

# SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

# 2019



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## TOWN OF MCCANDLESS



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*The Town of McCandless governs based upon solid core values of integrity, straightforwardness, pragmatism, and an attitude of public service and selflessness. We offer programs of service that emanate from these principles, delivered in optimal fashion.*

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# INTRODUCTION

## Executive Summary

The Town acknowledges the need to alter current practices based on growing evidence that business as usual is not sustainable. It also recognizes the need to provide a significant role in leading and supporting the community in their sustainability endeavors.

*Resolution No. 10 of 2019: The Town of McCandless is committed to promoting a sustainable future that meets today's needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.*

Ultimately, this plan will serve as part of the Town's application to the Pennsylvania Municipal League for Community Certification, along with a fully annotated criteria check sheet, which will be made available on the Town of McCandless website.

The Town will integrate the intent of this plan into everything we do by:

- o Supporting a stable, diverse and equitable economy
- o Protecting the quality of the air, water, land and other natural resources
- o Conserving native vegetation, fish, wildlife habitat and other ecosystems
- o Minimizing human impacts on local, regional and worldwide ecosystems

This plan provides insight into the Town's commitment to progressing toward sustainability and pronounces the principles of sustainability under which the Town is willing to conduct their duties. The pursuit of the Sustainable Community Certification is made based on the direction of the Town Manager and the Environmental Advisory

Committee. This executive summary highlights our key findings and provides some additional recommendations. It is meant to recognize the work the town has already accomplished toward achieving its sustainability goals and look at what can be done in the future to set a leading example for other communities.

At its conclusion, verifiable indicators for accountability are presented so the town may continue to track its progress. Our aim is to make the document easily accessible online for residents.



**FUN FACT:** Primarily a farming community in the 1800s, the Town boomed in 1890 with the discovery of oil and the introduction of an electric railway that helped open the future to the ever more growing, vibrant community we are today. In the Town we enjoy a suburban style setting while still maintaining the same comfortable environment of a bygone era. With quick and easy access to highways and turnpikes, and just a short commute to Downtown Pittsburgh, it's no wonder the population here has grown to more than 28,500 residents and why McCandless has been ranked highly among Money magazine's "Best Places to Live."

# The Sustainable Pennsylvania Community Certification

Sustainability at its most fundamental is the capacity of something to sustain itself. It is a concept and multi-modal practice that intertwines social/cultural issues, environmental issues, economic development and governmental policies. Balancing the economic, environmental and social needs of the community, meeting those needs, and respecting the needs of other local communities are the values that embody sustainable development.

The certification intends to grant acknowledgement to those municipalities that are applying the policies and practices of sustainability throughout their operations in order to advance community prosperity. It also serves as a mechanism for sharing best practices for creating a more sustainable Pennsylvania.



The program provides communities with an online structure and performance platform for recognition as they adopt sustainable operations. The certification – Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze, or Associate level – is free and strictly voluntary. The program helps municipalities progress toward achieving a more sustainable future for themselves and their residents.

## Positive Impacts of the Sustainable PA Certification:

- Clarifies priority policies that high performing governments ideally have in place
- Helps the Town establish a baseline of where they are now regarding implementing best practices
- Creates a pathway for continuous improvement
- Creates a conversation among town management, staff, elected officials, residents, and local employers
- Creates a network of municipalities for sharing information on best practices
- Raises community awareness about the comprehensive role of local government in advancing sustainable initiative



*Figure 1 is from the Sustainable PA Community Ceritification website*

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## Governance and Community Engagement

### Municipal Operations

The Town of McCandless approved a resolution dedicated to ensuring sustainability in May of 2019. Through the resolution, every town department has sustainability goals that are tracked and reported to ensure accountability.

McCandless has professional staff employed or retrained in the areas of budgeting and finance, additionally, a revenue-expenditure trend analysis is conducted annually.

### Community Engagement

The Town ensures that civic engagement, public participation and transparency are regularly assessed by holding publicly advertised council and committee meetings. An Environmental Advisory Committee was created by a Town resolution in May of 2016 and the members meet once a month to review progress on their projects.

Since 2017, the Environmental Advisory Committee has consistently produced a monthly environmental tips checklist that is distributed to all residents through the town website and McMail E-Newsletter.

To promote public engagement, a program currently exists to actively pursue and match residents and local businesses to volunteer opportunities for the betterment of the community.

### Local and Regional Cooperation

McCandless is an active member of the North Hills Council of Governments and often utilizes Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreements (ICA) to engage in multi-municipal endeavors. The McCandless-Franklin Park Ambulance Authority is a multi-municipal project which serves McCandless, Franklin Park, Bradford Woods, Pine and Marshall.

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## **Sustainability**

The Town has developed a sustainability program; departmental goal setting and budget processes are used to advance it. Moreover, a sustainability assessment will soon be conducted to evaluate town facilities, operations, plans and regulations relative to conserving resources, saving money and implementing policies. The professional development program for town personnel and officials includes participating quarterly in Local Government Academy or other professional training sessions.

## **Public Safety**

The Town maintains an updated Public Safety plan to ensure the needs of Fire, Police and EMS are met. Additionally, the Town participates in a regional service program and/or contracts these services through other municipalities like the McCandless-Franklin Park Ambulance Authority or ensuring that the McCandless Township Sewer Authority is empowered to serve the community.

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### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE:**

- Continue progress on the Heritage Center's cultivation and programming
- Provide training for municipal employees and HR who function closely to engage in advancing sustainability objectives
- Implement procedures to adequately measure the impacts of the sustainability program among all departments
- Continue developing a plan to expand the cooperation of available public safety services

## Healthy Communities

### Local Food

McCandless supports local farms in the surrounding area and encourages residents to buy local, the town also supports a program to engage residents in strengthening sustainable food systems to link local foods, farms and people. Accessible links are available on the town website to all local farm sites. Some farms local to McCandless are Soergel's, Kaelin's, Eichner's and the Shenot farms.

### Healthy People

Programs by the Town exist to address community health concerns; outdoor recreation opportunities, amenities and lifestyles are promoted. North Park activities and any recreation camps are displayed on the Town's website calendar for residents' convenience and to promote outdoor recreation.



### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE:

- Introduce education programs to residents on the benefits of organic, locally purchased food; facilitate farmers' markets and farm stands
- Work with residents on producing a community garden

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

### Human Resources

Measures are taken to ensure a wide range of candidates are interviewed for all municipal job openings in McCandless and the Town has a written policy prohibiting discrimination and valuing diversity and inclusion. The Town is engaged in programs to communicate that it is welcoming to a diverse population. The Town in July 2019 adopted a policy to ensure Minority Business Enterprises and Women Business Enterprises are considered for municipal purchasing bids and contracts.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE:

- Provide diversity training for all municipal employees
- Annually assess, and report to the public the diversity of all boards, employees, volunteers, committees, etc.
- Annually report to the public on progress toward creating a more diverse workforce

*From the Sustainable Pittsburgh Challenge website:*



#### Social Equity

This Focus Area provides a step-by-step roadmap for creating an inclusive and equitable work environment. Social Equity Actions ask you to assess your organization's approach to diversity and inclusion and then implement strategies for continuous improvement. This includes ensuring that you are recruiting from the full breadth of diversity in our region, providing inclusive benefits, and guaranteeing equitable salaries.

The Social Equity Actions asks you to reflect on your organization's inclusion practices. Who feels included or excluded? Why? "75 percent of white residents say they feel very welcome in southwestern Pennsylvania, compared to 36 percent of minorities. And 79 percent of whites feel the region embraces racial and ethnic minorities but only 41 percent of minorities agree."

## Education

### Cooperation

The Town works with schools and local nonprofits/community organizations to engage students about community issues such as waste reduction and recycling, public safety, wellness, conservation and nature.

Town planning is coordinated with the local school districts;

McCandless Town Manager, Robert Grimm, and Superintendent of the North Allegheny School District, Robert J. Scherrer, meet at least once a year. The North Allegheny School District is made up of students living in the McCandless, Bradford Woods, Franklin Park and Marshall Township areas. They all work together to share facilities and resources.

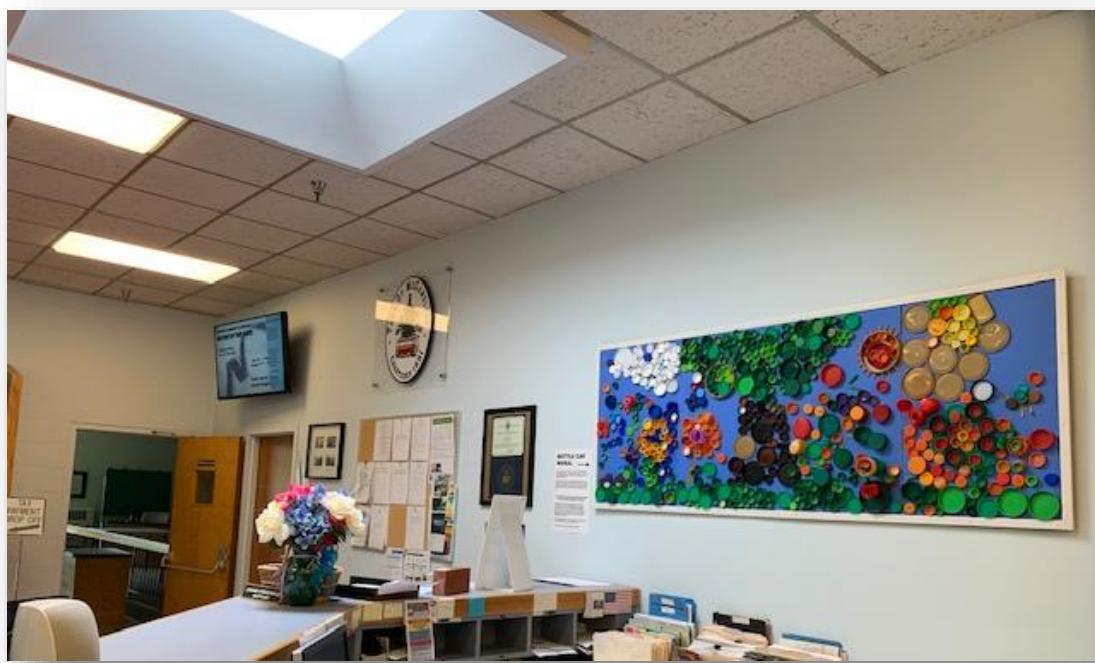


*In 2014, the Town of McCandless and the North Allegheny School District launched a collaborative effort to house the longtime collection of local history buff Joseph Bullick. Since the inception of the partnership, the community has shown an outpouring of support. Contributing community members have donated countless hours and materials for the careful planning of this project, which will benefit generations to come.*

Additionally, the Environmental Advisory Committee has a comprehensive syllabus ready for any outreach training opportunities that may present themselves.

Furthermore, the Town hosted its first ever Recyclable Art Show this year to display the designs of the recycled items and demonstrate how they can be repurposed in a meaningful way.

The Environmental Advisory Committee updates their webpage for residents each month with new environmental tips to stay current as the seasons change. This summer, the May update instructs on ways to keep your house cool as it gets warmer outside, like installing weather stripping or putting up thermal curtains. Additionally, it encourages residents to plant trees on their property for the extra shade and accompanying benefits.



*The Town of McCandless this year put on its very first Recyclable Art Show to demonstrate that when it comes to recycling, you can be creative and have fun while still helping the environment.*

## Energy Use, Conservation and Green Building

### **Municipal Energy Use, Community Energy Use & Renewable Energy**

The Town has completed an energy audit of all municipal buildings and operations. The audit includes findings and recommendations and establishes a baseline of energy usage. Overall, the Town use has declined at least 15% from the baseline year established in the energy audit, and, currently, is in the process of retrofitting streetlights and traffic signals to LED bulbs. The Town also has begun to report and

track its energy performance using ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager.



### **Green Buildings**

The Town has reviewed ordinances, resolutions and

other policies to remove impediments to the use of alternative energy installations or green buildings. The Town has regularly included performance zoning and low impact development ordinances within their written policies for years to ensure that everything remains up to standard.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE:

- Report yearly to the public on progress and results made in implementing recommendations/findings contained in the municipal energy study
- Establish a greenhouse gas inventory and mitigation plan for municipal functions as part of the energy audit
- Work an energy conservation element into the Town's implementable comprehensive plan
- Support a public program to conserve energy, promote renewable energy sources and mitigate carbon emissions
- Write a green building policy/standard for new construction/major renovations of municipal buildings such as International Green Construction Code
- Require new construction and major renovations at municipal facilities to incorporate LEED Silver principles
- Require Town building operations to meet LEED O&M Silver principles or better
- Require LEED certification for development projects receiving a public incentive
- Purchase energy for municipal facilities from renewable energy sources such that at least 10% of all municipal energy comes from renewable sources

## Environmental Stewardship

### Water Use, Conservation and Quality

The Town utilizes the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System program to identify the Town's priorities for projects and includes a description of how the proposed priorities reflect the relative importance of adverse impacts on human health and water quality. McCandless works with a civil engineering firm to get an accurate picture of the essentials the Town should be focused on when it comes to the MS4 program. They write up reports on matters related to storm sewer mapping, pollutant reduction plans and stream restoration projects.

The Town actively encourages water conservation among businesses and in the community, additionally, low impact development and onsite stormwater infiltration is encouraged. Sufficient investments are being made to the water, sewer and stormwater systems per real costs and keeping pace with maintenance and operations. Moreover, cooperation occurs with neighboring municipalities to manage water and sewer supply, treatment and distribution, sewage and stormwater, in the most cost-efficient way. McCandless website has water conservation tips linked and included in a few newsletters on the website.

### Tree Planting Program

The Town of McCandless is in the midst of its tree planting program to encourage residents and businesses to report the planting of trees on their property.

This will allow for more tree canopy cover in the Town, helping to reduce stormwater runoff (stuff like this also reduces stormwater pollution because trees take up nutrients and pollutants through their root systems).



## Air Quality

The PA-state anti-idling law is enforced via the McCandless police force and compliance is promoted. The Town also supports public education for reducing air pollution and emissions, while a burn ban has been formally adopted as it's an Allegheny County ordinance.

McCandless also has a tree planting program, an initiative currently ongoing to help dispel stormwater runoff and sediment. Moreover, the Town was awarded an MTSA grant to purchase new propane trucks—the purchase of these trucks is to dispel a lot of the additional fossil fuels being unnecessarily pumped up into the atmosphere.

## Green Infrastructure

Written policies, plans and ordinances are enacted to protect wetlands and waterways, while incentives have also been enacted to conserve environmentally and ecologically sensitive places in order to protect public safety while using green infrastructure for storm management. Low impact and green development techniques are fostered through incentives, ordinances and design guidelines.

Tree and woodlands protection and management policies are in place and a natural resource inventory has been developed for the community as part of the comprehensive plan. The Town's sustainable landscape maintenance practices are in place for parks and municipal grounds. The Wall Park Trail development is in progress and there are ongoing efforts to revitalize the other walking and biking trails within the town.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE:

- Adopt and enforce clean construction emissions policies for all publicly subsidized projects
- Have waste hauler services explore ways to reduce emissions from vehicles and trucks beyond anti-idling

## Housing

### Affordability

The Town zoning ordinance accommodates a full range of housing opportunities throughout the community. The new implementable comprehensive plan provides details of the mixed use and inclusionary housing that will be available to residents.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE:

- Address the benefits of and need for expanding housing choice for the community in the comprehensive plan
- Adopt a zoning ordinance with inclusionary housing provisions/incentives
- Introduce a program to facilitate home ownership
- Track and report annually to the public on results toward offering affordable housing for residents

### Sustainable Neighborhoods

McCandless does not have an abundance of vacant or blighted properties and thus uses a casual method to keep track of those which fall in this category. In addition, the Town imposes PA's statewide Uniform Construction Code and has the staffing in place to enforce all building and maintenance codes. Additionally, McCandless has crafted and subsequently follows its own property maintenance codes to ensure safe rental housing.

## Land Use and Transportation

### Mobility

Trails for walking and bicycling are developed and maintained throughout the Town and alternate transportation, public transportation and ride sharing is accommodated and promoted. For example, McCandless has a large Park and Ride within the Town which was zoned and advocated for by municipal employees. While the Town does not yet have a “Share the Road” campaign active; Police are trained on the rights and responsibilities of bicyclists and the state laws pertaining to them.



*The Public Works Department provides for the safe and efficient movement of vehicles and pedestrians through the maintenance and repair of all streets, curbs, storm sewers, and other facilities located within street rights-of-way.*

### Community

Professional staff are employed or retrained to manage the land use program and the comprehensive land use plan is current, addresses impacts to neighboring communities, and incorporates sustainability principles. Ordinances for zoning and subdivision/land development are up-to-date and in place; the comprehensive plan promotes pedestrian-oriented, dense, walkable, mixed-use development.

A Transfer Development Rights program is not currently in place but the Town does emphasize redevelopment where infrastructure already exists to protect important green space; all land use and development decisions are assessed to ensure they do not have negative fiscal, stormwater, traffic, infrastructure or quality of life impacts on neighbors.



## Green Space

The comprehensive plan identifies environmentally sensitive, ecologically significant, and civic/historic places, it also has protections in place for farmlands, promotes community gardens and infill green spaces. The Environmental Advisory Committee prepared a green space inventory for the Town to identify and locate all public green spaces throughout the town. Greenspace is reviewed and updated annually by EAC.

*Green Spaces include: 25-Town properties (including 5 parks), 5 school campuses, and North Park. The Town is fortunate to include approximately 2,132 acres of green space lands that represent roughly 20.3% of the total acreage with the Town (10,496 acres).*

## Local Economy

### Thriving Local Green Business

The Town has assessed Main Street program options and opportunities for possible applicability and implementation; owners and tenants within the retail area work with the Town to provide attractive sidewalks and street furniture, and to make the area safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. Moreover, the Town maintains and supports an initiative to encourage residents to buy local.

### Material Use, Waste, and Recycling

Waste and recycling ordinances and regulations are enforced per Act 101 and there is a curbside recycling program active. The Town contracts for solid waste collection as opposed to individual homeowners contracting for the same.

There is a written waste reduction recycling ordinance for residential, commercial, and institutional facilities and an active public information campaign to encourage residents to reduce waste and recycle.



**The Environmental Advisory Committee members assist Town staff in conducting site visits to review compliance for recycling at businesses and commercial establishments within the Town. The business visits review ongoing recycling activities and if recycling is not taking place, they review the Town Ordinance, which requires it. These visits have encouraged additional recycling, thereby reducing the waste output.**

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# CONCLUSION

## Assessment Criteria

The Town will regularly assess and evaluate their continued efforts toward achieving higher levels of sustainability each year. The Sustainability Coordinator, John Bojarski, will work in conjunction with the Environmental Advisory Committee to annually assess the progress each department has made on their goals. They will monitor and subsequently report to the public the results of yearly progress reports on the sustainability plan.

A few extra goals the Town will work toward:

- Work toward getting a sustainability assessment conducted on the municipal grounds within the next three years.
- Meet with local businesses, schools or organizations regularly to promote sustainable practices that are more progressive than those currently in place and check back each year to ensure any goals previously set are being met or exceeded.
- Work with HR to get a diversity training scheduled within the next two years for municipal staff and begin annually assessing the diversity of municipal staff, boards and volunteers.
- Evaluate the success of the Minority and Women Business Enterprise annually to ensure they are being utilized properly and progressively.
- Draft a policy within the next year for any new/future construction and major renovation to meet LEED Silver principles.