



Focus Group #1

Ulster County Community Climate Action Plan

Wednesday, May 29, 2024 | 6:30–7:30 PM
Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library | 56 Main St, Milton, NY 12547

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions
- Project and Focus Group Overview
- Discussion Questions
- Closing and Next Steps

BACKGROUND

Ulster County GHG Inventory

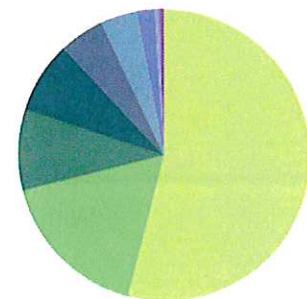
Ulster County recently conducted a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory that estimated that the County-wide community produced **2,148,946 Mt CO₂e** in 2022. The Inventory identified which activities in the County contribute the most greenhouse gases – substances released into the air that cause climate change. These activity groups include (refer to the graphic below):

- Transportation (especially individual cars and trucks) contributed 54% of the County's greenhouse gases.
- Residential energy contributed 17%.
- Commercial energy contributed 9%.
- Other areas (e.g. trash, leaky pipes, farming, etc.) contributed 21% altogether.

Based on these results, the County is brainstorming what actions they could take in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as planning for electric vehicles, more public transportation options, supporting residents with incentives for solar panels and electric appliances, helping utilities get greener electricity, and expanding composting and recycling. As established in Executive Order 01-2023, **Ulster County has a goal of reducing county-wide community greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030 and 85% by 2050.**

COMMUNITY EMISSIONS AT A GLANCE

- 1 Transportation**
54%
- 2 Residential Energy**
17%
- 3 Commercial & Industrial Energy**
9%



Transportation & Mobile Sources	(54%)
Residential Energy	(17%)
Commercial Energy	(9%)
Upstream Impacts	(8%)
Process & Fugitive	(5%)
Solid Waste	(4%)
Industrial Energy	(2%)
Agriculture	(<1%)
Water & Wastewater	(<1%)

Benefits of Climate Action

Based on research commissioned by the New York State Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA), potential benefits of climate actions can include increased jobs; air quality and other health improvements; savings on energy bills; opportunities for small business development; more options for walking, biking, and public transportation; opportunities to redevelop abandoned land or remediate brownfields; and more.

Potential Challenges of Climate Action

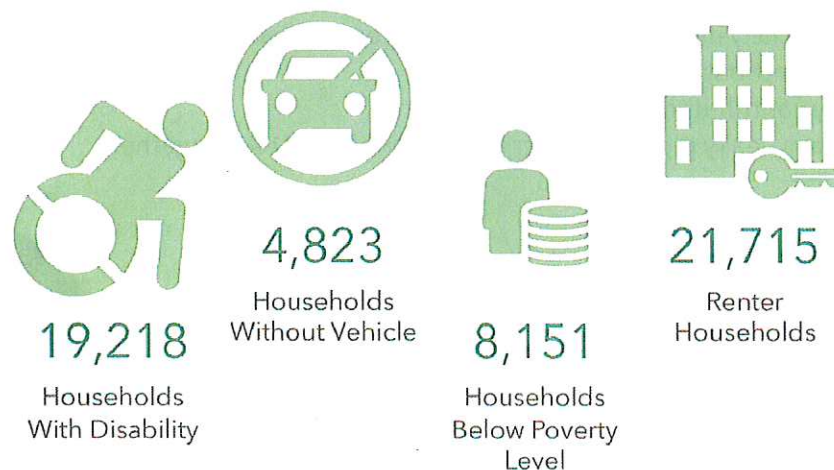
Based on research commissioned by NYSERDA, the overall benefits of climate action outweigh the costs by over \$115 billion. However, potential challenges of climate actions can include increases in energy costs in some circumstances, job loss in some industries, impacts on small businesses, and some health and safety risks. Different populations also have different abilities to purchase electric vehicles, solar panels, insulation for homes, etc.

Why is Ulster County holding these focus groups?

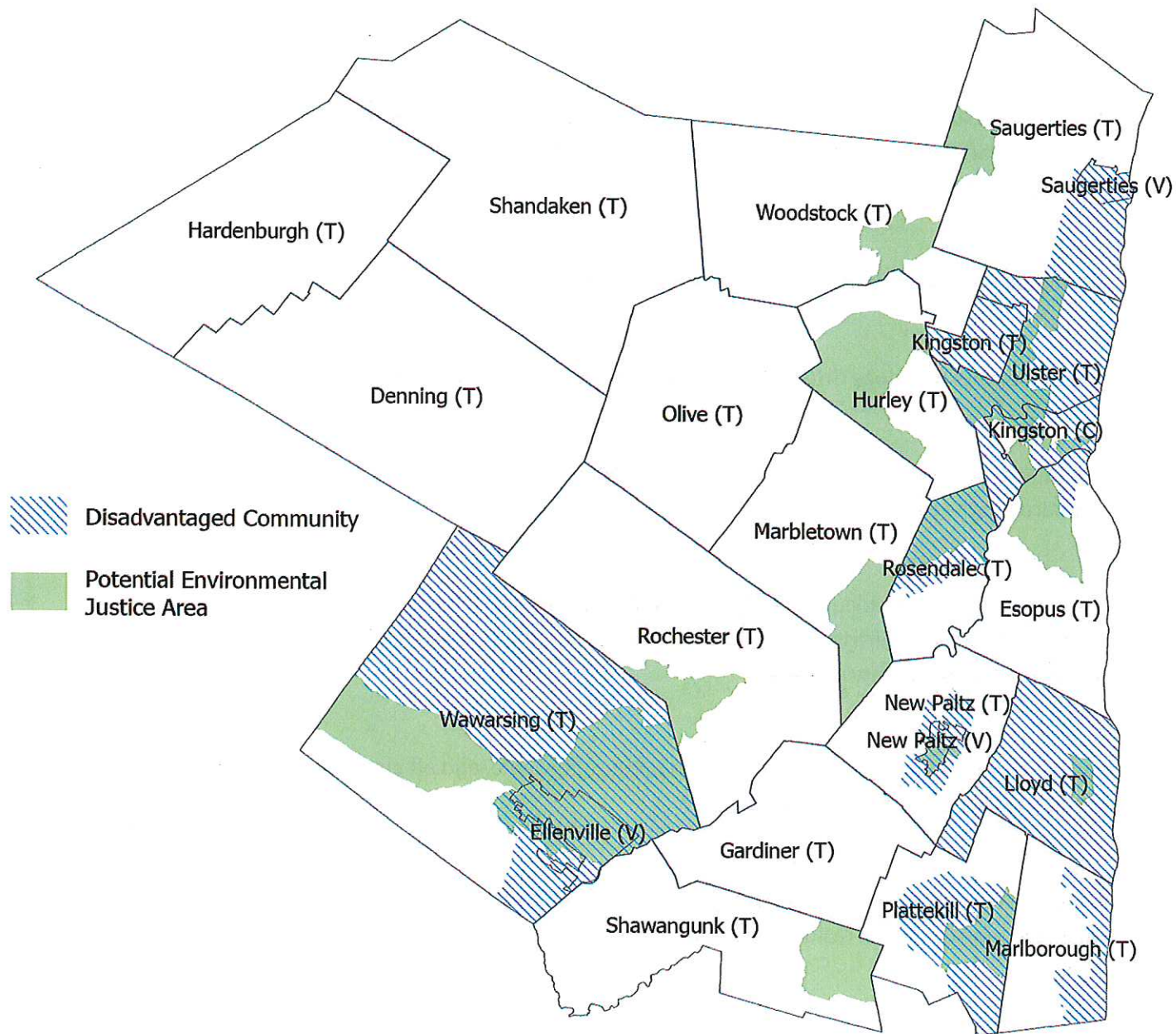
The County recognizes that low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately impacted by climate change and environmental pollution. For example:

- Between 2004 and 2018, non-Hispanic Black Americans were almost 50% more likely to die of heat stress than White Americans, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC).
- Residents of color in New York State are also exposed to much higher rates of air pollution from cars and trucks than white residents.

The County is hosting focus groups in 3 NYS-designated Disadvantaged Communities to make sure community priorities are reflected in the County plan, and to get ideas on how to best learn from the community. Please see the following images for information about vulnerability indicators in Ulster County, and the Disadvantaged Communities and Potential Environmental Justice Areas map on the next page.



Vulnerability Indicator	Percentage of County Population
Persons aged 65+	19.8%
Persons with a disability	14%
Persons without health insurance	5.4%
Persons who do not speak English well	3.3%
Renter households	33%
Households below poverty line	13.7%
Households without a vehicle	7%



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What key issues do you face or foresee related to climate change in Ulster County?
2. What strategies would you like to see the County and its partners implement to reduce community GHG emissions in Ulster County? Additionally, what types of GHG emissions reduction strategies would help your community recover from historical/ongoing harms?
3. What barriers exist to implementing those strategies? Additionally, what barriers does your particular region face when participating in climate mitigation efforts (e.g. financial constraints, housing/vehicle ownership, geographic barriers, etc.)?
4. How could Ulster County help overcome these barriers?
5. How can efforts to reduce GHG emissions take into account racial justice, social justice, and equity?
6. In what ways may GHG emissions reduction strategies need to differ or be tailored for this particular region, compared to the rest of the County?
7. Does your region have adequate public transportation infrastructure? (e.g. bus routes, pedestrian connections, bicycle infrastructure, electric vehicle charging stations) If not, what type of infrastructure would you like to see the County invest in?
8. Does your region have adequate access to healthy, affordable, and efficient housing? If not, what type housing would you like to see the County promote?
9. What types of housing efficiency strategies would be most applicable for your community? (i.e. building envelope improvements, residential solar, heat pumps, etc.)
10. In your experience, what are the most effective ways to ensure your community is foundational to the decision-making process?

Thank you for participating!