

PE7 Action: Shade Structures Policy

4 Points

A. Why is this action important?

When public spaces have shade structures, it provides relief for residents and pets during times of heat. Local governments can lead by example by having a policy to require shade structures on properties they own, such as public parks. Shade structures can include gazebos, trees, or covered outdoor facilities. The presence of shade structures is particularly important for individuals that do not have access to air conditioning, especially in urban areas. Moreover, shade structures in public spaces provide opportunities for social networking and public gatherings. Conserving existing forest cover and planting trees and green spaces can moderate temperatures and reduce the urban heat island effect, along with managing stormwater and improving habitat.

B. How to implement this action

To implement this action, local government should consider the following steps:

1. Identify areas in the community that are particularly vulnerable to high heat or the urban heat island effect or lacking significant shade. The [NYS Department of Health Heat Vulnerability Index](#) may be helpful in highlighting regions that are vulnerable to extreme heat.
2. Evaluate the opportunities to install shade structures on municipally owned properties and assess community support for a policy to include shade structures on municipal properties.
3. Work with local municipal building and planning commissioners, local boards (i.e., planning and zoning), and internal staff to educate them about the goals of the policy, and get their input on the design of the policy.
4. Create a policy requiring that development projects on municipally owned properties integrate shade structures. Determine whether the policy only applies to new construction/development or whether it also applies when making upgrades to existing properties. Develop appropriate exemptions and include them in policy, if applicable.
5. Have the policy approved by local elected officials.
6. Track implementation of the policy.

C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

The costs of implementing this action are minimal and will consist primarily of staff time. The policy can likely be drafted and approved in three to six months.

D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this action?

This Climate Smart Communities (CSC) certification action is applicable to all types of local governments, but is particularly important for highly urbanized communities. The department, office, or committee that leads local climate and sustainability efforts should work on this action in partnership with the building and planning departments. Involving the CSC Task Force is also recommended.

E. How to obtain points for this action

Four points are available to local governments that adopt a formal policy that is consistent with the requirements described here.

F. What to submit

Submit a copy of the policy requiring that development projects on municipally owned properties integrate shade structures. Include evidence that the policy was approved by local elected officials. The policy may have been adopted at any time prior to the application date. If available, also provide any documentation on implementation of the policy and the increase in shade structures in the community.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

G. Links to additional resources or examples

- [NYS Department of Health Heat Vulnerability Index](#)
- [Creating Shade at Public Facilities- Policy & Guidelines for Local Government, Australian Institute of Environmental Health](#)
- [US EPA, Trees and Vegetation](#)
- [NRDC, The Multiple Benefits of Green Infrastructure Solutions, Rooftops to Rivers II \(2011, p. 13-16\)](#)

H. Recertification Requirements

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.