

# Genesee/Finger Lakes REGIONAL REVIEW

NEWSLETTER OF THE GENESEE/FINGER LAKES REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

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## Clean Energy Communities, Spring 2019

What's going on in the energy world in our neck of the woods and how solar is like the new iPhone.

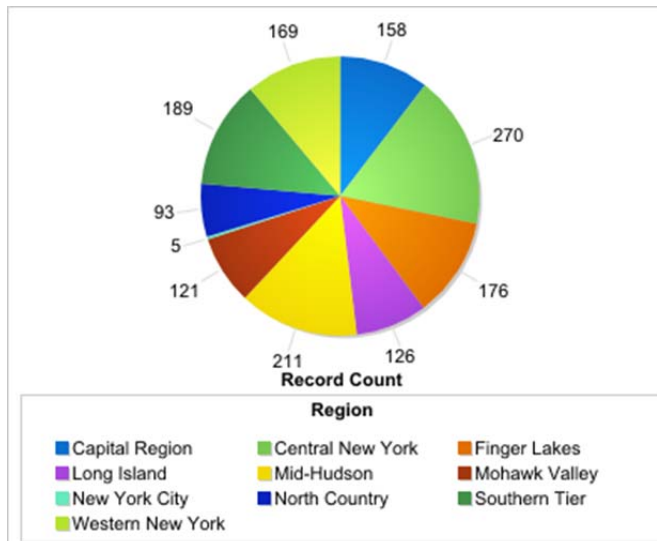
Matthew Halladay

*Clean Energy Communities: 2019 Program Review*

NYSDERDA's Clean Energy Community program will turn three this summer. Our region now boasts 27 designated communities under the initiative, stretching across the farthest corners of our 9-county region. All 18 non-competitive large grants allocated for communities in the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region have been accounted for, funding a diversity of energy projects ranging from underground geothermal systems, Climate Action Planning, rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) systems, LED streetlight conversions, and fleet electrification. This milestone is a testament to the commitment that our communities have for energy actions that reduce costs and cut carbon emissions. Embracing new technologies has always been a staple of our region's economy as we move into the clean energy economy of the 21st century.

Designated Clean Energy Communities in our region now include: the Villages of Brockport, Victor, Spencerport, Bergen, Sodus, Fairport, Churchville, Livonia, Geneseo, Holley, Webster, Avon, and Lima; the Cities of Canandaigua, Rochester, and Geneva; the Towns of Starkey, Brighton, Geneva, Greece, Bristol, Irondequoit, Avon, Batavia, and Pittsford; and the

Counties of Wyoming and Seneca. Together, these communities have completed a combined 108 High-Impact Actions and secured over \$1,700,000 in no cost-share funding as a stimulus for advancing clean energy projects.



69 communities in the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region have completed at least one high impact action, generating 176 approved High Impact Actions across the Region as part of over 1,390 statewide.

Regionally, 69 communities have now participated in the program by completing 176 clean energy High Impact Actions. The actions—aggregated with others in Western, NY—have equated to an estimated 54,609 MWh in energy efficiency savings and roughly 25,025 metric tons of CO2 emission reductions. The program is helping the New York State Energy Plan (REV) make possible its vision for New York's energy future that connects a vibrant private sector market with communities and individual customers to create a dynamic, clean energy

economy. The Governor's office upped the stakes for our State's energy targets by increasing the State's renewable electricity target from 50% to 70% of grid totals by 2030. This new goal will require a massive uptake of electrification across all sectors, not just power, such as regional initiatives like Sustainable Homes Rochester. The path to get there can include programs like Clean Energy Communities.

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### Upcoming Regional Events

G/FLRPC Spring Local Government Workshop, Friday, May 17, 2019, Burgundy Basin Inn, Pittsford, NY. For more information visit <http://www.gflrpc.org/spring-workshop.html>.

For further information call 585-454-0190, email [gflrpc@gflrpc.org](mailto:gflrpc@gflrpc.org)

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### Solar PV: the new iPhone

If you live in our region and pay attention to local news headlines, you have likely come across one of the many stories touting massive solar farms moving into our neck of the woods. While this isn't necessarily a new phenomenon, developers who began to plant the seeds of project ideas years ago are now seeing the fruits of their labor come to life. With solar developers trying to keep up with the State's goal of 3,000 MW deployed solar by 2025, we should expect to see more of this. While some communities are creating local solar zoning overlays and model laws to help direct siting and permitting, others have moratoriums on large renewable projects or are still figuring out how best to prepare. This is where planning and understanding the solar landscape in New York and how communities may benefit from large solar siting is crucial. While NY's Article 10 law for power generating facilities over 25MW effects local communities influence on projects, the siting process still considers local directives and incorporates public input into the decision process.

Many industry experts and pundits have begun comparing the proliferation of distributed solar projects to the explosion of the iPhone. The redesign of our electrical distribution system from a centralized nucleus to one that is more diffuse draws parallels to that of the telecommunication overhauls that took place in the last decade of the 20th century. In 1994, only 10% of Americans had a cell phone, but by 2011 more Americans would own cell phones than landlines. It was a massive technological transformation and yet one that helped connect us to one another and to the world in ways we never thought possible.

Distributed power generation already plays an important role for the electricity grid. Grid-tied solar panels can help defer or avoid large investments in infrastructure upgrades on the electrical system, helping all electricity customers save money by lowering the operating and capital costs of the investor-owned utility institutions (such as NYSEG, National Grid, and RG&E). Solar energy may create co-benefits beyond monetary savings, including local genera-

tion that can contribute to improvements in air quality, stimulation of local enterprises, quick and vast reductions in emissions, and a system that can help regenerate and even optimize the lands underneath it for use in other land cover activities-both now and in the future. And, it appears the technology is 99% recyclable and reusable.

There are some things to consider. We are in a region that has significant agricultural lands and business assets. Working with developers, land-owners, and financiers of renewable projects and best practices and/or land use regulation and control tools to help direct solar to optimum locations are two such considerations.

As solar energy technology progresses and the economy requires cleaner, often cheaper, renewable fuels, it may be important that local governments advance their economic development and sustainability plans by reviewing and possibly amending local zoning laws to if they want to permit the types of solar energy systems that each community may desire for its homeowners and businesses. Municipalities may want to take advantage of NYS's home rule land use system and adopt or revise comprehensive plans and zoning provisions that carry out the plan's goals and objectives. Telephone lines, utility poles, substations, transformers and iPhones; these have all, for better or worse, become a part of our non-living landscape. Whether we are ready for it or not, so too will solar likely dot our landscape.

*Spring 2019 Regional Local Government Workshop: May 17th, 2019*

If your community has been grappling with how to understand and site large and medium-scale solar projects, has thought about making the leap to electric vehicles and associated infrastructure, or are wondering what's going on with Community Choice Aggregation in our region, G/FLRPC's semi-annual Spring 2019 Region Local Government Workshop held on May 17th is just for you.

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## G/FLRPC's Revolving Loan Fund—Important Changes

The Regional Revolving Loan Fund is available\* for small and medium sized businesses needing resources and generally participates with other public and private financing tools for:

- Fixed asset loans (e.g. acquisition and improvement of land, buildings, plant and equipment, including new construction or renovation of existing facilities, demolition and site preparation)\*
- Working capital loans for the start-up of new businesses or conduct of current businesses\*

\* Loans are subject to availability of total funds and for each type of loan at time of application.

Borrowers must own and operate a business within the Genesee/Finger Lakes Region.

### Some Eligibility Requirements

- Most industrial and service activities including:
  - Industrial & Light Manufacturing
  - Service Industries
- Retail, where opportunities for private sector jobs are greatest - **NEW!** -

### Financing Parameters

- Maximum loan is \$200,000.
- Minimum loan amount is \$20,000.
- The RLF cannot be used to substitute for available private capital and potential borrowers must demonstrate that credit is not otherwise available.
- Meet financing policies including but not limited to equity participation, repayment terms, and collateral requirements.

For additional information please contact David Zorn, 585-454-0190 x14, [dave.zorn@gflrpc.org](mailto:dave.zorn@gflrpc.org).

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We'll be featuring industry professionals who will review new site selection tools and guidance resources for electric charging station installations and the role municipalities have in supporting this emerging sustainable mobility solution. We'll also hear from the perspective of developers and contractors working on some of the innovative ways solar technology has and is evolving. We will learn industry standards that can be used to ensure solar development creates agricultural, environmental, and water quality co-benefits and discuss other creative opportunities for co-location. See <http://www.gflrpc.org/spring-workshop.html>.

*Further Support*

G/FLRPC will continue to provide meaningful, localized support to communities via technical assistant and program guidance. Many of the High Impact Actions contained in the Clean Energy Communities program have merit on their own cost-savings potential. Our staff is here to help with all components of the program, even if that means just one energy action of interest.

Local governments are still able to achieve Clean Energy Community designation and utilize their local Clean Energy Coordinator here at the G/FLRPC. High Impact Actions through the Program include:

- **Benchmarking:** Adopt a policy to report the energy use of municipal buildings on an annual basis.
- **Clean Energy Upgrades:** Achieve a 10 percent reduction in the greenhouse gas emissions from municipal buildings through energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy.
- **LED Street Lights:** Convert at least half of the municipal cobra-head-style street lights within the jurisdiction to energy-efficient LED technology.
- **Clean Fleets:** Install an electric vehicle (EV) charging station and/or other alternative fuel infrastructure or deploy alternative fuel vehicles in the municipal fleet.
- **Solarize:** Undertake a solarize campaign to increase the number of solar rooftops in the jurisdiction through group purchasing and locally-organized community education and outreach. This includes Community Solar, Solar For All, and Rooftop.
- **Unified Solar Permit:** Pass legislation to adopt the New York State Unified Solar Permit to reduce costs and delays for solar projects in the jurisdiction.
- **Energy Code Enforcement Training:** Train code compliance officers and other municipal officials in best practices in residential and commercial energy code enforcement.
- **Climate Smart Communities Certification:** Earn Climate Smart Community (CSC) Certification through compliance with this robust, comprehensive rating system.
- **Community Choice Aggregation:** Transition to a cleaner, more affordable energy supply by facilitating the aggregated purchase of a 100% renewable electric default supply for residential and small commercial customers within the jurisdiction.
- **Energize NY Finance:** Allows property owners to pay back the cost of clean energy upgrades to their commercial or non-profit property through a special assessment benefit lien.

**Regional Buzz***Changes To PACE Energize NY Finance*

The Energy Improvement Corporation recently rolled out new changes to NYS's Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing product known as PACE. Now referred to as Open C-PACE, Cities and Counties in the G-FL Region who wish to provide energy efficiency and renewable energy project financing via a public benefit loan in their communities are now able to do so via a special benefit lien charge placed on property. The changes announced have been favorably received by existing PACE communities as the financial risk to non-payment and administrative duties on the part of the municipality have been removed. Contact G/FLRPC to learn more about the program and how your community can get involved.

*Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) Taking Off*

CCA programs in New York State have largely been in experimentation mode since the Public Service Commission authorized the first pilot program in 2016. This year, however, the G-FL Region could see a host of CCA programs go live in all three major utility zones. The Towns of Pittsford, Irondequoit and Brighton, together with the Village of Pittsford, issued a Request for Proposals for a CCA administrator in February after forming an inter-municipal partnership. The group will select a CCA administrator and will task the administrator with seeking an electric power supplier that can provide electricity from 100% renewable sources at a rate less than the utility variable rate. Joining together and increasing their negotiation power puts these communities in a stronger position to be able to provide cleaner energy while saving money for upwards of 30,000 households in Monroe County. A program in Ontario County is partnering with a local solar farm to provide the power for CCA participants while generating revenue for the municipality to fund additional sustainability projects. To learn more or become a part of a CCA, contact G/FLRPC.

*LED Streetlight Aggregations Advancing*

Our region has been working on various county-wide LED streetlight aggregation projects to help facilitate the acquisition and conversion of roadway streetlights to LED technology from utility-owned leasing models. A group of six communities in Livingston County have combined their assets to help facilitate a competitive equipment purchase and enable low-cost financing via a New York Power Authority offering. They will be meeting in April to finalize the design and fixture selections and expect to receive between 50-75% savings on their energy bills over the life of the project. Many more communities and counties are working along similar timelines and we expect thousands of streetlights to be converted to LEDs in the summer of 2019, drastically cutting emissions and costs.

Additional information on the Clean Energy Communities Program is available online at: <http://www.gflrpc.org/clean-energy-communities.html>. For more information on the Clean Energy Communities Program, please contact Matt Halladay at [mhalladay@gflrpc.org](mailto:mhalladay@gflrpc.org) or 585-454-0190 x 22.

Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council  
50 West Main Street, Suite 8107  
Rochester, NY 14614



### *A Sense of Place*

#### Rochester Public Market

The Rochester City Public Market has been one of the most popular and vital gathering places for residents, producers, and consumers in the region since it first opened in 1905. In the last few years, the market campus and buildings have undergone a major rehabilitation through on-going projects coordinated by the City of Rochester. While preserving the historic buildings, structures and brick paving, there have been a host of improvements that have created a more sustainable commerce experience.

Among the many upgrades include Electric Vehicle Charging Stations, Rooftop Solar Panels, an Energy-Efficient Indoor Winter Shed, A Cardboard Compactor, Waste and Food Surplus Diversion Initiatives, Stormwater Management and Rain Garden enhancements, and Multi-Modal Transportation Access Programs. The Market continues to be a living link between the City's past and present and serves as an impressive model for how cities can adapt to a changing world while preserving legacy institutions.

Source: <https://www.cityofrochester.gov/marketimprovements/>

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*\*Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates*

Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council  
50 West Main Street, Suite 8107  
Rochester, NY 14614  
[www.gflrpc.org](http://www.gflrpc.org)  
Telephone: 585-454-0190  
Fax: 585-454-0191  
Email: [gflrpc@gflrpc.org](mailto:gflrpc@gflrpc.org)



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