

SOLSMART APPLICATION



There are three levels of SolSmart designation for communities – below are the requirements for each:

BRONZE:

- Provide a Solar Statement outlining your community's solar goals, and commit to tracking key metrics such as number and capacity of installed Photovoltaic (PV) systems.
- Fulfill required actions in both of the Foundational Categories:
 - Permitting
 - Planning, Zoning, and Development Regulations
- Earn at least 20 points in each of the two Foundational Categories (above).
- Earn a total of 20 points from actions across the six Special Focus Categories: Inspection; Construction Codes; Solar Rights; Utility Engagement; Community Engagement; and Market Development and Finance.

Note: Actions in any of the Special Focus Categories count toward the 20-point target.

- *Note: Early Adopter communities will receive 10 extra points applied toward a category of their choice.*

SILVER:

- Fulfill the requirements to become a SolSmart Bronze Community.
- Complete the two Silver-required actions in the Planning, Zoning, and Development Regulations and Inspection categories.
- Earn 100 points overall from actions taken in any combination of categories.

GOLD:

- Fulfill the requirements to become a SolSmart Silver Community.
- Complete the Gold-required action in Permitting.
- Earn 200 points overall from actions taken in any combination of categories.

SPECIAL AWARDS:

- Communities that earn 60% of the points in a given category are eligible for special recognition.

Community Data

Community applying:

State:

Community website:

Population:

Other solar awards/recognition earned by community:

kW of installed solar or number of installations:

Contact Information

Local contact:

Contact title:

Organization:

Department:

Contact email:

Contact phone:



I am authorized to apply for and seek recognition for my community.

I understand that community data submitted through this application will be shared online.

STEP 1: SOLAR STATEMENT

PR-1: Solar Statement – Required for Designation

Our Solar Statement: *(Cut and paste your Solar Statement in the box below)*

Communities interested in pursuing SolSmart designation must indicate their commitment to supporting solar development in their community. These letters should include:

- A commitment to participate in the SolSmart designation process
- A statement of solar goals, areas of focus or community priorities (e.g. Encouraging solar PV development on vacant lots or supporting non-profit led initiatives)
- Past achievements or programs related to solar PV and/or renewable energy
- Commitment to tracking metrics related to solar PV and/or provide benchmark of available solar metrics (i.e. number of installed municipal systems or growth in residential installations)
- A commitment of staff time and resources to improve the local environment for solar PV

These letters do not need to be more than a page in length. Examples are included below from communities that participated in SolSmart's Early Adopter program. The SolSmart team can assist communities in prioritizing and establishing goals. Resources and Examples: [Burlington, Vermont](#), and [Brownsville, Texas](#)

Documentation: *(Please share a link to a public webpage where your Solar Statement is displayed or attach it as a document.)*

STEP 2: FOUNDATIONAL CATEGORIES: PERMITTING AND PLANNING, ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT

To earn SolSmart Bronze designation, communities must:

- Complete the required actions in both Foundational Categories – i.e., Permitting and Planning, Zoning and Development Regulations.
- Earn at least 20 points in each of the Foundational Categories.

Permitting

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
P-1: Create and make available an online checklist detailing the steps of your community's solar PV permitting process (Required).	Req'd	☐	Share link:
P-2: Provide a streamlined permitting pathway for small solar PV systems with turn-around time of no more than 3 days (Required for Gold).	20 Req'd for Gold	☐	Share link:
P-3: Distinguish between systems qualifying for streamlined or standard review.	5	☐	Share link:
P-4: Require no more than one application form for a residential rooftop solar PV project.	5	☐	Share link:
P-5a: Conduct a review of solar permit fees for residential and commercial solar PV.	5	☐	Share link:
 Earn additional points: P-5b: Revise or demonstrate that permit fees reflect national best practices (e.g. \$400 or less for residential, and based on cost-recovery for commercial).	5	☐	Share link:
P-6: Review permitting process for efficiency improvements and reduce processing time to 10 days or fewer.	10	☐	Share link:
P-7: Adopt a standard solar PV permit form aligned with best practices (e.g. Solar ABCs).	10	☐	Share link:
P-8: Train permitting staff on best practices for permitting solar PV and/or solar and storage systems. Training must have occurred within the past five years.	10	☐	Share link:
P-9: Train fire and safety staff on solar PV. Training must have occurred within the past five years.	10	☐	Share link:
P-10: Develop a regular communication schedule to solicit recommendations from the solar installer community regarding procedural changes.	10	☐	Share link:
P-11: Offer an online process for permitting submission and approval.	20	☐	Share link:
P-12: Make permit data open and accessible to other departments.	20	☐	Share link:
Total Points: Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			

Planning, Zoning and Development Regulations

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
PZD-1a: Review zoning requirements and identify restrictions that intentionally or unintentionally prohibit solar PV development. Compile findings in a memo. (Required). Examples of restrictions to look for include, but are not limited to, height restrictions, set-back requirements, requiring a conditional use permit, and aesthetic requirements.	Req'd	☐	Share link:
 Earn additional points: PZD-1b: Formally present PZD-1a memo findings to planning commission, or relevant zoning body.	5	☐	Share link:
 Earn additional points: PZD-1c: Draft proposed language for changes to zoning code based on PZD-1a memo. Involve planners and/or local zoning experts in the creation of the draft language.	5	☐	Share link:
PZD-2: Allow accessory use solar PV by right in all major zones. (Required for Silver and Gold).	20 Req'd for Silver and Gold	☐	Share link:
PZD-3a: Review existing planning documents and identify new opportunities (not already included) to integrate solar PV into planning goals.	5	☐	Share link:
 Earn additional points: PZD-3b: In consultation with planners and other staff, provide draft language on solar PV, which will be proposed for inclusion in existing or future plans. Provide a timeline for when the language will be considered for incorporation into plan.	5	☐	Share link:
PZD-4: Provide clear guidance for solar PV in historic and special-use districts.	10	☐	Share link:
PZD-5: Integrate solar PV and/or shared solar into relevant local plans (e.g. energy plan, climate plan, comprehensive plan), including quantifiable metrics or specific actions.	10	☐	Share link:
PZD-6: Include considerations for active and passive solar in development regulations (e.g. providing guidance for orientation of structures in subdivision regulations).	10	☐	Share link:
PZD-7: Provide development incentives for solar PV within the subdivision or zoning process, or as part of other development incentives (e.g., density or height bonuses and other incentives for buildings that plan to install solar PV).	20	☐	Share link:
PZD-8: Encourage or incentivize solar PV development on parking lots, vacant lots, landfills, buffer lands around uses with nuisances (e.g. refineries, wastewater plants), brownfields or formerly contaminated lands, airport safety zones (with FAA approval), and non-building structures.	20	☐	Share link:
PZD-9: Train planning staff on best practices in planning and zoning for solar PV. Training must have occurred within the past five years.	10	☐	Share link:

Planning, Zoning and Development Regulations Cont.

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
PZD-10: Ensure that the zoning ordinance...			
 PZD-10a ...Clarifies regulations for small ground-mounted solar PV.	5	☐	Share link:
 PZD-10b ...Establishes a clear regulatory pathway for primary use solar PV (for example through a special use permit or through inclusion among allowed conditional uses).	5	☐	Share link:
 PZD-10c ...Exempts rooftop solar PV from certain restrictions on accessory uses (e.g. height limits, rooftop equipment screening requirements, or other restrictions).	5	☐	Share link:
 PZD-10d ...Exempts small ground-mounted solar PV from certain restrictions on accessory uses (e.g. setbacks, coverage or impervious surface calculations, or other restrictions).	5	☐	Share link:
PZD-11: Create and provide online a handout for developers that provides an overview of what development regulations allow under which conditions (e.g. types and sizes of solar PV arrays permitted, the processes required, and other relevant information, such as design standards and policy outside of the zoning language).	5	☐	Share link:
Total Points: Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			

STEP 3: SPECIAL FOCUS CATEGORIES

To earn SolSmart Bronze designation, communities must:

- Earn 20 points (total) from actions taken across the 6 Special Focus Categories: Inspection; Construction Codes; Solar Rights; Utility Engagement; Community Engagement; or Market Development and Finance. Any action in any Special Focus Category counts toward the goal of earning 20 points.

Special Focus: **Inspection**

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
I-1: Provide cross-training of inspection and permitting staff on solar PV via in-person or online resources. Training must have occurred within the past five years. (Required for Silver and Gold).	20 Req'd for Silver and Gold	☐	Share link:
I-2: Require no more than two inspections for accessory-use solar PV.	10	☐	Share link:
I-3: Offer inspection appointment times in lieu of appointment windows.	10	☐	Share link:
I-4: Make inspection requirements for solar PV available online.	10	☐	Share link:
I-5: Have a fixed time frame between inspection requests and scheduling of inspections of no more than 10 days.	10	☐	Share link:
I-6: Provide an online process for scheduling and responding to inspection requests.	20	☐	Share link:
Total Points: Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			

Special Focus: **Construction Codes**

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
CC-1a: Develop and provide Solar Ready Construction Guidelines for developers to enable lower cost installation of future solar PV installations on buildings within the permitting office and online.	10	☐	Share link:
 Earn additional points: CC-1b: Include guidance for solar PV on parking lots and other types of non-traditional structures.	10	☐	Share link:
CC-2: Require or incentivize new construction to be solar ready to complete future installations at lower cost.	10	☐	Share link:
CC-3: Offer design guidelines for solar PV aligned with National Electrical Code and fire code.	20	☐	Share link:
CC-4: Adopt the most recent codes from the International Code Council. Appendix U from the 2015 IRC regarding solar ready construction must be adopted to receive credit.	20	☐	Share link:
Total Points: Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			

Special Focus: Solar Rights

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
SR-1: Conduct review of state policies related to protecting rights of property owners to install solar and solar system owners' right to sunlight on their property. Make this information available to residents.	5	☐	Share link:
SR-2: Provide consumer protection resources on solar PV which help consumers make informed solar PV purchasing decisions.	5	☐	Share link:
SR-3: Develop local process to enable solar rights through a solar access ordinance.	10	☐	Share link:
SR-4: Offer procedure for recording solar easements for property owners.	10	☐	Share link:
SR-5a: Engage homeowners and neighborhood associations and discourage unnecessarily restrictive requirements for solar PV through meetings with leadership.	10	☐	Share link:
 Earn additional points: SR-5b: Encourage subdivisions to consider shared solar allowances.	5	☐	Share link:
 Earn additional points: SR-5c: Work with homeowners associations to develop appropriate guideline documents for solar PV.	5	☐	Share link:
Total Points: Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			

Special Focus: Utility Engagement

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
U-1: Review best practices for integrating interconnection with electrical inspections and share best practices with staff.	5	☐	Share link:
U-2: Discuss community or shared solar PV programs with the local utility.	10	☐	Share link:
U-3a: Engage and communicate with the utility on community goals for solar PV, net metering, and interconnection processes.	10	☐	Share link:
 Earn additional points: U-3b: Coordinate with regional organizations or other local governments to engage utilities.	5	☐	Share link:
U-4: Coordinate utility and city inspections for solar PV, reducing the total number of inspections needed.	20	☐	Share link:
U-5: Launch and support a utility-provided community solar program.	20	☐	Share link:
Total Points: Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			

Special Focus: Community Engagement

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
CE-1: Convene an active energy task force or solar working group that meets at least three times per year.	10	☐	Share link:
CE-2: Create a solar landing page on local government's website with information on the community's solar goals and local resources for solar development.	10	☐	Share link:
CE-3: Encourage solar PV on non-profit or community facilities through fee waivers, technical assistance, or other support.	10	☐	Share link:
CE-4a: Support or host a community-group purchase program (e.g., Solarize).	20	☐	Share link:
 Earn additional points: CE-4b: Design program or create financing support options to encourage low-to-moderate income participation in community solar initiatives.	10	☐	Share link:
CE-5a: Host a solar workshop open to the general public and/or local government staff explaining solar PV opportunities and policies.	5	☐	Share link:
CE-5b: Create and distribute educational materials at relevant community events and through local government channels.	5	☐	Share link:
CE-5c: Establish partnerships with local non-profits or organizations on solar PV with multi-year goal or planned initiatives.	5	☐	Share link:
CE-5d: Publicly encourage community solar projects or solar PV projects on community facilities.	5	☐	Share link:
CE-5e: Engage the community in robust, ongoing discussion around climate, energy, or sustainability plans.	5	☐	Share link:
CE-6: Create and publish job training and placement opportunities for solar in coordination with local community colleges.	20	☐	Share link:
CE-7: Conduct feasibility analysis for solar PV on brownfields, landfills, formerly contaminated lands and/or other under-utilized properties.	10	☐	Share link:
CE-8: Install or lease land for solar PV development on brownfields, landfills, formerly contaminated lands and/or other under-utilized properties.	20	☐	Share link:
CE-9: Engage with regional organizations on advancing solar PV policies in the region including, but not limited to, unified permitting processes and group procurement opportunities.	20	☐	Share link:
CE-10: Demonstrate activity in state-level conversations regarding solar PV.	20	☐	Share link:
CE-11: Create and/or share an interactive solar map for your community.	20	☐	Share link:
Total Points: Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			

Special Focus: Market Development and Finance

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
MDF-1: Provide resources on active solar installers and/or local incentives for solar PV.	5	☐	Share link:
MDF-2: Make solar PV metrics publicly available.	5	☐	Share link:
MDF-3: Provide information to consumers about different solar PV financing options, including commercial options, such as Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing.	5	☐	Share link:
MDF-4: Conduct feasibility analysis for solar PV installations on public facilities.	10	☐	Share link:
MDF-5: Install solar PV on local facilities.	20	☐	Share link:
MDF-6a: If applicable, provide PACE financing in your community.	10	☐	Share link:
 Earn additional points: MDF-6b: Demonstrate that PACE financing has been used to finance solar PV in your community.	10	☐	Share link:
MDF-7: Provide local incentives (i.e. permit fee waivers or rebates) or locally-enabled finance (e.g., a revolving loan fund) for solar PV.	20	☐	Share link:
MDF-8: Engage local banks, credit unions, foundations and/or community funds about lending for solar PV projects through in-person meetings, discussions, and/or workshops.	20	☐	Share link:
MDF-9: Demonstrate that the community's installed per capita capacity is above top 20% of states (>99 watts/person).	20	☐	Share link:
MDF-10: Integrate solar PV with other distributed or emerging technologies such as storage, combined heat and power systems or electric vehicles in at least one installed or proposed project.	20	☐	Share link:
MDF-11: Develop feasibility analysis or planning for resilient solar technologies for critical facilities and emergency planning such as solar and storage.	20	☐	Share link:
Total Points: Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			

INNOVATIVE ACTIONS

The actions identified in the categories above represent many of the most common and impactful efforts communities are taking to reduce soft costs and make going solar easier and more affordable for residents. However, we know that communities across the country are developing innovative ways to help reduce soft costs. If your community has taken action to reduce soft costs that wasn't captured in the above application, please share it with us in the table below. Innovative actions will be reviewed by a team of solar experts and each action may be worth up to 20 points.

Innovative Actions

Category	Action(s)	Documentation
Permitting		Share link:
Planning, Zoning and Development Regulations		Share link:
Inspection		Share link:
Construction Codes		Share link:
Solar Rights		Share link:
Utility Engagement		Share link:
Community Engagement		Share link:
Market Development and Finance		Share link:

Designation Checklist

Step
Completed

STEP 1: SOLAR STATEMENT

Solar Statement

Statement Submitted

☐

STEP 2: FOUNDATIONAL CATEGORIES

Permitting

Required Action(s)

Points:
20+ required for Bronze

☐

Planning, Zoning, & Development
Regulations

Required Action(s)

Points:
20+ required for Bronze

☐

STEP 3: SPECIAL FOCUS CATEGORY POINTS

Inspection

Points:

☐

Construction Codes

Points:

☐

Solar Rights

Points:

☐

Utility Engagement

Points:

☐

Community Engagement

Points:

☐

Market Development and Finance

Points:

☐

Special Focus Points
Must be 20 or greater for Bronze

TOTAL POINTS including foundational
Must be at least 100 for Silver and 200 for Gold