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Fresno tapped to join federal program to speed up zero-energy practices

U.S. Energy Department announces local partnerships for its Better Buildings Accelerator program to develop zero-energy for more sustainable communities

FRESNO (Nov. 16) – The City of Fresno’s Energy Opportunity Zone was named one of five partners to join the federal effort to cut energy waste in our country’s buildings and facilities. The new local partnerships are part of the Better Buildings Zero Energy Districts Accelerator, a national initiative by the U.S. Department of Energy and the National League of Cities to move the building market toward adopting sustainable practices to help districts achieve zero energy use in buildings.

“The Local Government Commission is excited to be chosen as one of five projects to participate in the Department of Energy Zero Energy District Accelerator program. This is an important step towards reaching California’s climate goals and driving innovation and economic development in the City of Fresno,” said the Local Government Commission’s Executive Director, Kate Meis.

“Zero Energy Districts” are comprised of multi-purpose energy-efficient buildings, where the annual energy delivered to them is less than or equal to the renewable energy generated on-site. Each district in the program will receive technical resources and planning assistance, and work with the Department of Energy to identify best practices and address market barriers to implement zero-energy strategies and document proven solutions for industry-wide replication.

The Energy Opportunity Zone is part of Energize Fresno, a collaborative program between the City of Fresno, the Local Government Commission, Fresno Metro Ministry, CalSTART and Tierra Resource Consultants. Launched with a \$1.5 million state grant, Energize Fresno will develop a blueprint for an “Energy Opportunity Zone” along the Blackstone Corridor and Downtown. Over the next year-and-a-half, it will identify projects that deliver significant resource savings and attract more investment into the community, and develop a tool that streamlines the project-funding matching process to accelerate action.

As part of the program, Fresno’s Energy Opportunity Zone will implement a detailed master energy plan, business and governance model within three years.

“Developers, planners, building owners, and others are helping make our communities more efficient – saving money and reducing pollution,” said Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency Kathleen Hogan. “By committing to zero energy as part of their master planning processes, these communities will create a road map for others to follow.”

By 2030, 60% of the world’s buildings will be new or rehabilitated construction, creating a significant opportunity to develop communities that are more sustainable and use less energy. Zero Energy Districts are a cost-effective and productive way to design and build energy-efficient buildings, which will offset district wide energy use by aggregating renewable-energy sources to power its buildings.

“Cities are making major strides in transforming how modern communities will power buildings, transportation networks, and households, and the dream of zero energy development could be closer than most people realize,” said Cooper Martin, Sustainable Cities program director at the National League of Cities.

The Better Buildings Initiative encourages public-private collaborations to share and replicate successful strategies with the goal of making commercial, public, industrial and residential buildings 20% more energy efficient over the next decade. This reduction can help save billions of dollars on energy bills, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and create thousands of jobs.

The other local partners in the Better Buildings Zero Energy Districts Accelerator will include:

- Denver, CO – National Western Center Project and Sun Valley Ecodistrict
- Huntington Beach, CA – Advanced Energy Communities
- St. Paul, MN – Ford Twin Cities Assembly Plant Redevelopment Project
- Buffalo, NY – Western New York Manufacturing ZNE District

Read more about the Better Buildings Initiative: <https://betterbuildingsinitiative.energy.gov/accelerators/zero-energy-district>

For more information about EPIC and the Fresno Energy Opportunity Zone: lgc.org/energize-fresno

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