storm water runoff.
- Require all projects treat the quality of storm water leaving their site
- Create pilot projects and be a model by new city tree box filters, rain gardens, drainage swales and other improvements.
- Create a long-term plan to improve the health of the community's waterways.
- Complete an engineering assessment on the ability to meet present and future storm water management requirements. Include low impact and greet design considerations in the assessment.

## Energy

### *Top Priorities*

- Reduce community and city's energy demand and natural resource consumption.

### *Strategies*

- Established an Energy and Sustainability Commission to advocate for energy and climate mitigation, with City staff, board members, and citizens.
- Reduce energy use for city operations (e.g., building energy performance, automobile fleet fuel use and mileage, street lights, and all equipment)
- Encourage community energy savings (e.g., energy concierge program, solarize Northampton, group heat pump purchasing)
- Plan for micro grid to serve most sensitive areas (hospital, public works operations, emergency shelter)
- Prepare and implement an energy conservation plan for the City as a means of providing a resources guide on cost-effective-energy-saving measures.
- Adopt a standard that all new significant City buildings will meet LEED certification standards and ideally be LEED-certified (to date, new police station and new senior center are LEED certified)

## Development

### *Top Priorities*

- Direct changes and improvements in accordance with future Land Use Map.
- Create and preserve high quality, built environments in the downtown and village centers.
- Minimize the impacts of infrastructure systems on environmental resources.

### *Strategies*

- Double and triple the allowable density in residential neighborhoods close to downtown.
- Encourage mixed-use development in both residential and commercial areas, especially at the edge of downtown and at the former Northampton State Hospital.
- Ask for creative designed and cluster developments that allow higher density to improve the yield of housing in the downtown and village centers.
- Compare the City land use policies against the Open Space and Recreation Plan recommendations to identify priority open space areas and resources that should be preserved.
- Add 0.6% of the city as open space every year. Add parks, green space and appropriate agriculture on city-owned land or on larger infill development parcels where possible, to keep urban and village centers attractive.
- Implement regulation that will include measures for soil erosion and sediment control.

## Greenhouse Gas Reduction

### *Top Priorities*

- See energy actions above
- Use Greenhouse Gas reductions as a cross-cutting priority for all city planning
- Reduce GHG emissions 80% by 2050 (informal city goal)
- 

### *Strategies*

- (See energy actions above)
- Monitor Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Model city policies to show GHG on track to reduce 80% by 2015

## Climate Preparedness

### *Top Priorities*

- Develop strategies to protect the City from the impacts of natural hazards.
- Use FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plan to address all natural hazards and climate change induced hazards
- Create climate change plan, eventually incorporated into Sustainable Northampton,

as a citywide framework.

#### *Strategies*

- Expand the City's Sustainable Northampton Plan and Emergency Response Plan to include review of high hazard areas and recommendations to reduce exposure with alterations in land use patterns and infrastructure projects.
- Consider health inequities of some populations from hazards and climate change in preparedness planning
- Adopt comprehensive climate adaptation plan.

### Equity & Economics

#### *Top Priorities*

- Ensure vibrant and distinctive downtown, commercial, and village centers.
- Preserve and sustain existing affordable housing.

#### *Strategies*

- Encourage and support affordable housing throughout the city, but especially within walking distance of transit and downtown centers.
- Use environmental justice as a lens to evaluate new city-facility and park siting
- Create parks and recreation areas to serve underserved populations
- Focus on social justice and equality in public schools

Provide support for efforts to address food insecurity and all other inequities

- Coordinate regional efforts to improve the built environment, food systems, and clinical responses to address health inequities and preventable chronic disease.
- Support infill development in downtown and commercial/industrial zones.
- Provide regulations and financial incentives that would encourage conversion of public and private surface parking lots to mixed development.
- Continue to support participation and facilitation of the Three County Continuum of Care, the regional homeless services planning effort.

### Community Engagement

#### *Top Priorities*

- Inform, consult, engage, and empower community members and all stakeholders in community planning and policy formulation.

#### *Strategies*

- Include interactive workshops
- Target underserved populations
- Address power in balance between different populations in considering decisions such as parks and sidewalks, which had not historically been fairly distributed.

## Initiative Implementation

Northampton, MA	Not Yet Considered	Planning	In Progress	Fully Implemented
Curbside Composting	✓			
Zero Waste Policy		✓		
Community Gardens				✓
Urban Agriculture & Local Food Programs			✓	
Complete Streets			✓	
Bike Share/ Rail Trail			✓	
Green Storm Water Infrastructure Upgrades			✓	
Commercial/Municipal Building Upgrades			✓	
Municipal Energy Aggregation		✓		
Municipal Solar Installations			✓	
Community Solar Installations		✓		
LED Conversions: Streetlight				✓
LED Conversion: Municipal Buildings		✓		
Mixed-Use Development				✓
Urban Infill				✓
Sustainable Housing for Low-Income Families				✓
Aiding Local Business With Sustainable Programs		✓		
Updated Website with Events/Reports		✓		
OTHER			✓	
Totals	1	6	7	5

Data Source: University of New Hampshire Sustainability Institute: Program Implementation Survey 2017

### Sources:

- 1.) "Census Profile: Northampton, MA." *Census Reporter*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2017.
- 2.) "Sustainable Northampton, Comprehensive Plan." *City of Northampton* January 2008. <http://www.northamptonma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/838>