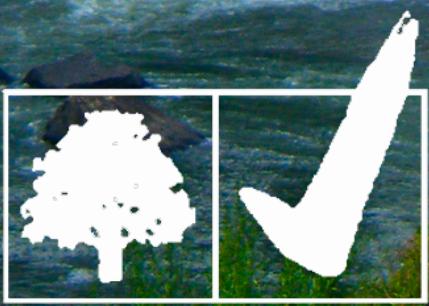


Blueprint for a Greener Westchester

2016-2017



NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND

INTRODUCTION

Every two years, the New York League of Conservation Voters Westchester Chapter works closely with local advocates to develop a policy agenda. This Blueprint for a Greener Westchester provides specific actions government officials can take to fight climate change, conserve our lands and waters, and protect public health.

Climate change is not only transforming our world, it's transforming Westchester. Recent severe storms destroyed our infrastructure, damaged our neighborhoods, and changed our landscape. We must become more resilient to the next storm, but we must also work to mitigate the long-term effects of a changing climate by promoting renewable

energy, building efficiency, sustainable transportation, and better solid waste management.

Westchester boasts vibrant natural resources from the Hudson River to the Long Island Sound. Yet our natural assets are being threatened by development, pollution, and underfunding. We must safeguard and restore them for the next generation.

Finally, we must make sure that we take steps to protect public health. Every Westchester resident deserves access to clean air, well-maintained parks for recreation, fresh food from local farms, and protection from toxic chemicals.

TOP PRIORITIES FOR THE CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT

- **Sustainable Development** - Creating the conditions for livable, sustainable communities is an important way that municipalities can combat against climate change. We will advance modernized zoning to encourage mixed land use, compact development, downtown revitalization, open space protection, and historic preservation.
- **Invasive Species** - Invasive species damage the lands and waters that native plants and animals need to survive. We will work with local organizations and public officials to educate the public on this problem, encourage better management of invasives, and propose a robust eradication program in Westchester.
- **Cleaner Air** - The use of home heating oil No. 6 and No. 4 is a top contributor to polluted air, with high levels of particulate matter that cause respiratory illnesses. We will work with the county and localities to speed up conversions and retrofits to cleaner, more efficient heating systems.
- **Expand Electric Vehicle Infrastructure** - Electric vehicles reduce greenhouse gas emissions and emit zero particulate matter, improving air quality. A larger network of charging stations will encourage more municipalities, businesses and individuals to switch over to them in the coming years. We will work with state and local officials to make this a reality.



Left: The Emerald Ash Borer is an invasive species infesting and killing Ash trees in Westchester. Right: No. 2 home heating oil emits 93% less soot into the air than dirty, polluting No. 6 home heating oil.

SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC ASSET MANAGEMENT

Local and regional governments can make significant impacts on energy use and the environment simply by deciding to spend money and deploy resources wisely.

- Purchase energy from renewable sources.
- Purchase Energy Star-rated equipment.
- Install solar and wind generation on public buildings.
- Increase clean energy purchasing power through intra-governmental aggregation.
- Convert municipal vehicle fleets to hybrid, electric, or other clean energy vehicles.
- Use 5% biofuel in existing diesel vehicles, especially those that transport children.
- Plant street trees and support other “green streets” initiatives.
- Conduct energy audits of municipal facilities.
- Develop a plan to reduce each locality's total fossil fuel use by 4% per year, in line with an Energy Descent Action Plan.
- Fund public education and outreach on existing energy efficiency incentives.
- Participate in PACE financing programs to increase clean energy installation and use.
- Upgrade street lights to energy-efficient LED bulbs.
- Adopt Integrated Pest Management plans for publicly-owned property to reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides.
- Create programming in parks, farms and other open space to encourage the public's use and appreciation of them.

TRANSPORTATION

Maximizing transit networks and developing new mixed-use housing and commercial centers that are accessible to energy-efficient mass transit will help fight climate change while enabling economic activity. Transit is key to developing walkable neighborhoods and towns.

- Create dedicated bus lanes, bike and pedestrian trails networks, and protected bike lanes that connect residential to commercial areas, parks, and green spaces.
- Support improved Metro North White Plains station that expands capacity and connects with regional transit network.
- Encourage bike share and car share initiatives.
- Encourage electric vehicle charging station networks in municipal and private garages.
- Increase funding for regional transit and increase service and routes.

SUSTAINABLE & TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Rising housing costs, disappearing open space, traffic congestion and the lack of coordinated planning pose serious threats to the region's economic future and a car-dependent transportation system has led to substantial environmental challenges. Creating livable and sustainable communities should be a goal for existing and future generations. This goal should include entitlements that permit increased density and diversity in our downtowns and neighborhoods with convenient mass transit.

- Modernize zoning, tax incentives, and regulations to encourage mixed land use, compact development, downtown revitalization, open space protection, and historic preservation.
- Adopt a Climate Smart Community resolution.
- Work with local towns to develop downtown revitalization plans.
- Reduce or eliminate parking minimums to encourage walkable neighborhoods.
- Redesign arterial streets as “complete streets” in order to make communities more walkable and bikeable.
- Implement traffic calming projects, lower speed limits, install electronic speed enforcement, increase penalties and enforcement for reckless and dangerous driving, and other initiatives focused on safety on all streets.
- Identify and encourage redevelopment of brownfield sites, and utilize the Brownfields Opportunity Area program to ensure that local communities are engaged.

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

Open space is disappearing and under development pressure throughout the region. While some communities have made laudable efforts to preserve open space, it is clear that more needs to be done. Local leaders should support planning strategies such as clustering, creating pocket parks in developed areas, and encouraging biotic corridors in less densely populated areas. Communities should make certain that their master plans encourage affordable housing and residential adaptive reuse of building structures in downtown areas. Taken together, these strategies will help ease development pressure on remaining open space.

- Protect open space from development by promoting local bond initiatives, conservation land trusts, community preservation funds, dedicated revenue streams for conservation, and reduced property taxes for open space.
- Expand regional and local land banks to preserve green space for livable neighborhoods.
- Create local community gardens and urban farms, and encourage their conservation easements be held by a land trust or municipality.
- Adopt zoning that preserves existing green space and open space set-asides.



Left: You can now charge your electric vehicle at many Metro North stations, but additional charging infrastructure is needed to further speed up the rate of electric vehicle adoption. **Right:** Programs like Solarize Westchester are helping residents and businesses finance rooftop solar panels and save money on their energy bills.

NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

Managing and protecting regional natural resources will require a comprehensive effort that looks at air, water and land.

- Reduce the use of single-use bags and encourage re-useable bags through fees and regulations.
- Provide incentives for communities, property owners and developers to manage storm water on-site with a variety of technologies such as green roofs, bioswales, rain gardens and rain barrels, and implement strategies outlined in storm water management plans.
- Encourage the use of native plants for landscaping and implement programs to address the growing threat of invasive species.
- Develop regional, county and local plans to restore streams and other water resources.
- Develop waste reduction plans such as municipal composting and “swap meets”.
- Prioritize and fund a forestry and tree regeneration program including downtown areas.
- Protect parks and playgrounds from alienation of parkland.
- Encourage permeable paving surfaces.
- Rebuild outdated infrastructure, update sewage treatment plants, and reduce combined sewer overflow drainage to improve water quality and aquatic habitat.
- Ensure that rail transportation of crude oil complies with federal, state, and local safety and environmental regulations, especially in environmentally critical areas.
- Support the Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan to create cleaner, greener communities.



Left: The Long Island Sound is among Westchester's many natural assets, drawing not just locals but people from around the region. Right: The Saw Mill River Daylighting project in Yonkers is an excellent example of urban revitalization that is also helping to improve resiliency from flooding and extreme weather.

ENERGY

A major pillar of addressing climate change and air pollution is energy efficiency. This can be achieved in many ways: in residential and commercial settings, in existing and new buildings, and with cutting-edge technology and the smarter use of older technology.

- Adopt green building standards for new residential and commercial construction projects.
- Remove impediments in laws, codes and practices to streamline the process for homeowners and business owners to install renewable energy sources.
- Create incentives for energy-efficiency upgrades in existing buildings and new development.
- Design and support programs that ensure equitable delivery of reliable clean energy and efficiency programs.
- Expand the use of biofuel blends in home heating oil, commercial buildings, and vehicles—especially vehicles used in dense urban areas with high levels of childhood asthma.
- Encourage the adoption of #2 home heating oil or natural gas to replace #4 and #6 oil.
- Pass local ordinances to control light pollution.
- Support clean-energy projects, such as microgrids, solar, distributed energy and efficiency investments.

FARMS AND LOCAL FOOD

A vibrant agricultural sector plays a key role in managing development and providing access to healthy, fresh foods.

- Work with the state Department of Agriculture and Markets to expand the Fresh-Connect Program to create more farmers markets throughout the region—especially in “food desert” communities.
- Maintain productive farmland through the acquisition and donation of development rights.
- Create outreach and awareness campaigns to take advantage of the growing popularity of regional agriculture, sustainable viticulture and local agricultural products.
- Adopt legislation that protects farmland.
- Explore and encourage funding streams for farmland and open space that can leverage private and public dollars.



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NYLCV is the only nonpartisan, statewide environmental organization in New York that fights for clean water, clean air, renewable energy and open space through political action.

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*NYLCV р educates, engages and empowers New Yorkers
to be effective advocates for the environment.*