

# Recommendations

The data from the survey and case studies have provided numerous insights into the strategies pursued and barriers faced throughout the local transition to 100% renewable energy. Cities working through this transition have largely faced barriers through staffing and subject matter expertise, funding resources, state policies, and utility structure. Some successful endeavors have been able to harness the power of citizen lobbying and grassroots organization in order to assist with these challenges and further clean energy goals. Cities have also advocated for clean energy policies on the state and regional level to pressure utilities to collaborate on the transition process. On the whole, expertise from community organizations and other Ready for 100 cities seems to be the most valuable resource to turn to, especially at the beginning of the transition. Many cities have even turned to outside consultants to develop plans for getting to 100% which can be done if the resources are available.

This report offers a series of recommendations based on the above findings to help cities within the transition reach 100% renewable energy. General recommendations for cities within the transition are listed below.

1. **Build partnerships, coalitions, and relationships** externally and within the city to work together, partner on projects, and share resources, stories, and knowledge.
2. **Ensure disproportionate energy burden on citizens is being adequately addressed** by engaging marginalized communities and investing in efficiency and clean energy programs directed towards these communities.
3. **Engage with other cities** that have similar commitments to build a network of peers for sharing best practices, data, and metrics.
4. **Collaborate with community-based organizations and national non-profits** that can provide additional perspectives and resources to help with the planning and decision-making process.
5. **Assess the use and allocation of local taxes and fees** from the city and supplement with state, federal, and other fundraising opportunities (e.g. grants) in order to procure funding for implementing programs and technologies.
6. **Advocate for renewable energy policies and funding mechanisms** at the state and federal level.
7. **Empower citizens to have voices within the energy system** through education and awareness campaigns, engagement in energy policy and regulation issues, and support of community-based organizations.
8. **Hire dedicated staff and foster connections with other cities**, particularly among dedicated staff, to maximize expertise in the transition.
9. **Designate a team or person entrusted to champion the initialization** and maintain communication within the local government to ensure that all departments are on the same page.
10. **Develop an interim goal** to help motivate staffers towards the transition to 100%.
11. **Partner with neighboring cities on energy projects**, whether they have made the commitment or not - cities and residents tend to support renewable energy initiatives and could be willing to work with you.

Following are also more specific recommendations for cities looking to increase community engagement, community groups and organizers within transitioning cities, cities with investor-owned utilities, and those cities hoping to make a commitment.

# Increasing Engagement and Equity

Although many cities find that energy democracy and equity are important to consider, prioritizing these issues within renewable energy transitions appears to be difficult for most cities. Energy democracy and equity issues go hand in hand; only when energy democracy is addressed can energy burden be reduced. The first step to solving equity issues is to recognize and understand the problems that frontline communities bear.



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*“Acknowledge inequities exist.”*

-Survey Respondent

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Energy equity can be addressed with engagement of these frontline communities throughout all decision-making bodies and processes. When given a voice, these communities can help enable solutions that will meet their needs. Cities can invest in these communities through energy efficiency projects, job training programs, clean energy funding assistance, and public transportation. Instead of overlooking the issues of marginalized communities, cities can prioritize this work to assist in building a more equitable transition for all.

## For Community Groups and Organizers

Community organizations, experts, and advocates should consider focusing their efforts on some areas where cities need help most: funding, technological expertise, legal expertise, access to data, public support. Consistent communication between local organizations and the city staff working in plan implementation will help to determine where the needs are greatest. Combining efforts for energy democracy and 100% renewable energy with electoral campaigns can build popular support, get renewable energy-friendly politicians in office, and ensure the incorporation of energy democracy throughout the planning and implementation process by holding elected officials accountable on their campaign promises.

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*“Our local IOU is regulated by the Public Utilities Commission to provide the cheapest electricity possible regardless of carbon impact. We’re working to transition the grid toward cleaner sources through engagement at the state and regional level, not through a utility.”*

-Survey Respondent

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## For Cities with Investor-Owned Utilities

Many cities have suggested renewable portfolio standards or other mandates, municipalization, community choice energy, and public pressure as methods for incentivizing the initial commitment by utilities. If the state requires integrated resource plans (IRP) from utilities, cities can be active in the stakeholder process. Even just passing a commitment can encourage utilities to change and work alongside the city, especially if they are brand focused. The utility's desire to be an engaged partner in the transition can be amplified if multiple committed cities in the area work together to put pressure on the utility. In addition, cities can try renegotiating the city-utility franchise agreement, with a goal of getting projects that involve a community benefits agreement with frontline communities within the city. Lastly, as municipal utilities allow for greater energy democracy and aid in the renewable energy transition, the threat of municipalization may help to push an IOU to act even if the city does not follow through. Unfortunately, some IOUs may only comply if necessary, so working to expand state-level renewable energy and emissions standards can be an important practice to undertake.

## For Cities Contemplating Committing to the Transition

Over half of the survey respondents noted that concern for their local environment or climate change drove their city to make their commitment. Cities can consider increasing community engagement in order to mobilize the public to advocate for change and focus on these areas of concern in order to garner public support for the transition. One helpful tool for beginning the process of plan-making for the transition is a baseline of energy usage within the city. Cities can begin tracking energy usage in municipal buildings as a way of making future planning easier if they want to have a rough idea of where to begin before making the commitment. Similarly, a publicly available GHG inventory is a commonly used tool for establishing a baseline. Lastly, cities can communicate with the state's energy office to see what resources are available for easing the process of creating or determining this baseline.

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*“Just do it!”*

-Mayor Jim Caruthers of Traverse City, MI

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