

Capital Region Climate Smart Communities Program Execution Plan

Prepared for

**The New York State
Energy Research and Development Authority**
Albany, NY

Prepared by

The Capital District Regional Planning Commission
Albany, NY

and

VHB Engineering, Surveying and Landscape Architecture, P.C.
Watertown, MA

and

Climate Action Associates, LLC
Watervliet, NY

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NOTICE

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

The following report will serve as a roadmap for the Capital Region Climate Smart Communities Pilot Program (Pilot). The Pilot, which is designed to be a three-year grant program with funding guaranteed for Year 1, was awarded to the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). To carry out the Pilot for Year 1, CDRPC has partnered with the consultant team of VHB Engineering, Surveying and Landscape Architecture, P.C. (VHB), and Climate Action Associates, LLC (CAA).

The overall purpose of the Pilot is to provide technical support to the communities within the Capital Region that are participating in the New York State Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program. The CSC program is an interagency effort of NYSERDA, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC), the New York State Department of State (DOS), New York State Department of Transportation (NYDOT), and the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC). Local governments initiate participation in the program by passage of a resolution to adopt the CSC pledge. The pledge describes ten areas of climate mitigation and adaptation action. Climate Smart Communities are free to develop their own specific programs within the ten action areas.

The Pilot will include a program execution plan, a greenhouse gas emissions inventory, marketing and outreach, region-wide and in-person training, the development of community profiles and customized service strategies, and summaries of model anchor projects. These initiatives will be described in more detail below.

Status of Climate Smart Communities in the Capital Region

The Capital Region covers the counties of Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady, and is comprised of 126 local governments. As of September 1, 2012, there were 16 local governments that adopted the CSC pledge; they include the cities of Albany, Cohoes, Rensselaer, Saratoga Springs, Schenectady, and Watervliet; the towns of Bethlehem, Cairo, Clifton Park, Copake, East Greenbush, Hunter, Jewett, and Niskayuna; and the counties of Albany and Schenectady (see Climate Smart Communities Map on page 6).

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS INVENTORY

The Pilot will begin by undertaking a greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory of the region. The inventory will compute regional direct and indirect emissions and apportion them to all 126 cities, towns, villages, and counties in the region. In order to standardize GHG emissions inventories across pilot regions in NY State, the pilot team will participate with other Pilot regions in conference calls and will exchange ideas and information to reach consensus on the appropriate GHG protocol to utilize. The GHG inventory also entails meetings, coordination and the collection of data from key partners, which include the region's utilities, National Grid, Green Island Power Authority, Central Hudson Gas and Electric, and NYS Electric and Gas; the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC); the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization; Cornell Cooperative Extension; NYSDOT; NYSERDA; NYSDEC; the Energy Information Administration (EIA); and other data sources. As of September 1, 2012 the GHG coordination and data acquisition had been ongoing for five months and the protocol was near completion. Meetings with the regional utilities and CDTC have been held; formats for utility data requests, community identification, vehicle miles traveled data have been established, and data requests have been initiated.

The municipal-level components of the regional GHG emissions inventory will be supplied to CSC participants as a planning tool. Therefore, CDRPC has determined that stakeholders will value high quality, real and metered, utility data as a critical component to the regional inventory to ensure CSC participants can use the data for goal setting and accurate tracking. The Pilot Team will work with the utilities to help prepare them, and the Team, for long-term tracking and updating in subsequent

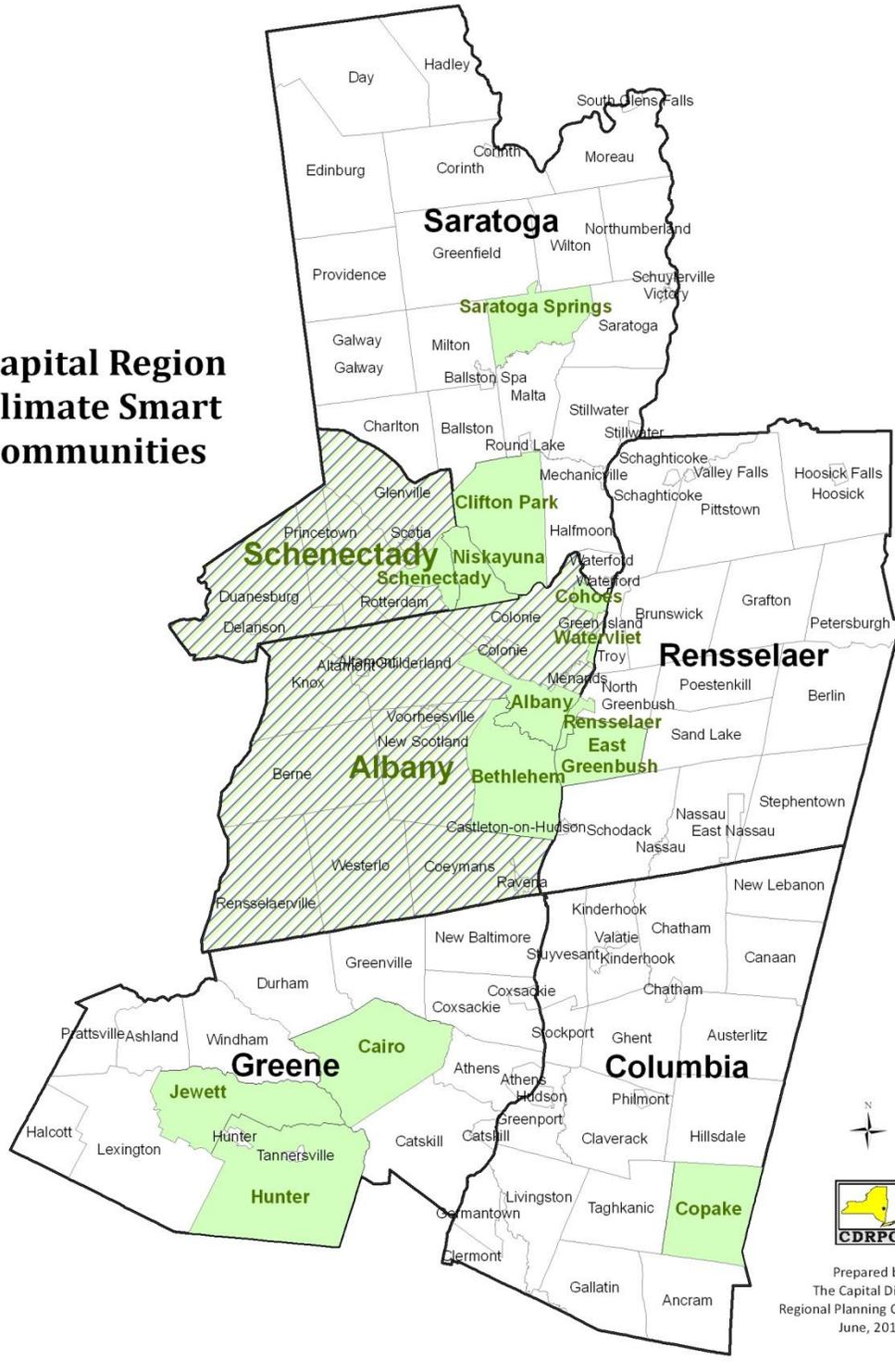
years. As of the date of this report, National Grid and Central Hudson have supplied municipal level data, and NYSEG reports that they are initiating data production. Once all the utility data are received and processed a final GHG emissions inventory report will be completed. The timing will be contingent on the delivery of the utility data and any data-quality concerns. In the interim, an aggregate GHG emission inventory for the Capital Region's counties, based on alternate data and suitable for high-level planning, will be completed by October.

CONNECTING WITH CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES

Program Kickoff and Formation of Capital Region CSC Council

A formal kickoff meeting for the Pilot was held on June 20, 2012. The meeting was convened at Hudson Valley Community College. The meeting was scheduled to follow a day-long planning and zoning training conference for local officials sponsored by CDRPC. A Climate change session was held as part of the conference and included presentations on the CSC program, the Cleaner, Greener Communities Regional Sustainability Plan initiative, the Energy Smart Communities Program, and land-use patterns in the Capital District. The CSC participants in the region were invited to attend this session, which was directly followed by the kickoff meeting. At the meeting, the region's CSC participants were introduced to each other and were asked to describe why their communities were motivated to take the CSC pledge, what initiatives they had taken so far to address the pledge elements, and what they hoped to gain from the CSC Pilot. The concept of establishing a "Capital Region Climate Smart Communities Council" (Council) was discussed and agreed to. The Council will meet quarterly to share program experiences and will serve as a forum for direct training sessions. It will also review and help implement this plan. The input offered by the communities will help to inform the Community Profiles and will also be incorporated into the Customized Service Strategies, both of which are discussed in subsequent sections below.

Capital Region Climate Smart Communities



Marketing

In order to raise the visibility of both the Climate Smart Communities program and climate change issues, a marketing campaign will be designed and implemented throughout the Pilot. The marketing campaign will include the use of websites, social media sites, and the development of direct marketing pieces, as well as establishing a presence at regional activities and events.

To market the CSC Pilot Program, the project team will employ the use of social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter. It is anticipated that the Pilot social media sites will be able to take advantage of the established network of climate and sustainability sites such as Sustainable Capital Region, the Mayor's Office of Energy and Sustainability in the City of Albany and Sustainable Saratoga. By linking to these pages, visibility of the CSC Pilot Facebook and Twitter accounts will be increased and attract followers. In addition, the project team will create a CSC Pilot Program dedicated page at www.cdrpc.org, CDRPC's current website. These sites will become a forum to promote the successes of CSC participants, provide information on upcoming trainings and webinars, provide information to the general public such as the GHG emissions inventory, community profiles, maps and other resource materials; and in general will increase the visibility and awareness of the CSC program. To kick off these initiatives a meeting was held with a web developer in August to begin discussions of web page design, GHG emission inventory report presentation format, and the incorporation of social media sites. A preliminary CSC Pilot web page is targeted to be launched in November and will be expanded and enhanced as program materials become available.

In addition to the social media tools, direct marketing will be utilized. The project team will assemble and create fact sheets and trainings on climate change, energy efficiency, climate change preparedness, and smart growth, which will be posted on the CSC Pilot webpage and available to the public at various community workshops and meetings as well as distributed to CSC participants for their own replication and distribution purposes.

Another primary method of marketing this program will be through identification of and participation in local, regional and even statewide events such as workshops, conferences, seminars, and meetings where the project team can promote the CSC program to local governments and other key stakeholders. The project team is connected to several active professional networks with primarily municipal audiences such as the American Planning Association, the Congress for the New Urbanism, and the American Public Works Association. Members of these networks oftentimes serve as the CSC elected official or staff person. Through these efforts, regional knowledge and interest in climate change issues will be expanded across a broader range of stakeholders, including municipal officials, businesses, academia and the construction industry.

Region-wide Engagement Process

The Pilot will engage in region-wide outreach, including participation at conferences and webinars, and participation in regional sustainability initiatives. As noted above, the June 20, 2012 training session that was held at Hudson Valley Community College (HVCC), which utilized an established and highly attended regional training forum to expose local planning and zoning officials to the CSC program, the Cleaner, Greener Communities program, the Energy Smart Communities program, and the issues associated with climate change, is an example of such outreach. The Pilot will continue to use this twice-yearly forum to market the CSC program and to offer direct education and training programs about climate change to local planning and zoning officials. A second conference training program will be held on October 4, 2012 with sessions focusing on climate adaptation (flooding mitigation and green infrastructure solutions) and walkable communities. CSC participants will be invited, but the sessions will be open to all conference attendees. Raising awareness of climate change may lead to additional municipalities taking the CSC pledge. A third direct training session will be held at the CDRPC's spring planning and zoning workshop, which will also be held at HVCC. Program date and content have yet to be determined.

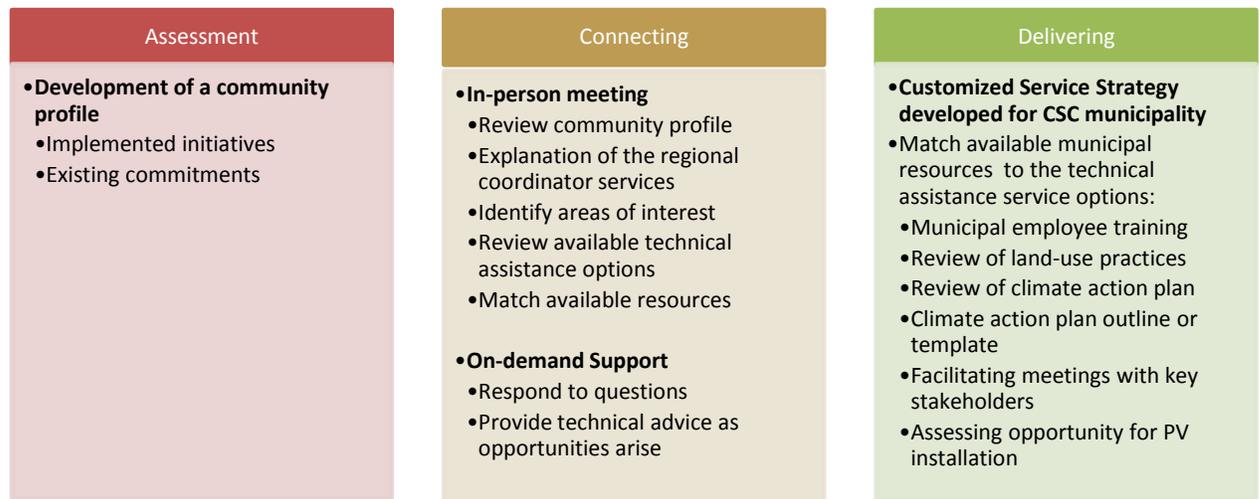
The Pilot will take advantage of existing statewide webinars developed for the CSC program by promoting them through CSC email lists, the CDRPC website, and social media sites created under this program. If needed, our team will be available to create and deliver a webinar on how to conduct local greenhouse gas inventories.

The Pilot will help coordinate with other regional and statewide programs. We will participate and help coordinate workshops that promulgate the smart-growth land-use tools being developed by NYSERDA as part of the CSC program. We have had discussions with Rutgers, the consultant charged with developing these tools, and have offered suggestions about best practices that could be successfully utilized in our region. We will leverage CDRPC's participation with other regional entities and programs to cross-fertilize program initiatives that are focused on sustainability by sharing information about climate change issues, and by working to further mutual sustainability goals, particularly related to land use and development. CDRPC is currently engaged in water-quality and watershed planning for the Mohawk River Basin, and we will be assisting in the incorporation of flood mitigation, green infrastructure, and smart-growth elements into that plan. CDRPC is also engaged on the CDTC Planning and Policy Committees, the Bike and Pedestrian Taskforce, and numerous CDTC "Linkage Study" advisory committees. Linkage Studies are local smart growth grants that promote more walkable and bikeable communities and more sustainable land use and transportation practices. CDRPC is also involved with the NYS Department of Health's Healthy Community program, which is also promoting walkable and bikeable communities. CDRPC's work on this program focuses on Rensselaer County and East Greenbush (one of the region's CSC

participants). We will be sharing the results of this initiative with the CSC participants and other communities in the Capital Region through conference presentations (including HVCC on Oct. 4th) and through www.cdrpc.org. CDRPC is also participating on five technical committees as part of the Cleaner, Greener Communities Regional Sustainability Plan as well as providing significant technical support to the Capital District Regional Economic Development Council, both of which are promoting sustainable economic development. VHB is also part of the consultant team developing the regional sustainability plan. We believe that the cultural and political shift necessary to address climate change can be best addressed by the cross-fertilization of programs that share mutual sustainability goals.

Direct Engagement Process

To achieve the goals of the Climate Smart Communities Coordinator Pilot Program, it will be imperative to engage each existing CSC directly. The direct engagement process that will be implemented can be broken down into three phases: 1) Community assessment; 2) connecting with communities; and 3) delivering customized services. This framework will allow for the project team to provide quality services that respond to each community’s individual needs. The chart below outlines the process.



It is envisioned that the above framework will continue throughout the Pilot. CDRPC will annually conduct an in-person meeting and develop a customized service strategy based on the varying needs of the CSC participants. Community profiles will only be developed as new communities take the CSC pledge, but they will be updated on a regular basis throughout the pilot project.

Community Assessment

To begin the community assessment phase, the project team conducted background research on the progress each community has made in achieving the ten CSC pledge elements. In addition to the information provided by NYSERDA, desktop research was conducted on every current CSC to determine and confirm what had been achieved and to collect supporting information, including greenhouse gas emissions inventories, climate action plans and other documentation. An account was created for each community in Salesforce.com. This database was secured to manage the project team's interaction with existing and potential CSCs.

Based on the information that was collected, a community profile was developed for each CSC participant. These profiles include all pertinent information on the current climate protection efforts and the details of any action on pledge elements, and will serve as documentation of the status of each CSC participant in addressing the ten elements of the CSC pledge. The community profiles were developed through research completed by project team staff. This research included review of public documents, municipal websites and other available anecdotal information. These profiles are essential to developing a baseline of each community's activities as well as familiarizing the project team with the municipality's structure and level of commitment to the CSC pledge. Baseline information will be collected for any new CSC participant that signs the pledge.

The community profile will be provided to each CSC two weeks prior to the initial in-person meeting. This will allow the local government staff to provide any missing information or correct any errors. In addition this profile will allow community staff and officials to see what information is readily available about their CSC pledge efforts. This profile will be used as a foundation for a discussion on which types of technical assistance will best meet the needs of each CSC.

In-Person Meetings

In-person meetings will be offered to the sixteen (16) existing Climate Smart Communities in the Capital Region during the first year. These meetings will allow the project team to

- Introduce the Climate Smart Communities Coordinator Pilot Program and the project team,
- Review the community profile and their progress toward achieving the pledge elements,
- Review current initiatives and projects that they are working on,
- Identify areas where they need assistance on accomplishing their climate protection efforts,
- Identify what resources they have available,
- Determine a customized approach for meeting their needs.

The project team will send an invitation to the highest elected official and (where applicable) the primary liaison for the CSC program to schedule the in-person meeting. Meetings will be scheduled

with the elected official, staff and volunteers working on the local government's climate protection efforts. The meetings are anticipated to last approximately 2 hours. The community will be presented with a menu of technical assistance options focused on bringing the community to the next level of activity and closer to achieving the overall CSC goals. All information gathered during the in-person meetings will be processed and used to create a customized service strategy (see below) that meets the desires and needs of the CSC.

In the first year of the pilot program, the in-person meetings will be conducted in two phases. The first phase will take place in September, October, and November 2012, with technical assistance provided directly to eight of the sixteen CSC communities through the end of 2012. The second phase will take place in February, March and April 2013, with technical assistance provided for the remaining eight communities through April 2013. This two-phase approach will allow the project team to consult with and deliver high-quality services to CSC participants by allowing for a smaller number of overall people to engage the communities so that success stories and best practices can more readily be shared. It will also allow us to evaluate our approach mid-year and make any modifications to service delivery, if necessary.

Customized Service Strategy

Each community will receive a customized service strategy (Strategy) within two weeks of the in-person consultation. This Strategy will summarize the in-person meeting and outline what the action item is, how it will be delivered, who will provide it and when it will be completed. The Strategy provided to each CSC will be based on each community's needs. This analysis will be based on two factors: the actions a community has already completed to fulfill the CSC pledge and the results of the in-person consultation. It is not anticipated that any formal legislative approval will be necessary for the acceptance of this strategy, however if a municipality decides that legislative approval is needed, our team will be available to make a presentation on the Strategy to the legislative body.

Each community's Strategy will also include a defined timeline. Both short- and long-term strategies can be developed. All technical-assistance strategies that extend longer than six months will have at least one evaluation at the midway point to ensure that the strategy is still appropriate for the community and delivering what is promised. For year one, the goal will be to provide as much value in the short term as possible. The longer-term strategies will be utilized for years two and three.

Sample Services Offered

During the in-person meeting the project team will present the community with a menu of technical-assistance options that could be provided in years two and three. These technical assistance options will be refined and matched to the needs and available resources of the CSCs and presented in the

Customized Services Strategy. The examples of potential technical-assistance options listed below were identified as priorities by existing CSC participants in the Capital Region at the coordinator Pilot program kickoff meeting in June.

- **Municipal Employee Training**—The project team will work with the CSC on the development and implementation of staff trainings to introduce the behavioral changes necessary to reduce energy consumption in municipal operations.
- **Review of Land-use Practices**—Members of the project team will be available to review existing development patterns, comprehensive plans, and land-use laws to ensure that they are structured in a way to meet the goals of the CSC. Where appropriate the project team will recommend modifications to existing land-use practices. The team’s knowledge of national smart-growth best practices will allow them to provide insight into the strengths and weaknesses of existing practices.
- **Energy Planning**— The team will assist municipalities in understanding their overall costs for electricity, natural gas, transportation fuels in their operations and help them create targets and strategies to reduce their costs and reduce GHG emissions
- **Municipal Operations Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Data Collection Templates and Guidance Document**- A template to assist with the collection of data relevant to a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and a guidance document providing information on how to conduct a greenhouse gas emissions inventory for municipal operations.
- **Community GHG Inventory Template**. Pulling from the regional GHG inventory, the team will be able to provide, in a standard template form, a community’s complete Tier II GHG inventory for 2010. The team will also provide guidance on updating and improving the inventory where possible, and on using it to develop a community-wide climate action plan.
- **Climate Action Plan Outline/Template**—A climate action plan template, a menu of effective climate protection strategies that are appropriate and applicable to the region will be available to the CSC participants. In addition, other climate action planning resources available will include information and tools related to specific components of the climate action plan development process and how to identify funding sources to initiate a more formal climate action planning process.

- **Climate Action Planning**—Members of the project team will be available to review existing climate action plans to ensure they are structured to meet the goals of the CSC program. The team’s knowledge of national best practices in climate action and adaptation will allow it to provide insight into the strengths and weaknesses of existing plans.
- **Facilitating meetings with key stakeholders**—The project team will work with municipalities to organize meetings with the key stakeholders necessary to help achieve their CSC goals. The team will also assist the CSC on understanding how to leverage volunteer committees and how to get the most out of community workshops.
- **Network Support**—The project team will be available on-call to answer questions and provide guidance to the CSC participants as needed.
- **Assessing opportunity for PV installation**—The project team can provide CSC members with a review of existing facilities and their potential for supporting PV installations. In addition the project team can provide energy savings estimates along with the associated reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Coordinating with NY Energy Smart Communities Program

The Pilot will coordinate outreach and technical assistance activities with the NY Energy Smart Communities program to leverage the value of both programs. CDRPC has held meetings to discuss mutual program goals with representatives of Courtney Strong, Inc., the current NYSERDA Energy Smart contractor for the areas that includes the Pilot region. Upon completion of the Customized Service Strategies developed for the CSC participants under the Pilot, a copy of the Strategies will be provided to the Energy Smart contractor. The Strategy will be utilized to identify opportunities for connecting the CSC communities with Energy Smart program resources suited to the CSC participant’s needs. CSC participants will be notified at the Pilot in-person meetings that they may be contacted by the Energy Smart contractor. If a different contractor is chosen for the next phase of the Energy Smart program (which will be called the Economic Development Growth Extension [EDGE] program) the same coordination will be initiated.

RECRUITMENT

The Pilot will focus most of the first year on helping the existing CSC participants advance in their efforts to implement the pledge elements. However, the marketing and outreach efforts of the Pilot will expose many more communities to the CSC program, which will open the possibility of additional

regional communities expressing interest in, and potentially joining, the CSC program. CDRPC's conference training sessions (which are held twice-yearly and usually attended by over 200 local planning officials) will be open to non-CSC communities and marketing materials that describe the CSC program will be available at these sessions. The web and social media initiatives described above will also help to advertise the CSC program and expose it to other potential members. We will take advantage of other forums and planning initiatives in which CDRPC is involved to highlight the benefits of the CSC Pilot to non-CSC members. In addition, CDRPC, through its various work program initiatives, is highly regarded in providing planning support services to the communities in the Capital Region. We will use our well established network to promote and recruit communities to participate in the program.

For the first year we have budgeted funds to cover in-person meetings and Customized Service Strategy development for three additional communities not currently part of the CSC program. Therefore, our first year goal is to recruit three new CSC participants. We will focus on regional cities (Hudson, Troy, and Mechanicville) and on high-population/fast-growing suburban towns (Guilderland, Glenville, Rotterdam, Colonie and Malta). We will also explore the possible interest of Saratoga and Rensselaer counties. Prior to contacting potential recruits, we will coordinate outreach efforts with Mark Lowery from NYSDEC.

ANCHOR PROJECTS

The Pilot project team will query CSC participants to identify appropriate anchor projects. We will create an inventory of the community projects that we identify through in-person meetings and attendance at trainings and workshops where CSC participants are present. In addition to the interaction with the CSC participants, the project team will leverage its involvement in the Cleaner, Greener Communities program in the region to examine potential anchor projects. The project team will choose innovative, replicable projects to develop case studies for up to three anchor projects. We will also convene the Capital Region CSC Council and have representatives from anchor project communities make presentations about their projects to other CSC Council members to share ideas and experiences.

TRACKING AND REPORTING

Through the Climate Smart Communities Coordinator Pilot Program, the project team will engage with NYSERDA and NYSDEC, as well as other regional coordinators to share best practices and lessons learned and to provide feedback and evaluation of the program while it is being implemented.

The project team will comply with all reporting and submission requirements established by NYSERDA and included in the Pilot contract. The project team will participate in all quarterly Pilot Program conference calls. The team will submit annual reports summarizing the successes and challenges of the CSC Program and including recommendations for modifications to the program moving forward; a list of communities that have received in-person consultations; a progress summary of each community in accomplishing specific pledge elements; conferences and events attended and presentations, trainings and webinars offered; and a summary of CSC interaction (calls, meetings, workshops attended, etc.).