

CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES TASK FORCE

Columbia County, NY
Progress Report & Roadmap - 2025

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Columbia County, NY Progress Report & Roadmap - 2025

The Columbia County Board of Supervisors adopted the New York State Climate Smart Communities Pledge on November 10, 2020 with resolution no. 338-2020 and established the Columbia County Climate Smart Communities Task Force on March 10, 2021:

"...to serve as the central body that promotes and supports climate mitigation, adaptation, and education in the community, and advises the County Government on undertaking plans, programs, and activities that are part of the CSC program".¹

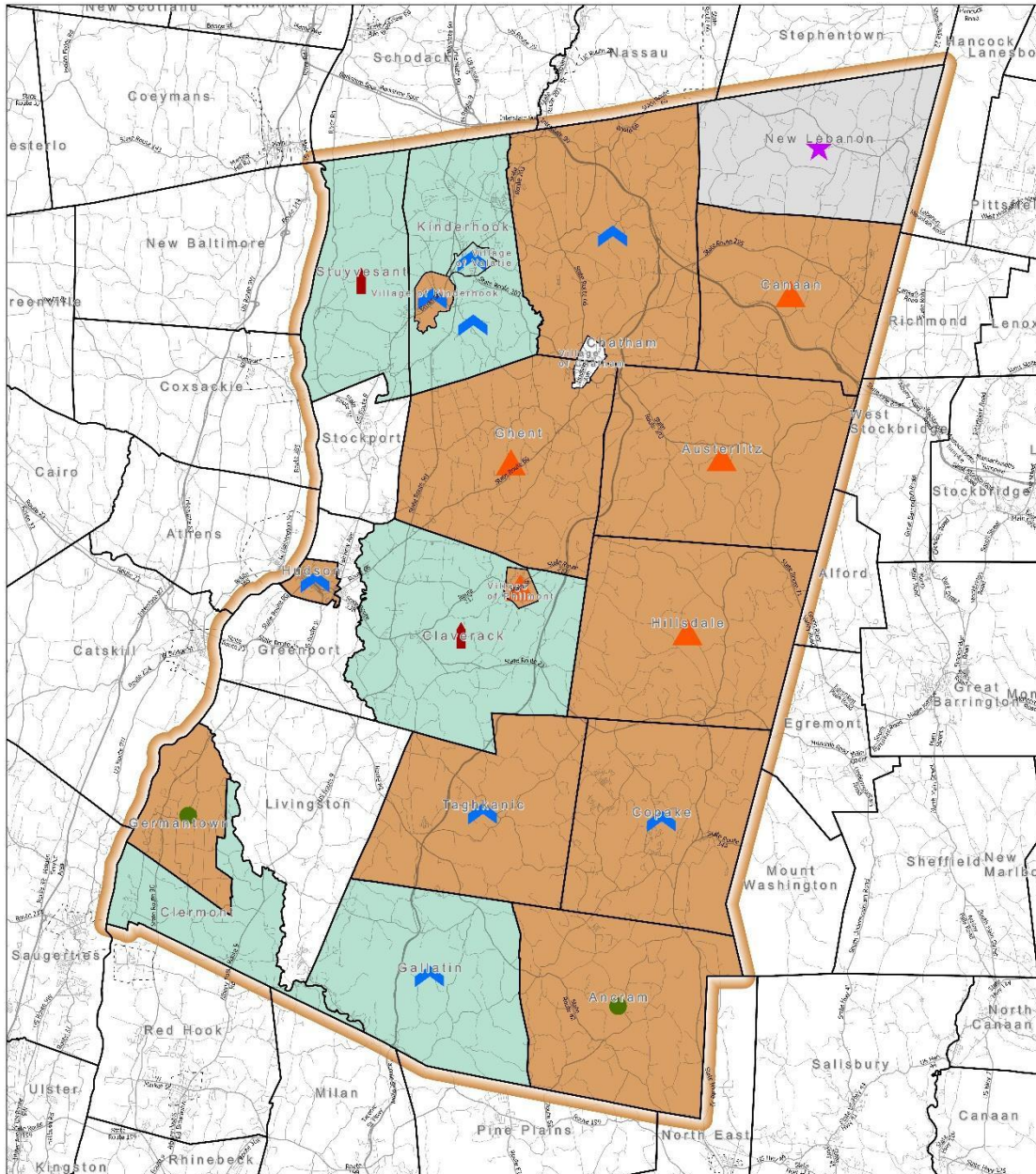
The purpose of this report is to highlight the county's progress toward reaching the goals included in the Climate Smart Communities pledge and to outline a future path that will help the county:

"...respond to climate change, provide an opportunity to save money, to build livable, energy-independent and secure communities, and to adapt to climate change by fortifying infrastructure, investing in resilient land stewardship practices, and conserving the ecological integrity of local farms, forests, and watersheds..."²

Cover photo: Photo Voltaic Rooftop Solar Array on the Columbia County DPW Garage in Greenport
Photo by: Stuyvesant Supervisor Ron Knott

¹ BOS Resolution No. 71-2021

² Paraphrased from BOS Resolution no. 338-2020



Columbia County Climate Smart Communities & Clean Energy Communities

Registered, Certified, & Designated Municipalities
2025-01-01

Registered Climate Smart Communities are local governments that have Adopted the Climate Smart Communities pledge as a formal resolution.

Bronze Certified communities have acted on their pledge and taken steps to implement climate-smart policies and projects. They have earned at least 120 points within the CSC Certification Program, and completed at least 1 action under four different pledge elements, 3 of which must be CSC priority actions. Silver Certified communities have earned at least 300 points and completed at least 6 priority actions.

The Clean Energy Communities program provides resources and funding to help local municipalities implement clean energy projects.

A Designated Clean Energy Community has completed at least four High Impact Actions and has qualified to apply for a \$5,000 grant. Most are now working on additional actions (1-5 Star Designation) that will allow them to apply for additional grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$250,000. (Up to \$350,000 for larger communities with populations over 40,000)

Climate Smart Community Status

- Certified Bronze - Columbia County
- Certified Silver Municipality
- Certified Bronze Municipality
- Registered Municipality
- Not Yet Registered

Clean Energy Community Status

- Designated CEC
- 1-Star Designation
- 2-Star Designation
- 3-Star Designation
- 4-Star Designation (Columbia County is 4-Star)
- 5-Star Designation

Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1 - Columbia County Climate Smart Communities and Clean Energy Communities Status

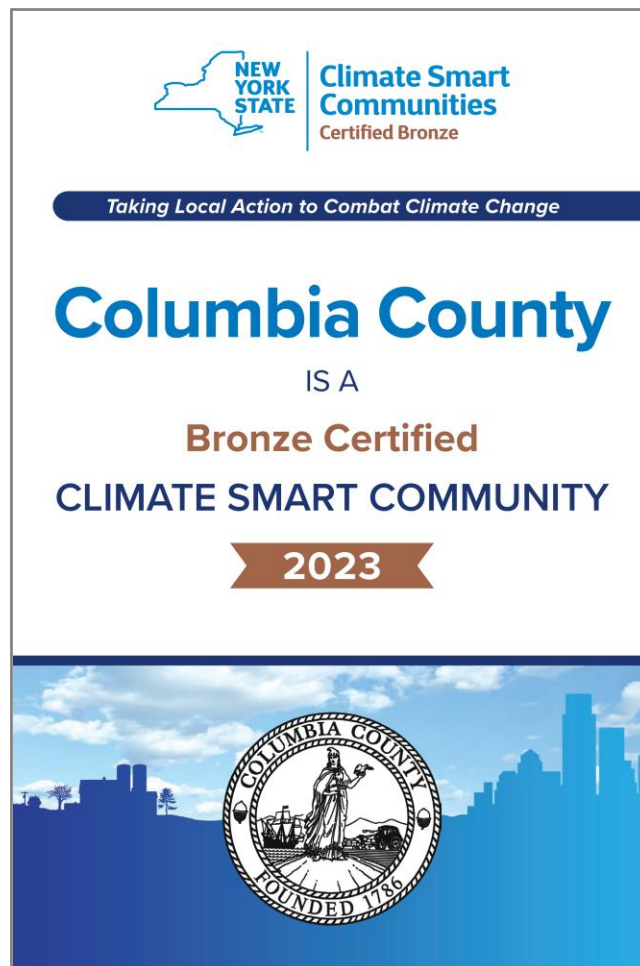
CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	4
Columbia County’s CSC Task Force	5
County and Task Force Highlights	5
Climate Smart Communities Program	10
Climate Smart Communities Actions	10
Actions leading to Bronze certification	10
Possible Next-Step Actions	14
Clean Energy Communities Program	15
Clean Energy Communities Actions	15
Using the Grant Money	18
Disadvantaged Community Bonus	18
Appendices	19
Appendix A Climate Smart Communities Timeline	20
Appendix B Task Force Members	23
Appendix C Climate Smart Communities Action Details	25

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Columbia County Climate Smart Communities Task Force thanks all of the volunteers, past and present, who have served on the Task Force or have provided help and guidance for us in our quest to address the challenges facing Columbia County due to climate change. Significant time and effort has been supplied by the [Planning Department](#), the [Solid Waste Department](#), the [Controller's Office](#), and the Department of Public Works, as well as many individuals outside those departments.

For a full list of Task Force member past and present, see Appendix B.



COLUMBIA COUNTY’S CSC TASK FORCE

The Columbia County Board of Supervisors (BOS) joined the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program on November 10, 2020³ and established a Task Force four months later on March 10, 2021⁴. This Task Force is currently comprised of county residents, town supervisors, county staff, and expert advisors. On July 14, 2021, the BOS joined the NYS Clean Energy Communities (CEC) program⁵.

The County Task Force meets virtually on the first Thursday of every month to discuss active actions and plan future projects and events. A YouTube link is shared for live public viewing. The Task Force maintains a website and social media accounts to help get the word out about these activities and to facilitate and coordinate efforts with other Climate Smart Communities in the County and regionally. Columbia County achieved Bronze Certification status on April 21, 2023, and has been awarded \$1,085,000 through the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities program as of December 2024.

COUNTY AND TASK FORCE HIGHLIGHTS

Climate Carnivals (2022 & 2024)

On July 16, 2022, the Task Force hosted the first Columbia County Climate Carnival. Over 50 vendors, environmental groups, musicians, and food trucks participated. Both display space and viewer entry was free of charge. Participants included a Repair Café, Free Store, bike repair, and composting demonstrations. All local Climate Smart Task Forces were represented. On September 14, 2024 we held our second Climate Carnival which again, hosted over 50 vendors with over 800 visitors. By all accounts it was another success.

The Climate Carnivals have been the most publicly visible actions taken by the Task Force. They are designed to bring together the government, commercial, and residential sectors, to share information and promote climate action at the personal level. The tag line for these events is: Celebrate - Educate - Motivate. We are celebrating our accomplishments, even though we know there is much more to do. We are educating all sectors about what needs to be done and what can be done to address the effects of climate change. And we are motivating everyone to take action by showing them the progress we’ve made as a county, and the accomplishments of local groups and citizens.



Figure 2 - Hawthorne Valley Farmscape Ecology at the 2024 Climate Carnival
Photo by Claudia Knab-Vispo

³ BOS Resolution No. 338-2020

⁴ BOS Resolution No. 71-2021

⁵ BOS Resolution No. 243-2021

Bronze Certification

On April 21st 2023 the announcement was made that Columbia County, along with 6 other Columbia County municipalities, had become certified bronze Climate Smart Communities. To achieve CSC bronze certification local governments must accumulate at least 120 CSC points for planning and implementation actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve community resilience to the impacts of climate change. Much credit goes to our first Task Force Coordinator, Wendy Madsen for assembling the massive amount of information needed to document the County Actions, as well as completing the county's first Benchmarking of Buildings, which documents the energy use and greenhouse gas emissions from every 1,000 square foot or larger county owned building.

The bronze certification brings with it additional Clean Energy Community (CEC) points which aid us in qualifying for additional no-match grants through the CEC program, as well as a higher score when applying for DEC Climate Smart Community grants.

EcoRich food scrap composting equipment

In April 2023 the Columbia County Solid Waste Department installed an EcoRich in-vessel composter at the Greenport, Newman Road transfer station. The composter recycles food waste on site, without odors or pest problems, thereby reducing our dependency on landfills. Food scraps are accepted at all Columbia County stations during regular operating hours and then transported to the Greenport facility. Acceptable scraps include: Meat, fish, dairy (small bones, and shells are OK), fruits and vegetables, pasta and rice, eggs, nuts, nutshells, bread and grains, leftovers, snacks, chips, cookies, coffee grounds (no K Cups), and tea bags.

This program has been very popular with residents and Solid Waste has received numerous inquiries about how the program might be expanded.



Figure 3 - EcoRich Food Scrap Composter at the Greenport Solid Waste Station
Photo by @ClimateSmartClaverack

Installation of 200kW of PV Solar Panels at DPW Garage and DSS Building

In 2023, Columbia County replaced the roof and installed a rooftop solar array at the Department of Public Works building on Route 23-B in Greenport. The solar array is rated for 186 kW (DC) /150 kW (AC). While the annual electric use at the DPW building is about 78,000 kWh/year, the estimated production of the solar array is 220,639 kWh/year. The excess production at the DPW site will be used to offset electric utility costs at other county owned buildings. It is anticipated that this solar system will save the county over \$20,000 in electric utility costs annually, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂e) by about 146 metric tons per year. Installation of this solar array includes an internal cloud-based monitoring system. The solar panels were connected to the grid and began producing electricity for the county on December 1st 2023.

In 2024, Columbia County performed significant energy efficiency upgrades to the Department of Social Services (DSS) building on Railroad Ave. in the City of Hudson, including the installation of a rooftop solar array. The DSS

PV system is rated for 74 kW (DC)/50 kW (AC), and is expected to generate over 86,000 kWh annually to offset the facility’s energy usage. Like the DPW array, the DSS system is equipped with a remote monitoring system to measure on-site weather conditions and near real-time operation of the solar inverters. The PV system was approved to begin operation on April 24, 2024.

The cost of the DSS solar system was partially offset by a \$15,000 NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities grant the county obtained through a Clean Heating, Cooling, and Energy Efficiency Community Campaign.

Climate Adaptation & Resilience Plan CARP

Columbia County, along with 17 other county municipalities, began preparing a set of Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Climate Adaptation Plans in August 2022 and completed the project on March 25, 2024. We referred to this project as our Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan or CARP for short. Development of these plans relied on technical assistance from Cornell Cooperative Extension on behalf of the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) through a NYS DEC Climate Smart Communities Coordinator Services contract and Pilot Program.

The goal of these planning documents is to set the stage to create efficiencies, reduce redundancies, and increase coordination across the County when it comes to strategies for adapting to climate change.

First County Owned EVs and EV Charging Stations



**Figure 4 - Toyota BZ4Xs purchased by the County, fully funded by a NYSERDA CEC grant
Photo by Don Meltz**

By completing multiple High Impact Actions within the Clean Energy Communities program, Columbia County qualified for multiple no-match NYSERDA grants. The county used four of these grants to purchase a total of five battery electric vehicles (EVs) and install 16 EV charging stations at four locations within the City of Hudson and Town of Greenport. The EVs are being used by the County Engineer, District Attorney, Office for the Ageing, Health Department, and general use at the 401 State Street building. The chargers are installed at the DPW garage in Greenport, 401 State Street, 11 Warren Street, and the County Courthouse in Hudson.

These cars are the first zero-emission vehicles owned by the county, and the charging stations are available for workforce and public use.

Energy Audits and Energy Efficiency Upgrades

Lowering energy usage significantly decreases energy costs, as well as GHG emissions. The County Supervisors and Engineer have been aggressive in identifying energy waste and ways to lower energy costs by performing investment grade energy audits. In 2019 audits were performed for: the Human Services building at 325 Columbia Street, the DSS building at 25 Railroad Ave., the Public Safety building at 85 Industrial Tract Rd., the DPW garage at 178 Route 23B.

LED lighting upgrades were performed at all four of these buildings in June 2020. HVAC upgrades and Building Energy Management Systems (BEMS) were installed at the Public Service and Human Services buildings in September and October 2020.

In February 2023, heating system upgrades, LED lighting upgrades, building envelope upgrades, and BEMS were installed at the DMV and County Clerk's office on Warren Street.

Through a NYSERDA grant awarded by the CEC program, new heat pumps are being installed for the courtrooms at the County Courthouse in Hudson.

And most recently, the county is performing an investment grade energy efficiency audit for the County Office building at 401 State Street. Anticipated improvements there include LED lighting upgrades, building envelope improvements (windows and doors), and upgrades to the heating and cooling systems.

CEC Grants totaling \$1,085,000

Overall, Columbia County has been awarded nine NYSERDA CEC program grants totaling \$1,085,000. These grants do not require a local match, meaning the energy efficiency upgrades these funds were used for bear no cost to county residents. The County and Task Force completed 17 High-Impact Actions under the CEC program to qualify for these grants. Details about what was done to qualify for these grants and how they are being used can be found in the Clean Energy Communities Program section of this document.

CEC Actions completed to qualify for these grants include:

- Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Financing - Authorize Open C-PACE Locally (200 points) - 7/6/2021
- Community Campaigns - Community Solar (200 points) - 4/19/2022
- Benchmarking - Municipal Buildings (100 points) - 9/6/2022
- Benchmarking - Advanced Reporting (200 points) - 11/16/2022
- Community Campaigns - Clean Heating and Cooling (500 points) - 1/31/2023
- Climate Smart Communities Certification - Bronze (600 points) - 4/18/2023
- Community Campaigns - Clean Heating and Cooling - Tier 2 (600 points) - 3/19/2024
- Community Campaigns - Clean Heating and Cooling - Tier 3 (700 points) - 3/19/2024
- Clean Energy Generation Installation Owned by Municipality Tier 1 (600 points) - 4/9/2024
- Clean Energy Generation Installation Owned by Municipality Tier 2 (700 points) - 4/10/2024
- Clean Energy Generation Installation Owned by Municipality Tier 3 (800 points) - 4/10/2024
- Electric Landscaping Equipment (200 points) - 9/3/2024
- Municipal Building Demos: Clean Heating and Cooling - Tier 1 (700 points) - 9/3/2024
- Light-Duty Electric Vehicles - Tier 1 (300 points) - 9/17/2024
- Light-Duty Electric Vehicles - Tier 2 (500 points) - 9/17/2024
- Level 2 Charging Stations - Tier 1 (200 points) - 9/30/2024
- Level 2 Charging Stations - Tier 2 (400 points) - 9/30/2024

Coordination with local Task Forces

The Climate Smart Communities Task Force Bylaws⁶, adopted February 9, 2023, specify that one of the duties of the Task Force Coordinator is to “Coordinate efforts with other Climate Smart Communities in the County and regionally, as well as with government divisions and departments”.

Claverack’s Climate Smart Coordinator John Bradley says: “There are several projects where the County Task Force's initiatives have been very helpful for Claverack's Climate Smart efforts. Specifically, the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CARP) and the upcoming County Community Climate Action Plan (C-CAP)”. John goes on to say that these are both very complicated projects and without the County Task Force initiative, his local CSC would not have been able to get started. With only a few volunteers interested from Claverack, they have been able to participate and lay the groundwork for broader efforts. John expects that the CARP will be very helpful for the town's comprehensive planning update. Similarly, with the County Task Force’s Land Use subcommittee laying groundwork for the County's C-CAP, John expects the Claverack Climate Smart Committee with its limited volunteers will be able to undertake their own Community-CAP project. “We would not be able to even consider this project with our limited technical and volunteer resources without the benefit of what the County Task Force is doing”.

County Government Operations and Community Climate Action Plan(s)

The Task Force and Columbia County Government are currently actively working on over two dozen climate related projects. Now that Columbia County has achieved Bronze Certification under the CSC program, and the CEC program grant funds have been exhausted with the program undergoing significant changes, we feel it is time to take stock of our position - to regroup and reevaluate what we are doing, and to come up with a new roadmap to guide us forward. Essential to this reevaluation is the development of a Climate Action Plan (CAP).

A Columbia County Climate Action Plan (CAP) will establish a baseline of current greenhouse (GHG) emissions in the county and recommend policies and other actions that will reduce these emissions as they are applied in the future. The CAP will use the community and government operations GHG inventories being conducted by the Capital District Regional Planning Commission and the County Planning Department, respectively. The community GHG Inventory data will be enhanced with further analysis of current land-uses in the County.

The County Board of Supervisors authorized applying for a grant⁷ to help support hiring a consultant to lead stakeholder outreach, analyze GHG emission sources and sinks, and propose policy recommendations that lead to long-term GHG reductions. The end result will be a Climate Action Plan that includes implementation strategies for both County Government Operations, and the broader community.

The CAP will include GHG reduction targets that cover direct and indirect emissions from government operations and the broader community. The CAP will also identify the resources required to implement a prioritized list of strategies and possible funding mechanisms.

⁶ BOS Resolution No. 84-2023

⁷ BOS Resolution No. 290-2024

CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

The CSC program is an eight-agency initiative administered by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). CSC is a framework organized into pledge elements designed to empower local governments in leading climate actions. It aims to provide guidance to reduce GHG emissions, adapt to climate change, and build a sustainable economy. The benefits of participating include free technical assistance, leadership recognition, and access to grants. There are 115 different Pledge Element actions a community can choose from, each worth a different number of points. Communities who reach a total of 120 points receive Bronze Certification status. Those who reach 300 points attain Silver Certification status. These recognitions result in better scores on grant applications for some state funding programs.

Columbia County reached Bronze Certification status on April 21, 2023.

CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES ACTIONS

The New York State Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Program provides guidance to local governments in their efforts to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. The overall goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) and to adopt climate friendly policies while maintaining a vibrant and sustainable economy. The benefits of participating in the CSC program include free technical assistance, access to grants, and recognition of progress through various levels of certification. Local governments participate by adopting a voluntary pledge and using the CSC framework to guide and measure progress toward creating healthy and safe places in which to live and work.

To achieve certification the CSC program requires the county to complete a minimum number of actions. Columbia County achieved Bronze Certification on April 21, 2023 by completing 22 Actions worth a total of 132 points. This certification is good for 5 years, and will expire on September 30 2028 (per the certification report). Some of the actions completed have an earlier expiration date, but that will not affect our bronze certification. It only means the county will have to update or complete those actions again before being able to use them for recertification in the future.

ACTIONS LEADING TO BRONZE CERTIFICATION

The following tables list the status of all of the CSC Actions the Task Force and other county departments have completed, are working on, intend to work on, or believe are viable actions in the near future. Descriptions and an evaluation of the viability of each of these actions can be found in Appendix C.

Table 1 lists all of the CSC Actions completed by Columbia County and the Task Force, plus the actions being actively worked on or discussed as possible future actions at monthly meetings. The Approved Points column lists the points earned from that action prior to 4/21.2023 leading to our current bronze certification. The Possible Future Points column is an evaluation of what we may be able to earn leading up to a future recertification date. This column does not show the maximum number of points possible, but the Coordinators best guess as to how many points we would likely earn based on the county's or task forces efforts working on that particular action. We might be able to earn more points than listed. We might also earn fewer points.

As you can see, adding up the Possible Future Points column results in a total of 305. This is five more than the required 300 points for silver certification. If we fall short on one or more of these recertifying actions we may not meet the silver certification goal. Three of these actions appear to be most critical in that effort. The PE02.03 Government Operations CAP, the PE02.04 Community CAP, and the PE03.07 Clean Energy Upgrades actions are all essential in reaching that goal. Due to the number of points each of these actions is worth, it will be difficult to substitute any of them with alternative actions.

Table 1 - Actively discussed CSC actions

Action	Approved Points leading to Bronze Certification	Possible Future Points when recertifying
PE01.01 - CSC Task Force	20	20
PE01.02 - CSC Coordinator	10	10
PE01.03 - National/Regional Climate Program	3	3
PE01.04 - Partnerships with Other Entities	3	3
PE02.01 - Government Operations GHG Inventory		16
PE02.02 - Community GHG Inventory	16	16
PE02.03 - Government Operations Climate Action Plan		16
PE02.04 - Community Climate Action Plan		16
PE03.01 - Government Building Energy Audits	10	0
PE03.02 - Interior Lighting Upgrades	3	4
PE03.03 - HVAC Upgrades	2	3
PE03.05 - Building Energy Management System	2	2
PE03.06 - Benchmarking - Municipal Buildings	4	4
PE03.07 - Clean Energy Upgrades		10
PE03.10 - Fleet Inventory		4
PE03.11 - Fleet Efficiency Policy		1
PE03.12 - Fleet Rightsizing		0
PE03.13 - Advanced Vehicles		2
PE03.17 - Outdoor Lighting Upgrades		2
PE04.04 - Heat Pumps	9	20
PE04.05 - Solar Energy Installation		20
PE04.09 - County-hosted Trainings		6
PE05.12 - Residential Organic Waste Program	6	6
PE06.12 - Alternative-fuel Infrastructure		18
PE06.13 - Access to Public Transit	1	6
PE06.16 - Natural Resources Inventory	10	10
PE06.17 - Local Forestry Program		3
PE07.01 - Climate Vulnerability Assessment	8	16
PE07.02 - Evaluate Policies for Climate Resilience		6
PE07.03 - Climate Adaptation Plan		15
PE07.04 - Climate-resilient Hazard Mitigation Plan	4	4
PE07.13 - Culverts & Dams	2	4
PE08.02 - Green Vendor Fairs		2
PE08.04 - Farmers' Markets	3	3
PE08.05 - Buy Local/Buy Green Campaign	2	0
PE08.09 - PACE Financing	7	7
PE08.12 - Community Campaign - solar	3	3

Action	Approved Points leading to Bronze Certification	Possible Future Points when recertifying
PE08.12 - Community Campaigns - clean heating cooling energy		3
PE09.01 - Climate Change Education & Engagement		8
PE09.03 - Climate-related Public Events		3
PE09.04 - Local Climate Action Website		3
PE09.05 - Social Media		3
PE10.02 - Annual Progress Report	4	4
Total	132	305

POSSIBLE NEXT-STEP ACTIONS

The Climate Smart Task Force Coordinator has evaluated all of the remaining CSC Actions. Some of these actions have been mentioned briefly at monthly Task Force meetings. None have been discussed in great detail. Some of these actions should probably be included as possibilities in our recertification process. All will require reaching out to specific county department heads to gauge their capabilities and the Board of Supervisors' level of interest. By including some or all of these actions in Task Force and County Department efforts, we would strengthen our chances of reaching silver status when it comes time to recertify. Many of these will likely be discussed and evaluated during the development of our Climate Action Plan.

Table 2 - Possible additional actions to discuss

Other Possible Actions	Possible Future Points
PE05.09 - Waste Reduction Education Campaign	2
PE06.15 - Traffic Calming	3
PE07.05 - Heat Emergency Plan	6
PE07.07 - Cooling Centers	6
PE08.01 - Green Jobs Training	3
PE08.03 - Green Economic Development Plans	4
PE08.11 - Rooftop Solarize Campaign	3
PE08.12 - Community Campaigns - electric vehicles	3
PE09.02 - Energy Reduction Campaign	5
PE10.01 - GHG Tracking System	5

CLEAN ENERGY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

NYSERDA’s Clean Energy Communities (CEC) program provides technical support and grants to help local municipalities implement a range of high-impact clean energy actions that help save money, grow the local economy, and improve the environment. The program was launched in August 2016. The Clean Energy Communities Leadership Round was launched in January 2021 with expanded and additional actions. This added grant funding based on points earned, grants for specific community campaign actions, and a \$10,000 bonus for larger projects located in a Disadvantaged Community (DAC). The CEC program was expanded again with Round 3.0 on December 13, 2023. The number of actions was increased once more, and \$25 million was allocated to the grant program, state-wide.

The CEC program can be thought of as a sister program to CSC. Administered by the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), the CEC program provides additional tools and resources to communities and is designed around High Impact Action items that, when completed, provide increased access to grant funding. One of the greatest benefits of the CEC grant program is that there is no local match required for the grants. As of November 7, 2024, the CEC program is not accepting submissions for completed High Impact Actions. The \$25,000,000 designated to fund grants through the program have been exhausted.

CLEAN ENERGY COMMUNITIES ACTIONS

Between Dec 13, 2023 and Dec 5, 2024, Columbia County and its local municipalities have received \$2,667,500 in NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities grant money. This amounts to over 10.6% of the \$25 million dollars allocated to the program during this time. This does NOT include grants received through earlier versions of the program, before Dec. 13, 2023.

As of November 27, 2024, Columbia County has been awarded \$1,085,000 in NYSERDA CEC no-match grants. In 2024, Columbia County municipalities (including the county) were awarded \$2,667,500. Since the CEC program began in 2016, Columbia County and its municipalities have been awarded a total of \$3,512,500.

In total, including all versions of the CEC grant program and funds distributed before Dec. 13, 2023, Columbia County government alone has been awarded \$1,085,000. The following tables describe the actions taken by the county, the points earned through those actions, and the grants awarded. (Dates in parenthesis are the date NYSERDA approved the completion of the action).

Table 3 - Clean Energy Communities, High Impact Actions Completed

High Impact Actions Completed	Points Gained	Grant Awarded
PACE Financing, adopted by Columbia County some time before September 2020, with assistance from CEDC. (2021-07-06)	200 points	
Community Campaign - Community Solar, authorized by the BOS on August 11, 2021, Resolution 275-2021. (2022-04-19)	200 points	\$15,000
Benchmarking - Municipal Buildings, authorized by the BOS on August 11, 2021, Resolution 276-2021. (2022-09-06)	100 points	
Benchmarking - Advanced Reporting, authorized by the BOS on August 11, 2021, Resolution 276-2021. (2022-11-16)	200 points	
Community Campaign - Clean Heating, Cooling, & Energy Efficiency Tier-1 At least 10 Heat Pump installations documented in the county. (2023-01-31)	500 points	\$15,000
Climate Smart Communities Certification - Bronze. (2023-04-18)	600 points	
Community Campaigns - Clean Heating, Cooling, & Energy Efficiency Tier-2 20 additional Heat Pump installations documented (30 total) (2024-03-19)	600 points	\$45,000
Community Campaigns - Clean Heating, Cooling, & Energy Efficiency Tier-3 30 additional Heat Pump installations documented. (60 total) (2024-03-19)	700 points	\$90,000
Renewable Energy Owned by Municipality Tier-1 - 5kW to 49.9kW Solar Panel Array (Tiers 1, 2, & 3 were all accomplished through the Greenport Highway Garage PV solar array.) (2024-04-09)	600 points	
Renewable Energy Owned by Municipality Tier-2 - 50kW to 99.99kW Solar Panel Array (2024-04-10)	700 points	
Renewable Energy Owned by Municipality Tier-3 - 100kW or more Solar Panel Array (2024-04-10)	800 points	
Electric Landscaping Equipment. Purchased over 40 pieces of battery powered equipment for Highway, Facilities, and Solid Waste departments. (2024-09-03)	200 points	
Clean Energy Upgrades - Heating & Cooling Demonstration Kiosk. Poster and handouts placed at the Solid Waste admin building. (2024-09-03)	700 points	

High Impact Actions Completed	Points Gained	Grant Awarded
Clean Fleets - Light-Duty Electric Vehicles Tier-1, purchase one battery electric vehicle. (2024-09-17)	300 points	
Clean Fleets - Light-Duty Electric Vehicles Tier-2, purchase two additional battery electric vehicles. (2024-09-17)	500 points	
Clean Fleets - Level 2 Charging Stations Tier-1, 2 Ports (2024-09-30)	200 points	
Clean Fleets - Level 2 Charging Stations Tier-2, 4 additional Ports (2024-09-30)	400 points	
Total	7,500 points	\$165,000

Table 4 - Clean Energy Communities, Designated Community Achievements

Designated Community Achievements	Grant Awarded
By completing 4 high impact actions, Columbia County became a Designated Community under the NYSERDA CEC program. (2022-11-29).	\$5,000
By completing one more high impact action and attaining 1,000 points when the CEC program instituted "Version 3.0", Columbia County became a 1-Star Designated Community. (2024-03-27)	\$15,000
By attaining 3,000 points we became a 2-Star Designated Community. (2024-03-27)	\$187,500
By attaining 5,000 points we became a 3-Star Designated Community. (2024-04-18)	\$300,000
By attaining 7,000 points we became a 4-Star Designated Community. (2024-11-12)	\$412,500
Total	\$920,000
Total Grants Awarded, Tables 3 and 4	\$1085,000

USING THE GRANT MONEY

Under the NYSERDA CEC Grant program, there is no local cost share required. All funding through the CEC program must be used to support clean energy projects. Grants that are \$5,000 or less are paid directly by check. For grant awards greater than \$5,000, applicants must select from a list of pre-approved project types or propose a custom project.

DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITY BONUS

Prior to December 13, 2023, a grant award of \$20,000 or more was eligible for a \$10,000 bonus if the proposed project was located in a New York State Disadvantaged Community (DAC). When NYSERDA adopted version 3.0 Guidance, this changed to a 50% bonus for any grants over \$5,000 that are located in a DAC. In Columbia County the City of Hudson and the Town of Greenport are listed as Disadvantaged Communities, and all CEC grants awarded to the county have been or will be used in one of these DACs.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Climate Smart Communities Timeline

Appendix B - Task Force Members

Appendix C - Climate Smart Communities Action Details

APPENDIX A

CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES TIMELINE

2020

November 10 - BOS adopts the Climate Smart Communities Pledge

2021

March 11 - BOS Establishes the CSC Task Force naming David Newman as chairperson

May 12 - BOS authorizes hiring a Task Force Intern, Alejandra Plaza Limon works over the summer compiling a list of CSC actions that are already complete or planned by the County

July 14 - BOS joins the Clean Energy Communities Program

August 11 - County launches the Community Solar Campaign

August 11 - County initiates the Municipal Building Energy Benchmarking Program

November 22 - First Task Force Coordinator is appointed - Wendy Madsen

2022

May - Task Force intern Alejandra Plaza Limon completes the Task Force's first progress report "Roadmap to Bronze"

July 16 - County holds its first Climate Carnival at the Columbia County Fairgrounds

August 10 - BOS authorizes the development of a Climate Adaptation & Resilience Plan (CARP)

November 9 - Launch of the Community Campaign for Clean Heating, Cooling, & Energy Efficiency

November 29 - County completes 4 high impact CEC actions, becomes a Designated Clean Energy Community
County qualifies for a \$5,000 grant due to Designated CEC status

2023

February 8 - BOS authorizes a Government Operations GHG Inventory

February 8 - BOS adopts the first Task Force Bylaws

February 8 - Second Task Force Coordinator is appointed - Don Meltz

February 24 - County qualifies for a \$15,000 CEC grant due to Clean Heating & Cooling Campaign Tier-1
Grant is used to subsidize rooftop solar installation on DSS building

March 3 - Columbia County officially becomes Bronze Certified

April 6 - The Task Force participates in the Hudson Energy Forum held at the Hudson Area Library

- April 21 - The County Solid Waste Dept. holds an open house demonstration of its new ECRICH food scrap composting equipment
- June 12 - The Task Force publishes a new and completely revised website with social media accounts
- July 18 - County qualifies for a \$15,000 CEC grant due to completing the Community Solar Campaign Grant is used to purchase 42 pieces of electric landscaping equipment
- August 4 - The Coordinator posts the first Annual Benchmarking Report to the Task Force website
- October 18 - The Task Force Coordinator begins participating in a series of Municipal Climate Leadership Team Meetings to discuss and review progress on the Regional Community Climate Action Plan being developed by CDRPC
- December 1 - The 150 kW (AC) PV solar array at the County DPW building in Greenport is connected to the grid
- December 2 - The County holds its second Climate Forum at Columbia Greene College with six panelists and ten vendor display tables
- 2024**
- March 27 - County qualifies for a \$15,000 CEC grant due to reaching 1-Star status in the CEC 3.0 program Grant is used to install 2 level-2 EV charging ports at 11 Warren Street
- March 27 - County qualifies for a \$187,500 CEC grant due to reaching 2-Star status in the CEC 3.0 program Grant is used to purchase four Battery Electric Vehicles for Engineering Dept., Office For the Ageing, District Attorney, and 401 State Street office building
- March 27 - County qualifies for a \$45,000 CEC grant due to reaching Tier-2 in the Clean Heating & Cooling Campaign; Grant is used to purchase one Battery Electric Vehicle for the Health Dept.
- March 27 - County qualifies for a \$90,000 CEC grant due to reaching Tier-3 in the Clean Heating & Cooling Campaign; Grant is used to install 14 EV charging ports at 401 State, Greenport DPW, and Courthouse
- April 6 - The 50 kW (AC) PV solar array at the DSS building is connected to the grid
- April 12 - The Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plans (CARP) are finalized for Columbia County and 17 local municipalities
- April 18 - County qualifies for a \$300,000 CEC grant due to becoming a 3-Star designated community Grant is used for the installation of heat pumps at the County Courthouse in Hudson
- July 10 - BOS authorizes applying for a \$60,000 DEC CSC Certification Grant to complete a Government Operations and Community Climate Action Plan
- August 2 - The County receives shipment of its first four EVs, 2024 Toyota BZ4Xs

September 14 - County holds its second Climate Carnival at the Columbia County Fairgrounds

October 9 - BOS authorizes an investment grade energy audit for the 401 State Street office building

November 11 - County qualifies for a \$412,500 CEC grant due to reaching 4-Star status in the CEC 3.0 program
Grant is to be used to perform energy efficiency upgrades at the 401 State Street office building

December 12 - Columbia County is awarded grants totaling \$60,000 to complete “Government Operations and Community Greenhouse Gas Inventories, and Government Operations and Community Climate Action Plans”.

APPENDIX B

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Table 5 - Current Task Force Members

Member Name	Town/Organization
David Newman	Ghent - County CSC Task Force Chair, County EMC
Currently Open	Ancram
Lisa Bouchard Hoe	Austerlitz - Local Realtor
Will Powers	Canaan - Town Board liaison to Canaan Task Force
Deborah Conrad	Chatham - Co-chair Chatham Task Force
John Bradley	Claverack - Local CSC Task Force Coordinator and County EMC
Jennifer Phillips	Clermont - Planning Board & CSC task force, and Bard Center for Environmental Policy
Cara Boyle	Copake - Copake Task Force & County EMC
Matt Stinchcomb	Gallatin - Partners for Climate Action Hudson Valley
Matthew Mercier	Germantown - Germantown Task Force Chair
Currently Open	Greenport
Currently Open	Hillsdale
Joshua Cohen	City of Hudson
Sean Casey	Kinderhook - Town Board
Stan Yarian	Livingston - County EMC
Steve Powers	New Lebanon - Town Task Force Chair
John Leone	Stockport - Town Board
Kathy Schneider	Stuyvesant - Town Planning Board & Task Force
Betsy Albert	Taghkanic - Taghkanic Task Force
Currently Open	Chatham Village
Bill Mancini	Kinderhook Village - Village CSC Task Force Coordinator, County EMC
Tom Paino	Philmont Village - Local CSC Task Force Chair
Laura Cannamela	Valatie Village - Valatie Task Force
Don Meltz	Columbia County - County CSC Coordinator, Senior Planner
Brenda Adams	Canaan Supervisor
Donal Collins	Chatham Supervisor - Farmland Protection Board

Table 6 - Former Task Force Members

Member Name	Town/Organization
Terence Duval	Columbia Land Conservancy
Tistrya Houghtling	Supervisor, New Lebanon
Claudia Kenny	Little Seed Farm
Ron Knott	Supervisor, Stuyvesant
Wendy Madsen	Columbia County Solid Waste Director
Patrice Perry	Columbia County Planning Director
Jody Rael	Sundog Solar, Chatham
Bruce Shenker	New Lebanon - EMC and CSC Task Force Coordinator
Cara Humphrey	Austerlitz
Dan Hass	Copake
Michael O'Hara	Hudson
Jolene Race	Greenport - Former County Director of Solid Waste Dept.
Suzan Flamm	Ancram - Local CSC Task Force Coordinator

APPENDIX C

CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES ACTION DETAILS

The following pages describe each CSC Action listed in the table on page 11, the number of points we estimate we could qualify for, and the time constraints that apply to that action.

PE01.01 - CSC Task Force

20 points Must submit proof we've met at least twice in the last year

The Columbia County CSC Task Force was established by resolution No. 71-2021 of the Board of Supervisors on March 10, 2021. Bylaws for the operation of the Task Force were adopted by Resolution No. 84-2023 on February 8, 2023. The bylaws describe membership requirements and how appointments are made, meeting requirements, and duties of officers, committees and staff.

This action is complete and will only need to be documented when we are ready to submit for recertification.

PE01.02 - CSC Coordinator

10 points Position must be currently filled and have defined responsibilities

Wendy Madsen was appointed the Columbia County CSC Coordinator by resolution No. 437-2021 of the Board of Supervisors on November 22, 2021. Don Meltz was appointed Coordinator by resolution 86-2023 of the Board of Supervisors on February 8, 2023. The responsibilities of the CSC coordinator are defined in the bylaws adopted by Resolution No. 84-2023 on February 8, 2023.

This action is complete and will only need to be documented when we are ready to submit for recertification.

PE01.03 - National/Regional Climate Program

3 points Must demonstrate active engagement within the past year

Columbia County participates in the New York State Clean Energy Communities program, authorized by the Board of Supervisors in resolution 243-2021 on July 14, 2021.

The Clean Energy Communities program is presently in a transitional phase. There is talk that it may move from NYSERDA control over to DEC, or may be revamped in other ways. This may require a new resolution to join this new program, or we may need to look into joining a different program in order to maintain our points for this action.

PE01.04 - Partnerships with Other Entities

3 points Collaboration must have taken place within 3 years or be currently active

One of the duties of the Task Force Coordinator described in the adopted bylaws is to “Coordinate efforts with other Climate Smart Communities in the County and regionally, as well as with government divisions and departments.”

Columbia County annually enters into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Cornell Cooperative Extension, partnering with them to “... assist supporting and supplying information and resources to our agricultural and natural resources, promoting gardening, climate change and the environment, our local 4-H youth, and promoting Taste NY.”

The Board of Supervisors (BOS) also passed resolution 347-2022 on August 11, 2022 to “... accept the technical assistance being offered by CDRPC to develop a Vulnerability Assessment and Climate Adaptation Plan” which was completed through an agreement with Cornell Cooperative Extension.

The CSC Task Force is working closely with CDRPC on their Comprehensive Regional Climate Action Plan, and CSC Coordinator Don Meltz has participated in their Climate Leadership Team meetings, providing input on the development of the plan. At the December 2024 Task Force meeting the idea was broached that we participate in a Statewide Protocol Group to help develop a more automated method of incorporating agriculture and forest into municipal CAPs.

This action will need to be re-documented when we are ready to submit for recertification. We may want to consider formalizing our cooperation with CDRPC through a BOS resolution or MOU in order to strengthen our submission for points for this action.

PE02.01 - Government Operations GHG Inventory

16 points Must be published within the last 5 years

The Columbia County BOS passed resolution 54-2023 on February 8, 2023, authorizing the Task Force to work with CDRPC and county officials to develop a government operations GHG inventory, publish the report publicly, and update the report periodically. The Task Force Coordinator is working with the County Controller’s office, obtaining all necessary data, and recording the information in a series of spreadsheets. The inventory will be complete in time for its use in the anticipated Local Government Operations Climate Action Plan. (PE02.03)

PE02.02 - Community GHG Inventory

16 points Must be published within the last 5 years
Current inventory expires 11/30/2027

With assistance from CDRPC staff a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory was completed on November 30, 2022 based on a CDRPC inventory done in 2013 using 2010 GHG data.

Columbia County has been awarded a DEC CSC grant to develop both a Government Operations and Community Climate Action Plan (CAP), which will include incorporating local GHG data from a regional Community GHG Inventory being developed by CDRPC. This GHG inventory will be based on 2022 data.

This action should be re-documented using the more up-to-date 2022 data when our Community CAP is complete, likely sometime in 2026.

PE02.03 - Government Operations Climate Action Plan

16 points Must be completed within the last 10 years

The Columbia County BOS passed resolution No. 290-2024 on July 10, 2024 authorizing a grant application for a NYS DEC Climate Smart Communities Certification grant for \$60,000. The grant was awarded by DEC in December 2024. This grant will be added to a \$30,000 commitment of county government matching funds and \$30,000 worth of in-kind services from county staff and volunteers. These funds and services will be used to enhance the CDRPC Regional GHG inventory for use by Columbia County, and to complete both a Government Operations and a Community Climate Action Plan. Work on these plans will begin in mid-2025, and likely continue through 2026.

PE02.04 - Community Climate Action Plan

16 points Must be completed within the last 10 years

(As above) The Columbia County BOS passed resolution No. 290-2024 on July 10, 2024 authorizing a grant application for a NYS DEC Climate Smart Communities Certification grant for \$60,000. The grant was awarded by DEC in December 2024. This grant will be added to a \$30,000 commitment of county government matching funds and \$30,000 worth of in-kind services from county staff and volunteers. These funds and services will be used to enhance the CDRPC Regional GHG inventory for use by Columbia County, and to complete both a Government Operations and a Community Climate Action Plan. Work on these plans will begin in mid-2025, and likely continue through 2026.

PE03.01 - Government Building Energy Audits

0 points Must have been conducted within 7 years
Current audits expire on 10/31/2026

Columbia County hired a contractor to conduct Investment Grade Energy Audits for the Public Safety Building, Human Service Building, Department of Social Services Building, and DPW Highway Garage. The report was completed on October 31, 2019. This amounted to at least 25% of the county's buildings (by square footage), qualifying us for 10 points.

Energy Audits only qualify for points if they are performed within 7 years of the application date. Given the timing, we will likely not be able to use this 2019 Audit for recertification. The county has contracted with another company to perform an energy audit for 401 State Street. However, this will not qualify us for any points because this one building is less than the minimum required (10% of the number of county owned buildings, or 10% of overall square footage of buildings). In order to gain points for this action the county would have to perform additional Level 1, 2, or 3 energy audits.

PE03.02 - Interior Lighting Upgrades

4 points These points are cumulative and do not have an expiration date

As a result of the 2019 energy audit, four county owned buildings were upgraded to LED lighting as of June 30, 2020. These were the: Public Safety Building, Human Services Building, Department of Social Services Building, and DPW Highway Garage. These buildings account for 41.41% of the total county building square footage, gaining us 3 points.

In February 2023, renovations at the 560 Warren Street DMV, Real Property, and Treasurer's office included lighting upgrades to LED. An energy audit planned for 401 State Street will likely include LED lighting. There may be other lighting upgrades performed that are not accounted for in this list. If the 401 State Street lighting upgrades happen before we recertify, it is almost certain we will surpass the 50% threshold and gain 4 points.

PE03.03 - HVAC Upgrades

4 points Equipment must have been installed in the last 10 years
Current equipment qualification will expire on 9/30/2030

As a result of the 2019 energy audit, two county owned building HVAC systems were upgraded to Air-Source Heat Pumps , the Public Safety Building and Human Services Building. These were completed on September 30, 2020 and account for 27.29% of the total county building square footage, gaining us 2 points.

In February 2023, renovations at the 560 Warren Street DMV, Real Property, and Treasurer's office included HVAC upgrades. The Department of Social Services building heating system was upgraded at the end of 2023. The County is currently installing energy efficient heat pumps at the County Courthouse building. An energy audit planned for 401 State Street will likely include HVAC upgrades. There may be other upgrades performed that are not accounted for in this list.

With these additional upgrades it is almost certain we will surpass the 30% threshold and gain 3 points when we recertify. In order to use the upgrades performed in 2020, we will have to recertify before September 30, 2030.

PE03.05 - Building Energy Management System

2 points Equipment must be in active use within the last year
These points are cumulative as long as the equipment remains in use

As a result of the 2019 energy audit, two county owned buildings were outfitted with Building Energy Management Systems (BEMS), the Public Safety Building and Human Services Building. These buildings account for 27.29% of the total county building square footage, gaining us 2 points.

In February 2023, renovations at the 560 Warren Street DMV, Real Property, and Treasurer's office included installing BEMS. The Department of Social Services building heating system was upgraded with a BEMS at the

end of 2023. These BEMS control only the heating and cooling systems, not lighting. While these additional BEMSs increase the number of buildings and square footage covered, it will not get us past the 60% threshold required for 3 points. We will still qualify for 2 points.

PE03.06 - Benchmarking - Municipal Buildings

4 points Must post at least 24-months of municipal energy use on website
Unclear if this action has an expiration date as it is tightly bound to the CEC program, which is in limbo

The Board of Supervisors authorized a Municipal Building Energy Benchmarking Program with resolution 276-2021 on August 11, 2021. This Benchmarking Program collects and tracks building energy use by all county-owned or occupied buildings over 1,000 square feet. The initial Benchmarking report was completed for years 2020-2021 and posted on the Task Force website. This “Advanced Reporting” qualified us for an additional 2 points.

The Benchmarking Report is currently being updated as part of the county’s GHG Inventory and will include years 2020-2024, giving us a full 5-years’ worth of data. The new report will be posted on the Task Force website when complete.

PE03.07 - Clean Energy Upgrades

10 points Must document at least a 10% reduction in GHG emissions from all buildings
These points do not expire as long as the reductions remain in effect

This action is not being actively discussed at Task Force meetings. However, the Task Force Coordinator is keeping a close eye on our progress towards the first goal of a 10% reduction in GHG emissions across all municipal buildings. This is being tracked through the Benchmarking Action (PE03.06) above. There is no evidence yet that the county has reduced emissions to that extent. However, with the many building upgrades, heat pump installations, and PV solar projects completed in the last few years, we may be approaching this first tier 10% reduction, worth 10 points. With a 15% reduction we would qualify for 12 points. With a 20% reduction, 14 points.

PE03.10 - Fleet Inventory

4 points Must be completed within the last 2 years

Upon the recommendation of the CSC Task Force, Coordinator Don Meltz opened discussions with members of the Fleet Maintenance Committee and its chair, Supervisor James Guzzi, regarding development of a Fleet Inventory and Fleet Efficiency Policy. The county already maintains an inventory of owned and leased vehicles in a pair of Excel Spreadsheets. Don took these spreadsheets, merged and modified them to fulfill the requirements of this action, and has populated them with most of the required information. Before submittal

for recertification they should be updated with the most recent information, particularly current total mileage per vehicle and annual miles driven per vehicle.

PE03.11 - Fleet Efficiency Policy

1 point There is no expiration date but the policy must be actively implemented

(As above) Upon the recommendation of the CSC Task Force, Coordinator Don Meltz opened discussions with members of the Fleet Maintenance Committee and its chair, Supervisor James Guzzi, regarding development of a Fleet Inventory and Fleet Efficiency Policy. A draft policy was developed and distributed to the Fleet Maintenance Committee in September 2023. The draft policy was discussed at a Fleet Maintenance Committee meeting on February 13, 2024 and received positive feedback. Though the policy has not yet been adopted, the discussions led to the eventual approval of the purchase of 5 Full Battery Electric Vehicles using NYSERDA CEC grants.

In order to qualify for 1 point this policy must require that 100% of new vehicles in the local fleet be fuel-efficient by a certain year (with designated exempt vehicles).

In order to qualify for an additional 2 points this policy must specify a short-term deadline (within two years) by which a minimum percentage of new vehicles will be fuel-efficient or a medium-term deadline (within five years) for attainment of a minimum fleet fuel-efficiency standard for the entire fleet.

Reviewing the draft policy, if adopted, we should qualify for 1 point for this action.

PE03.12 - Fleet Rightsizing

0 points The rightsizing initiative must be completed within the last 5 years

Columbia County owns or leases over 250 four wheeled “highway” vehicles. In order to qualify for the minimum 1 point, we would have to remove at least 25 vehicles (10%) from the fleet. This seems unlikely as the county Fleet Maintenance Committee and the Controller have been keeping a close eye on vehicle use and purchases for many years. There may be places to cut, but probably not enough to get a 10% reduction.

That being said, since fleet rightsizing is an ongoing discussion within and among county departments, we are keeping it on our list of active actions even though it may not result in any points.

PE03.13 - Advanced Vehicles

2 points These points are cumulative as long as the equipment remains in use

Columbia County purchased its first 5 Battery Electric Vehicles (four on 8/1/2024 and one on 10/22/2024) using two NYSERDA CEC grants awarded due to completing a pair of CEC High Priority Actions. This qualifies us for 2 points in the CSC program. In order to qualify for an additional 4 points the county would have to deploy at least an additional 20 advanced vehicles (10% of our fleet) or purchase a single medium or heavy-duty class 3-8 vehicle.

PE03.17 - Outdoor Lighting Upgrades

2 points These points are cumulative as long as the equipment remains in use

The first step for this action would be to take an inventory of all off-street outdoor lighting (in parking lots, public parks, outside buildings, etc.) owned by the county. The inventory would be updated as lighting is converted to LED. Upgrading between 26% and 50% of all outdoor lighting would result in 2 points.

PE04.04 - Heat Pumps

20 points These points do not expire as the equipment remains in use

The Sheriff's Office and Administration area at the Columbia County Public Safety building was upgraded with new air-source heat pumps, completed on October 19, 2020. This qualified us for 9 points.

The Task Force has also completed a "Heating and Cooling Demo" at the Solid Waste Administration Building by displaying a poster and handouts which adds 3 points. With the new Solid Waste Administration building using heat pumps, and new air-source heat pumps being installed at the County Courthouse, we should qualify for at least 20 points when we recertify, or possibly 22 if we can document the installation of heat pumps at other county buildings.

PE04.05 - Solar Energy Installation

20 points These points do not expire as the equipment remains in use

In 2023, Columbia County replaced the roof and installed a rooftop solar array at the Department of Public Works building on Route 23-B in Greenport. This solar array is rated for 150 kW (AC). In 2024, Columbia County performed significant energy efficiency upgrades to the DSS building on Railroad Ave. in the City of Hudson, including the installation of a rooftop solar array. The DSS system is rated at 50 kW (AC).

The combination of these two systems qualify us for the maximum 20 points available.

PE04.09 - County-hosted Trainings

6 points Trainings must have happened within the last 5 years

These trainings must be hosted by the county and conducted in coordination with a NYSERDA Clean Energy Community Coordinator. Trainings are worth 3 points each and are available for:

- Overview of the Model Solar Energy Law
- Overview of the Model Battery Energy Storage System Law
- Clean Energy and Your Comprehensive Plan
- Battery Energy Storage for First Responders
- Solar PV Permitting and Inspecting

To receive approval, the County-Hosted Trainings must be attended by individuals representing at least 35% of the municipalities within the County. That would be 9 towns, villages, or the city of Hudson for Columbia County. We've estimated at least 6 points attainable for this action. But given the requirements, it's possible we could easily qualify for the maximum of 15.

PE05.12 - Residential Organic Waste Program

6 points Program must be currently active

Columbia County Solid Waste Department accepts small residential yard waste such as leaves, grass clippings and tree limbs less than 2 inches in diameter at the Greenport Transfer Station. The material is then taken to GroMax in Claverack, NY for composting. The County has also developed a drop off food waste program. Food scraps are accepted at all Columbia County stations during regular operating hours. The purchase of a Recycling & Food Scrap sticker is required.

The yard waste program qualifies us for 2 points and the food scrap program qualifies us for 4 points. It is likely that these programs will continue into the future gaining us 6 points when we recertify.

PE06.12 - Alternative-fuel Infrastructure

18 points Equipment must be currently active

Columbia County installed its first ten Electric Vehicle charging stations in August and September of 2024 using two NYSERDA CEC grants awarded by completing a pair of CEC High Priority Actions. Six more charging stations are planned and should be operational by early 2025. These 16 EV charging stations, half of which are accessible to the public, will qualify us for 18 points when we recertify.

PE06.13 - Access to Public Transit

6 points Strategies must have been implemented or used within the last 10 years

Columbia County provides a public transportation program administered by the NYS Department of Transportation. This program provides transit incentives for residents by contracting with a bussing company that provides transportation to local shops and the city of Hudson, as well as commuting to Albany.

The County public transportation system currently qualifies us for 1 point. If we can document that there is adequate bike and car parking near stops, that the current system acts as a shuttle system to trains, and the county promotes car-sharing in some way, we may be able to increase this to a 6 point action when we recertify.

PE06.17 - Local Forestry Program

3 points Strategies must have been completed within the last 10 years

Various strategies for encouraging tree plantings on government and private lands have been discussed at Task Force meetings over the last year. School Districts and local businesses were contacted and draft plans were made. However, nothing has yet come to fruition. It was decided that additional partners should be brought onboard and a more detailed plan of attack should be developed.

The five strategies included in this action are not all implementable by a county government. “Enacting a tree preservation ordinance” for example, is not something a county can legally do. Members of the Task Force have been investigating ways to incorporate Agriculture and Forestry land uses into our potential Community Climate Action Plan. A comprehensive tree inventory seems like a logical step (worth 3 points). Participation in a state forestry program or a large-scale tree planting project may also be possibilities (worth 2 points each).

PE06.16 - Natural Resources Inventory

10 points The report must have been completed in the last 10 years
The Columbia County NRI will expire on 12/31/2028

The Columbia County Government Committee of the Board of Supervisors voted to support a request for grant funding from the Hudson River Estuary Program for the development of a Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) on June 21, 2016. The Inventory was created with the assistance of the county Environmental Management Council and coordinated by Columbia Land Conservancy. The NRI was completed in 2018, and the Board of Supervisors adopted the NRI with resolution 135-2019 on April 10, 2019. The NRI itself is worth 8 points. Adoption by the BOS gain an additional 2 points. Points for this action will expire 10 years after the NRI was completed, at the end of 2028.

PE07.01 - Climate Vulnerability Assessment

16 points The assessment must have been completed within the last 10 years
Our CARP document will not expire until 3/31/2034

The Task Force relied on the County’s 2018 Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) and the 2018 NRI for this action. Three climate related hazards covering the entire county were identified in the HMP, resulting in 8 points.

On August 10, 2022 the County BOS adopted resolution 347-2022 accepting technical assistance from the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) to develop a Vulnerability Assessment and Climate Adaptation Plan. The Columbia County Climate Adaptation and Resilience Planning (CARP) process was facilitated by members of the Climate Resilience Partnership, a regional collaboration of Cornell Cooperative Extensions (CCEs). Final CARP documents were presented to the county and all participating municipalities on March 31, 2024.

The CARP project was designed to fulfill not only this action, but also the next two: PE07.02 - Evaluate Policies for Climate Resilience and PE07.03 - Climate Adaptation Plan. Because the CARP includes a Comprehensive vulnerability assessment, covering all relevant climate hazards for the entire geographic area of Columbia County, we should qualify for the full 16 points available for this action. Points for the CARP will expire in 10 years on March 31, 2034.

PE07.02 - Evaluate Policies for Climate Resilience

6 points The CSRП report must have been completed within the last 5 years
The CSRП report included in our CARP will expire on 3/31/2029

The Climate Adaptation and Resilience Planning (CARP) process described above included a Climate Smart Resilient Policy analysis (CSRП). This included an assessment of community plans, a stakeholder meeting and development of a CSRП summary report.

This action will result in 6 points when we recertify. The current CSRП report will expire in 5 years, on March 31, 2029.

PE07.03 - Climate Adaptation Plan

15 points The document must have been completed within the last 10 years
Our CARP document will not expire until 3/31/2034

As described in Action PE07.01 above, on August 10, 2022 the County BOS adopted resolution 347-2022 accepting technical assistance from the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) to develop a Vulnerability Assessment and Climate Adaptation Plan. The Columbia County Climate Adaptation and Resilience Planning (CARP) process was facilitated by members of the Climate Resilience Partnership, a regional collaboration of Cornell Cooperative Extensions (CCEs). Final CARP documents were presented to the county and all participating municipalities on March 31, 2024.

Because the CARP is “Comprehensive in scope, covering all relevant climate hazards for the entire geographic area of the community” and includes a “community-developed climate adaptation and resilience vision statement”, we should qualify for the full 15 points available under this action. Points for the CARP will expire in 10 years on March 31, 2034.

PE07.04 - Climate-resilient Hazard Mitigation Plan

4 points The HMP must have been completed within the last 5 years
Columbia County’s updated HMP will expire in early 2030

Columbia County adopted its last Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) with resolution 387-2018 on October 11, 2018. Submitting this plan gained us the full 4 points available for this action. Points for this action have expired as of October 11, 2023.

The county is currently in the process of updated its HMP which will adhere to the NYS Hazard Mitigation Planning Standards. These standards require an assessment of how climate change is affecting the county’s vulnerability to climate change, and documentation of strategies to address hazards related to climate change. We should qualify for the full 4 points available when we recertify.

PE07.13 - Culverts & Dams

4 points Must have occurred in the last 10 years
Our current culvert report will expire on 12/31/2027

The Task Force submitted a 2017 large culvert inspection report assessing all of the road-stream crossings that fall under the responsibility of Columbia County. This resulted in 2 points. Additional documentation was submitted regarding two bridge replacement and right-sizing projects. These were rejected, however, due to lack of documentation regarding the completion of the projects.

Completing a dam inventory would result in an additional 2 points for this action. With an updated culvert inventory and assessment, we would likely qualify for 4 points total. Reviewing other bridge and culvert upgrade projects could result in an additional 12 points if they meet the action requirements.

PE08.02 - Green Vendor Fairs

2 points Must have occurred within the last year
Recognition for our Climate Carnival will expire on 9/14/2025

Columbia County and its Task Force have sponsored two Climate Carnival events in the past. The first was held on July 16, 2022, and the latest on September 14, 2024. Nearly fifty vendors signed up for each event, and approximately 2,000 visitors attended between the two, 1,200 in 2022 and 800 in 2024. An event of this scale takes a tremendous amount of work in planning, coordinating, setting up beforehand, and managing on event day. The Task Force will likely seek additional sponsors for future events that will be able to help with planning and staffing this event. We all agree that this is something we would like to see continue into the future. However, if we want to promote the Carnival and broaden its scope, we will have to expand the number of organizations involved in its planning and sponsorship.

PE08.04 - Farmers' Markets

3 points Must be active within the last year
Each year the County BOS passes a resolution allowing the City of Hudson to use the county owned parking lot at 560 Warren Street for a Farmers' Market. The latest resolution is no. 68-2024, adopted on February 14, 2024. It is anticipated that this will continue into the future.

PE08.05 - Buy Local/Buy Green Campaign

0 points Must have been active within the last 3 years

The Columbia County Tourism department has in the past worked in coordination with the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce to promote a Shop Columbia County 1st, Buy Local Campaign. Evidence that the campaign was active between 2019 and 2021 was supplied to NYS CSC program which qualified us for 2 points. However, since then, the campaign has stalled. There is no evidence that it has been active in recent years,

which is why zero points are being applied for future certification. It may be possible, however, to qualify for points due to the Tourism Department's participation in "Hudson Valley Make It Yours", and by documenting numerous other programs of the Tourism Department that promote local shopping and events.

PE08.09 - PACE Financing

7 points Must be listed as a current Energy Improvement Corporation (EIC) member
Columbia County is currently listed on the EIC website

Open C-PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) Financing allows property owners to pay back the cost of clean energy upgrades to their commercial or non-profit property over a term that can go as long as 20-30 years. The investment is secured through a benefit assessment lien on the improved property.

To recertify, the county must show that they are still listed as a current EIC member having authorized Open C-PACE.

PE08.12 - Community Campaign - solar

3 points Must have been implemented within the last 5 years
Our campaign will expire 8/11/2026

The Columbia County BOS passed resolution n. 275-2021 on August 12, 2021 authorizing the launch and implementation of a countywide Community Solar Campaign. On February 9, 2022, the BOS passed resolution no. 76-2022 authorizing entering into agreements with Astral Power and Nexamp to jointly promote the Solar Campaign, and to offer subscriptions to community solar projects for residents and businesses. The campaign reached over 100 subscriptions. However, there were significant delays getting most of these subscribers connected to an actual community solar project. It is still uncertain if all of the subscribers were connected in the end.

It is unclear how this action will be assessed in the future as it is tightly bound to the CEC program, which is in limbo. Community Solar promoters continue to call the Planning Department office and there appears to be growing capacity. However, given some of the problems encountered with this action, there is hesitation from the Task Force in making this a priority action.

PE08.12 - Community Campaigns - clean heating cooling energy

3 points Must have been implemented within the last 5 years
Our campaign will expire 11/9/2027

On November 9, 2022, the Columbia County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution no. 492-2022 authorizing the launch of a "Community Campaign for Clean Heating, Cooling, and Energy Efficiency in Columbia County".

The Task Force developed a webpage describing the campaign and posted handouts at the County Admin building at 401 State Street in Hudson, NY.

Christina Bohnsack of the Capital Region Clean Energy Hub assisted with tracking heat pump installations throughout the county. We reached our goal, documenting more than the 10 required installations required by the CEC program before the end of December 2022. Tier 2 under the CEC program was reached on September 17, 2023 and tier 3 was reached on December 2, 2023.

It is unclear how this action will be assessed in the future as it is tightly bound to the CEC program, which is in limbo.

PE09.01 - Climate Change Education & Engagement

8 points Must have held at least two engagement activities within the past year

To be eligible for points under this action, the county must develop a community engagement strategy. The strategy document should include the goals and scope of the outreach program, key partners in the community and in the region, an analysis of the audiences local government is trying to reach, and list of engagement methods tailored to our local circumstances.

Columbia County's Task Force already has a robust set education and engagement tools it is using. We have a well-designed website and multiple active social media accounts. We have hosted multiple educational events. And we work with the Capital Region Clean Energy Hub and local municipal Task Forces to help coordinate and promote each other's events. By simply assembling a document that describes what the Task Force is doing and plans on doing, we should qualify for the full 8 points available for this action.

PE09.03 - Climate-related Public Events

3 points Must host at least 1 event within the past year

In addition to the Climate Carnival held every two years so far, Columbia County has hosted a Climate Forum at Columbia Greene Community College in 2022 and 2023. The goal of these forums was to assemble a panel of experts to educate Columbia County residents on what is happening related to the NYS Climate Act, outline barriers to complying with the goals and requirements, and present potential solutions relevant for our County. The Task Force also participated in a Hudson Energy Forum at the Hudson Area Library on April 6, 2024. This event was organized by the Capital Region Clean Energy Hub and included multiple participating state and local agencies. It is anticipated that similar public events will continue well into the future.

PE09.04 - Local Climate Action Website

3 points Must have new content posted within the last year

The Columbia County CSC Task Force Coordinator developed a new website which went live on June 12, 2023. The website includes the essential components needed to qualify for points for this action which are: A description of the county's goals and projects related to local climate change mitigation and adaptation, ways that residents and businesses can participate in efforts to reduce GHG emissions and build community resiliency, and a summary of actions that residents and businesses in the community can take to reduce their GHG emissions. The website also includes

maps and information about local risk factors and areas vulnerable to climate hazards, descriptions of sponsors and partners involved in local climate action, a calendar of events related to climate change, tools to help users find resources and contacts, and local, state, and national resources and links related to climate change. The website is continually updated with new information, and we anticipate it will remain a valuable asset well into the future.

PE09.05 - Social Media

3 points Must have new content posted within the last year

At the same time the Task Force website was published, new social media accounts were also established. These accounts are meant to compliment the website content, helping the Task Force to promote events, disseminate climate news, and notify county residents of completed actions, grant awards, and other achievements. The Task Force currently maintains Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Bluesky social media accounts. These accounts are continually updated and we anticipate they will remain active well into the future.

PE10.02 - Annual Progress Report

4 points Must have been released to the public within the last year

Over the summer of 2021 Cornell University intern Alejandra Plaza Limon developed the document "Roadmap to Bronze" which helped guide the Task Force in its early days. This roadmap describes the state of climate action in New York State, the Climate Smart Communities Program, and includes demographic data for Columbia County. It contains an analysis of all the CSC Actions available to Columbia County, a list of actions the county had already completed up to May of 2022, and a list of next-step actions that if implemented, could lead the county to bronze certification.

The current Task Force Coordinator, Don Meltz, has been updating this list of actions as the Task Force has been making progress in their completion. Now that Columbia County has achieved Bronze Certification and has also completed multiple Clean Energy Communities High Impact Actions, it is time for an updated Roadmap to guide us through the next few years. This document is meant to serve as that plan as well as an annual progress report to the Task Force and the County Board of Supervisors. This new plan will be continually updated as more actions are completed and new projects are begun.

Other Possible Actions

Columbia County must qualify for at least 300 points in order to achieve silver certification status under the CSC Program. The total number of points likely achievable through the actions listed above add up to slightly more than 300. If we were to fall short on one or two actions that would greatly decrease our chances of obtaining silver certification. With that in mind the actions listed below may be viable options for additional CSC points if the Board of Supervisors is interested, and the responsible departments have the capacity.

PE05.09 - Waste Reduction Education Campaign

2 points Must have taken place within the last 3 years

Two points are available under this action for implementing a waste reduction, composting, and/or recycling campaign to educate the public and encourage waste reduction and recycling. We could use our existing resources such as website and social media, hold or attend public events, and/or support and promote an existing campaign of another organization or community.

This appears to be a fairly easy action to complete. We would probably want to coordinate with the Solid Waste Department.

PE06.15 - Traffic Calming

3 points Must have been implemented within the last 10 years

Some examples of traffic calming include:

- Plantings
- Roundabouts with pedestrian accommodations
- Raised Medians
- Raised Crosswalks
- Leading Pedestrian Interval Traffic Signal
- Widening Sidewalks and Reconfiguring Traffic Lane Widths
- Sidewalk Extensions
- Chicanes
- Tight Corner Curbs
- Diverters (islands to prevent certain through and/or turning movements).
- Road Humps, Speed Tables, and Cushions
- Rumble Strips and Other Surface Treatments

Some County Highway projects might already be incorporating these devices.

We would want to coordinate with the DPW/Engineering Department.

PE07.05 - Heat Emergency Plan

6 points Must have been developed or updated within the last 5 years

A heat emergency plan is usually a multiagency and locally coordinated plan that describes and organizes activities that provide an efficient response to heat events. It outlines what a community will do in the case of a heat wave. For example, activating cooling centers, promoting awareness of their locations, providing transportation for residents if needed, and a system to check in on vulnerable people.

It is unclear right now, if the Hazard Mitigation Plan, currently being updated, can serve as the county's Heat Emergency Plan, or if it is required that this be a stand-alone document.

We would want to coordinate with the Office of Emergency Management.

PE07.07 - Cooling Centers

6 points All initiatives must have taken place within the last 3 years

This action involves identifying facilities that can function as cooling centers. Cooling centers can include air-conditioned places like libraries, schools, community and senior centers, movie theaters, malls, and other publicly available and accessible spaces.

The NYS Department of Health website currently lists 8 libraries in Columbia County as cooling centers. To earn more points we would have to establish one new cooling center (3 points), update an existing center, promote awareness of these centers, extend their hours, provide transportation, expand access, and/or track their use (each worth 1 point).

We would want to coordinate with the Office of Emergency Management.

PE08.01 - Green Jobs Training

3 points Must be currently active and training has occurred within the last year

Points are earned for this Climate Smart Communities (CSC) action by establishing at least one green job or green skills training program or course per year. The program could be a single workshop that re-trains a particular profession for ways to "green" their work, or it could be an ongoing training program that introduces skills, provides hands-on training, and helps link participants to jobs.

We would want to coordinate with the Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC).

PE08.03 - Green Economic Development Plans

4 points Must have been created or updated within the last 5 years

Points are earned for this Climate Smart Communities (CSC) action by incorporating baseline assessments, goals and objectives, and initiatives for developing green industries into new economic development plans or for updating existing plans with this new information.

We would want to coordinate with the Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC).

PE08.11 - Rooftop Solarize Campaign

3 points Must have been implemented within the last 5 years

This action awards Climate Smart Communities (CSC) certification points for local governments that are part of a campaign focused on enrolling local homes and businesses to install solar panels directly on their properties.

This could be a Task Force initiative approved by the BOS.

PE08.12 - Community Campaigns - electric vehicles

3 points Must have been implemented within the last 5 years

This action awards Climate Smart Communities (CSC) certification points for the successful completion of a NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Community Campaigns high-impact action. In the past, promoting the purchase of EVs and documenting the purchase of at least 10 electric vehicles would qualify for the 3 points available here.

It is unclear how this action will be assessed in the future as it is tightly bound to the CEC program, which is in limbo.

This could be a Task Force initiative approved by the BOS.

PE09.02 - Energy Reduction Campaign

5 points Must be currently active or completed within the last year

For this action the county could create an energy reduction campaign that targets sectors that use the most energy or have the most potential for emissions reductions. The campaign can be geared toward businesses, residents, institutions, or open to any type of participant within the community.

This could be a Task Force initiative approved by the BOS.

PE10.01 - GHG Tracking System

5 points Must be currently active with at least 12 months of data

A GHG emissions management system is often managed by the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) coordinator. The number of documents, the amount of data, and the number of steps needed to access the data currently needed to assemble the information for a county GHG Inventory is enormous. If the county wants to continue to track and analyze its carbon footprint, on an annual basis, some type of system needs to be developed.

Such a system should include developing protocols for entering data and maintaining the system and creating user guides or procedures that are customized to the county. The protocols should focus on what steps users need to take to use the tracking system, maintain it over time, and report the results. The municipal protocols

document should lay out instructions for updating the data in a consistent manner on a defined schedule and enable local government staff, interns, or contractors, to use the system with ease.

This would need some in-depth discussion with all county departments, and the Controller's office in particular.