

Lea Kyle, Matthew Taboni and Andy Whitehead, posting on @ubgreenteam on instagram from the University at Buffalo. Our Project Green Challenge username is bwhitehe.

Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz is an advocate for Clean Energy. Under his leadership, Erie County continues to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, both on a governmental and community level. More specifically, though, The majority of the advancements have been due to the “Green Team”, headed by **Tracy Skalski**, Erie County’s Sustainability Coordinator, for the past six years.

Due to the efforts, Erie County has been dictated a Clean Energy Community by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). This means that the county is doing its job of reducing its emissions by completing 4 of the ten clean energy actions outlined in the Clean Energy Communities Initiative. What is that, exactly?

“Clean Energy Communities advance the Governor’s Green New Deal by demonstrating the important role communities play in helping New York State reach its goal of having a carbon-neutral economy as soon as practicable and a carbon-free power grid by 2040.”

- From the Erie County website.

So what did Erie County do? Well, according to the website, (published 11.18.19), they:

1. Developed a comprehensive program to help fix the environment.
2. Added electric vehicles into their fleet.
3. Adopted a tracking system to report energy usage in government/community buildings
4. Helped in a community-based solar project campaign that helped to reduce project costs through joint purchasing.

So where are we now? According to the most recent post about the topic on the [Erie County website](#) (11.26.21):

“Erie County’s 2020 GHG inventory for government operations shows a decrease of 36.4% compared to the 2005 baseline, surpassing the goal for 2020 set by the Climate Action & Sustainability Plan (CASP) - Internal Operations by almost 4.5%”.

Some significant things Erie County did in 2021 are:

- Energy Performance Contract:
 - Reduced energy costs/usage in building by upgrading old HVAC equipment to newer, more efficient versions in over 40 County-owned buildings.
- Paris /Climate Action Fund:
 - Funding to replace gas/fuel energy systems to high efficiency heat pumps/electric.
- Open C-PACE – Clean Energy Financing:
 - Finance mechanism for Energy conservation
- Food Composting
 - “From October 2020 through September 2021 Erie County composted 62 tons of food scraps, reducing more than 50 metric tons of GHG emissions while saving more than \$20,000 in disposal costs.”
- Silver Climate Smart Community Certification:

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- The highest level of the Climate Smart Communities program, designating a county that is doing extensive work to reduce their carbon footprint. Not many counties have it.

I agree with a lot that they are doing, but I wish that they did much more in the regulation of private businesses rather than only focusing on the public sector.

Climate Action - Clean Energy



Tracy Skalski, part of Erie County's Green Team for over 6 years, which is responsible for:

- A **decrease of 36.4% of GHG** emissions from the government
- Composting **62 tons of food** scrap from Oct. 2020 through Sept. 2021
- Achieving the "**Silver Climate Smart Community**" Certification in NYS



Tracy Skalski

Erie County's
Sustainability Coordinator

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“Meet Tracy Skalski, one of the main spearheads of the clean energy push in Erie County.

A part of Erie County's Green Team for over 6 years, she has been involved with the development, implementation and maintenance of sustainable programs throughout the county.

She, along with the rest of her team, has achieved many benchmarks through utilizing many avenues. Old equipment was upgraded to newer and more efficient machinery, as well as switching from gas/fuel energy systems to high efficiency heat pumps/electric. A push for increased composting, as well as a decrease in food waste has decreased the amount of greenhouse gas emissions, as well as saving money. Many systems have also been put in place for other entities to use to help finance energy conversion from gas to clean energy.

Through all of this, and many more, Skalski and her team have achieved much, and hopefully will continue to fight for more.

Creating and mobilizing around climate action and environmental justice! We are Team UB Green, from the University at Buffalo. #pgc2022 @turninggreenorg”