Water Conservation Advanced by 2030 Districts

Supported by Partners for Places, Austin TX and Stamford CT implement districts designed to reduce consumption of water and energy.

2030 Districts have emerged as a viable model to advance urban sustainability goals, as designated areas commit to reducing water and energy consumption. Read on to understand the model and impacts.

2030 DISTRICTS®

Image Source: 2030 Districts Website

2030 Districts is an effort led by the private sector. Local building industry leaders unite around a shared vision for sustainability and economic growth. They also align with local community groups and governments to achieve energy, water, and emissions reductions in commercial urban settings. This organization defines a successful 2030 District as a public-private partnership comprised of those within the district's boundary: 1) property owners and managers, 2) service providers, and 3) community stakeholders. The 2030 website hosts toolkits and showcases the current 2030 Districts Network.

The 2030 Districts vision is to onboard new cities to the model, support peer learning between districts, compile and share data, leverage district aggregate purchasing power, create national partnerships, and influence policy around transportation and building infrastructure for increased efficiencies. In 2015, two 2015 Partners for Places grants support the creation and implementation of 2030 Districts in Austin TX and Stamford CT. The following is a summary of both programs and impacts to date.

Austin's 2030 District

Because of the Partners for Places grant and the matching Meadows Foundation grant, the Austin 2030 District leveraged the lessons learned and best practices from fellow Texas communities Dallas and San Antonio. A full-time District Director is now responsible for recruitment, outreach, events, and coordination with local sponsors. When the Partners for Places grant closed, the District had 14 members representing 4.9 million square feet of building space. Building data is being aggregated from the member buildings, and the electric utility

Image Source: 2030 Districts Website

(Austin Energy) staff have developed an energy use baseline for the District. Austin Water Utility is providing similar support, as well as free water audits for all district member buildings.

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This District was initiated by a collaborative of property owners and managers, professional service providers and community organizations with the goal to keep Austin competitive and ensure a resilient, vibrant city in 2030. To do this, business leaders have committed to reduce the downtown business district's energy use, water use, and greenhouse gas emissions while continuing to stimulate economic growth. Within this District, members agree to:

- Support the goals and objectives of the Austin 2030 District
- Actively engage with the District by sharing professional and organizational expertise
- Provide education, training and / or mentorship to District members
- Leverage community networks to publicize and support the District
- Participate in District meetings and activities

To get members to contribute towards the success of District goals, benefits of joining are outlined:

- Greater financial gain from the high-occupancy rates and increased lease revenue green buildings generate
- Expanded organizational outreach, influence, programs, and activities
- Recognition for leadership on sustainability and resilience
- A way to showcase and share expertise / experience
- An expanded network of industry stakeholders and like-minded professionals
- Recognition as a thought leader and increased contribution to the community

Austin's 2030 District Reduction Goals

District goals represent aggregated reductions for all District buildings. No individual data is disclosed.

- *Existing Building Energy Use*: 20% reduction below the district baseline by 2020 with incremental targets, reaching a 50% reduction by 2030
- *Existing Building Water Use*: 20% reduction below the district baseline by 2020, with incremental targets, reaching a 50% reduction by 2030
- *New Building Energy Use*: Initial 60% usage below baseline at construction; carbon neutral by 2030
- *New Building Water Use*: 50% reduction below the District baseline by 2030
- *Transportation CO_2 Emissions*: 20% reduction below the district baseline by 2020, with incremental targets, reaching 50% by 2030

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Stamford's 2030 District

Image Source: 2030 Districts Website

The goal of the Stamford 2030 District is to promote energy efficiency, resiliency, and other key issues in commercial, institutional, and major multi-family buildings. In addition to meeting the performance goals of the Architecture 2030 challenge, the District is developing and incorporating strategies to increase community and local economic resilience to storms and sea level rise. It is doing this through best practice sharing and participant performance data tracking. All district buildings are being benchmarked and measured against a national baseline for energy use and against district baselines for water use and transportation-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Matching a Partners for Places grant, the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation and the City of Stamford CT worked together to design district goals and programmatic structures. Over the course of the grant, the District made measurable progress and identified new impact areas. Membership grew to 41, and it launched a monthly newsletter and an annual report. The report included the first compilation of energy and water conservation benchmarking data. The results demonstrated that member buildings are performing an average of 24 percent better than the national median building (adjusted for the regional climate). When factoring in non-member buildings (and assuming their performance is the same as a median building), the District is performing an average of 6 percent better.

Stamford 2030 has taken steps to begin the benchmarking process for water usage. Currently 64 percent of reporting buildings in the District are already tracking and collecting water usage data in Portfolio Manager. Stamford 2030 has also been working with organizations such as Aquarion Water Company and Clean Water Action to help determine appropriate metrics and best practices to meet the water usage goals. The District was awarded Connecticut Clean Water Action's 2015 Revitalization Award for leadership in green development.