BUILDING A LOCAL SOLAR MARKET

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Led by the MREA, Grow Solar initiatives span multiple Midwestern states

We’ve been able to do this work thanks to a Department of Energy Sunshot initiative grant.
Learning Objective

Attendees will gain an understanding of a variety of steps and strategies to grow the solar market in their community.
Agenda

• Permitting, Planning, and Zoning
• Financing programs for solar
• Training Inspectors
• Municipal projects
• Community programs
Solar PV Installations To Date

Now over 27.4 GW of solar PV installed in US

Enough to power over 5.4 million homes

Solar represented 29.4% of all new electric generating capacity brought on-line in the U.S. in 2015, more than natural gas!

SEIA Solar Market Insight Report
Permitting, Planning, and Zoning

• Solar Rights legislation
• “We don’t have anything prohibitive to solar”
• Removing regulatory barriers and complexity does not, by itself, spur market activity.
• Grow Solar can review your documents.
Expedited Permitting case study

• Began with stakeholder meeting (City staff, inspectors, utility reps, local installers, solar industry professionals)
• Specific eligibility requirements
• Worksheet for installers
• Saves money
• Saves time
• List of solar installations for Assessor
PPZ state toolkits at GrowSolar.org
Solar Financing

• Low-interest solar loans to city residents.
• The City of Milwaukee provided $100,000 in donated funds as a loan-loss reserve, and Summit Credit Union leveraged those funds to offer $2 million in low-interest solar loans.
• Since being established in 2010, the Milwaukee Shines Solar Financing Program has provided over 30 loans to Milwaukee residents and none have defaulted.
PACE Financing

- Cities set up special clean energy finance districts capable of issuing low-interest bonds.
- Participating home/business owners can use the bond money to pay for renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements.
- Pay the lien back through a long-term assessment on their property taxes.
- Spreads the cost of a new solar energy system out across a 20-year payment plan that is easily transferable to the next property owner.
Inspector Training

- Solar systems that aren’t code-compliant could present a risk to building occupants, system owners, the public, solar technicians, and other contractors.
- Inspectors unfamiliar with solar can approve improperly installed solar arrays, or can delay projects due to concerns.
- We have led a number of inspector trainings around the region and would love to help train your inspectors.
- Continuing Education Credits
Municipal Projects?

- Set an example
- Highly visible
- Start a conversation
- Demonstrate priorities
Community ‘Group Buy’ Programs to Advance Rooftop Solar
What is a group buy?

• Group Buys can add a lot of solar in a market in a short period of time.

• Aggregate demand for solar, usually in a small geographic area, achieving economy of scale.

• Lower the installers’ “soft costs” further by providing customer education en masse, leading to a higher conversion rate for solar leads.

• Everyone wins.
Guiding Principles

- Customers adopt solar when their neighbors or others in close proximity adopt solar.*
- The presence of affinity groups that advocate for solar lead to more installations in a given area.
- Discounts with deadlines help a greater number of people decide that “now is the time.”

Structuring Collective Action

- Grassroots Program
- Tiered Pricing
  - 50 kW | 100 kW | 150 kW
- More participants means lower pricing for all
Two Phases

Phase I: Planning (6-8 weeks)
1. Identify local partners and advisory team
2. Select installer(s)
3. Schedule outreach sessions
4. Develop brand

Phase II: Execution (16-20 weeks)
1. Deliver outreach sessions
2. Ongoing press and promotions
3. Document and promote progress
Roles

• Lead Organization
  (In our case, MREA)
• Jurisdiction
• Community
• Installer
Messaging

- Emphasis on the power of local people to make the program a success
- Regular press contact
- Participants to the front
Promotion

• Do:
  – Yard Signs
  – Posters, handbills, flyers
  – Emails from local networks/orgs

• Don’t:
  – Billboards
  – Commercials
Next Steps

• Attend the other sessions in this track
• Familiarize yourself with state and local incentives (dsireusa.org is a good place to start)
• Reach out to Grow Solar for help
• Optimize PPZ
• Set up local financing for solar
• Train Inspectors
• Pursue Municipal projects
• Launch Community programs
When there's a huge solar energy spill, it's just called a "nice day"

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