

Montgomery's County's Climate Change Response Plan: Renewable Energy Let's Get One...

Elements of a good renewable energy plan for our County are either in place, being proposed (such as green roofs and residential construction solar energy options for buyers ZTAs, Community Solar ZTA), or can be modeled after a number of existing plans across the US. Montgomery County Government's [Solar Initiative Program](#) provides a clear example of setting measurable goals and means of attainment for a single program. Comprehensive climate change response plans are rightly multi-pronged with land use, transportation, natural resource (forest, water, soil/farmland) conservation, energy conservation, renewable energy, waste reduction, and education components. Each part in a successful response plan is critical and thus collectively supporting each (in relative harmony) is both practical and necessary. Knowing how best to advance each requires collaborative planning. Clearly, we do not advance transportation or land use plans with wide ranging impact and cost prior to creating master plans.

Each of the elements that will facilitate achieving our carbon emissions goal beg a comprehensive plan that addresses renewable energy as well as energy efficiency – a smart plan. Fortunately, the American Planning Association provides excellent resources, including model plans that can serve to guide Montgomery County. So while we have some catch up work to do, we do not have to start from scratch.

See: [APA's Planning and Zoning for Solar Energy](#) - more information and model programs than you can shake a stick at.

See also: [Solar Community Engagement Strategies for Planners](#) which reads in part:

Many communities are looking to solar energy to help them meet energy and sustainability goals. Solar energy is a safe, clean, and abundant energy resource available across the country for decentralized, on-site power generation. Constant improvements in technology and manufacturing processes are driving prices down, putting these systems within reach of more and more citizens. Solar energy reduces dependence on fossil fuels, and the energy produced by photovoltaic (PV) systems can reduce residents' energy bills and ease demand on the power grid. Solar panels can be easily placed on roofs and over surfaces such as parking lots, making productive use of these underutilized spaces; in fact, studies have shown that California's entire renewable energy goal (20 percent by 2030) could be met by solar panels on rooftops, parking lots, and brownfields (Weinrub 2011).

Advancing a full climate change response plan here in Montgomery County is facilitated by the manner in which we have planned for our growth via smart growth principles while retaining significant green space in parkland, lower density rural communities and the Agricultural and Open Space Reserve. It would be folly to upend these successful tools by promoting utility sprawl without comprehensive planning that both guides and protects.

Our [County's goal for zero greenhouse emissions by 2035](#) is ambitious. It deserves a solid plan.