



Streamline Solar Permitting for Small Solar Installations

Action Updates

This action has been revised for the **current certification cycle**. Edits are highlighted in yellow. (Last updated 2023)

Objective

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

What to Do

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 <https://solsmart.org> to learn more about how you can receive dual recognition, and even Gold status!

1. Streamline solar permitting for small solar installations. **(20 Points)**

Elements 5.6.1a-5.6.1f 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. Examples include: height restrictions, set-back requirements, screening requirements, visibility restrictions, etc. Consider the actions on this list of [best practices](#). Present the memo of findings to your Planning and Zoning Commission.

Submit: A copy of the memo. [A sample of the memo is available for download](#). The agenda of the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting where the memo findings were discussed. This subaction is included in the optional Sustainable CT [Climate Leader Designation](#).

Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit and rolling credit. This action falls under the action type "Websites, Maps, Inventories, Checklists, Assessments, Plans, Ordinances, Policies, Regulations and Resolutions" (see ["Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document](#) for submission requirements).

b. Draft proposed language for changes to zoning code based on the memo of findings created and discussed during the Planning and Zoning meeting in 5.6.1a. Involve planner and/or local zoning experts in the creation of the draft language.

Submit: The proposed language for changes to zoning code. Include a list of those involved in the drafting of the proposed language (name and title). This subaction is included in the optional Sustainable CT [Climate Leader Designation](#).

Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit and rolling credit. This action falls under the action type "Websites, Maps, Inventories, Checklists, Assessments, Plans, Ordinances, Policies, Regulations and Resolutions" (see ["Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document](#) for submission requirements).

c. Create and make available an online checklist detailing the required permit(s), submittals, and steps of your community's small rooftop solar PV permitting process. Consider using the CT Standardized Instruction Template for Solar PV Permitting.

Submit: A hyperlink and a screenshot of your online permitting checklist (which applies to at least the permit process for solar).

Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit and rolling credit. This action falls under the action type

"Websites, Maps, Inventories, Checklists, Assessments, Plans, Ordinances, Policies, Regulations and Resolutions" (see ["Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document](#) for submission requirements).

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 resources listed under the Resources section below, or visit www.energizect.com/sunrisene for training opportunities. 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: The training name, host/sponsor organization, date of training, and 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. This subaction is included in the optional Sustainable CT [Climate Leader Designation](#).

Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit only. This action falls under the action type "Events, Meetings, and Trainings" (see ["Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document](#) for submission requirements).

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

Submit: The training name, host/sponsor organization, date of training, and 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.

Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit only. This action falls under the action type "Websites, Maps, Inventories, Checklists, Assessments, Plans, Ordinances, Policies, Regulations and Resolutions" (see ["Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document](#) for submission requirements).

f. Install solar PV on local government facilities and/or local government-controlled land.

Submit: A news article, press release announcing the commissioned system, or webpage that summarizes the details of the installation(s) including the total number of systems, sizes, location, and photos. This subaction is included in the optional Sustainable CT [Climate Leader Designation](#).

Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit only. This action falls under the action type "Implementation Projects" (see ["Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document](#) for submission requirements).

OR

2. Achieve at least Bronze status in the national [SolSmart](#) community designation program. **(20 Points)**

Submit: A copy of your final prerequisite summary and credit or proof of SolSmart designation from the SolSmart program. This subaction is included in the optional Sustainable CT [Climate Leader Designation](#).

Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit and rolling credit. This action falls under the action type "Outreach, Education, Programs, Campaigns, Recognition/Designation in External Program, and Funding" (see ["Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document](#) for submission requirements).

Timeframe for Credit

Actions can either be "New" or considered for "Rolling Credit."

New Action Credit. Any action completed within the past three years (from January 1 of the year seeking certification) is eligible for potential certification points. If you are applying for recertification in your year of expiration, you may not claim *New Action Credit* for items that previously received credit.

Rolling Credit. For any action older than three years (from January 1 of the year seeking certification), you must demonstrate ongoing, currently relevant, and meaningful impact in your community to be considered for certification points. If you are applying for recertification in your year of expiration, you must apply for *Rolling Credit* for any item that previously received credit, even if it was completed within the past three years.

View the "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for detailed submission requirements.

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the "partners" box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality's role. For additional information, please see the Partners Guidance Document.

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.

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.

For a complete list of funding opportunities, implementation resources, and success stories specific to this action, please visit the full Action write-up on the [Sustainable CT Actions webpage](#).