



## Montclair says "It's In Our Power" to Reduce Our Carbon Footprint

by Gray Russell, Environmental Coordinator, Township of Montclair

On July 12th the Montclair Township Council voted unanimously to adopt an ambitious Carbon Footprint Reduction Plan for our community, including a goal of lowering GHG emissions by 2% annually over the next two years, as proposed by the Montclair Climate Committee and the Global Warming Response Act of New Jersey.

This means that the local government will support the implementation of a public campaign to help all residents, businesses, and institutions of our town – both public and private – to reduce their energy use and save money on their utility bills, often with the encouragement of various financial incentives that are now available.

The campaign, dubbed "It's In Our Power", is funded by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designating Montclair as a Climate Showcase Community.

Achieving the targets will require the combined participation of homeowners and renters, businesses and commercial building owners, schools, houses of worship, and the municipal government...everybody.

Information on the campaign and on how to participate can be found on-line at [www.OurPowerMontclair.org](http://www.OurPowerMontclair.org), on facebook at [www.facebook.com/OurPowerMontclair](http://www.facebook.com/OurPowerMontclair) (please "like" us), by calling (973) 509-5721 or emailing [grussell@montclairnjusa.org](mailto:grussell@montclairnjusa.org).

### "Money for Nothing!"

#### Our House, In the Middle of Our Street

Homeowners can see real savings in their utility bills – up to 30% – with basic home improvement measures such as sealing up the cracks and drafts we all have in our living spaces, adding more and better insulation, and generally streamlining the performance of their most valuable tangible asset: their house.

Simultaneously, they can take advantage of rebates from the "Home Performance with Energy Star" program offered by the NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) ([www.njcleanenergy.com](http://www.njcleanenergy.com)).

Renters can also participate. By looking for the Energy Star rating label the next time they purchase any consumer electronics – such as a TV, computer, printer, air conditioner or refrigerator – they'll save money as they use the smarter appliance. Even changing light bulbs to the smarter, energy-efficient compact fluorescent lights will save as much as \$30 per bulb.

#### More \$ongs about Buildings

The municipal government is also taking advantage of these incentives. Last year the Township received a federal grant for energy efficiency. We have arranged to use this economic stimulus to "leverage" even more

funding: the BPU Office of Clean Energy's "Direct Install" program will pay 60% of municipal efficiency improvements.

Due to current budget limitations, we wouldn't have been able to benefit from the BPU discount. But now we can use our federal money to access this valuable incentive!

This means we can conduct a \$150,000 lighting upgrade – now underway in five municipal buildings – and the BPU is covering \$90,000 of it. The 40% for which we are responsible comes to \$60,000...and we can use our federal stimulus money to cover that.

So Montclair taxpayers will pay nothing for these upgrades, which then lower our utility bills and will save the Township \$50,000 this year, and again next year, and every year after that, while conserving energy and reducing our emissions of greenhouse gases which contribute to climate change.

It is worth noting that these financial incentives for energy efficiency from the BPU are threatened by the Governor's new Draft Energy Master Plan, and green energy activists around the state hope to repeal his cutbacks. For an administration that says they want to promote business as well as energy security, cutting smart incentives now will be a big step backwards for clean energy in New Jersey.

#### Making Plans

In preparing this plan, comments were solicited over a 6-month period through a robust public input process consisting primarily of a diverse Climate Committee appointed by the Mayor and Council.

Climate Committee members, and the respective sectors they represent, include: Susan Bartol, public schools; Barb Conover, community/environmental activists; Abraham Dickerson, residents/schools; Kevin Fried, Interfaith Environmental Coalition; Tom Lonergan, business community; Stanley White, seniors/schools; Katya Wowk, municipal-residential communications; and, Mike Yellin, greens / renters / landlords.

Constructive input was also provided by members of the Montclair Green Team, including Pat Kenschaft, Fred Chichester, Trina Paulus, Suzanne Aptman, Jennifer Chaky, and Stephanie Sheerin.

#### It's a 3-Town Project

This EPA Climate Showcase Grant is the first ever granted to *towns*– usually these go to cities which have the infrastructure to implement these types of changes in programs. But more people live in towns. We are a pilot project, as the 'middle-size' town along with Cherry Hill (large) and Highland Park (small). You can find information on their parallel programs at [www.ourpowercherryhill.org](http://www.ourpowercherryhill.org) and [ourpowerhighlandpark.org](http://ourpowerhighlandpark.org).



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