



Catoctin News

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Carroll and Frederick Counties

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Climate Emergency Report Submitted to Frederick Jurisdictions

By the Climate Emergency Mobilization Workgroup

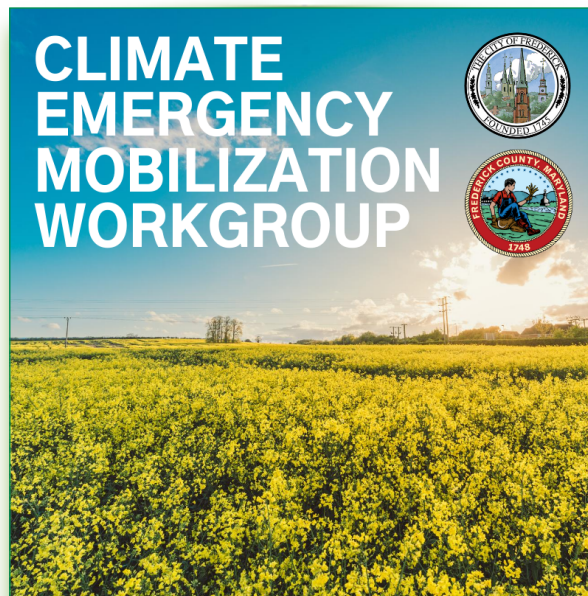
The City of Frederick and Frederick County's joint Climate Emergency Mobilization Workgroup (CEMWG) submitted their final report to the County Council and City Aldermen on August 17th. The "Climate Response and Resilience" report, posted at <http://mobilizefrederick.org>, culminated a year of serious study, dialogue, and debate by nearly 50 citizens who donated an estimated 18,500 volunteer hours to the effort and held more than 70 stakeholder meetings to generate input from the community.

This effort provides relevant, well-researched and practical recommendations to achieve the goals of the Resolutions adopted in 2020 - and the shared hope that, as a community, we act in time to provide a decent future for our children and grandchildren.

Background

It is well documented that the City of Frederick and Frederick County, like the rest of the Mid-Atlantic region, are experiencing hotter and longer summers, more moderate winters, more frequent extreme rain events, flooding, and extended dry periods. That these events are driven by distant and local accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere is also generally accepted. In acknowledging these facts, the City of Frederick Alderpersons adopted the Climate Emergency Resolution on March 11, 2020, and the Frederick County Council adopted its version on July 23, 2020.

The goals of the resolutions are: 1) implement policy and legislative actions through the lens of climate change; 2) reduce County- and City-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 50% from 2010 levels by 2030 and 100% no later than 2050; 3) employ efforts to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere; and 4) develop adaptation measures.



The two governments requested that a joint workgroup (CEMWG) be formed. Out of more than 70 applicants from the area, 14 members were selected with broad professional expertise and representing multiple industrial and commercial sectors of the community as well as the ethnic diversity from the City's and County's population. Four sub-groups were also formed, totaling 50 people: Agriculture, Forestry, and Land Management (AFL); Energy, Transportation, and

Buildings (ETB); Health, Extreme Weather Events, and Resilience (HWR); and Public Awareness and Outreach (PAO).

The CEMWG bimonthly meetings featured subject matter experts and included progress reports from subgroups as well as consensus-driven problem-solving discussions about processes to use to develop recommendations. A full list of speakers and topics are listed on the County Council's website and include videos and PowerPoint slides (<https://frederickcountymd.gov/8113/Climate-Change-Workgroup-Information>).

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The Year's Combined Efforts Resulted in These Major Lessons

- **Action on climate change is an economic imperative.** The total cost of climate-related disasters in the U.S. in 2020 was more than \$95 billion. Disaster-related damage is expected to grow as storms continue to intensify, droughts become more severe, and natural systems are disrupted. In 2018, flooding resulting from a May storm caused \$24 million in property and infrastructure damages in Frederick County alone. Insurance companies and investors alike are pushing local governments to take action on climate to mitigate risk. Each recommendation includes cost-benefit analyses for this reason.
- **Governments that are meeting and exceeding climate action goals are innovative in their funding approaches and provide staffing and budget for climate action.** Authors of recommendations included options for funding, and more options are likely available. Teeing up ideas now will position the City and County for increased funding competitiveness.
- **People do not experience climate change equally.** Some will lose their jobs as the economy shifts away from fossil fuels, and people who find themselves financially or

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medically insecure are already at high risk from the changing climate. We must make decisions that first do no harm, and then focus efforts to help the most vulnerable people thrive by considering their needs first.

- **Harnessing the power of local governments to make climate-responsible decisions has rarely been so consequential.** Our local governments have the authority to develop land use policy, to make land use decisions, to determine how buildings are built, and to protect the quality of life of their citizens. Local governments have extraordinary purchasing power and own property, buildings and vehicles; through their purchases, they can influence markets and marshal communities to drive major transformation. Our shared history as a nation is replete with transformative changes created by small communities.
- **There is no time to waste. The chaos we are experiencing from weather events heretofore unheard of are happening faster than models suggest and will only get worse.** Slashing GHG emissions and adapting to the changing climate are essential and immediate tasks.

Scope of the Report

Recommendations are split among 11 sectors, which are:

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|------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| • Leadership | • Agriculture | • Clean Energy Economy |
| • Buildings | • Forestry | • Education |
| • Energy | • Food | • Community |
| • Transportation | • Resilience | |

This report has been developed in two main sections:

- **Volume 1:** Introductory materials, explaining what CEMWG is and how the recommendations and report were completed, as well as brief recommendation summaries by sector.
- **Volume 2:** Detailed versions of each of the 40 recommendations, which include science-based justification, implementation strategies, costs,

benefits, examples from other jurisdictions, funding mechanisms, and equity considerations.

To use this report, it is suggested that the brief recommendations are reviewed in summary form first, and once more information is needed, carefully inspect and read the detailed recommendations in Volume 2.

First Priorities for Action

The Report was presented to the County Council during an August 24th Workshop (https://frederick.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=10&clip_id=8216) and was presented to the City Aldermen on September 29th, 3:00 PM, on Channel 99 (https://cityoffrederick.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=16&clip_id=4845). Near-term priorities for action by the County and City are:

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1. **Vote to accept the Climate Response and Resilience Report** - The Resolution allows for a two-month question period after which a vote to accept the report by both the Council and the Aldermen is expected.
 2. **Fund the Climate Response and Resilience Office** - A combined Climate Response and Resilience Office (CRRO) is proposed to serve both County and City governments with three shared staff members, as a complement to the existing sustainability offices and other participating jurisdictions to: regularly provide coordination, oversight, and accountability of climate program implementation; provide technical assistance to county, school district, and city government departments; launch and implement a robust public education and engagement campaign; publicly report progress on achieving climate-related actions and metrics semi-annually; and other tasks. The CRRO will provide the expertise needed to ensure future policies will be climate responsive by helping staff evaluate all major decisions through the lens of climate change (Recommendation 1).
 3. **Pass a resolution to support development of a Green Bank and seed this Bank with \$5 M from the \$50 M American Rescue Plan funds.** An increasingly interesting delivery mechanism that often packages one or more of these alternative financing solutions in one institution is the Green Bank. Green Banks seek to expand market opportunities through focused, private investment. Green Banks offer credit enhancements such as loan loss reserves or loan guarantees to reduce risk for private investors. Green Banks also pool loans together to diversify risk and achieve scalability for private investors that might not otherwise consider the loans on an individual basis. Green Banks work with a variety of capital providers to offer an array of financing options depending on the market gaps they are attempting to solve. Their understanding of the channels to identify green investment opportunities helps to build a volume of activity that can be an investable level for capital providers (Recommendation 1).
 4. **Adopt the 2021 International Green Construction Code** (Recommendation 4).
 5. **Adopt a tax exemption for urban agriculture** (Recommendation 22).
 6. **Seek local deference for stormwater mitigation on select spot lot/small cluster development** (Recommendation 21).
 7. **Apply for funding, through legislation or other means for a feasibility study for microgrids throughout the city and county** at priority locations, such as Frederick Health Hospital (Recommendation 10).
 8. **Establish a local homeowner tax credit for solar and geothermal installation.** (Recommendation 6).
- These are priority, short-term (within the next six months) goals, with many more to follow.

What Can Sierra Club Do?

Governments act when voters make their voices heard.

1. The SCCG has adopted a Forest Conservation Campaign, which supports recommendations 25 and 26.
2. The SCCG is encouraged to decide if they can support one or more additional recommendations in the CEMWG, especially those that address Sierra Club national priorities, such as the Ready for 100 Campaign. SCCG can help facilitate these changes through a myriad of activities (depending on the recommendation) by hosting educational events and partnering with other local groups to encourage participation in incentives programs, educational events, behavioral changes, and more.
3. The SCCG and its members should support and stay attuned to the work of Mobilize Frederick and the CEMWG report implementation advocacy effort. Watch mobilizefrederick.org for more information and consider signing on to its email list.
4. Vote for candidates in upcoming local elections who pledge to support adoption of the CEMWG report and its recommendations. Ask them about it if necessary.

Residents of this area are fortunate that local governments have been responsible. Both the City and County, and many of the county's municipalities, have established positions as leaders in the state on climate responsiveness. BUT, heretofore, their actions have been mostly limited to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in government operations, which is a start, but insufficient given that households and businesses account for up to 75% of GHG emissions.

Local governments must do more to engage households, business owners, and local civic organizations in public education efforts toward shifting behaviors. They have the platform to set the tone, develop the pathways, and provide the incentives for the entire community to transition quickly to the clean energy economy that will keep everyone safe, healthy, and thriving. More must be done, faster, together. As author Andres Karelas has stated, “Climate change is a collective problem, caused by collective behavior.”

What can YOU do?

Households in the United States emit an average of 48.5 metric tons of carbon per year – almost 5 times the global average. A sustainable level of emissions is more like 3 metric tons per person, or 12 metric tons for a household of 4. Contrary to a common belief that cutting back on GHG emissions is somehow a sacrifice, most people report substantial benefits. Along with the good feelings that come from making a contribution to the greater good, decreasing one’s carbon footprint is almost always a catalyst for financial savings, improved health, additional convenience, and a greater quality of life.

For example, switching from natural gas to electric heat or cooking improves home air quality and lessens the possibility of respiratory distress, an important change since more than 25% of childhood asthma can be linked directly to natural gas use in homes. Switching to an electric vehicle is an increasingly affordable choice and saves substantial fuel and maintenance costs. Imagine what it’s like to never have to go to the gas station! Converting turfgrass lawns to native shrubs and perennials reduces yard maintenance time and costs. Once people get in the habit of “going green,” the benefits and cost savings substantially increase.

