



# **Progress Made, Challenges Remaining: Reflections On a Career in Local Government Climate Action**

John Morrill, Director, Office of Environmental  
and Energy Coordination (OEEC)

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# Who am I? Why am I here? My trajectory in clean energy.

| Period    | Organization                                                                          |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1983-1988 | ACEEE (American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy)                              |
| 1988-1990 | <i>Teaching “sabbatical” in Japan</i>                                                 |
| 1990-2000 | ACEEE                                                                                 |
| 2000-2011 | Arlington County (energy manager, co-lead of AIRE)                                    |
| 2011-2012 | <i>Brief stint with Emerald Cities Collaborative</i>                                  |
| 2012-2020 | Arlington County                                                                      |
| 2020-2026 | Fairfax County, Ofc of Environmental and Energy Coordination<br>(Director, 2023-2026) |

*A caveat: Remarks here are mine as an individual and do not necessarily reflect the views of Fairfax County government.*

## First *Energy Manager* in local government in Virginia

- Found the “institutional barriers” to clean energy are all too real.
  - *Motors*
  - *Ground-source heat pumps and solar*
- Happy to report the local energy and environmental staffing is much stronger today: 107+ individuals from 24 localities are involved in the Virginia Energy & Sustainability Peer Network (VESPN)

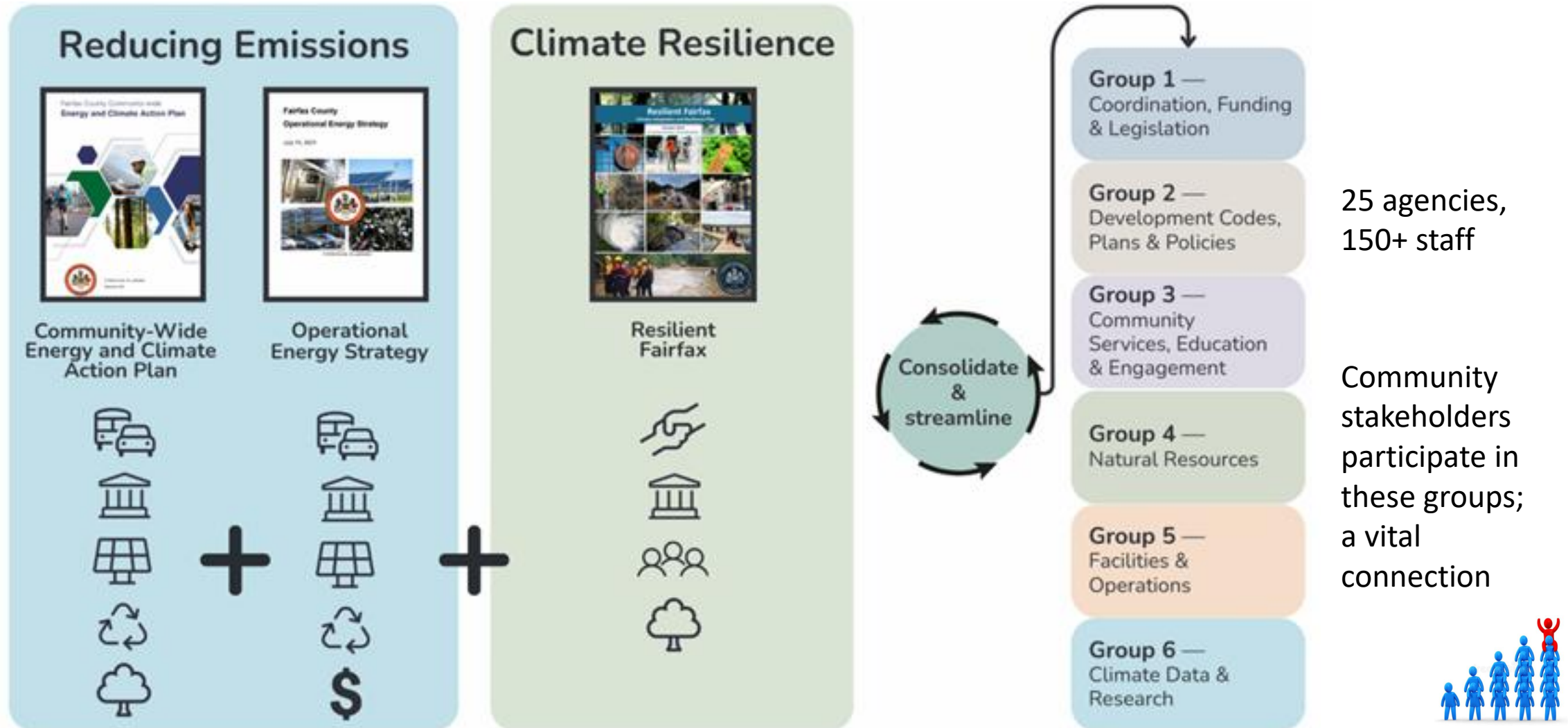
# Highlights from Fairfax County

- Three complementary climate action plans:
  - Operational Energy Strategy (2021)
  - Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (2021)
  - Resilient Fairfax (2022)
- Implementation of those plans
  - Multiple award-winning deep retrofits + renewables at County facilities (leading by example)
  - Multiple programs serving the community
  - Attention to resilience through programming addressing stormwater, extreme heat, and resilient trees.



# Highlights from Fairfax County

*Interagency Climate Action Groups  
Vital to our success with programs*



# Highlights from Fairfax County



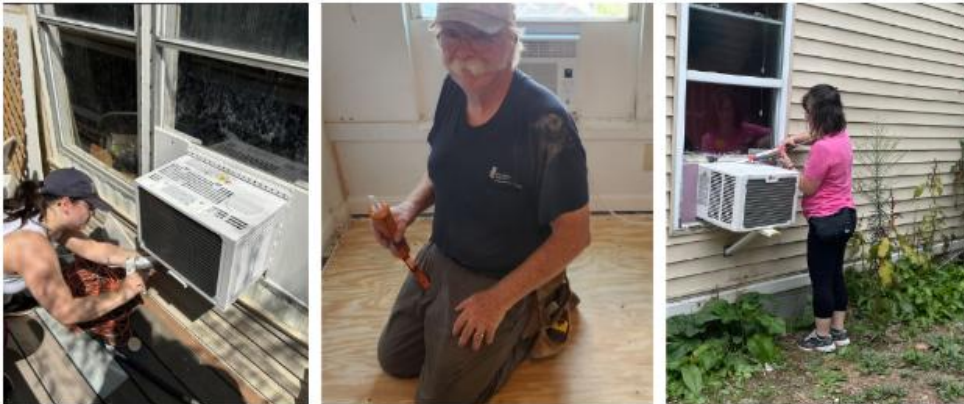
*Multiple award-winning deep retrofits + renewables at County facilities*

*Photo of Fairfax County Redevelopment & Housing Authority, courtesy CMTA Inc.*

*Multiple programs serving the community with carbon mitigation*



# Highlights from Fairfax County



# Highlights from Fairfax County

Milestone events like the ribbon-cutting for the 5 MW<sub>AC</sub> solar on our landfill are the result of multiple agencies working for *years* to overcome obstacles, perform due diligence, and complete negotiations.

[OEEC 2025 Annual Report](#)



# Unfinished Business

- Battery energy storage at county facilities for resilience, and in the community for use as a *virtual power plant* to improve affordability.
- Large off-site renewable electricity project(s) for county operations
- Fill gaps in EV infrastructure (geography) for equitable use of electric vehicles.
- Build deeper relationships and partnerships with data centers and their clients for meaningful deployment of clean energy throughout the community.



Amazon Arlington Solar Farm Virginia, Pittsylvania County

# Lessons Learned

- Kermit was right. As much as (some) elected officials and (some) advocates like to think so, *it ain't easy* to make change.
- Keep human interests foremost. Abstract notions of carbon reduction have limited utility.
- Elevate climate resilience. The climate is changing and the reckoning is here.
- Localities have limited influence over the cause of climate change, but localities are well-positioned to help protect constituents from the impacts.

