Recommendation #7

Increase Deployment of Solar PV in the Residential and Commercial Sectors by Expanding Partnerships, Incentives, and Financing Solutions.

Description:

Prince George's County has several partnerships, incentives, and financing solutions in place that have already contributed to more than 20,000 solar PV installations. However, recent estimates from Project Sunroof estimate that up to 80% of buildings without solar PV in our region are viable for a roof-mounted solar PV installation. Of the 338,766 residential and commercial electric accounts in Prince George's County, only 6% of those accounts currently use solar PV.

Prince George's County will help provide educational resources, explore innovative partnerships, and connect residents with financing opportunities to facilitate an additional 60,000 solar installations by 2030. Bold action to increase residential and commercial solar installations will help Prince George's County remain a solar energy leader with the State of Maryland by continuing to install more solar systems each year and creating the most solar energy capacity.

Co-Benefits

- Within County Control
- Alignment with Existing Initiatives
- Technical Feasibility
- Cost-Effectiveness

Time Frame

1-4 years

Proposed Measurement & Tracking

On an annual basis, track, monitoring, and quantify the following:

- Number of participants(households, organizations, business, etc.) participating in PV programs, loans, and incentives.
- Installed capacity (KW) per each year per the residential and commercial sectors. Understanding that the utility data currently available to the County does not separate residential, commercial, and public sector solar PV capacity.
- Number of consultations with County Energy Coach with outcomes tracked.

Capacity and Funding:

What capacity and funding is necessary to implement this recommendation?

1. Allocate funding to hire additional three full-time staff for OCS, Sustainable Energy Office implement this recommendation.

2. Allocate and dedicate ongoing budget to both provide staff manage an R-PACE program.
3. Allocate additional funding for consultant to conduct a county-wide solar feasibility study.

Implementation Steps:

Step 1: Establish a Solar Task Force. Solar Task Force (agency leads, business leaders, subject matter resident experts) will be responsible for leading the development of new solar PV programs and incentives, communicating the availability of these resources to Prince George's County's residents, commercial building owners, and engaging the community on the benefits of solar PV particularly the financial aspects of solar PV.

- Perform county-wide analysis of available private, commercial, and governmental rooftops, parking areas, and other suitable locations throughout the County for solar panels.
- Identify barriers(financial, existing infrastructure, and code) to installing Solar PV and other renewable energy practices on both commercial and residential buildings.
- Accommodate more roof top solar by engaging with the Public Service Commission(PSC) to identify required approvals for two-way direction grid and streamline investment in necessary upgrades.

Step 2: Expand Education and Outreach related to sustainable energy. Develop a sustainable energy website and outreach program to continue increasing awareness in Prince George's County of the many programs and incentives available to residents, as part of a more extensive, comprehensive Climate Action Plan website (see Recommendation: Lead by Example). During community meetings (during the development of this plan), residents expressed that education and outreach were a vital gap and lacked a trusted source of information. The County will continue to utilize resources, such as EnergySage and Maryland Solar United Neighbors (MD SUN), to support residents in connecting with credible solar installers. In addition, it can help educate and support residents to understand how different options, including direct ownership, leasing, community solar, solar co-ops, etc., work and the trade-offs involved for each option, as well as information about solar financing and case studies demonstrating the financial benefits of solar.

Step 3: Participate in the national SolSmart Program funded by the U.S. Department of Energy and seek platinum designation. This program provides support to local governments to adopt best practices in solar deployment. The program offers free technical assistance to participating communities and can help identify opportunities to improve solar permitting, expand access and engagement, and expand partnerships and innovative programming. Additionally, as part of the SolSmart designation process, the County should adopt NREL's SolarAPP+, supported by DOE. The SolarAPP+ helps communities streamline the solar PV permitting process and reduces soft costs associated with installing solar PV, two primary goals of the SolSmart program.

Step 4: Expand participation in solar financing. While FSC First Green Energy Loan Fund offers loans for green energy, including up to $250,000 for commercial buildings, to date, no business or building owner has utilized this opportunity. Through the solar task force and community engagement, the County should seek to understand residents' and businesses' financing needs and assess the potential to adjust current loan products or expand offerings to meet these needs.

- Through County Code of Ordinance or Resolution, establish a Residential Property Assessed Clean Energy Program(R-PACE) as now legislatively enabled through Maryland State House Bill 517 in 2021.
- Create business recognition program to publicly acknowledge for businesses participating in the First Green Energy Loan Fund and help promote businesses and contractors certified and registered by the County to provide services through R-PACE.

Equity considerations

Equity Concerns:

Low and moderate-income homeowners may not have access to the capital required to purchase solar, and those with poor credit scores may not be able to take advantage of financing or leasing options.

How this recommendation can be implemented to lead to equitable outcomes:

- Provide access to grants to help subsidize costs for improvements in Equity Emphasis areas (Home Owner's Guide to the R-PACE) through the R-PACE program.
- Require specific regulatory oversight through County Energy Coaches to work with homeowners to prevent overleveraging their property's equity to make improvements through R-PACE(R-PACE creates a Super- Priority Lien).
- Provide energy coaches to work with resident to evaluate contractor proposals and review applications eligibility for free low-income Weatherization Assistance Program and other no- or low-cost programs before leveraging R-PACE.

Helpful Resources:

- **Resource**: A Maryland Consumer's Guide to Solar
  - Organization: Clean Energy States Alliance and The Maryland Energy Administration
  - Description: This guide is intended to help Maryland consumers better understand the benefits of solar PV and their options for procuring and financing private renewable energy projects.
- **Resource**: SolSmart Program Guide
  - Organization: Solsmart
  - Description: A guide to participation in a national solar recognization and technical assistance program funded by the U.S. Department of Energy
- **Resource**: EnergySage
  - Organization: EnergySage
  - Description: This online tool helps potential solar customers easily receive and compare quotes from credible solar installers.
- Resource: Solar United Neighbors of Maryland
  - Organization: Solar United Neighbors
  - Description: Solar United Neighbors (SUN) is a nonprofit helping people go solar through their community-driven bulk discount solar cooperative initiative.
- **Resource**: EmPower Maryland

    - Organization: Maryland Public Service Commission
    - Description: EmPOWER Maryland programs are administered by utilities. County programs can add or supplement energy savings or GHG reductions from those programs.
- **Resource:** Property Assessed Clean Energy Programs
    - Property Assessed Clean Energy Programs | Department of Energy