

The EMPOWER project in Alachua County

Presentation to Board of County
Commissioners

Alachua County Florida

September 13, 2022



 NAACP ALACHUA COUNTY

Transitioning to 100% Clean Energy

A Countywide Discussion

SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 25
9:00-1:00 PM ET

Bring your favorite Lunch!

Register:
<https://tinyurl.com/CleanEnergyAlachua>

Topics of Discussion  Clean Energy, Weatherization, Food Systems, and Equity

PARTNERS

Siembra Farms
Greater Duval Neighborhood Association
Ayoka Gifts of Montecocha
Racial Justice Committee of UCG
Cultural Arts Coalition
Hall Chapel United Methodist Church of Rochelle

SPEAKERS:
Denise Abdul-Rahman
Field Organizer, NAACP Environmental & Climate Justice
Marianne Schmink
Community Weatherization Coalition (CWC)
John H Nix
NAACP Alachua ECJ
Ennis Leon Jacobs, Jr., Esq.
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy

MODERATOR:
Jacques Werleigh
Florida Field Organizer, NAACP ECJ

For more details, contact us: naacpecjcgmv@gmail.com

The EMPOWER program came out of a 2021 County-Wide Forum on Transitioning Towards 100% Clean Energy, sponsored by the Alachua County NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Committee (ECJC).



The DOE Communities LEAP (**Local Energy Action Program**) Pilot aims to facilitate sustained community-wide economic and environmental benefits primarily through DOE's clean energy deployment work. This opportunity is specifically open to low-income, energy-burdened communities that are also experiencing either direct environmental justice impacts, or direct economic impacts from a shift away from historical reliance on fossil fuels. Under the Communities LEAP Pilot, DOE will provide supportive services valued at up to \$16M for community-driven clean energy transitions.

Multi-stakeholder team:

- NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Committee (ECJC);
- Alachua County (County);
- City of Gainesville-Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU); Gainesville Community Reinvestment Area (GCRA) and Economic Development and Innovation Department;
- Community Weatherization Coalition/Rebuilding Together North Central Florida (CWC/RTNCF).



US Dept of Energy Communities LEAP

The team was selected – one of only 24 US communities and the only one in Florida -- for a technical assistance grant from the US Department of Energy to support community-driven action plans to increase energy resilience, lower utility costs and energy burdens, and provide long-term jobs and economic opportunities in Alachua County



<https://www.energy.gov/communitiesLEAP/leap-communities>

The selected communities will work over a period of 12-18 months with DOE, its national labs and other experts, government and non-governmental partners, community-based organizations, and utilities, as well as environmental, economic development, and equity organizations to develop roadmaps for an equitable pathway to 100% renewable energy, with a focus on marginalized communities that are experiencing economic challenges.



Project EMPOWER

Project EMPOWER will build on community goals for 100% renewable energy with a focus on marginalized communities within the Gainesville, Florida Metropolitan Area that are experiencing economic challenges.

With supportive technical assistance, the Project EMPOWER team will work to ensure the County's most vulnerable communities participate in and benefit from the transition to clean energy, with an explicit focus on reducing inequitable energy burdens and increasing utility resilience in low-income neighborhoods that are racial and ethnically diverse.

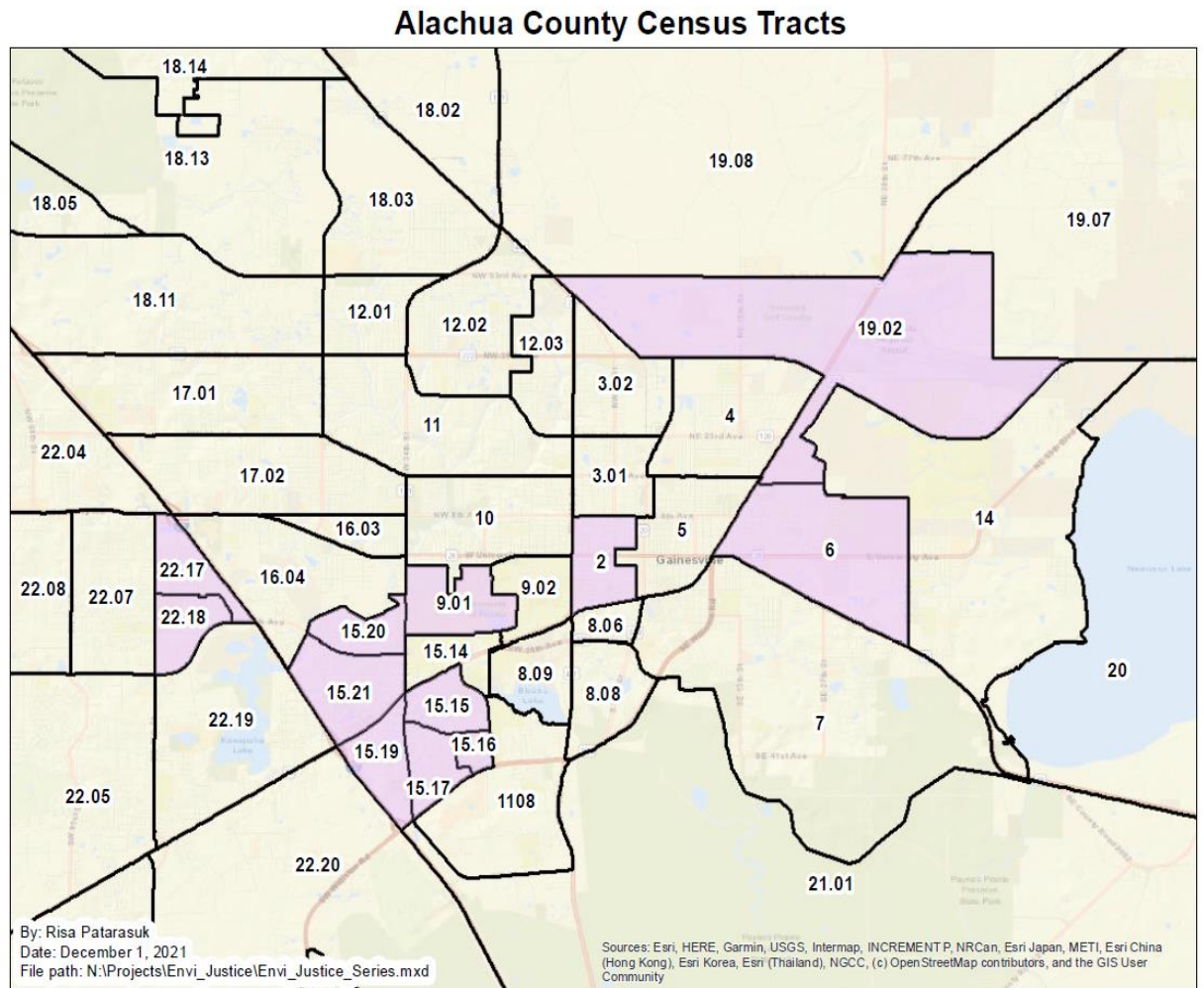
Statement of Community's Objectives/Commitment to a Clean-Energy Economic Development Transition

Project EMPOWER requires technical assistance that synergizes our current efforts and moves Alachua County forward to launch a clean energy-related economic development transition. Our community has committed to a clean energy transition. Most notably, Alachua County has a declared goal to be 100% renewable energy powered by 2030 (Alachua County Board of County Commissioners), and our public utility goal is for 2045 (Gainesville Regional Utilities). We seek technical assistance to meet these goals with an explicit focus on equity by reducing inequitable energy burdens while increasing utility resilience in low-income neighborhoods that are racial and ethnically diverse. Ideally, this would be through a combination of pathways to renewable energy planning and development, energy-efficient buildings and beneficial electrification planning and investment, and the potential for community resilience microgrids. We have local funding sources that can match other resources to move pilot projects to full-scale development.

Explore the potential to develop programs to :

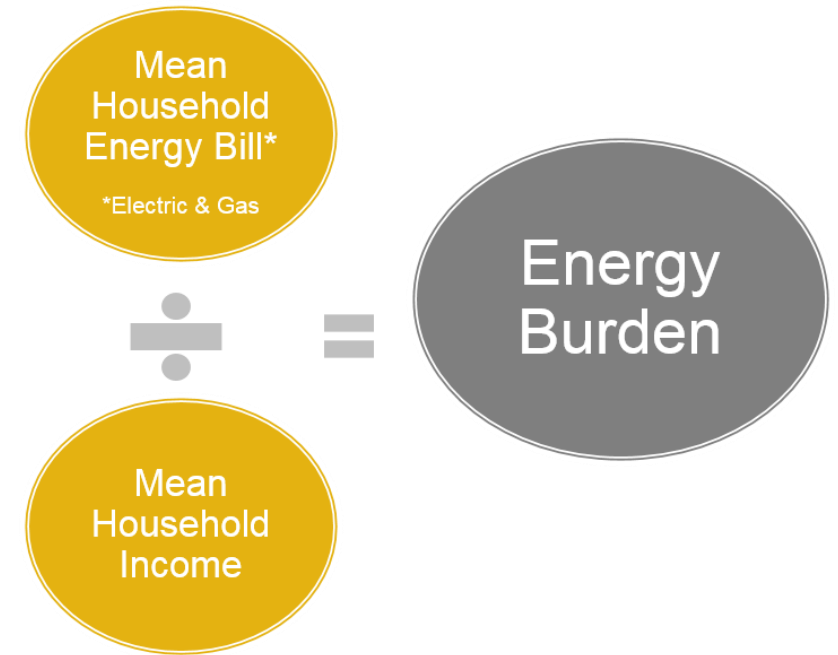
1. Reduce energy bills for residents through expanded energy efficiency and weatherization services.
2. Develop a pathway to electrify current fossil fuel energy consumption for space and water heating systems.
3. Develop solar projects in eligible low-income neighborhoods in Alachua County by installing rooftop solar panels with energy storage backup on community centers, schools, multi-family residences, and nearby single-family homes.
4. Potentially link these solar arrays in a microgrid for resilience.
5. Incorporate youth internships as a workforce development strategy in the energy efficiency and construction process.

DOE environmental justice communities as indicated by low income, high or severe energy burden, high exposure to environmental hazards, pollution, and toxicity.



Focus on:

1. Springhill
2. Greater Duval
3. SWAG



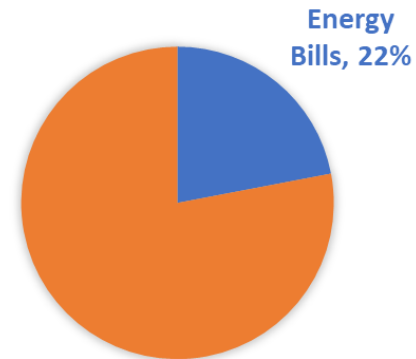
- Larger percentages of historically marginalized populations and communities of color
- Disproportionate lack of solar energy participation.
- Inefficient and older homes
- Twice as likely to have a utility disconnect
- Pockets of food insecurity and related health disparities



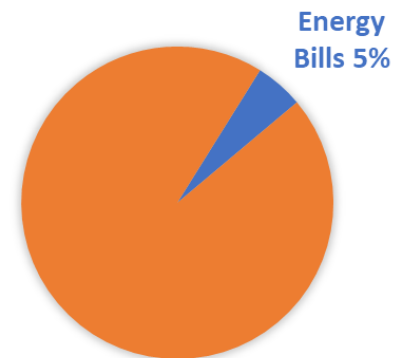
Energy Inequity

% of Annual Income on Energy Bills in Alachua Co.

LOW-INCOME HOMES



WHOLE POPULATION



Low-income residents are more likely to live in rental housing or older, less efficient housing stock.

High utility bills (\$300-500/month) can amount to 70-80% of estimated minimum housing costs (\$600-700) for lowest income Alachua County homes

Throughout 2022 and 2023, Project EMPOWER will engage with neighborhood groups, nonprofits, and local government to build relationships and learn together. Through exchange of information with residents, we will educate ourselves about energy issues, and hear from residents about which problems they want us to address and the solutions they want us to pursue to help income-challenged families, and to develop an equitable transition to renewable energy and climate resilience.



While the project does not provide any funding, it will position our community to develop sound plans that will be eligible for future funding for community-focused programs. In the meantime, Project EMPOWER can help people reduce their energy costs through existing energy efficiency services of the CWC/RTNCF and GRU LEEP programs.

