

SUSTAINABLE SIMSBURY

A newsletter of Simsbury's Sustainability Committee

January 2024

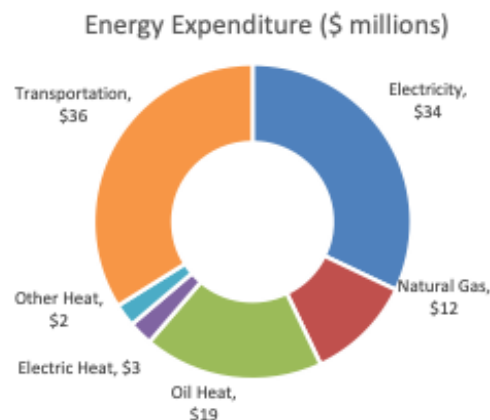
ARTICLES

The article below on Simsbury's energy usage is the first part of a two-part series. Here we discuss Simsbury's current energy usage and in part-two we will discuss suggestions for decarbonizing our community.

Simsbury's Energy by the Numbers

Energy is essential; it is the lifeblood of Simsbury. We use it to heat and cool our homes and businesses, to run our appliances and to travel to work and play. It is also one of the largest expenditures for our residents and businesses.

Altogether, Simsbury residents, businesses, schools and the municipality spend about \$106 million each year on energy, or about \$4,300 per person. The chart below breaks down our annual expenditure by type. As you can see, it's about one-third for electricity, one-third for heating and one-third for transportation.



Currently, we get most of our energy from fossil fuels, including gasoline for our vehicles and heating oil and natural gas for our buildings. Even the electricity we get from the grid is generated to a large extent from fossil fuels, primarily natural gas. Our reliance on fossil fuels means we produce a lot of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in town,

roughly 8.8 metric tons per person each year. Experts tell us that this level is far higher than the planet can sustain.¹

If we are to address climate change, we need to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. Fortunately, we know how to do this. We already have the technologies we need to transition to clean energy, and as you'll see below, there are generous incentives available these days to make the changes affordable.

We need to focus our efforts in three areas:

- **Efficiency:** First, we should do everything we can to reduce the amount of energy we waste. For residents, the first step is to get a [Home Energy Solutions \(HES\)](#) energy audit. It's probably the best investment you'll ever make.
- **Electrification:** As we replace our cars, let's consider switching to an electric vehicle (EV). Costs are coming down, the selection is improving and here too, there are incentives to help us make the change. Similarly, as we replace or supplement our heating systems, let's consider electric cold-climate heat pumps. They are the most efficient system out there, and double as air conditioners.
- **Solar:** Not everyone can put solar on their roof, but if you can, it is an excellent investment these days. While we have some solar in town, we have much more potential. For example, through 2021, there are 197 residential solar installations in town which together produce about 2.2% of residential electricity usage.

In future newsletter articles, we'll explore in more detail how we all can reduce our energy usage, save money and reduce our impact on the planet.

How to Save Money while Transitioning to Clean Energy

In 2022, Congress passed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Among other things, the IRA offers generous incentives to homeowners, renters and drivers in the form of tax rebates or discounts to fight climate change. The non-partisan Citizens' Climate Lobby offers a [concise summary of the federal incentives](#). The State of Connecticut offers [additional incentives](#).

Reduce Food Waste with Flashfood

The West Simsbury Stop and Shop is now working with Flashfoods to reduce food waste. Working with the app [Flashfood](#), Stop and Shop offers significant discounts on foods approaching their "best sold by" dates. The Flashfood app alerts customers to products that are discounted. Customers can pay for the products through the app, and then pick up their order from the Flashfood cooler at the front of Stop and Shop.

Just a few months after introducing the Flashfood program, the West Simsbury Stop and Shop is already selling 25% of its discounted foods. Stop and Shop hopes, eventually, to sell 70% of its discounted food.

Overall in the United States, between 30-40% of all food is wasted, according to the USDA; food waste contributes to 8% of all greenhouse gas emissions in the US.

Bottles and Cans Now Worth Twice as Much

Beginning January 1, 2024, Connecticut's redemption on eligible bottles and cans doubled from 5- to 10-cents.

Recent updates to the 1980 recycling law - aka the "[Bottle Bill](#)" - are the result of legislative efforts to modernize the program and boost declining beverage container recycling rates which have dropped from 88% in 2000 to 46% in 2021.

All supermarkets are required by State law to redeem bottles and cans of brands that they carry.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Quarterly Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, January 18 at 10 am on Zoom

The Simsbury BPAC is a group of Simsbury volunteers, town staff, and regional advocates who are working together to build a safe and accessible walking and biking community. All are welcome. An agenda and zoom link will be posted at www.simsbury.bike.

"Birdman of the Senate: Senator George P. McLean and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act"

January 25, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at the Simsbury Public Library Program Room

The Simsbury Land Trust and the Simsbury Public Library invite you to William McLean Greeley's virtual author talk on his new biography of Senator George P. McLean titled *A Connecticut Yankee Goes to Washington: Senator George P. McLean, Birdman of the Senate*.

Meet up with the Farmington River Watershed Association

Sunday, January 28th from 1:30-2:30, 65 Farmington River Turnpike, New Hartford

Join the Farmington River Watershed Board of Directors on a walk of the newly-acquired Frey Property. Wear boots.

Following the hike, FRWA's Board of Directors will be at the Legitimus Brewery from 3-5 pm. Food is available at the food truck and drinks from the brewery. Legitimus Brewery: 283 Main Street, New Hartford. Please register for one or both events at 860 810-3938.

Simsbury Sustainability Committee Monthly Meeting

Thursday, February 1, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom

If you would like to watch the next meeting of the Sustainability Committee, join us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SimsburySustainabilityCommittee>.

FILM PRESENTATION: Uninvited: The Spread of Invasive Species

February 15, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at the Simsbury Public Library Program Room

This film from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation tells the story of invasive species in NYS and how DEC and their partners are tackling them. Sponsored by the Simsbury Land Trust and the Simsbury Public Library.

Seed Swap

February 25, 2024 from 2:00-4:00 pm at the Simsbury Grange, 236 Farms Village Road, West Simsbury

Are you interested in helping to promote biodiversity, or a cost effective alternative to buying seeds? Join us upstairs for a community seed swap! Bring your own seeds to share, or just come to collect seeds and learn more about planting them this spring. Sponsored by the Simsbury Grange.