

In the face of a mounting carbon crisis and the lack of action by commercial utility companies to adopt greener energy solutions, communities across the nation are opting to take hold of the power—literally!—and switch to more local, less polluting energy sources.

Reporting from Sonoma County, California on Tuesday, *LA Times* reporter Evan Halper [highlights](#) this growing trend known as Community Choice Aggregation. Established by law in six states thus far, including California, CCA allows communities to pool their energy load and then direct the purchase of their energy supply while working in partnership with existing utilities, who then deliver the power.

Established by law in six states thus far, CCA is an energy supply model that works in partnership with the region's existing utility which continues to deliver power, maintain the grid, and provide customer service and billing

"If you are an environmentally focused community, this is something big you can do," Shawn Marshall, executive director of the San Francisco Bay Area-based [Local Energy Aggregation Network \(LEAN\)](#), told Halper.

Along with Sonoma County, which recently launched the Sonoma Clean Power initiative sourcing energy at competitive rates from local geothermal plant, communities from coastal Massachusetts, Cincinnati, Chicago and Boulder, Colo. are all organizing alternative utility providers that curate and source their own local power supply.

Halper writes:

In Boulder, local officials and advocates are so dissatisfied with the mix of energy offered by their utility that they are attempting what amounts to a hostile takeover. With voter approval, the city is moving to use eminent domain to acquire as much as \$214 million worth of Xcel Energy Inc.'s transmission lines and substations.

In Chicago, city officials last year negotiated a deal that cut coal out of the mix of energy that the city buys on behalf of residents. The contract would reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions 16%, Mayor Rahm Emanuel said at the time.

On Cape Cod, in Massachusetts, officials are using their control of energy contracts to fund a network of solar farms that might not have fit within the business model of a conventional utility.

Many of these local initiatives boast rates competitive to those from investor-owned utilities because they are not profit-driven and can negotiate for customers as a group.

For other localities looking to usurp the private energy companies which, until now, have run a seeming monopoly over regional power supply, John Farrell, who directs the Democratic Energy program at [Institute for Local Self Reliance](#) says that cities should take advantage of expiring city franchise agreements to reassess their energy future.

"Think about the poles and wires running through a city neighborhood or gas pipelines running under streets, all of it public property and right-of-way," Farrell [wrote](#) Tuesday at *Clean Technica*.