

10.4 – Develop and Promote Community Growing Spaces - Community Gardens – Equity Toolkit

Who Lives and Works in your Community

List the groups and stakeholders your Sustainability Team identified and engaged.

As one of Connecticut's oldest municipalities, Glastonbury is dedicated to preserving its numerous parks, historic sites, and riverfront property and supports a highly active community of ~35,000 residents. The Town is proud to be well-known for its excellent municipal management, outstanding public education, historic character, and high quality of life.

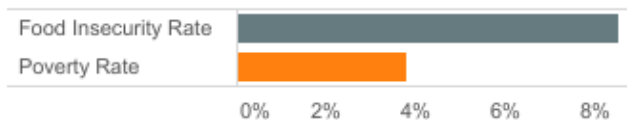
The following data was taken from the [2020 US Census](#), [2019 CERC profile](#) (most recent year available), and [CT Department of Labor](#), and helps provide a useful snapshot of the community's demographics:

- Population (2020) = 34,810 residents
- 52.5 square miles, including 9 miles along the Connecticut River
- 12 Parks / Open Spaces; 3 Swimming Pools
- 3 Libraries; 8 Public Schools
- Median age (2013-2017) = 46 years
- # of Households (2015-2019) = 13,411
- Median Household income (2020 Census)= \$120,837
- Poverty rate (2020 US Census) = 3.6%
- Unemployment rate = 4.8%
- Persons with a disability, under age 65 years, 2015-2019 (2020 Census)= 4.8%
- Veteran population (2015-2019) = 1,367
- Age distribution (2020 Census)
 - 23.2% of residents are under 18 years of age
 - 18% of Glastonbury residents are 65+ years of age
- Race (2020 US Census)
 - White alone = 85.1%
 - White alone, not Hispanic, or Latino = 80.9%
 - Asian, alone = 8.7%
 - Hispanic or Latino – 5.8%
 - Black or African American, alone = 2.2%
 - Two or more Races = 2.2%
 - Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, 0.4%
 - American Indian and Alaska Native, alone = 0.1%

Food Insecurity

The USDA Economic Research Service defines food insecurity as “household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.” According to Feedback America and Craig Gundersen*, the Food Insecurity Rate in Glastonbury is 8.5%.

Food Insecurity Rate	8.5%
Poverty Rate	3.8%



* Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, A. Crumbaugh, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. *Map the Meal Gap 2018: A Report on County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2016*. Feeding America, 2018.

Equity Implications of Data

As evidenced by the data above, Glastonbury is a fairly affluent community of just under 35,000 residents. With an average age of 46 years, 23.2% of residents are youth (under the age of 18) and 18% of residents are seniors age 65+. These groups represent 2 large subsets of the Glastonbury population. Additionally, the 2020 Census indicates that the Town of Glastonbury has a median household income of \$120,837 a poverty rate of 3.6%, and an unemployment rate of 4.8%. While the community compares favorably to the state of Connecticut on these metrics, Feeding America reports that the Town of Glastonbury has a food insecurity rate of 8.5%.

According to the CT General Assembly (CGA), the pandemic has had a significant impact on food insecurity in families throughout the state. In December of 2020, CGA issued a report that outlined the changes in food insecurity for CT families by county, as well as how the rates compared from 2018 to 2020.

[Food Insecurity in Connecticut](#)

Table 1: Projected Food Insecurity by County, 2018 - 2020

County	Total Population	2018		2020		Change 2018-2020	
		# Food Insecure	% Food Insecure	# Food Insecure	% Food Insecure	# Food Insecure	% Food Insecure
Fairfield	944,350	93,270	9.9%	132,170	14.0%	38,900	41.7%
Hartford	894,730	105,050	11.7%	141,990	15.9%	36,940	35.2%
Litchfield	183,030	17,890	9.8%	24,760	13.5%	6,870	38.4%
Middlesex	163,370	15,770	9.7%	21,760	13.3%	5,990	38.0%
New Haven	859,340	104,390	12.1%	139,370	16.2%	34,980	33.5%
New London	268,880	31,670	11.8%	45,700	17.0%	14,030	44.3%
Tolland	151,270	13,980	9.2%	19,350	12.8%	5,370	38.4%
Windham	116,540	13,900	11.9%	18,640	16.0%	4,740	34.1%

Source: *Food Insecurity During COVID-19, October 2020, See [appendix](#)*

The Town operates a highly successful food bank, managed through the Social Services Department. This program relies on donations from local businesses and community members and has served as a very effective platform for connecting residents in need with food items. Eligible families looking to use the food bank can submit a request by phone or online in English or Spanish and the Town arranges to them to pick up their items on a weekly basis.

In addition to the Food Bank, Glastonbury staff are continuously seeking opportunities to connect community members with healthy and locally grown food. The Farmers Market operates from June – September on Town-owned grounds each year, and the Senior Services division provides grocery services to senior and disabled residents in need.

Glastonbury also offers a community garden program through its Parks & Recreation Department. Community garden plots are located behind the Police Department at 2108 Main Street and can be accessed from Canione Road. Plots measure either 20' x 40' (\$35) or 20' x 20' (\$20) and are rented to interested residents. Parks Maintenance staff maintain the areas (e.g. plowing and staking), and they are available for community use between May and September each year.

As part of the Sustainable CT certification program, the Sustainability Team identified and engaged the following stakeholders as part of its ongoing Community Gardening program:

- Glastonbury Partners in Planting (GPIP)
- GPIP President, Pam Eudowe

- Glastonbury Recreation Supervisor, Anna Park
- Glastonbury Parks & Recreation Director, Lisa Zerio
- Town Departments: Glastonbury Parks & Recreation Department; Glastonbury Refuse Disposal Division; Glastonbury Public Works (Highway, Engineering, Fleet); Glastonbury Food Bank (Social Services Department)
- Glastonbury Sanitation Superintendent Mike Bisi
- Senior residents
- Youth residents
- Inter-faith communities (St. Dunstan's)
- Eileen Cullinane, St. Dunstan's Community Garden Plot Manager
- Residents with food insecurities

How did you connect with each other?

Describe how and when the engagement took place and what was discussed. List the shared goals determined through your community co-creation and engagement process.

Glastonbury Parks and Recreation collaborates with many different volunteer groups for a variety of different initiatives throughout each year. Since 2004, the local gardening organization Glastonbury Partners in Planting (GPIP) has coordinated volunteers to create new gardens in many areas throughout the community including the Route 17 Medians, Buckingham Park, Center Village, Village Green, Welles-Turner Library, South Glastonbury Library, and Salmon Brook Bridge on Main St. The volunteers also plant annuals in more than 80 large pots throughout the community every spring. Over the years, Glastonbury Parks & Recreation and GPIP have worked together on a number of projects, with GPIP facilitating volunteers and equipment/resources, and the Town providing support in terms of staff resources, equipment, and property maintenance. As a result of this ongoing collaboration, Glastonbury Parks & Recreation Staff and GPIP members have identified the following shared goals:

- **Improve and expand Town parks and open spaces, specifically garden opportunities**
- **Create opportunities for resident gardening education and passive recreation**
- **Leverage the community gardens to support residents with food insecurities**

These shared goals of community engagement and education arose organically through co-sponsored events and ongoing conversations between staff and GPIP staff. Face to face conversations with Teen Center participants and residents that had purchased community garden plots in the past also took place during the end of the gardening season, 2020 to assist in determining what additional educational opportunities would benefit them going forward. Town staff that assisted in the installation and closure of the gardens each year also provided additional feedback.

What emerged from your dialogue?

State the Sustainable CT action to which you ultimately chose to apply the Equity Toolkit; include why you selected this action.

Based on Town staff's interactions with residents and other stakeholders, we chose to apply the Equity Toolkit to Action 10.4: Develop and Promote Community Growing Spaces - to help youth and senior residents access open space, create educational and recreational gardening opportunities, and to support improved access to healthy food for residents with food insecurities through a partnership with St. Dunstan's Church.

Supporting Residents with Food Insecurities:

In 2021, Glastonbury Recreation Supervisor, Anna Park reached out to GPIP President, Pam Eudowe to present the idea of developing an educational program dedicated to the Community Gardens. The two engaged in several phone calls, emails, and meetings to develop the program and associated schedule.

As part of the stakeholder engagement process, Anna Park researched other existing community programs that had these shared goals of improving town parks and engaging residents in gardening activities. Through conversations with other Town departments, Anna Park learned that the Glastonbury Refuse Disposal had recently started a resident compost bin program (launched in 2019). Twice annually, the Refuse Division hosts a compost bin sales and pickup

event, where residents can purchase compost bins, rain barrels, and related equipment at a 50% discount from retail prices. Purchased items are then available for pickup on designated days. Upon learning of this composting program, Anna reached out to Glastonbury Sanitation Director, Mike Bisi to explore the potential of adding compost bins to the Town-managed community gardens.

Glastonbury residents and local businesses/organizations can rent the garden plots and, among the many participants, St. Dunstan's Church has rented a plot for many years. They have rented this community garden plot with the sole goal of planting and harvesting food for the local food pantry (Glastonbury Food Bank). As harvests among other community gardeners grew more bountiful, Eileen Cullinane (St. Dunstan's garden plot manager) reached out to Anna Park about the potential to engage the entire community gardens network to donate produce from their gardens to residents with food insecurities. Anna/the Town was in full support of this idea and the two organizations collaborated to determine how they could best execute. To help encourage participation, St. Dunstan's posted signs at the garden plots and donation bins to collect produce grown on site that could be donated to the local food bank.

Creating Opportunities for Gardening education and recreation

Gardening is often used as a therapeutic tool to help improve mental health. During the COVID-19 pandemic particularly, many of Glastonbury's senior residents were unable to participate in their typical activities and/or see visitors due to quarantining restrictions. Additionally, teen residents (youth) spent an inordinate amount of time on social media and electronics, including virtual learning. In response to these isolating circumstances and residents growing need for activity, socialization, and time spent outdoors, the Town and its stakeholders wanted to create opportunities for safe recreation and socialization.

To help meet these needs within the youth and senior communities, the Town wanted to provide a dedicated community garden space, which would serve as a healthy/safe activity and the opportunity to visit with neighbors and friends. In addition, the program would include educational elements whereby participants could learn about soil testing, shade vs. sun plants, pollinators, and various other gardening related topics. This educational component helped engage community members and also eliminated barriers for residents who would not otherwise know how to participate in gardening activities.

What was the result of your collaboration?

Describe how you implemented the action based on the input received during the community engagement and co-creation process. Highlight how your Sustainability Team incorporated the community input and how the action implementation was different because of this input. How might you include or expand services to additional community members in the future?

Creating Opportunities for Gardening education and recreation

As a result of the collaboration with Glastonbury Partners in Planting, Inc. (GPIP), and the need to provide socialization and passive recreation for senior and youth residents, the Town developed and implemented the Family Gardening initiative at the Community Gardens. Through this program, GPIP will host a monthly educational series at the Community Gardens for residents to learn all about gardening from A-Z. This year, the free program is being offered from May through September 2021 and is free for community members. By providing this program free of charge, we are eliminating any barriers for community members who may not be able to afford such a program otherwise. Additionally, the community gardens are located in the Town Center, which is easily accessible by public transportation or the expansive sidewalk network. This helps eliminate any barriers related to transportation and helps ensure that residents with or without a vehicle can attend as desired.

Through the educational series, participants will learn to test the soil, prepare beds, what to plant, as well as information about planting zones, fertilizer, composting, and much more! This monthly series features different topics and opportunities for hands-on learning in a very casual environment, which also allows community members to participate without worrying about dress code. The groups meet twice per week, on Wednesdays from 9:00-10:00 a.m. and Fridays from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. The topics repeat on Wednesdays and Fridays to accommodate residents with different schedules who may not be able to attend one session or the other.

As part of Anna's collaboration with the Refuse Division, the Parks and Recreation Department was able to purchase 8 compost bins through the April 2021 Compost Bin Sales and Pickup event, and these bins were implemented at the various garden plots in 2021. The Refuse Division split the cost of the compost bins with the Parks and Recreation Department. 8 compost bins were placed in various locations throughout the gardens, including the Family Gardening Initiative plots. Participants are welcome to add their organic materials to these bins and the Town sent an email communication to all community garden plot renters detailing what was and was not appropriate to place in the compost bins, as well as information about the value of composting. For example, items appropriate for the compost bins include: Vegetable & Fruit Scraps; Dried Leaves, Straw and Hay; Very Small Weeds. Conversely, the use of herbicides in the community gardens is prohibited. This includes weed killers, many of which remain in the soil for several years and can cause damage to crops in succeeding years. GPIP volunteers care for and turn the compost in the bins each week. At the end of the gardening season, Park Maintenance staff will add the compost that was created to the soil at the gardens, and the compost bins will be removed and placed in storage.

To remove barriers for participation, the Town and GPIP provide as much maintenance and support as possible for the community garden plots. Glastonbury Public Works delivers mulch (created by tree removal in Town) for community gardeners to use in their garden plots. Additionally, the Town has provided a number of spigots for the gardens for watering and covers the utility costs for the water. Gardeners are reminded that the use of drip irrigation is discouraged, to be fair and reasonable in the use of water, and not to leave water running unattended.

Leverage the community gardens to support residents with food insecurities

Providing fresh vegetables and locally grown produce to families in need (e.g. those who have recently lost their job or are facing financing difficulties), can be a challenge. Most Food pantries are not able to provide fresh produce and communities across the world have seen an increased need for the food bank as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the Town has found that, unfortunately, many gardeners leave produce in the gardens to rot when there is excess they cannot use. Through the Town's collaboration with St. Dunstan's Church, we have identified an opportunity to reduce this food waste and to provide the healthy, fresh, and locally grown food with residents in need through the Glastonbury Food Bank. Community gardeners are encouraged to donate surplus produce (by placing produce in bins located in the community gardens) which are in turn donated to local food pantries, Glastonbury Senior Services and FoodShare. In addition, at the end of the gardening season any leftover produce is harvested by volunteers and donated to the local food pantry.

This summer 8-10 bags each week of greens (collards, kale, lettuce, basil, sage) has been delivered to local pantries. In addition, 2 boxes of zucchini (20 pounds); 3 boxes of summer squash (30 pounds) and 10-12 bags of beets, fingerling potatoes, eggplant, and broccoli has been donated. It is anticipated that approximately 2000 pounds of produce will be donated by the end of the summer.

In addition to the Family Gardening Initiative, the Town of Glastonbury also wanted to respond to the community's identified needs to support youth and senior socialization. Through conversations for residents and the Glastonbury Housing Authority, the Town decided it would be valuable to provide free gardening spaces where youth and seniors could easily access them. Accordingly, Glastonbury established free gardening spaces available at the Herbert T. Clark House senior housing community, the Glastonbury Teen Center, and to Glastonbury Partners in Planting (GPIP) so that their members can garden. By providing these plots free of charge, the Town helps support youth and senior gardening activities and opportunities for passive recreation. Additionally, the Town strategically selected the Herbert T. Clark House to provide easy access for senior residents who may lack transportation or have other barriers to access. Likewise, the Teen Center was selected to make access easier for teens and their parents, as many youth would already be visiting the site for other activities, and the facility is centrally located and accessible by public transportation and the Town's extensive sidewalk network and highly walkable downtown area. Lastly, GPIP was provided with a free gardening space to foster ongoing collaboration with this valued partner.

How will you refine, revisit, and improve?

Evaluate the Equity Toolkit application process. What did your Sustainability Team learn? What challenges did your Sustainability

Team encounter and how might you make improvements for future applications of the Equity Toolkit? How might you engage and include more community members?

The equity toolkit application process was a useful method for evaluating our efforts as we went through the process of implementing the family gardening initiative, as well as our partnership with St. Dunstan's and the Glastonbury Food Bank. As we continue these programs, we will look to:

- implement additional compost bins as needed
- St. Dunstan's Church will continue to rent its garden plot to grow produce for local food pantries and coordinate produce donations from community gardeners.
- GPIP is in the process of soliciting new members & volunteers to assist with upcoming projects including turning the compost bins at the community gardens. They welcome both sponsors and/or partners for current and new project ideas and educational series session. Gardening knowledge is not necessary, people are needed to help with non-gardening tasks too.

Upon the completion of the gardening season, the Town plans to survey all of its gardener participants to get their feedback on the expanded educational offerings, food donation bins, and compost bins. Additionally, the Town will seek input from GPIP, its stakeholders, and the community gardeners to identify any potential improvements we can make to our programs.

One area we do want to focus on moving forward would be opportunities to make the gardens more accessible to senior residents and residents with disabilities. For example, would raised garden beds make gardening easier for someone with physical limitations? This is something we hope to explore for future programming.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Town did not mail its seasonal brochure as done in typical years, but was only able to provide the brochure electronically. This may have prevented residents without internet access or computers from learning about these programs. Going forward, the Town will evaluate the methods in which we promote these programs and determine if there are other channels through which we can make residents aware of these opportunities. Because the community gardeners are also supporting the food bank, the Town will also explore opportunities for additional partnerships and donations that could further our joint efforts to address food insecurity in Glastonbury.

Overall, the programs mentioned herein have been very well received, and community feedback thus far has been positive. The equity toolkit was helpful in guiding some of the decisions made throughout this process, and we are confident that these programs will continue to benefit community members in many ways in the years to come.