



# COUNTY OF ERIE

**MARK C. POLONCARZ**  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

June 4, 2014

Erie County Legislature  
92 Franklin Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Buffalo, New York 14202

**Re: Climate Smart Community Pledge  
IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION REQUESTED**

Dear Honorable Members:

Enclosed please find a memorandum and proposed resolution from the Department of Environment and Planning pertaining to the Climate Smart Community Pledge.

Local governments have direct control or strong influence on most of the New York State's greenhouse gas (GHG) emission sources (including buildings, transportation, land use and community services), so local action is critical to reducing heat-trapping emissions. Cities, towns, villages and counties also are best able to assess their own vulnerability to a changing climate, and to initiate adaptation measures when changes cannot be avoided.

Formally adopting the Climate Smart Communities Pledge will initiate Erie County's commitment to GHG emission reduction and climate adaptation. The Climate Smart Communities Pledge includes all the elements of a successful local climate program. By reducing GHG emissions and preparing for a changing climate, local climate programs protect public health and safety, and support a secure economic future.

Immediate consideration is being requested to assure credit for pending grant proposal submittals for State funding.

Should your Honorable Body require further information, I encourage you to contact Deputy Commissioner Thomas R. Hersey, Jr. at the Department of Environment and Planning, Division of Environmental Compliance. Thank you for your immediate consideration on this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Mark C. Poloncarz  
Erie County Executive

MCP/cw  
Enclosure

## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Honorable Members of the Erie County Legislature  
**From:** Department of Environment and Planning  
**Re:** Climate Smart Community Pledge  
**Date:** June 4, 2014

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### **SUMMARY**

This resolution calls for Erie County to take the Climate Smart Community Pledge to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, make adaptations to minimize impacts of climate change, and to enhance the potential for State funding assistance for the County's GHG reduction initiatives.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no fiscal implications for Erie County.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

Erie County, as a Climate Smart Community will receive notification of state and federal assistance that they can leverage to help adopt low-carbon technologies, and of programs and support for efficiency improvements and energy conservation. Erie County will also receive an advantage in accessing some state assistance programs, specifically NYSEDA funding for the Erie County Energy and Sustainability Plan.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Two types of actions enable Climate Smart Communities to minimize the risks of climate change and reduce its long-term costs:

1. Reducing GHG Emissions: Starting now to reduce GHG emissions will help stabilize atmospheric GHGs at manageable levels and avoid severe climatic changes.
2. Adapting to a Changing Climate: Altering the built and natural environment in anticipation of predicted climatic changes, or in response to actual changes, which will alleviate the risks associated with unavoidable changes in climate.

Many municipalities begin by reducing emissions and increasing climate resilience in municipal operations alone, but action by the entire community is needed to make significant reductions in GHG emissions and to successfully adapt to unavoidable climate change. Erie County can act directly to reduce fossil fuel consumption in municipal buildings and vehicles, to improve solid waste management practices and to adapt infrastructure and operations for resilience to anticipated changes as the climate warms.

To help the broader community act, Erie County can enable climate-smart practices through land use plans, zoning and building codes and efficient transportation policies. A key local government role is leading, educating and setting an example of energy efficiency and adaptation.

## **CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION**

Erie County will lose any advantage in accessing state GHG reduction assistance programs.

## **STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL**

An executed, certified copy of the resolution will be sent to the NYSDEC Office of Climate Change which will enhance funding opportunities for GHG reduction for the next round of State Consolidated Funding Application submittals.

**A RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY:  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING**

**Re: Climate Smart Community Pledge**

WHEREAS, Erie County believes that climate change poses a real and increasing threat to our local and global environments which is primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels; and

WHEREAS, the effects of climate change will endanger our infrastructure, economy and livelihoods; harm our farms, orchards, ecological communities, including native fish and wildlife populations; spread invasive species and exotic diseases; reduce drinking water supplies and recreational opportunities; and pose health threats to our citizens; and

WHEREAS, we believe that our response to climate change provides us with an unprecedented opportunity to save money, and to build livable, energy-independent and secure communities, vibrant innovation economies, healthy and safe schools, and resilient infrastructures; and

WHEREAS, we believe the scale of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions required for climate stabilization will require sustained and substantial efforts; and

WHEREAS, we believe that even if emissions were dramatically reduced today, communities would still be required to adapt to the effects of climate change for decades to come.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**

**RESOLVED**, that Erie County, in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate will:

**Pledge to Combat Climate Change by Becoming a Climate Smart Community  
Set Goals, Inventory Emissions, Move to Action  
Decrease Energy Demand for Erie County Government Operations  
Encourage Renewable Energy for Erie County Government Operations  
Realize Benefits of Recycling and Other Climate Smart Solid Waste Management Practices  
Promote Climate Protection through Community Land Use Planning  
Plan for Adaptation to Unavoidable Climate Change  
Support a Green Innovation Economy  
Inform and Inspire the Public  
Commit to an Evolving Process; and be it further**

**RESOLVED**, that certified copies of this resolution be provided to the Director of the Division of Budget and Management; the Commissioner of the Department of Environment and Planning; and the Office of Climate Change, Attention Climate Smart Communities, NYS DEC, 625 Broadway, Eighth Floor, Albany, NY 12233-1030.