



Sustainable PGH

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Sustainable Pittsburgh officially reopens acclaimed programs to support and recognize sustainability progress

- *After two years of development, these customized frameworks now offer a more user-friendly, strategic, and impactful experience*
- *Open to Municipalities, Workplaces of multiple sectors/sizes, Retail Shops, and Restaurants*
- *Aggregated data contribute to holistic view of regional sustainability performance*

(Pittsburgh, PA) – Today, the nonprofit Sustainable Pittsburgh reopened its acclaimed sustainability recognition programs, propelling a new phase in the organization’s work to build the knowledge, perspective, and ability needed to create a better tomorrow for the region.

The four programs, tailored to different sectors, provide organizations with a step by step process to track and measure sustainability progress. The programs are:

- Sustainable Pennsylvania Community Certification - for municipalities throughout the Commonwealth; managed in partnership with Pennsylvania Municipal League.
- Sustainable Pittsburgh Workplace - brand new and open to workplaces of multiple sectors/sizes, including virtual organizations; an evolution of a prior program, the yearlong Sustainable Pittsburgh Challenge
- Sustainable Pittsburgh Shop - open to retail/“mom and pop” businesses
- Sustainable Pittsburgh Restaurant - for brick & mortar establishments with a kitchen

“Sustainability requires a foundational approach that simultaneously integrates social equity, environmental stewardship, and economic development in decision-making,” said Joylette Portlock, Ph.D., Executive Director of Sustainable Pittsburgh. “Sustainable Pittsburgh’s recognition programs provide essential tools and resources for organizations to adopt this approach, whether they are just starting out, or more advanced in their sustainability efforts.”

More than 250 Shops and Restaurants have earned sustainable designation in southwestern Pennsylvania as of the relaunch. Across the Commonwealth, 120 municipalities have earned certification, including 69 in southwestern Pennsylvania. Certified sustainable municipalities are home to more than 3.4 million residents across the state.

“When a municipality earns certification, we know it demonstrates excellence in good governance,” said Neil Weaver, Acting Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). “This municipal certification program shines a light on the pacesetters.”

The DCED considers certification in this program when evaluating municipal funding applications.

“The Sustainable Pennsylvania Community Certification offers municipalities a strategic approach to fostering a vibrant community while helping to conserve resources and save money,” said John Brenner, Executive Director of Pennsylvania Municipal League. “We are pleased to partner with Sustainable Pittsburgh to ensure municipalities across the Commonwealth have access to the tools and resources found within this program.”

All of the newly launched recognition programs enable better tracking of aggregated data, such as diversity, equity & inclusion metrics; energy usage; waste reduction; and water savings. Sustainable Pittsburgh can use this information to identify areas where businesses and communities might need more support. The reopening of these programs is timely, given the elevated importance of multi-sector regional decarbonization and diversity, equity, and inclusion goals in the region. Sustainable Pittsburgh brings an integrated perspective to these conversations.

A leader in driving sustainability goals within the company and the communities within which it operates, Highmark Health participated in the beta testing of the new Sustainable Pittsburgh Workplace program. The company was also the top scorer in its sector in the final Sustainable Pittsburgh Challenge.

“We are excited to engage in the Sustainable Pittsburgh Workplace program, as it identifies new opportunities for us as a company to be a better steward of our environment and community, and helps us chart and achieve our own internal goals,” said Phyllis Barber, Sustainability Manager of Highmark Health. “This program aligns with our development of a long-term, more strategic approach to ongoing sustainability.”

Sustainable Pittsburgh Workplace offers best practices to reduce organizational risk and expense, respond to stakeholder expectations, better attract employees, tap new markets and innovations, support the local community, and stand out to customers, investors, and program users. Sustainable Pittsburgh Restaurant offers similar benefits, tailored for food-based businesses that reside in brick and mortar establishments with kitchens onsite.

“Sustainable Pittsburgh’s restaurant program is key at establishing new benchmarks for the hospitality industry, as well as the built environment, helping to establish a better future for the region,” said Jen Saffron, Owner of Sprezzatura Catering Kitchen and Cafe, a Gold Designated Restaurant. She added, “On a practical level, it’s resource and cost savings like conservation of water and energy that directly improve our quality of life. On a business level, Sustainable Pittsburgh helps businesses like mine identify goals and track progress to save money and conserve resources – and also be an example to others that doing the right thing is not a sacrifice but the new path forward for small business.”

Surveys consistently find that consumers, employees, investors, and other stakeholders prefer to support organizations aligned with their values. A “Finder” tool is available on Sustainable Pittsburgh’s website to search for organizations that have earned sustainable designation. All organizations receive a digital badge, and those that are consumer-facing, like Shops and Restaurants, will receive window clings and other marketing materials.

Sustainable Pittsburgh designed the recognition programs to reduce the risk and cost of action by connecting participants with resources and financial incentives and providing examples and best practices. Subject matter experts at Sustainable Pittsburgh created and updated the programs based on the latest sustainability trends and in consultation with regional partners and past achievers.

As organizations engage with the programs, they will answer a series of questions, each assigned a point value. Questions cover a variety of topics related to sustainability including energy, waste, water, transportation, diversity, and procurement. Sustainable Pittsburgh offers Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum designation levels.

Organizations with employees in the 10-county region of Southwestern Pennsylvania and any Pennsylvania municipality are eligible to create an account and begin the designation process. More details are available at SustainablePittsburgh.org. Fees to participate are waived for 2022.

Sustainable Pittsburgh believes that businesses, nonprofits, institutions, and local governments have the power to make this region a better place for all. Reopening these recognition programs is the next step in its mission to empower decision-making that builds a fundamentally equitable, resilient, healthy, and prosperous region.

About Sustainable Pittsburgh

Sustainable PGH is committed to building the knowledge, perspective, and ability needed to create a better tomorrow for our region. We’re optimistic, having worked with nearly a thousand businesses, communities and organizations to take action using our customized frameworks to track progress and simultaneously advance social equity, environmental stewardship, and prosperity. The strategic networks we host leverage the collective expertise and diverse perspectives within our region to ensure our communities can meet our challenges today and thrive into the future. Together, we are co-creating a fundamentally equitable, resilient, healthy, and prosperous southwestern Pennsylvania.

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