



Renewable energy in New York City

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In the past five years, an increasing number of international corporations, institutions, regions and cities have created goals to commit to 100% renewable energy. The transition that at one time seemed like a far-fetched idea is currently an actual plan already under way. 100% renewable energy targets in the commercial sector have gone from pipe dream to mainstream. According to the EPA, over a thousand businesses in the U.S. have adopted 100% renewable electricity goals. In these instances, it is not just the typical "green" brands that are recognizing that the transition is instrumental for their bottom line, but brand names like Ikea, BMW, Staples, Apple and Google have jumped on board. Taking solutions a step further are North American cities like San Diego, San Francisco and most recently Vancouver. These urban areas have taken the pledge to fully source electricity, heating and cooling from renewable resources within the next two decades.

First and foremost, there is not a "one size fits all" formula for how to achieve 100% renewable energy targets. Each community, whether in the public or private sector, has determined its values and resources. While a city like Vancouver has built up effective hydropower generation systems, San Diego looks to harness the majority of its energy from solar photovoltaics. The methods play into the aptitudes of their environments; and although the approaches are different, the target is the same.

These Pacific Coast communities have set into motion climate action plans that share core components. The first of these fundamentals, and perhaps the most imperative, is reducing demand. Shrinking energy consumption will reduce the supply necessary to power the cities. To support these action plans, buildings, both commercial and residential, are looking to improve their efficiencies by upgrading their equipment and envelopes. The driving force in the success of these programs is the public support. It is evident that the more communities and individuals have opportunities to invest in renewable energy development, the faster it goes, lowering the cost of renewable technology adoption.

Although the populations and demands of San Diego and Vancouver represent only a fraction of New York City's, is a full-on commitment to renewables so outlandish for the metropolis of bright lights and skyscrapers? While the road ahead would be challenging, New York City is the perfect place for such a pioneering undertaking as it is the pinnacle of innovation, intelligence and possibilities.

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