The Connecticut Living Building Challenge Collaborative is a local chapter of the International Future Institute whose mission is to promote a future that is socially just, culturally rich, and ecologically restorative. The Living Building Challenge is a building certification program, advocacy tool, and philosophy that defines the most advanced measure of sustainability in the built environment possible today. It calls for the creation of building projects at all scales that operate as cleanly, beautifully, and efficiently as nature's architecture. There are 8 fully Living Certified Projects, including one in Whately, Massachusetts and one in Rhinebeck, New York.

Net-Positive Energy is an important aspect of the Challenge. Energy from combustion sources harms environmental and human health at the points of extraction and combustion. Fossil fuel extraction causes great environmental damage in the form of pollution from leaks that contaminate drinking water and air quality, and increases birth defects in the surrounding communities. According to an MIT Study, air pollution released by cars causes more deaths than car accidents. Increases in global warming gases cause droughts, sea level rise, conflict, and ocean acidification. Buildings account for 41% of the energy use in the United States, more than transportation or industry. Reducing the amount of combustion needed to power buildings can have a substantial positive impact.

Clean renewable energy is available in the form of solar and wind. Unlike combustion sources, these fuel sources do not require transportation, and there is no concern about their long-term availability. These are proven technologies that generate energy without causing pollution, and there is a pent-up demand for this technology in Connecticut. Architects and Builders are quickly reaching the point where they can design and construct buildings that are efficient enough to offset their entire energy demand with the use of solar panels. Due to an increase in efficiency and a reduction in cost, solar panels are ready to be implemented at a large scale, and at great savings to the consumer.

Shared Solar will allow this clean renewable energy to be available to energy customers at all socioeconomic levels, and to those who cannot install solar panels due to shade, or building orientation. Other communities with Shared Solar legislation are leaving Connecticut behind in the implementation of renewable energy.

The solar industry is growing exponentially in Connecticut, creating jobs and bolstering the economy. Its growth can be ensured by passing Shared Solar or it may be stunted if Connecticut fails to act. The Connecticut Living Building Challenge Collaborative believes Connecticut should drop the pilot program and authorize unlimited Shared Solar, using New York and Massachusetts as examples for moving forward.

Signed,

Living Building Challenge: Connecticut Collaborative
Melissa Arminio Kops, AIA, LFA, LEED AP BD+C
Nora Rizzo, LEED AP BD+C, LFA
Larry Jones, LEED AP BD+C
Ariana Bain
Anne Lissett, AIA, OAQ, LEED AP BD+C
Amy Vigneux, LEED GA