

Planning Best Practices				
<p>Background information and resource assessment – Plans include identification of community resources and background information that inform the process of defining the desired future outcomes. Recognizing local solar energy resources as a driver for development in the community helps integrate the resource into decision-making. The comprehensive plan is the foundational document, but communities can address solar development in other types of plans, including economic development plans, specific area plans, climate action plans and energy plans.</p>				
Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes	No	Comments
1. Does the community identify solar energy resources as a potentially valuable resource that can drive development in the community?	Plans– Background section, analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Has the community mapped the solar resource or otherwise identified the potential for solar development in the community?	Plans– Background section, analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Has the community identified potential conflicts between solar resources and other resources, such as the urban forest, historic resources, ag resources, or neighborhood design?	Plans– Background section, analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Goals and policies – Plans identify the desired future outcomes in the form of goals, policies, or objectives. Specifically identifying how solar development will benefit the community helps decision-makers define how solar resources and solar investment is integrated into the community and balanced with other resource development or protection.</p>				
Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes	No	Comments
1. Does the plan identify the economic benefits of solar development?	Plans – Vision, goals, or policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Does the plan address climate protection activities or goals?	Plans – Vision, goals, or policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Does the plan explicitly support renewable or alternative energy development?	Plans – Vision, goals, or policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Does the plan promote the general use of or development of local resources?	Plans – Vision, goals, or policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Does the plan support the general goal of using built infrastructure (water, sewer, electric and gas utilities, roads) more efficiently?	Plans – Vision, goals, or policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Does the community recognize the environmental benefits of solar development (GHG reduction, improved air quality, improved water quality)?	Plans – Vision, goals, or policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Development Regulation Best Practices			
<p>Solar uses - Solar development can occur as either an accessory use (rooftop or free-standing) or a principal use (solar garden or farm). Identify where solar uses are permitted or conditional. Solar accessory uses are typically permitted in any district where buildings are allowed. Principal uses are permitted or conditional in specific appropriate districts.</p>			
Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes No	Comments
1. Does the zoning ordinance specifically permit solar accessory uses?	Zoning – districts, use tables	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Does the zoning ordinance permit or make conditional solar as a principal use in any district?	Zoning – districts, use tables	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Height limits – Solar resources are sometimes limited to rooftop areas, and solar development needs to be above the roof (either a flat roof or above the peak of a pitched roof) in order to function. Identify whether solar development is an exception to height limits and the conditions, if any, that the community places on solar development that exceeds the height standard. Standard may be different for flat roof buildings than for pitched roof residential buildings.</p>			
Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes No	Comments
1. Does the zoning ordinance make height limit exceptions for building systems or equipment such as chimneys, architectural features, rooftop equipment, etc?	Zoning - General standards or districts	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Does the ordinance identify whether solar development constitutes an exception similar to other building system exceptions?	Zoning - Solar or general standards, districts	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Setbacks/Required yards – Solar resources are sometimes limited to areas on the lot that is part of a required setback or a required yard in which development is restricted. Identify whether solar development constitutes an allowed incursion and the conditions, if any, that the community places on such incursions.</p>			
Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes No	Comments
1. Does the ordinance allow incursions (decks, equipment, awnings) into setbacks or required yards?	Zoning - General standards	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Does the ordinance identify conditions or standards under which solar development can extend into setback or required yards?	Zoning - Solar or general standards	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Lot coverage – Solar resources may be located in yard areas rather than on rooftops. But free-standing solar accessory structures can be restricted due to lot coverage limits, impervious surface limits, or limits on the number of accessory structures per lot. Set standards that allow reasonable solar development in yard areas.</p>			
Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes No	Comments
1. Are accessory structures subject to lot coverage limitations or limits on the number of structures per lot?	Zoning - Districts, general standards, storm water standards	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

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Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes	No	Comments
2. Does the ordinance identify whether solar development is subject to coverage standards, and conditions under which the community will make exceptions?	Zoning - Solar standards, districts, general standards, storm water standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Does the community identify solar collectors as impervious surfaces?	Zoning - Solar standard, storm water standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Solar Rights – The concept of solar rights includes both a right to install a solar energy system and a right to retain access to direct sunlight over the life of the solar energy system. The combination of solar development zoning standards noted above should be constructed in a manner to clearly identify an “as-of-right” design for solar development. The as-of-right design will be different for residential and commercial installations, and for rooftop and free-standing installations. Contractors should be able to design a solar installation that is protected by development regulation. System owners should be able to protect long-term access to direct sunlight.

Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes	No	Comments
1. Has the community identified characteristics of solar installations that are “as-of-right” for residential and commercial districts?	Zoning - Solar standard, solar installation guide	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Has the community noted in ordinance that solar development standards are intended to guide and enable development rather than restrict development?	Zoning - Solar standard Solar rights ordinance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Do property owners within common interest communities have a right to install a solar energy system?	Subdivision or Zoning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Do property owners have a means to protect access to direct sunlight over time via a solar easement?	Zoning - Solar standard,	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Does the community, in its development regulation, consider the risk that new development poses to existing solar systems that are located on adjacent lots?	Zoning – Rezoning or variance standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Principal Use Standards – Solar farms/gardens are the principal use on the parcel rather than an accessory use. Solar farms and ground-mounted solar gardens have distinct characteristics as principal land uses. Solar farms create few nuisances for surrounding land uses but can have a significant visual impact, land coverage is intense but ground cover can be preserved, need no access to urban services but do need access to the electric transmission/distribution system, and opportunity costs can be high if sited inappropriately.

Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes	No	Comments
1. Does the community identify desired locations in its districts or via overlay for solar farm or garden development?	Zoning standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Does the community identify desired design characteristics such as ground cover requirements or setbacks from other preferred or protected uses?	Zoning standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Permitting Best Practices				
<p>Transparent Permit Requirements - Communities should clearly identify the permits needed for solar development in order to create a transparent and consistent development process. All solar development is subject to the state building code and electric code, although not all communities enforce the code or issue permits. Regardless of the local jurisdiction, all solar electric (photovoltaic) development contractors must obtain an electric permit prior to commencing work. Most solar development occurs in communities that issue building permits and enforce the state building code.</p>				
Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes	No	Comments
1. Does the community issue building permits or enforce the building code?	Building dept., Com. Devel. dept.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Does the community or the State electric inspector issue electric permit?	Building dept., Com. Devel. dept.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. If other permits, such as a separate land use permit, are required for all solar development, does the contractor use a single permit process for all approvals?	Building dept., Com. Devel. dept.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Does the community identify on its website and/or in writing what permits are needed for solar development?	Website, permit counter handouts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Building Permit Process – When communities issue building permits for solar development, the requirements and process for obtaining a permit should be predictable for contractors and counter staff, and streamlined when possible (a single process for multiple permits, when multiple permits are necessary).</p>				
Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes	No	Comments
1. Does the community have written standardized solar building permit application submittal requirements (conditions when a building permit is required, submittal information necessary for obtaining a permit)?	Building permit handouts, website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Does the community use the Solar ABCs expedited permit process for small solar development projects?	Building permit handouts, website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Does the community use the Division of Energy Resources solar retrofit structural study when evaluating the need for structural analysis for solar development permit applications?	Building permit handouts, website, staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. For small-scale solar projects, does the community combine application processing into a single process (one permit process for building, structural, zoning)?	Building permit handouts, website, staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Does the community offer electronic or over-the-counter submittal and review options for solar development?	Building permit handouts, website, staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Electric Permit Process – For communities that issue electric permits for solar development, the requirements for obtaining a permit should be predictable and explicit for both contractors and counter staff. Maximize use of on-line information specific to solar development and use on-line applications if possible.				
Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes	No	Comments
1. If the community does not issue electric permits, does it track permits or coordinate with state electric inspectors on electric permits issued?	Building or land use staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Does the community use the Solar ABCs expedited permit process for small (residential size) solar development projects?	Building or electric permit staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Does the community coordinate with the electric utility on electric and interconnection requirements and inspections?	Building, electric, or utility staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Inspections – Residential and small commercial projects				
Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes	No	Comments
1. For standard solar development projects does the community require only one inspection for building and electric permits?	Building dept handouts, website, staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. In the inspection process, does the community give contractors a specific time for the inspection (rather than a window of time of an hour or more)?	Building dept handouts, website, staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Permit Fees – Many communities assess permit fee based on the value of the development project. The valuation-based fee is a proxy for estimating the cost of issuing permits and conducting inspections. Solar development costs are not, however, indicative of the complexity of the project or the inspection process; much of the cost is solar collectors and electronics.				
Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes	No	Comments
1. Does the community have a flat permit fees for any type of building projects?	Building website, handout, staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Does the community have a flat permit fee for residential solar development projects?	Building website, handout, staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Does the community have a value-based fee structure that excludes the cost of solar collectors, power electronics, or other equipment elements of solar development?	Building website, handout, staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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Solar Energy Incentives – Communities have a number of opportunities to encourage solar development within development regulation.			
Solar Best Practice	Location	Yes No	Comments
Does the community encourage or require some new buildings to be built “solar-ready”?	Zoning, Subdivision, PUD	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Does the community encourage or require in the subdivision process that solar resources be identified and/or protected in lot configuration, use of solar easements, building or landscaping standards, or HOA design standards?	Subdivision or PUD ordinance	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Does the community encourage or require development that is part of a public/private partnership (where the community is financial partner via investment, land donation, etc.) to include solar development as part of the project?	Development standards	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	