



Linking, Leveraging and Aligning Community-Based Energy Strategies

Community-Based Approaches to Energy Across the Chesapeake Crescent Region of Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia: Report and March 9th Convening

Introduction

The vital role local authorities play in economic development, energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions is increasingly recognized in the U.S. in general, and particularly in the Mid-Atlantic states of Virginia, Maryland and Washington D.C. The reasons are clear. To remain globally competitive, cities such as Baltimore, Maryland, Charlottesville, Virginia and Washington D.C. must ensure they are able to offer affordable, reliable clean energy for decades to come.

Indeed, because of a lack of agreement on comprehensive national and international climate policies, the burden of achieving energy security, energy efficiency, greenhouse gas emissions reductions, community clean micro-grids and other alternative energy approaches, and “green” job creation falls squarely on the shoulders of state and local authorities. Cities and counties have recognized the need to plan and promote sustainable affordable energy and emissions reductions policies which are tied to economic development approaches. These plans must manage the risks of rising energy prices, supply uncertainties and possible greenhouse gas penalties. This is no easy challenge in the middle of the worst economic crisis in 75 years.

Multiple climate, energy and economic studies suggest that this will become more difficult. The Virginia Governor’s 2008 Climate Commission, and the 2007 Maryland Climate Commission indicate that under “business as usual” scenarios, energy supply and efficiencies will become less reliable, greenhouse gas emissions will increase, the effects of climate change could be more extreme, with negative economic outcomes.

The Chesapeake Crescent region – the State of Maryland, the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Virginia – is already home to multiple initiatives that demonstrate remarkable leadership, vision and belief in the future opportunities that address climate change, “green” jobs and clean energy technology development. For example, Loudoun County, Virginia, developed the nation’s first long-term comprehensive Community Energy Strategy, an effort recently recognized by the National Association of Counties as a national model. Successful cases like Loudoun tend to be characterized by an acknowledgement of the value gained by a comprehensive energy and climate approach and opportunities by all parts of local communities. They include an evaluation and assessment of local assets and energy challenges, supported by specific plans to address long-term energy cost, reliability and environmental impacts.

Background and Purpose of Report

The Chesapeake Crescent Initiative (CCI) engaged Garforth International and the Northern Virginia Regional Commission to conduct an examination of community efforts across the region so we could better understand these existing discrete community energy planning efforts and their potential for energy/environmental impacts as well as their economic development potential. It is hoped that the report would provide an effective basis for further discussions on the value proposition for linking, leveraging and aligning these efforts across the broader Chesapeake Crescent region, and how potentially the region could work together to accelerate the achievement of energy efficiency goals, spur clean energy-related economic and workforce development opportunities, develop alignment with the Federal government's approaches and identify emerging cross-sectoral partnership opportunities.

The report examines selected "representative" communities from the Chesapeake Crescent region engaged in community energy development to determine their goals and aspirations, as well as their political processes for moving forward. It reviews the experiences of these communities in their efforts to create green jobs as well as to accelerate deployment of energy efficient and low-carbon technologies, practices and policies. The paper looks at the impacts on the economic development objective of increasing overall attractiveness of the community as a place to live and work and of creating attractive investment incentives and opportunities for business. A major focus is the importance of initiatives scaled to the community-level and the degree to which the examples are demonstrating the value of "scale" in implementation.

The report is grounded in the following principles:

- Inclusion. Community-based energy strategies start with conversations that include and incorporate multiple issues, partners and approaches of a community
- Benchmarking. Community-based energy strategies rely on identifying and applying global and regional best practices and benchmarks
- Leveraging. By linking, leveraging and aligning community efforts across the region, the region as a whole may accelerate achievement of its energy savings and economic development objectives.

Current Status and March 9th Meeting

The paper is currently being finalized and will be distributed as a basis for further discussion at a March 9th convening co-hosted by Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments in Washington, DC. We will discuss the initial findings of the paper, the value proposition of linking, leveraging and aligning these efforts as well as the potential for collaborations and future phases of the project. Special emphasis will be placed on the economic and workforce development opportunities as well as the appropriate role of technology deployment.

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