EAST HAMPTON: THE POWER OF A STRONG VISION

Already a Clean Energy Community\(^2\), the Town of East Hampton has a goal of achieving 100% renewable energy – 100% renewable electricity by 2020, and 100% renewable across all sectors (including transportation and heating) by 2030. Best known as a summering community, the town also includes the surfing-and-fishing hotspot of Montauk and a number of artists living out among the pines and sand.

PROGRAM

For East Hampton, achieving its 100% renewable electricity goals means that the total kWh consumed community-wide per year equals the total renewable energy generation located or connected within its borders (perhaps supplemented with the purchase of Renewable Energy Credits). Energy efficiency measures, solar, and offshore wind are critical to meeting this goal, which built on a 2012 “Clean Energy Vision for Long Island”\(^3\) report from Synapse Energy Economics commissioned by Renewable Energy Long Island (reLI).

reLI has been at the heart of the 100% renewable energy movement in East Hampton. Executive Director (and former chair of the town’s Energy Sustainability Committee) Gordian Raacke drew upon the experience of his home country Germany and its towns that have had long-standing 100% goals and achievements. Raacke himself lives in a passive solar home with a solar-covered carport surrounded by oaks and pine woods. Through steady education, bringing politicians onboard, and building pressure from other town notables, he managed to convince his town of the benefits of a 100% renewable energy goal that rippled throughout Long Island.

Beyond simple proclamations, the town’s commitment has also driven investment in renewable sources such as offshore wind. Town officials successfully pressured the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) to contract with our state’s first offshore wind farm, which will provide 130 megawatts of power to Long Island’s East End. Based on an “achievable renewable energy” analysis done by Raacke, offshore wind needs to supply at least 80% of the town’s electricity to get to that 100% goal.

It hasn’t been easy—delays in contracting with the new offshore wind farm and in developing large-scale solar have pushed the 100% electricity benchmark to 2022. Plans for East Hampton’s first ‘solar power plant’ were conceived in 2013, yet it wasn’t until late in 2018 that the 1.1 MW array was being built on a former brush

\(^2\) See pp. 27-28 for descriptions of programs.
dump. But lining up local solar and wind projects in less than 10 years that will enable the community to hit its goal of 100% puts East Hampton far ahead of other municipalities, and hews to the realistic nature of the town’s endeavors.

**PROCESS**

In 2014, the Town Board passed a resolution in support of a clean energy goal, making it the first municipality on the East Coast to commit to 100% renewable energy. This commitment was prompted by an increasing awareness of climate change in this coastal community (vulnerable to both rising seas and the significant spread of Lyme disease from ever-more-prevalent ticks), the town was also seized by controversy over the building of large transmission and distribution lines to bring in power from outside of the community. Within this milieu, the town formed an Energy Sustainability Committee and subsequently adopted a Comprehensive Energy Vision, ultimately leading to the 100% resolution that was unanimously supported by a visionary town board in 2014.

**TAKEAWAYS**

Far from being pie-in-the-sky, this commitment was informed by data, analysis, and assessment from the beginning. “The tools are all there,” Raacke says; he’s open about the town’s use of support from programs public and private. NYSERDA, which maintains programs like Clean Energy Communities and shapes standards for offshore wind, could have an increasing role as more and more municipalities adopt 100% renewable pledges. Moreover, Raacke recommends Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI-USA)’s tools like ClearPath, which allows municipalities to chart their emissions and model climate action plans (free for all signatories of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy – and, in a partnership with the state, for all California municipalities).

Both East Hampton’s former Supervisor Larry Cantwell, whose administration started on the path to 100%, and his successor Peter Van Scoyoc have seen a 100% commitment as a challenge worth supporting, and town board members continue to embrace not just the slogan, but the enactment. Where local generation is a necessity due to both geography and politics, solutions such as energy efficiency for buildings, large-scale solar and offshore wind are flourishing. This town’s bold vision is bringing these projects to fruition.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Contact Kimberly Shaw, Environmental Protection Director at East Hampton’s Natural Resources Department at KShaw@ehamptonny.gov or 631-324-0496.

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5 [http://icleiusa.org/](http://icleiusa.org/)
CLEAN ENERGY COMMUNITIES
Amherst, East Hampton, Red Hook  Under NYSERDA’s Clean Energy Communities program, communities that complete four out of the 10 High Impact Actions and meet all other eligibility requirements are designated by New York State as a Clean Energy Community and are eligible to apply for grants to fund additional clean energy projects. Those ten actions are:

- **Benchmarking** - Adopt a policy to report the energy use of buildings
- **Clean Energy Upgrades** - Achieve 10% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from buildings
- **LED Street Lights** - Convert street lights to energy efficient LED technology
- **Clean Fleets** - Install electric vehicle charging stations or deploy alternative fuel vehicles
- **Solarize** - Undertake a local solarize campaign to increase the number of solar rooftops
- **Unified Solar Permit** - Streamline the approvals process for solar
- **Energy Code Enforcement Training** - Train compliance officers in energy code best practices
- **Climate Smart Communities Certification** - Get certified by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- **Community Choice Aggregation** - Put energy supply choices in your community’s hands
- **Energize New York Finance** - Offer energy upgrade financing to businesses and non-profits

CLEAN ENERGY STANDARD/RPS
Eagle, East Hampton  The Clean Energy Standard requires that 50% of New York’s electricity come from renewable energy sources such as solar and wind by 2030. New renewable projects provide enormous benefits to local communities, including: reduced emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants, economic investment and PILOT payments, and new, high quality jobs in the clean energy sector.

COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATION
Ossining  Community Choice Aggregation allows local governments to work together through a shared purchasing model to procure energy supply service and distributed energy resources for eligible customers within the jurisdictional boundaries of participating municipalities. Eligible customers will have the opportunity to have more control to lower their overall energy costs, to spur clean energy innovation and investment, to improve customer choice and value, and to protect the environment, thereby fulfilling an important public purpose.

GROUND SOURCE HEAT PUMP REBATE
Lockport  NYSERDA’s **Ground Source Heat Pump Rebate** provides funding for the installation of ground source heat pump systems for residences, businesses and institutions. Benefits include lower and less volatile energy bills, greater resiliency and reliability, and health benefits from this emissions-free technology.

MUNICIPAL ZERO EMISSION VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE REBATE PROGRAM
Amherst, DeWitt, Red Hook, Schenectady  The Municipal ZEV Infrastructure Rebate Program provides rebates to cities, towns, villages, and counties (including New York City boroughs) to install publicly available charging stations. Installation of these charging stations will help electrify New York’s transportation sector and meet its climate goals, putting local communities on the road to energy independence while helping to reduce emissions harmful to the environment.

NY-SUN
Avon, Clarkstown, Delaware, DeWitt, Grand Island, Red Hook, Schenectady  NY-Sun provides multiple resources for local governments to install solar energy, including financing, incentives, and training/education to identify opportunities and mitigate barriers, providing the tools necessary to build clean, affordable solar programs to power their communities.

REFORMING THE ENERGY VISION DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS
Schenectady  New York State is seeking demonstration projects to show how new products and services can capture latent value on the grid, and how new business models can monetize and distribute that value across third parties, utilities and customers. While New York’s investor-owned utilities have been directed to partner with third parties to develop a first round of REV demonstration projects, the utilities will continue to undertake demonstration projects until these kinds of products and services are fully integrated into core system operations.