

Innovative Microgrid Community Planned for Maryland Community of Fairmount Heights in Prince George's County

Housing Initiative Partnership, Pepco & Emera Technologies Awarded \$200,000 from Maryland Energy Administration for Innovative Microgrid Community

BALTIMORE, MD, UNITED STATES, April 29, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Housing Initiative Partnership (HIP), a green nonprofit affordable housing developer based in Prince George's County, along with Pepco and Emera Technologies, have been awarded \$200,000 from the [Maryland Energy Administration \(MEA\)](#) to construct a new residential microgrid to power a small subdivision of new net zero single family homes in Fairmount Heights, MD. This public-private partnership will bring transformative microgrid technology to new low-to-moderate income residential construction project in Prince George's County.

The grant builds on efforts catalyzed by is an extension of the MEA's [Resilient Maryland program](#) and will support a community solar and battery energy storage system, as well as the associated racking, mounting, and wiring equipment, for six low-to-moderate income households. This innovative pilot project, which received design and feasibility funding in 2020, will enable the new homeowners to generate their own energy independent of the public electrical grid.

"Supporting the development of new and affordable, clean energy homes for first time low-to-moderate income home buyers is a sustainable model Maryland can build upon," stated Governor Larry Hogan.

"This strategic partnership with the State of Maryland, Pepco, Housing Initiative Partnership and Emera Technologies is paving the way for the first block microgrid community in the state," stated Dr. Mary Beth Tung, MEA Director.

"This generous grant from the Maryland Energy Administration allows Pepco and our community partners a unique opportunity to provide affordable and equitable access to sustainable energy, while at the same time helping Fairmount Heights achieve its revitalization and climate change goals," said Dave Velazquez, president and CEO of Pepco Holdings. "By working collaboratively with the MEA, the Housing Initiative Partnership, Emera Technologies and other key stakeholders on this project, we are executing our vision and commitment to supporting a low-carbon future in the communities where we live and for the customers we serve."

This innovative project was originally proposed to the MEA Resilient Maryland program in 2020, to support and develop microgrid and other distributed energy resource (DER) systems that expand clean, reliable and flexible energy solutions to Maryland. This microgrid is an integral part of creating a community that makes affordable, sustainable, and resilient new construction housing more accessible to Maryland's low-to-moderate income population.

"HIP is focused on developing affordable housing that is both healthy and highly energy efficient in older neighborhoods across Prince George's County. This will be our second project in Fairmount Heights focused on passive design and affordable home ownership," said Stephanie Prange-Proestel, HIP's Deputy Director, who serves as the project manager for the development team.

HIP expects to break ground on Phase I of the development in the fall of 2021. Six single-family homes will be built on vacant lots on 60th Place in Fairmount Heights using modular construction, designed to meet the U.S. Department of Energy's Zero Ready Energy standards and the Passive House Institute's PHIUS+ 2018 standard. These rigorous requirements ensure energy savings, comfort, health, and durability. HIP will market the homes to first-time homebuyers earning 80% or less of the area median income.

The collaboration of community partners looks forward to providing electricity generation solutions like rooftop community solar to modernize grid technologies in neighborhoods such as Fairmount Heights, which will help meet state and county de-carbonization goals. Emera Technologies' residential microgrid solution BlockEnergy will allow for homes to share the benefits of combined renewable generation. The community microgrid system also provides reliability and resiliency for the neighborhood.

"The BlockEnergy microgrid is a utility-focused system that easily scales to meet new residential growth and gives utilities the ability to manage distributed community energy with a single point of control. This partnership is a great model for what is possible when we work together to use new technology like BlockEnergy to bring clean, reliable energy sources cost-effectively to customers in communities across the country," said President and CEO of Emera Technologies Rob Bennett.

Fairmount Heights, Maryland, the second oldest African American majority municipality in Prince George's County, is home to just under 2,000 residents and a model location for clean and resilient development. The town has set ambitious goals for 2021 to revitalize vacant land with projects that will encourage citizen engagement and attract growth while minimizing its carbon footprint and promoting a green, sustainable future. This microgrid helps the neighborhood to become a Sustainable Maryland community.

"The Town of Fairmount Heights is greatly appreciative of the \$200,000 for this new and innovative microgrid project at the site of our 6 new Net Zero homes in our historic town. We are positive that the energy savings will reduce our carbon footprint and make life more enjoyable

for all of our residents” said Mayor Lillie-Thompson Martin.

Pepco and Emera Technologies, LLC will install the microgrid elements with infrastructure. For the first three years after residents move into the new homes, Pepco will operate a pilot in conjunction with the other partners to collect data for specific metrics related to the system and potential benefits to the distribution system. Pepco will share additional details regarding the design, goals, proposed metrics and timeline associated with the three-year pilot with the Maryland Public Service Commission, community members and the public later this year.

Affordable access to sustainable energy has taken center stage in communities across America in the face of increasing threats from climate change, which can disproportionately affect our most vulnerable communities. The Fairmount Heights Net Zero community will provide replicable, scalable, and cost-effective solutions that will serve as models for wide-scale adoption across Maryland. This pilot underscores the importance of state investments in positively advancing the local energy grid through collaboratively identified inclusive and equitable solutions.

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The Maryland Energy Administration advises the governor and general assembly on all energy matters, promoting affordable, reliable and cleaner energy. MEA develops and administers programs and policy to support and expand all sectors of the state’s economy while benefiting all Marylanders and implementing legislation.

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