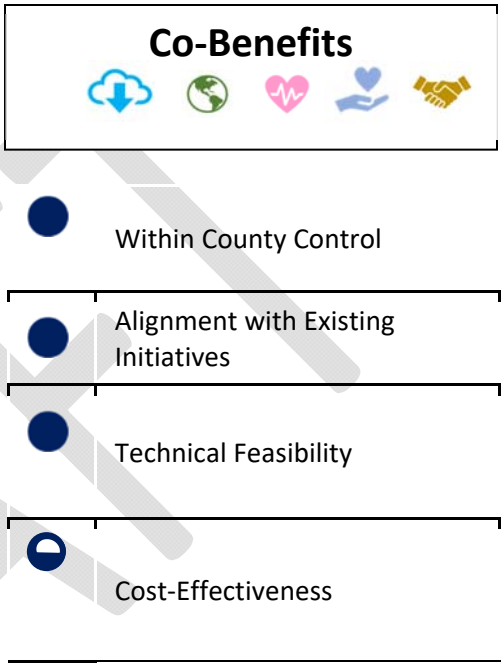
Recommendation #25

Establish Energy Resilient Communities to Serve the Needs of Vulnerable

Description:

Providing basic services must be a critical component of our county's resilience strategy during and after severe climate change-induced storms or related power outage events. Climate resilience hubs will serve as essential lifelines to enable cost-free access to charge a phone, web-based communications, refrigerate medication, and connect with the larger community. These hubs will also provide a central location for residents impacted to gain immediate access to existing County and State government resources to aid in the overall community's recovery. Resilience hubs are not in place of emergency shelters but rather another tool in addition to standard emergency operations facilities to help meet the needs of vulnerable communities. The recommendation's goal will be to implement at least ten resilience hubs in climate-impacted vulnerable communities by 2030.



Time Frame

3-10 years

Proposed Measurement & Tracking:

- # Resilience Hubs Serving Energy Resilience Zones or Extreme Heat "Hotspots"
- # Residents Served by Resilience Hubs (including specific workshops or events as well as use during specific incidents)
- Demographic information (age, race, income, address/housing status, etc.) for users of Resilience Hubs
- Amount of Renewable energy generated and energy storage capacity.
- Date and reason Resiliency Hubs utilized.

Capacity and Funding:

What Capacity and funding is necessary to enact this recommendation?

1. Dedicate annual budget and allocate funding for additional county staff to support the ongoing development of Resilience Hubs. Note, implementation costs of resilience hubs

will vary based on the proposed site and the size of the population a Hub may be intended to serve.

2. Dedicate an annual budget for financial incentives and ongoing support for community organizations to serve as Resilience Hubs.
3. Allocate funding for a renewable energy potential analysis to inform the resilience hub strategy.
4. Broaden existing Emergency Management outreach and education efforts to alert communities to Resilience Hub locations and the differences in the support offered Resilience Hubs vs. Emergency Shelters.

Implementation Steps:

Step 1: Identify High Priority Locations for Resilience Hubs. Using existing maps, energy resilience zones, equity emphasis areas, thermal mapping, and other relevant map layers, the County will prioritize ten locations for resilience hubs.

Step 2: Identify Partner Organizations. Identify likely partners based on the priority areas as identified under Step 1. Issue Request for Proposal(RFP) for targeted community partners or create a rolling application process. Identifying multiple potential locations for each priority zone may be necessary.

Step 3: Engage Community to Design Resilience Hubs.

- Tailor programs and services offered by each designated Resiliency Hub to meet the community's needs.
- Ensure a community-specific approach by first engaging with residents through workshops, surveys, and other means. This engagement will better identify required support based on the specific Hub location. Partnering with trust organizations deeply rooted in the communities they serve and consider the use of existing community centers, churches, etc., are key strategies to increase the likelihood of success
- Streamline county's permitting and code compliance all resiliency hub-related improvements to encourage partnership participation.
- Incubate resiliency innovation and entrepreneurship through public-private partnerships by incorporating resilience hub locations into the County's Economic Development Plans.
- Reward participating businesses or entities through public recognition and fee and tax reduction incentives.

Step 4: Develop Funding Strategy. Co-develop funding strategies with the resilience hub partners. Different partners may have access to additional funding sources, and a co-proposal may appeal to many funders. Funding strategy should include the Maryland Energy Administration(MEA) Resiliency Hub Grant Program and grant funders that have a traditional interest in supporting vulnerable communities, disaster preparedness, environment, and energy(FEMA, HUD, for example). Creating financial incentives for a public-private partnership to retrofit facilities more quickly as resilience hubs should also be a consideration.

Equity considerations:

Equity concerns:

Potential partnering organizations within vulnerable communities may be cash-strapped or prioritize investing available resources on the community's existing issues versus investment in preparing for future climate change impacts.

How can the recommendation be implemented to lead to equitable outcomes?

- Engage directly with the community to inform the location, design, and services of resilience hubs.
- Host multi-lingual workshops based on specific community demographics versus overall County demographics.
- Locate Resilience hubs as part of every economic redevelopment plan for equity areas.
- Provide timely support for businesses within vulnerable communities to remain open for services and solvent after a severe climate change-induced storm or related power outage events.

Helpful Resources:

- **Resource**: Resilience Hubs Website
  - Organization: Urban Sustainability Directors Network
  - Description: A clearinghouse for information on Resilience Hubs, including case studies and resources.
- **Resource**: MEA FY22 Resiliency Hub Grant Program
  - Organization: Maryland Energy Administration (MEA)
  - Description: Information including grant requirements and proposal deadlines for the Resiliency Hub Grant Program.
- **Resource**: Baltimore City Community Resiliency Hub Program
  - Organization: City of Baltimore
  - Description: This website summarizes the Baltimore Resiliency Hub Program, including a map of the ten resiliency hub partner locations.
- Resource: Resilience Hub Business Plan
  - Organization: Cambridge Community Center
  - Description: A business plan for the implementation of a Resilience Hub in Cambridge, Massachusetts including detailed implementation steps, timeline, roles and responsibilities, and costs.