



**For Immediate Release
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The Concord Free Public Library is Certified Sustainable
*The Sustainable Libraries Initiative recognizes the Concord Free Public Library
as a leader in sustainability.*



SUFFOLK COUNTY, NY – MAY 6, 2024 – The Concord Free Public Library located in Concord, Massachusetts has been designated a “Certified Sustainable Library” through the Sustainable Libraries Initiative’s award-winning Sustainable Library Certification Program (SLCP).

After joining the Sustainable Library Certification Program in 2022 as a component of their ambitious 5-year sustainability plan, the Concord Free Public Library has successfully achieved certification. Their work with the Sustainable Libraries Initiative officially began in February 2023, and has demonstrated tremendous growth that transcends the walls of their library: bringing awareness and motivation for sustainable practices to their entire community.

On certification, Concord Library’s Green Team Chair Reni Cunningham said:

“The Concord Free Public Library has made sustainability a priority since 2020. When the SLI opened up the certification process to include libraries outside of New

York, we saw it as the perfect framework for our sustainability goals and as an opportunity to set an example here in Massachusetts. I am very proud of the hard work accomplished by the Library's staff Green Team and grateful for the Concord community's support that has empowered us to acquire this certification, the first of its kind in Massachusetts!”

Concord discovered that there is power and productivity in collective action and committed to extending their reach. Publishing a quarterly sustainability newsletter and teaming up with other town departments, nonprofit organizations, and private entities with similar values allowed them to be more accessible to their community and encourage social cohesion between many different groups and individuals. For instance, the Library hosted native seed workshops in partnership with a local farm, a high school club, and a variety of other departments from local government. As a result, the Library welcomed many new patrons that may not have otherwise visited the Library, provided a space for the development of new ideas and solutions, and delivered an understanding on why sustainable practices are so important. Not only did the services of Concord’s Library get more people directly involved with sustainability, but also educated them and left them with the resources to bring their newfound knowledge home.

Within their building, Concord reports that the SLCP helped increase staff engagement across all departments and job levels. For sustainable action already being taken, the program highlighted the intention in taking these actions – shifting them from mindless routine into meaningful decisions. The involvement and enthusiasm of Concord’s staff allowed them to reap many of the same benefits for themselves as they provided for their library and the surrounding area.

Library Director Emily Smith gave thanks to everyone involved:

“I would like to express my gratitude to the staff Green Team, our community partners, SLI and our SLI mentors, the Friends of the Library, and especially to the Concord Free Public Library Corporation, for supporting the Concord Free Public Library in our journey to become the first Certified Sustainable Library in Massachusetts. We look forward to continuing this important work and mentoring other libraries to follow our lead in building a more sustainable future for all.”

Concord also put a lot of focus on curating their library’s indoor and outdoor spaces. Indoors, special care was taken to ensure a high standard of air quality beneficial for patrons, staff, and books on the shelves. Staff have reduced aerosol use, abide by all smoking laws, added more indoor plants, schedule regular maintenance of the building HVAC system, and regularly quantify the humidity and temperature with a hygrometer to confirm that the air in the Library is supportive of a long lifecycle for all library materials.

Outdoors, the Library has designed a beautiful space that could serve as a model for similar projects elsewhere. Library grounds support a number of wifi-accessible seating areas for visitors to enjoy time in nature, many of which are in shaded areas or located on top of permeable surfaces

that allow for groundwater replenishment and the reduction of stormwater runoff. The Library also has multiple green spaces including a children's garden consisting of native plants, a pollinator garden in the Homegrown National Park Pollinator Pathway, and a demonstration garden for patrons to learn about sustainable lawn alternatives. In addition, their abundant well-designed space can be used for large outdoor programming events furthering their service to the community as a center for activity.

“It has been a rewarding experience mentoring the team at the Concord Free Public Library.” said Janet Scherer, Director of the South Huntington Public Library and Concord’s SLCP Mentor. “They have consistently demonstrated leadership in sustainability initiatives, exemplified by their forward-thinking approach. Their Sustainability Plan for the period of 2021-2025 serves as a valuable resource from which we can draw inspiration and insight. Throughout their progression through the established benchmarks, it was evident how these benchmarks aligned with their overarching sustainability strategy. I extend my congratulations to them on achieving their certification!”

This achievement makes the Concord Free Public Library the twenty-second public library -- and the first library in Massachusetts -- to complete the Sustainable Library Certification Program: an award-winning community of practice designed to provide public libraries, academic libraries, library systems, and school librarians with exclusive resources and guidelines to shift towards a cleaner, greener, and more equitable future.

Sherry Litwack, President of the Concord Free Public Library Corporation said:

"We are thrilled to be named the first library in Massachusetts to receive certification from SLI! Creating a sustainability plan for the Library that aligned with the Town of Concord's plan was a priority for the CFPL Corporation. The Library staff has embraced it and exceeded our expectations. The Library Corporation plans to provide significant funding for infrastructure to meet our sustainability goals."

Moving forward, the Concord Free Public Library plans to continue with their work in sustainability and take everything they have learned to the next level. The Library has pledged to host biannual climate festivals, proceed in moving toward zero-waste, and persist in organizing sustainability programs for their patrons. Furthermore, the Library aspires to be carbon neutral by 2030: continuing on the path of emission reductions supported by the program and establishing them as a dedicated practitioner of sustainability. The work put in by the Concord Free Public Library will continue to promote connectivity within their community and has added value that can be appreciated by everyone.