

Fall 2019

Clean Energy Communities News

Moving our communities toward sustainability.



Director's Corner



By Todd Fabozzi / Director of Sustainability,
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Welcome to the 11th and final edition of the Eastern Upstate NY Territory Clean Energy Communities (CEC) quarterly newsletter. The CEC program, funded by NYSERDA, is delivered within the Territory by the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) through a unique partnership of regional agencies, which includes the Adirondack North Country Association, the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District, and the Hudson Valley Regional Council. These regional agencies play a critical role in helping New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) connect with and provide support to local governments so they can successfully participate in the CEC program. The Team is also supported by Climate Action Associates, LLC and Courtney Strong Inc.

Communities across the Territory are receiving technical assistance and actively completing "High Impact Actions" in their pursuit of CEC Designation. Communities must complete four actions to achieve CEC designation. Designated communities qualify for match-free grants to design and implement clean energy projects. Currently, 203 communities within the Territory that have completed a total of 637 "high impact" actions, 116 communities are officially designated and advancing program funded projects, and many others are working through the designation process.

Following are summary highlights from the past three years of the CEC program within the Eastern Upstate NY Territory. The first round of the program will wrap up at the close of 2019. We anticipate another round of program funding will be announced later this year. Contact your [regional outreach coordinator](#) if your community is interested in becoming a Clean Energy Community.

[Capital District](#)

33 Large and Small Communities Achieve Designation

By Tara Donadio and Jill Henck

The Capital Region has had great success with the Clean Energy Communities Program, with designated communities as small as the Town of Edinburgh in northern Saratoga County, with just 1,290 residents, to the City of Albany with a population of 98,000. As of July 1, 2019, 33 communities in the Capital Region have achieved Clean Energy Communities Designation through the support of the Capital District Regional Planning Commission. The region's designated communities have received match-free grants for clean energy projects totaling almost \$3 million. The region was also aided by \$837,150 in additional funding for projects in Albany, Rensselaer, Greene and Columbia Counties as part of a New York State Attorney General settlement with Lafarge North America, Inc.



An April 19 seminar highlighted the synergy between Clean Energy Communities and Climate Smart Communities at Guilderland Public Library.

Throughout the past three years, CDRPC hosted numerous workshops in the Capital District covering a range of topics, including: alternative fuel vehicles and infrastructure, LED streetlight conversions, Climate Smart Communities, Community Solar, Clean Heating and Cooling, Clean Energy Projects, and Community Choice Aggregation. These events incorporated local experts, interested citizens as well as municipal representatives and provided a space for participants not only to learn about the Clean Energy Communities Program but also connect with one another. We also held two panel discussions with local communities who shared their experiences with the CEC program.

One of the most popular High Impact Actions in the Region has been Clean Fleets, with 21 communities in the eight-county region installing electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure or purchasing EVs for their fleets. Many of those communities used additional funding from NYSERDA and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) programs to significantly lower the cost of the vehicles and



Town of Chatham energy champions with new EV charging station.

charging stations. Albany County, for example, purchased four electric vehicles for their municipal fleet and installed four Level 2 charging stations at the Times Union Center as a result of the Clean Energy Communities Program. Smaller communities, such as the Town of Greenville in Greene County, have also installed charging stations helping to expand the Capital District's charging station network.

Mohawk Valley

\$12 Million In Savings From Energy Efficiency, Renewable Projects



Aerial view of southern Herkimer County - photo by Amy Wyant

By Amy Wyant, Clean Energy Communities Coordinator

The Clean Energy Communities Program has been a great success in the Mohawk Valley. The 46 communities that have participated in the program, submitting a total of 122 High

Impact Actions, each came to the table with a desire to improve their communities while saving taxpayer money and improving the environment in which they live.

Of these 46 communities, 21 received grant funding toward projects in their communities to complete additional clean energy projects.

The projects in the Mohawk Valley range from LED street lighting, solar and geothermal installations, electric vehicle fleets, wastewater treatment blowers, building and envelope improvements, municipal building LED interior lighting, HVAC and boiler efficiency upgrades.

Over the lifetime of these projects, the combined impact will be over 32,434 metric tons (MT) of carbon (CO₂) in emissions. These savings are calculated on the grant funded projects alone, meaning that all of the High Impact Actions that communities completed to receive funding are emissions savings over and above these calculations!

Many of these communities took on the Clean Energy Communities for a double bottom line. They wanted to not only save greenhouse gas emissions, but also to save their constituents' hard earned money! And they will--the projected tax dollar savings for the Mohawk Valley projects are over \$12 million. A 700 percent return on investment is what we would call an amazing success.

The North Country CEC Become Major 'Value Add' For Small Villages, Towns



By Jamie Rogers, Clean Energy Communities Coordinator

The North Country region is composed of the seven northernmost counties in New York, encompassing over 40,000 square miles of farmland, lakes, mountains and forests, much of it within the Adirondack Park. With towns and villages linked by winding roads, it can take more than four hours to drive across the North Country, from the shores of Lake Champlain to the shores of Lake Ontario. Three sides of this incredibly beautiful region are bordered by water, with Lake Ontario to the east, the St. Lawrence River to the north and Lake Champlain to the east.

In the North Country, only four municipalities have a population greater than 40,000 residents; all four are counties. The smallest county in the North Country in population is Hamilton, with just 4,800 residents. The largest, Jefferson County, has a population of more than 116,000.

In the least populated towns and villages, the small tax base means few resources or capacity for clean energy initiatives. With no municipal staff, the single North Country Clean Energy Communities coordinator provides a vital link between cash-strapped municipalities and the clean energy improvements that can save them money. To help the small municipalities like the Town of Leyden or the Village of Champlain take advantage of the CEC program, I attended numerous public meeting and provided regular hands-on assistance to complete the action items and submit projects to be approved by NYSERDA.

In the larger municipalities, planning department staff recognized the value of CEC and were quick to get approval from their town, village and county boards to move forward. These municipal staff were engaged through the entire CEC program and served as the liaisons between the CEC coordinator and elected officials. These staff members have experience in energy efficiency programs, which helped them make the case for CEC and move forward more quickly than in the smaller communities.

In concert with CEC, Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) is assisting 12 municipalities in an aggregation LED streetlight project that will convert nearly 2,000 lights. This may sound like a small number to many, but most of our rural communities have between 12 and 125 lights.

More than any other NYSEDA program in the North Country, the CEC has resulted in greater understanding of the value and importance of clean energy and efficiency measures at the municipal level. Going forward, the smallest of the communities we worked with will still need assistance if they are to continue making progress and contributing to New York's energy goals.

As ANCA's CEC program wound down this summer, we were proud to have participated in the Clean Energy Communities program. It is very rewarding assisting municipalities in achieving clean energy progress that they otherwise would not have had the capacity to complete for their residents.

Mid-Hudson

Looking Back, Forging Ahead In Early-Adopter Region

By Carla Castillo and Europa McGovern, Clean Energy Communities Coordinators

It's hard to believe that it is closing in on three years since NYSEDA launched the Clean Energy Communities (CEC) Program. HVRC's team of CEC Coordinators have been a locally engaged, boots-on-the-ground presence in the Mid-Hudson Region since 2016. We provided, and continue to provide, significant technical assistance to municipalities in their pursuit of the 10 [High Impact Actions](#) that they can benefit from under the CEC Program, as well as CEC grants and related funding opportunities.

From smaller actions, such as adoption of the NYS Unified Solar Permit, to large and impactful ones, such as Community Choice Aggregation and Climate Smart Communities Certification, there are many opportunities for our team to support your community!

We have many local successes to share:

- Ulster County
 - Ulster County was the first municipality state-wide to complete four High Impact Actions and become a 'designated' Clean Energy Community! They received a \$250,000 NYSEDA Block 1 CEC grant.
- CEC Grants
 - Close to 40 municipalities in our region have become 'designated' Clean Energy Communities, and many have received CEC grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$250,000.
- Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventories & Climate Action Plans
 - HVRC recently completed an innovative pilot program, the Climate Action Planning Institute, which was developed and deployed last year. The Institute supported eight local governments in completion of their Government GHG Emissions Inventories and in initial development of their local Climate Action Plans. We highlighted this project in a state-wide webinar on February 27, 2019.
- Climate Smart Communities Program
 - This New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)-administered program is one of the 10 High Impact Action under the CEC program.
 - Dozens of communities in our region are gearing up to become certified Climate Smart Communities (CSCs), in part by appointing local CSC Coordinators and Task Forces.
 - The Village of Nyack is the newest community to achieve Climate Smart Communities certification in our region!
 - The 2019 CSC grants are now available.

- Electric Vehicles (EV) and EV Charging Stations
 - Many communities are installing publicly accessible EV charging stations (see the [PlugShare map](#)) and also capturing the benefits of deploying fleets EVs, and they are accessing available resources and funding to do so.

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Climate Action Associates **GHG Inventories Lead To Project Implementation**

By Greg Mumby, Community Planner / Climate Action Associates

Climate Action Associates (CAA) has been providing support in the Hudson Valley, Capital District, Mohawk Valley and North Country as a member of the Clean Energy Communities (CEC) Eastern-New York outreach team since the program began in 2016. CAA's primary role has been offering deep technical support on sustainability issues and providing turn-key grant development assistance. CAA provided well over 50 designated CECs with turn-key grant development assistance that included initial identification of potential projects, feasibility assessments, emission and cost savings projections, project scoping, and drafting of application materials. Successful applications are now moving into the implementation phase of projects that include Electric Vehicle procurement, solar PV installation, LED streetlight conversion, water and wastewater efficiency upgrades, facility HVAC and insulation improvements, sustainable heating and cooling systems, and community-based projects.

In addition to project development work CAA performed research, developed tools, and provided answers on technical sustainability questions. Some highlights of this work include: the development of a Streetlight Operations Cost Calculator for each utility territory to assist communities with assessing the benefits of LED streetlight conversion; a Climate Change Mitigation Easement template to allow communities to meet a New York State grant requirement for installation of charging stations on non-municipal land; multiple guides and step-by-steps including those on energy use data gathering and building energy efficiency upgrades assessments; and a Government Operations Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory tool.

The GHG Inventory tool was developed in support of another initiative, the Climate Action Planning Institute (CAPI), that CAA helped to create with the Hudson Valley Regional Council (HVRC). The goal of CAPI was to guide communities through a collaborative process to develop community climate action plans that would not only offer beneficial insights into municipal energy use but also qualify for points under the Department of Environmental Conservation's Climate Smart Communities program.

200+ Communities Completed 1,250+ Clean Energy Actions

The Clean Energy Community designation recognizes community leadership in reducing energy use, cutting costs and driving clean energy, all supporting the state's clean energy goals. Clean Energy Communities support Governor Cuomo's Green New Deal, a nation-leading clean energy and jobs agenda that puts New York State on a path to a carbon-neutral economy, by demonstrating the importance of communities in helping New York reach its goals for a carbon-free electricity sector by 2040 and an 85 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Announced by Governor Cuomo in August 2016, the \$16 million Clean Energy Communities initiative supports local governments across the state by providing grants to eligible municipalities to implement energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable development projects in their communities.

Overall, the 1,255 high-impact clean energy action items were completed by communities representing more than 86 percent of the state's population in 60 counties and all 10 Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) regions. Some of the largest communities across New York State have been designated Clean Energy Communities, including the City of New York, Albany County, St. Lawrence County, Suffolk County and the Town of Hempstead.

[View Map](#) showing Clean Energy Communities, actions completed, and communities engaged in the Clean Energy Communities initiative

Designated Eastern NY Clean Energy Communities

A total of **116 communities** have been named Clean Energy Communities in the Eastern NY Region. The following table highlights participation in each region.

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Region	# of Designated Clean Energy Communities	Participating Communities*	Clean Energy Actions Completed
Capital District	35	53	177
Mid-Hudson	40	69	231
Mohawk Valley	23	47	128
North Country	18	34	101

*Completed at least one Clean Energy Action item

For a full list of communities throughout New York State, visit the [NYSERDA website](#).

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