



# Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy

[www.SHAREAlbany.org](http://www.SHAREAlbany.org)

---

## Written Testimony to The Environmental Conservation and The General Services Budget Hearings

Executive Budget  
Capital Project Appropriations for 2020 – 2021

The Honorable Liz Krueger, Chair, Senate Finance Committee and  
The Honorable Helene Weinstein, Chair, Assembly Ways and Means Committee

*Submitted by:*

*The Honorable Merton Simpson, Albany County Legislator and Ruth Foster*

*Co-Chairs of the Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy*

-----

The Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy (SHARE) is pleased to have the opportunity to submit this testimony to the Joint Budget Hearing for the Environment and the Joint Budget Hearing for General Services.

SHARE is a coalition of community and renewable energy organizations -- local and statewide -- that joined together to oppose the Sheridan Hollow Microgrid Project when it was proposed in 2017. The project, proposed by the New York Power Authority (NYPA) to install gas-fired turbines at facilities owned and operated by the Office of General Services (OGS) on Sheridan Avenue to provide heating, cooling and electricity to the Capitol and Empire State Plaza (ESP) has been rejected. We opposed the original project as poorly conceived, both on environmental justice and climate grounds.

SHARE is pleased that the proposal for new fracked gas turbines in Sheridan Hollow has been scrapped and that NYPA is currently initiating several measures to reduce the greenhouse gas footprint of the ESP, using the funds initially intended for the Sheridan Hollow Microgrid Project.

Although the process of transforming the Capitol and ESP to renewable energy has begun, much more needs to be done. Current renewable projects for the ESP focus mostly on conservation and transiting some of the cooling from steam to electric generation. However, there is still no plan to convert the heating systems for the plaza to renewables.

***We therefore propose that the 2020-2021 NY State budget should include \$600,000 for a study to convert the Empire State Plaza Complex to renewable energy, with the goal of eliminating steam production in Sheridan Hollow and closing the Sheridan Avenue Steam Plant. The study should emphasize geothermal and building efficiency measures and involve experts with***

*demonstrated experience in geothermal and thermal load-share technology for large-scale systems.*

Our proposal is based on the grounds discussed below.

First, although the proposed powerplant was rejected, the Sheridan Avenue Steam Plant continues to burn fossil fuels to heat and cool the Capitol and ESP. This continues to subject the surrounding Sheridan Hollow and Arbor Hill neighborhoods, both consisting predominantly of low-income, people of color residents, to continued pollution, violating environmental justice principles. The Sheridan Ave Steam Plant (SASP) has burdened the community since 1911, and the notorious ANSWERS trash to steam plant released heavy metals and other toxic chemicals into the surrounding community throughout the 1980s and 1990s. These neighborhoods have had high rates of health problems including asthma and cancer. Continued operation of the SASP is contrary to DEC's Environmental Justice Policy (DEC Commissioner Policy 29), which provides that:

*No group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies.*

Second, the SASP continues New York's dependence on fossil fuels in contradiction to the new Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act that calls for 40% reduction in greenhouse gases in just 10 years. New York has committed to transition to a renewable energy economy and should make the ESP a showcase for the rest of the state and the country. To meet these aggressive climate goals we must, not only stop new fossil fuel infrastructure, we must begin the process of shutting down existing fossil fuel facilities.

The states of Oklahoma and Colorado presently heat and cool their state capitol buildings with geothermal energy and so does St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Stanford University recently replaced its co-generation fossil fuel power plant in favor of a heat sharing system with an energy savings of over 60%. A renewable energy solution incorporating geothermal technology for the ESP and would showcase New York as a climate leader and serve as a model for the nation.

Finally, renewable options are available now. If we are to transition our state to renewable energy we must teach our workforce and state agencies how it is done. NYPA can use the ESP as a training center for future projects. Nationally known geothermal expert Jay Egg has reviewed the currently proposed project and has demonstrated, with a team of experts involved in the design and development of large-scale projects, that geothermal and thermal load sharing are thoroughly viable options for heating and cooling the ESP. In light of this information, the Legislature should require a complete examination of renewable alternatives. A study to convert the ESP is the next step in transforming the ESP and the Capitol and our state.

**In summary, SHARE recommends that funds be allocated in the FY 2020 -21 budget to require a study on renewable energy alternatives for the ESP and Capitol. This will lessen fossil fuel use and pollution in Sheridan Hollow, helping the community and helping New York meet its new climate goals.**