

4.6 Streamline Solar Permitting for Small Solar Installations

10 Points

15 Points

20 Points

Action Updates

This action has been revised for the **current certification cycle**. A version of this action from the prior program year is [available for comparison](#). Edits are highlighted in yellow. (Last update 2020)

Objective

Encourage residential solar deployment by reducing transactional costs for small solar PV installations by making the solar permitting process transparent and simple.

Municipalities that complete all sub-elements of this action (including those not required for Sustainable CT points) may qualify for Bronze status in the national SolSmart community designation program. Note: if seeking dual program credit you must also complete a [SolSmart Statement](#). Visit www.gosparc.org to learn more about how you can receive dual recognition, and even Gold status!

What to Do

If you collaborate with other municipalities or other stakeholders to implement this Action, please describe the partnership in the “partners” box of your submission. Please also consult this [guidance document](#) to help your municipality earn points for actions pursued in partnership. Regional collaboration and other forms of partnership are highly encouraged.

1. Streamline solar permitting for small solar installations. **(10 Points)**

All elements must be completed to receive credit.

a. Review zoning requirements and identify restrictions that intentionally or unintentionally prohibit solar PV development. Compile findings in a memo. Consider the actions on this list of [best practices](#).

Submit: A copy of the memo. [A sample of the memo is available for download.](#)

b. Create and make available an online checklist detailing the required permit(s), submittals, and steps of your community’s solar permitting process. Consider using the [CT Standardized Instruction Template for Solar PV Permitting](#).

Submit: A link to your online permitting checklist (which applies to at least the permit process for solar).

c. Require no more than one application form for a residential rooftop solar PV project. Consider using the [CT Standardized Solar PV Permit Application](#).

Submit: A link to your residential solar PV permitting process and permit application form required by your municipality.

d. Train building inspectors, permitting, and inspection staff on solar PV and/or solar and storage systems technologies and best practices for permitting/inspecting. Check the Office of Education and Data Management’s Continuing Education calendar for upcoming solar PV trainings, the resources

listed under the Resources section below, or visit www.energizect.com/sunrisene for other online resources. Training must have occurred in the past five years. (Acceptable training enables staff to review all components of the PV system at once and covers both permitting and inspection.)

Submit: Training name, host/sponsor organization, and date of training, include the name and title of the municipal staff person(s) who attended. Submit a short description of topics covered during the training and, if available, training materials or a link to the training. Please list any continuing education requirements attendees received.

e. Train planning staff on best practices in planning and zoning for solar PV. Training must have occurred within the past five years.

Submit: Training name, host/sponsor organization, and date of training, include the name and title of the municipal staff person who attended. Submit a short description of topics covered during the training and, if available, training materials or a link to the training. Please list any continuing education requirements attendees received.

You may complete one or both of the additional steps below to receive up to 10 additional points. You must complete steps 1-5 prior to steps 6 and/or 7. If you are seeking SolSmart Bronze certification, both steps are required in addition to steps 1-5 listed above.

f. Optional: Review the permitting process for efficiency improvements. Reduce processing time to 30 days or fewer (or 10 days or fewer, if you want to receive SolSmart certification.) Consider the actions on this list of best practices. **(5 additional points)**

Submit: A document that tracks the date of permit application submissions and decision dates; or documentation from a local solar installation company indicating the average permit turnaround time; or a memo stating that the typical permitting process is 30 days or less.

g. Optional: Include quantifiable metrics and/or specific actions for solar PV development in the most current version of relevant plans (E.g., energy plan, climate plan, plan of conservation and development.). **(5 additional points)**

Submit: The link to relevant plans that incorporate solar PV goals or metrics. Please indicate relevant sections.

OR

2. Achieve at least Bronze status in the national [SolSmart](#) community designation program. **(10 Points)**

Submit: A copy of your final prerequisite summary and credit summary.

Credit for Past Action

For spring certification, count back from February 1st of the current year. For fall certification, count back from August 1st of the current year. For further clarification on determining if your prior work is eligible to earn points, [click here](#).

- This action does not expire and can have been completed at any time to receive credit.

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

Staff from the building, planning and zoning, and engineering departments, and a representative from the planning and zoning, or energy commission could be helpful in implementing this action.

Funding

For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions,

please visit the [Sustainable CT Grants Portal](#), which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the [Sustainable CT Resources for Certification](#) page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- [Urban Act Grant Program](#)
- [Municipal Grant Program \(MGP\)](#)

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- [CT Green Bank](#): No-cost technical assistance, email Emily.Basham@CTGreenBank.com.
- [SolSmart Resources page includes resources for all 7 actions](#)
- [CT Rooftop Solar PV Permitting Guide](#)
- [CT 2016 Municipal Solar Scorecards](#)
- [CROCOG Regional Permitting Initiative](#)
- [From Paperwork to Panels](#): Video overview of home solar installation process.
- Acadia Center, "[Community Energy Vision, Action Guide for Connecticut](#)"
- Training Resources:
 - 4.6.4
 - [Interstate Renewable Energy Council training portal](#)
 - U.S Department of Energy Sunshot webinars:
 - [Efficient Solar Permitting for Your Jurisdiction: Pre-Application Materials and Application Submittal and Review](#)
 - [Efficient Solar Permitting for Your Jurisdiction: Inspections -SolSmart Best Practices for Solar PV Permitting: Season 1 and Season 2](#)
 - 4.6.5
 - [SolSmart Webinar: Planning & Zoning Best Practices for Large-Scale Solar](#)
 - [SolSmart Webinar: Best Practices in Solar Planning and Zoning](#)
 - [U.S. Department of Energy SunShot webinar: Promoting Solar Energy Use Through Local Development Regulations](#)
 - [U.S. Department of Energy SunShot webinar: Promoting Solar Energy Use Through Local Plans](#)

Organizations and Relevant Program

- [CT Green Bank](#)
- [SolSmart](#)

Why This Matters

Each of Connecticut's 169 municipalities has its own permitting processes, permit application and fee structure, which makes widespread solar deployment a challenge. By streamlining the procedures and documents required for a permit, your town or city can encourage more sustainable projects, including solar, and bring more business into your community.

We developed the recommendations and resources for improving rooftop solar PV (< 1 Megawatt) permitting in this action from research conducted by the Connecticut Rooftop Solar Challenge team. These suggestions align with the work of leading organizations throughout the nation that are working to help understand and improve solar PV permitting processes.

Benefits

You can reduce everyone's guesswork and frustration by creating open access to information, streamlining permit application submissions, implementing online permitting software and waiving or reducing permit fees.

Help contractors get it right the first time by clarifying the information they should provide when they apply

for a solar PV permit.

CT Success Stories

- Coventry, CT: [“Solar Panel Permitting”](#)
- Hartford, CT: [“Zone Hartford, Zoning Regulations” \(Section 4.20.6\)](#)