



Jesse Carpenter- ICLEI
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Dear Jesse Carpenter:

RE: Interim Report of The Borough of Forest Hills for the ICLEI Climate Action Project

The Borough of Forest Hills has pursued a Climate Action Planning process beginning with a Proclamation of the Borough Council dated April 18, 2018, which includes in relevant part:

It is imperative that the world know that in the U.S., the people that will provide the leadership necessary to meet our Paris Accord commitment are found in city halls, state capitals, borough buildings, colleges and universities, and businesses. Together, we will remain actively engaged with the international community as part of the global effort to hold warming to well below 2°C and to accelerate the transition to a clean energy economy that will benefit our security, prosperity, and health.

Now, therefore be it resolved, that I, Frank Porco, Mayor of the Borough of Forest Hills, in collaboration with the Forest Hills Borough Council are joining forces for the first time to declare that we will continue to support climate action in our community and declare “We are still In” the Paris Accord

The Climate Action goals were included in the two- year process of updating and adopting a Comprehensive Plan for the Borough of Forest Hills, including four community input sessions attended by over 120 people, a communitywide survey for feedback on the proposals, and public hearings before the Borough Council. The Comprehensive Plan adopted in January 2019 is here: <https://foresthillspa.org/Document%20Center/Borough-Budget/Comprehensive%20Plan.pdf>

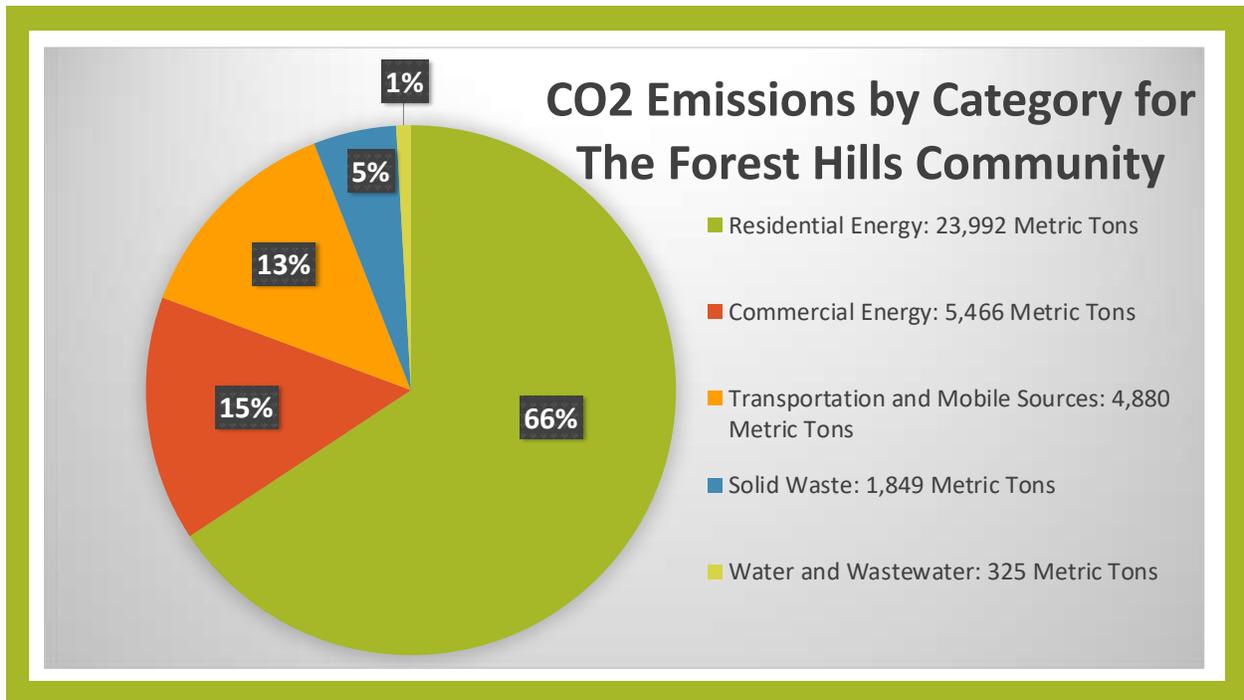
Forest Hills moved the Administrative Offices, C. C. Mellor Library, Police Department and Community Room from two older buildings into a new net zero energy borough building that has served as an emblem for our commitment to this process. With the evidence of an 18 -

month continuous zero net electricity bill from the operation of this building, it is clearly evident that properly designed buildings can produce more energy than they use, on an annual net basis, even through the winter months. This accomplishment has stimulated renewed interest in advancing the process of improving the energy profile of the entire community.

We participated in the ICLEI Climate Action Project with high hopes for achieving a Climate Action Plan to guide continuing efforts of the Borough of Forest Hills to address this global existential crisis of our time. The COVID-19 virus response put an abrupt halt to our efforts in mid-March. The Borough offices went to restricted hours and rotating staff presence and planned public outreach sessions for April 10 and 24 were postponed, then cancelled. In addition, our intern left campus as The University of Sharpsburg depopulated the campus in response to the pandemic. In April, The Borough of Forest Hills secured the service of a graduate student intern from the Chatham University Falk School of Sustainability, Blake Martin. He will be with the Borough until December 2020, and has completed certification in eco-District Planning, which will greatly assist in achieving our goals.

Emissions Inventory:

The Greenhouse Gas inventory was completed and presented to the Borough Council in May 2020. (presentation attached)



The Emissions profile shows the heavy contributions of residential sector to the climate emissions profile. The Borough of Forest Hills has a population of 6,322 people, with the largest cohort, 23% of the population, aged 65 or older. Two thirds of the 3,486 residential housing units are owner-occupied, and half of those have no mortgage, indicating older residents. Strategies for improving energy efficiency and eventual conversion to electric heating with or without solar PV

from the dominant fuel of natural gas will require considerable consumer education as well as likely need for financial assistance.

The Commercial Sector is characterized by several strip-mall type of buildings, a scattering of businesses in single buildings, and two high rise office buildings. Three commercial multi-family apartment buildings are included in the commercial sector. For this sector, the Comprehensive Plan includes the objective of forming an Eco-District overlay for the zoned business areas as a mechanism to improve the emissions profile of this sector.

The Transportation sector was addressed in the Comprehensive Plan, and a grant application has been submitted (WalkWorks) to address an Active Transit Plan to define implementation for pedestrian, bicycle and public transit mobility. In addition, the Forest Hills Police Department has initiated the process of migrating to an electric vehicle fleet as vehicles are replaced. The Borough Building has connectivity in place to support the eventual addition of a solar PV canopy for parking and electric vehicle re-charge stations.

Water and Stormwater Management and Waste Management strategies are being pursued as part of regional efforts.

Upon consideration of this preliminary report, Council adopted a goal of Net Zero Emissions by 2050, with benchmarks to be established at two years, five years, ten years and thirty years. This process is underway with forecasting tools, and a rough guide of overall 5% reduction in emissions per year. Oversight of the program development was remanded to the Environmental Advisory Council where the community outreach functions will be planned and executed.

Vulnerabilities:

The most critical climate hazards and vulnerabilities arise from extreme weather conditions and storm damage. These include power outages from downed wires. Forest Hills has a 50% land coverage with a mature tree canopy. As a U.S. Tree City since 1976, protecting and preserving this attribute is an important community value. Mature trees (25 years or older) also biologically sequester carbon and serve a significant function in the emissions control process. A summary of community vulnerabilities (a list of hazards and community systems/populations that are likely to be the most impacted)

A second serious vulnerability comes from landslide hazards. Forest Hills has 40% of its area vulnerable to landslides due to the steep terrain, undermined areas from prior coal mining, and past building on filled land. Four significant landslides with house destruction and road collapse have occurred within the last three years. This issue is receiving consideration and analysis with the assistance of the Council engineering firm, Glenn Engineering, and Public Works staff.

Vulnerability from storm and weather extremes include drought, which has implications for both the tree canopy and the water supply if prolonged over time. There are also significant and escalating concerns with storm surge events. Many of the conditions resulting from surges of storm water require collaboration with neighboring communities that share the watershed. Mitigation measures are in the planning stages through ALCOSAN and MS4 Consent Decree as

well as through collaborative efforts of CONNECT, the Congress of Neighboring Communities who work together on this issue.

Next Steps:

The Borough of Forest Hills has the following timeline for completion of the Climate Action Plan:

1. Complete forecast and establish Benchmarks for emissions reduction by August 55, 2020.
2. Conduct electronic survey for public input on the Climate Action Plan in August 2020
3. Hold feedback sessions addressing proposed actions on Zoom focused on Residential, Commercial and Transportation sectors September.
4. Coordinate with Woodland Hills High School student climate action plan for informational sessions and to support their community engagement efforts at the Student Climate Summit, October 23, 2020.
5. Hold a formal Public Hearing at the Borough Council meeting of October 2020.
6. Make proposals for EcoDistrict zoning overlay to Planning and Zoning in November 2020.
7. Formal adoption of Climate Action Plan in December 2020.

The Borough of Forest Hills takes the community engagement process seriously. The traditional ways of achieving community engagement have been compromised by the response to the pandemic. We take care to adhere strictly to social distancing and protective measures especially due to the sensitive demographic of our citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to engage with this process.

Sincerely,

Patricia M. DeMarco, Ph.D.
Vice President
Forest Hills Borough Council