SPIRE

Stimulating Public-sector Implementation of Renewable Energy

Local Initiatives Support Clean, Stable Energy Future

Electricity restructuring and California's energy problems of 2000-01 have driven many California communities to investigate ways they can reduce the adverse impacts of a system over which they feel they have little control. Encouraging local renewable electricity generation reduces the economic and safety issues that can result from blackouts and price spikes. As they did in the early 1980s, local governments are poised to take the lead in securing a cleaner, safer and more stable energy future through policies and programs that encourage energy conservation and efficiency and the generation of renewable energy.

The State of California has recognized the benefits of renewable energy. It has passed legislation to require renewable generation, to help pay for it, and to overcome some local barriers to its siting. The State's Renewable Portfolio Standard mandates that 20% of electricity generation in California will be from renewable resources by 2017. Since 1998 California has offered buy down incentives that significantly reduce the cost of renewable generation systems. The State further encouraged renewable on-site generation by enacting laws that supersede local ordinances unfriendly to small wind systems and that void CC&R restrictions on renewable energy.

California local governments are adopting a variety of policies, programs, and implementation measures that support renewable energy and empower residents and businesses to generate their own electricity.

POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

The programs and documents referenced in this fact sheet are available at **www.lgc.org/spire**, where you can also find a fact sheet of California local government photovoltaic installation case studies.

Oroville water treatment

PVs provide 80% of the power for the water treatment plant

Vallejo Police Department

PVs power dispatch center and emergency computer backup

San Bernardino house

10kW wind turbine provides 100% of household electricity

Local policies and ordinances encourage efficiency and renewable generation

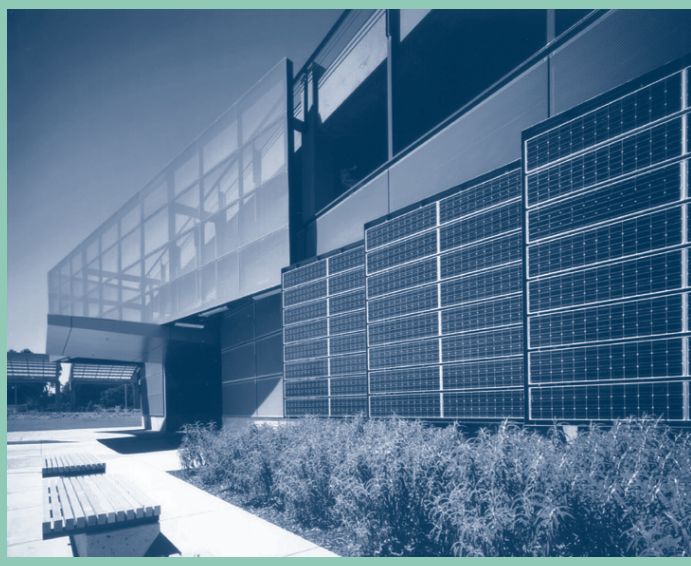
More information on these policies and programs is available at www.lgc.org/spire

Local governments in California continue to be leaders in pushing progressive energy policies. Traditionally overlooked, energy planning is now increasingly recognized as an important part of community planning. Local energy plans and policies present an opportunity to integrate energy reliability, siting of new generation facilities, environmental justice, air quality, public health and a range of environmental issues.

- The City of Pleasanton's Energy Plan addresses green building, energy efficiency, and renewable energy through policy recommendations that integrate education; demand reduction; policies, programs, ordinances and legislation; financing; alliance building; and improved energy supply – including distributed renewables.
- The San Diego Regional Energy Office has been tasked by the San Diego Association of Governments to update and implement the current Regional Energy Strategy (RES). RES would support the future prosperity of the region through measures that ensure an adequate energy supply at a reasonable cost that is consistent with a high degree of environmental quality.
- For a list of local governments that have adopted Energy Elements in their General Plans: http://www.calpin.ca.gov/archives/.

State law mandates solar access protection, maximizes passive solar orientation, and restricts small wind unfriendly ordinances. Cities and counties may be inadvertently discouraging renewable energy installations through existing codes and standards that do not support state law or locally-adopted policies. For example, Marin County recently reviewed its Zoning Code and found nine sections that could create barriers to energy conservation and sustainable development.

- The City of Oakland's Self-Certification for Renewable Energy Production Facilities effectively streamlines the permit process by exempting qualifying facilities from design review.
- Santa Cruz County has codified development standards for wind energy systems, and institutionalized a process for registering solar energy systems to protect solar access rights.
- Marin County's Single Family Dwelling Energy Efficiency Ordinance requires new homes larger than 3,500 square feet to meet the Title 24 standard of the equivalent home designed at 3,500 square feet. This can be achieved with energy efficiency measures and/or by supplementing energy use with renewable energy.
- Los Angeles and Sacramento revised zoning codes to exempt solar panels from height restrictions.



PVs help power the Fairfield Transportation Center

PVs provide the energy for lighting at this Palm Desert bus shelter

Photos: Sun Power & Geothermal Energy (Oroville, Vallejo); American Wind Energy Association (San Bernardino, Santa Cruz); Gordon H. Chong + Partners (Fairfield); City of Palm Desert.

Local Programs Create Incentives for Renewable Energy

Santa Cruz County's development standards encourage renewable energy, like this residential wind turbine

Cities and counties can support residents and business owners in their efforts to generate their own clean electricity through a variety of mechanisms. This support can come in the form of reduced permit fees, streamlined design review processes, and cash incentives. Some communities are developing solar energy programs that promote photovoltaics in the private sector. In fact, a recent study concluded that local government plays an important role in facilitating investment in PV electricity by reducing the financing and transaction costs for residents and businesses.

- Marin County's Building Energy Efficient Structures Today (BEST) is a Board of Supervisors-sponsored program that encourages energy efficient buildings and renewable energy projects through fee rebates, technical assistance, and expedited permit processing.
- The City of Palm Desert's Solar Assistance Program used bulk procurement to reduce the per-unit cost of 600 solar panels that were resold, at a considerable savings, to businesses and homeowners.
- The Solar Sebastopol Program was initiated by city officials following the Solar Sebastopol Feasibility Study. The program aims to install up to 1,000 kW of PV in the community.
- The City of Arcata and the Humboldt Energy Task Force are encouraging Humboldt County residents to go solar. A solar guidebook, developed by the Renewable Energy Development Institute under contract with the City, helps potential solar energy owners evaluate system size and cost.
- In November 2001, San Francisco voters overwhelmingly approved a $100 million bond initiative that pays for solar panels, energy efficiency and wind turbines for public facilities. The money that would have gone to buy electricity from power plants instead goes to pay down the bond.
- Communities that have reduced or eliminated permit fees for residential and/or business PV systems include the cities of Oakland, San Jose, Santa Cruz and Santa Monica, as well as Alameda, Marin and San Diego counties.
- Alameda County, Marin County, San Diego, San Francisco/MontereyBay Area Solar Consortium, San Francisco and Santa Monica are encouraging solar energy through their partnerships with the national Million Solar Roofs program.
- The City of Santa Monica has adopted a set of requirements and recommendations to encourage the development of "green" buildings without forcing excessive costs or other burdens upon developers, building owners or occupants. The City has also developed Green Building Guidelines to explain possible ways of achieving green building goals.
- San Jose's Green Building Policies, incorporate green building principles and practices into the planning, design, construction, management, renovation, operations, and demolition of all City facilities that are constructed, owned, managed or financed by the City. They also call for San Jose to provide leadership and guidance to encourage the application of green building practices in the private sector. Together with the Pacific Energy Center, the City sponsors Green Building workshops.

Renewable Resources

- **The Database of State Incentives for Renewable Energy (DSIRE)**

DSIRE is a comprehensive source of information on state, local, utility, and selected federal incentives that promote renewable energy.

http://www.dsireusa.org/

- **Emerging Renewables Rebate Program**

This California Energy Commission program provides rebates to consumers who install qualifying renewable energy systems.

http://www.consumerenergycenter.com/

- **Renewable Energy Development Institute**

REDI provides a broad range of services in support of the renewables technology industry including technical assistance, financial analysis, project development, and education and training in technology and financing.

http://www.redinet.org/

- **Small Wind Information Center**

The information on this web page is designed to aid local government authorities that are making decisions on applications for small wind turbines or planning for the future development of small wind turbines in their area.

http://cwec.ucdavis.edu/smallwind/

- **U.S. Green Building Council**

The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System™ is a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings.

http://www.usgbc.org/

- **Vote Solar Initiative**

The Vote Solar Initiative's mission is to promote a national transition to clean energy by empowering city governments to implement large-scale, cost-effective solar projects.

http://www.votesolar.org/

http://www.lgc.org/spire/
(800) 290-8202

Resources Available from the Local Government Commission

"CURRENTS: An Energy Newsletter for Local Governments": Current and past issues are available online at: http://www.lgc.org/freepub/energy/newsletter

The following resources are available at http://www.lgc.org/spire/:

Renewable Energy Assistance Packet: A one-stop-shop for municipal financing and procurement of renewable energy stems, the Assistance Packet directs local governments to information on photovoltaic systems, a compendium of financing sources, options for procurement, rebates, incentives, and local energy policies and programs.

Solar RFP's, ranging from single-page solicitations for solar panels to detailed RFPs for full-scale design/build projects.

Policies, Codes and Programs that Support Renewable Energy: Sample zoning ordinances, policies and programs are the basis of local regulatory and program efforts to encourage renewable energy generation.

The "Innovative Energy Strategies for the Public Sector" fact sheet profiles communities that have installed photovoltaic (PV) systems on municipal facilities; it provides resources and a renewable energy checklist.

Public Sector PV Presentation: This PowerPoint™ overview of PV technology and benefits presents case studies of communities that have installed PV, and analyzes the economics of three different solar installations.

"Assessing Rooftop Solar-Electric Distributed Energy Resources," a report by the U.S. Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory that asseses local government facility renewable energy generation capacity.

California Energy Commission

Renewable Energy Consumer Education
http://www.consumerenergycenter.org/

Renewable Energy Program
California Energy Commission

Local Government Commission

1414 K St., Suite 600
Sacramento, CA 95814-3966
tel (916) 448-1198
fax (916) 448-8246

printed on recycled paper • editing & design: dave davis