

## **Introduction for the Clean Energy Working Group Recommendations**

Montgomery County is committed to addressing our climate crisis by rapidly transitioning to the use of renewable natural resources from the sun, the wind, water, and the geothermal heat of the earth to power our electrical grid, backed up and supplemented by storage resources. The county will use a systems perspective that emphasizes conservation, efficiency, and demand management to reduce its need for energy generation. It will encourage the sequestration of carbon by maintaining and increasing the county's forested areas and promoting regenerative agriculture. Equity, justice and elimination of greenhouse gas emissions and reduction of other environmental impacts are core principles. Transformation to a clean energy economy will generate good paying jobs, economic opportunities and improve the health of our residents and protect the environment. We envision a sustainable future of clean air, clean water, less noise, and healthier people, plants and animals.

This rapid transition must recognize that Montgomery County is presently not capable of meeting all of its needs for emission-free energy only by energy generated within the County. The goal is independence from non-renewable fossil fuels, not energy independence for the county. Nevertheless, the County should develop renewable energy sources and economic opportunities within the county, including distributed energy captured on buildings and other structures, microgrids, and with larger scale commercial facilities.

In addition to shifting towards the use of renewable energy, a major goal of the County should be the reduction in energy consumption. Maximization of energy efficiency, through technology, policy, and economic incentives and disincentives, and energy conservation, through behavior change, policy and economic incentives and disincentives, will be essential components of a transition to zero greenhouse gas emissions.

However, it would be counterproductive for the County to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by turning forests, farmlands and wetlands into industrial facilities for energy capture. These vegetated lands and the soil beneath are important in capturing carbon from the atmosphere, reducing the urban heat island and providing clean water, clean air, biodiversity and other ecosystem services. Preservation and protection of the environment should be an essential component of the County's shift to net zero.

It is not only possible but essential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in ways that generate good-paying jobs, reduce inequities and improve the health of all inhabitants of the county.

The Clean Energy Technical Advisory Committee identifies five essential goals:

Goal 1 – Green the electricity supplied to Montgomery County residents and businesses.

Goal 2 – Expand the use of distributed renewable energy.

Goal 3 – Expand the use of renewable energy to power buildings.

Goal 4 – Encourage economic development related to renewable energy

Goal 5 – Establish a dedicated, secure funding source to support renewable energy programs and financial incentives.

To achieve these goals, the working group has identified 18 strategies and 43 actions to implement the strategies. These strategies and actions include policies, economic incentives and technical developments. They should be implemented expeditiously, in concert with recommendations generated by other technical working groups.