

STRATEGY 1: Efficiency

Promote the transition to energy efficient and weatherized buildings to reduce GHG emissions, minimize energy costs and improve health.

The buildings sector is the largest source of GHG emissions in NYS. Overall, the combustion of fossil fuels in residential buildings was responsible for 11% of statewide GHG emissions in 2019.* As a result, building energy conservation is key to moving towards a zero-carbon energy future. Reducing energy consumption could be the largest savings, but this is often overlooked. Reductions in energy consumption can be achieved through energy tracking, weatherization and upgrades to energy efficiency technology. An initial step to reducing energy consumption in existing buildings is to begin tracking energy use to better understand consumption patterns and identify opportunities for deep energy retrofits. Weatherization includes insulating walls and roofs, improvements to doors and windows, and air sealing. Energy efficiency upgrades include energy certified appliances, high efficiency light bulbs, and heat pump technologies which are further detailed in the Electrification Strategy.

Local governments have tremendous influence on what the building stock of the future will look like. Prioritizing energy efficiency and proper weatherization will reduce GHG emissions and energy bills, while improving occupant health and well-being by increasing resilience to extreme temperatures and decreasing exposure to combustion-related indoor air contaminants that can cause respiratory distress. Furthermore, energy efficient homes can reduce the energy burden for our most vulnerable residents. While new construction offers opportunities to utilize modern technologies and design approaches, the vast majority of the existing buildings in the region are aging and will need to be retrofitted to achieve full energy efficiency potential. One County program; Erie County Low-Income Program for Sustainable Energy (ECLIPSE) is currently investigating how it can administer clean energy in the region and use the funds brought in from administering the program to invest in energy efficiency upgrades in Low-Income communities.

In order to ensure success, the County will educate homeowners and building owners on the value of efficiency improvements, and incentivize energy benchmarking to better understand consumption patterns and accurately identify opportunities for improvements. The County will seek to understand who the largest owners of rentals are in order to tailor the message to landlords. Protections will be put in place for renters so that they are not out-priced by rent cost once homes are upgraded with public incentives, funding and/or financing. Funding and financing weatherization work on homes in disadvantaged neighborhoods will be prioritized as well as developing new, affordable, energy efficient apartment buildings. The County will develop programs to assure that building owners are connected with the resources necessary to make energy-saving and cost-saving retrofits. Buildings that upgrade to energy efficient technologies will be more resilient to extreme weather events that come along with climate change.

DEFINITIONS FOR ACTIONS SPECIFICATIONS
Short-term: By or before 2030
Medium-term: By 2040
Long-term: By 2050
Direct: County can directly control actions - related to County operations and infrastructure
Indirect: Regional agencies and municipalities have control and/or County can support/influence
Support: State or Federal policies and programs

ACTION ITEM	HORIZON	SPHERE OF INFLUENCE	LEAD COUNTY ENTITY	PARTNERS
1.1: Engage and alert the public about access to free or low-cost energy assessments offered by the State.	Ongoing	Direct	DEP	PUSH Buffalo/WNY Clean Energy Hub, HOTCN
1.2: Leverage Community Development Block Grants and other resources available to the County and consumers to increase support for energy efficiency and weatherization improvements.	Ongoing	Direct	DEP	NYSERDA, Weatherization Assistance Program
1.3: Set a County goal for overall energy use reductions in homes and businesses and assess progress annually.	Short-Term	Direct	DEP	County Executive
1.4: Educate homeowners on energy and cost savings from weatherization and upgrades to energy efficient technologies, including heat pumps.	Short-Term	Direct	DEP	PUSH Buffalo, WAP, NYSERDA Clean Energy Hubs, HOTCN
1.5: Work with programs including WAP, HEAP, and Empower to improve resilience and energy efficiency outcomes, including creating incentives for homeowners and renters for energy waste reductions.	Medium-Term	Direct	DEP	DSS

1.6: Develop a weatherization program through the Erie County Low Income Program for Sustainable Energy.	Medium-Term	Direct	DEP	DSS, WAP. PUSH Buffalo, HOTCN
1.7: Expand renter protections through owner agreements or liens acknowledging rent caps for low income renters.	Ongoing	Direct	DEP	HUD, County Rental Rehab Program
1.8: Support energy efficiency standards for appliances that can be sold in the County.	Ongoing	Support	DEP	State initiatives, environmental advocacy groups
1.9: Establish a countywide rental database for residential and commercial properties, including an energy efficiency rating system of properties.	Medium-Term	Direct	DEP	City of Buffalo Rental Registry Program, GIS Department