

# MINNESOTA GREENSTEP CITIES AND SOLSMART:



## Building on Best Practices to Increase Solar Adoption

### Why GreenStep Cities should pursue SolSmart designation

GreenStep Cities are demonstrating their intent to be sustainability leaders by instituting broad and innovative actions that constitute the program's 29 best practices. SolSmart provides an opportunity for GreenStep Cities that want to build on their work by reducing the barriers to solar implementation locally.

**SolSmart is a local government designation program which recognizes communities that have taken steps to improve solar market conditions.** SolSmart designation at the Bronze, Silver, or Gold level will provide high-profile, national recognition for communities that have made it faster, easier, and more affordable for residents and businesses to invest in solar energy.

**GreenStep Cities that have addressed actions within the Renewable Energy Best Practice (BP 26) may have completed measures that achieve prerequisites or earn credit toward SolSmart designation.** By pursuing SolSmart designation, GreenStep Cities will earn national recognition and simultaneously increase their standing within the GreenStep Cities program. **All communities pursuing SolSmart designation are eligible for no-cost technical assistance from a team of national solar experts. For a free consultation, contact us at [phaddix@solarfound.org](mailto:phaddix@solarfound.org).**

#### Technical Assistance Opportunities

In-person assistance	Remote assistance	Intensive assistance
<p><b>Presentations:</b> Attend SolSmart presentations pertaining to local or regional solar challenges or opportunities.</p> <p><b>Site visits:</b> Get in-person assistance around specific criteria, categories, or projects via a short visit by a SolSmart solar expert.</p>	<p><b>Online:</b> Email your community's dedicated technical assistance provider, participate in subject-matter webinars, or visit our online resource catalog.</p> <p><b>Over the phone:</b> Call the SolSmart hotline or contact your community's technical assistance provider for a one-on-one conversation or group conference call.</p>	<p><b>SolSmart Workshops:</b> Intensive, single- or multi-day events designed to empower communities to make significant progress toward achieving designation.</p> <p><b>SolSmart Advisors:</b> Program-funded and trained staff that will work in a community or region for an engagement lasting up to six months.</p>



- Address 3 prerequisites
- 20 points in Permitting
- 20 points in Planning, Zoning, & Development Regulations
- Earn 60 total points



- Earn SolSmart Bronze
- Address 2 prerequisites
- Earn 100 total points



- Earn SolSmart Silver
- Address 1 prerequisite
- Earn 200 total points



# PATH TO BRONZE

## Sample Pathways to SolSmart Designation



### STEP 1 » COMMIT AND CUT CRITICAL RED TAPE VIA PREREQUISITES

SolSmart Criteria	Corresponding GreenStep Cities Best Practice Actions (BPAs)
Provide a statement of your community's solar goals, including commitments to earn designation and to track key solar metrics. <b>Required</b>	
Create and put your community's solar permitting checklist online. <b>Required</b>	BPA 26.7, Star Level 1
Review zoning requirements and identify restrictions that intentionally or unintentionally prohibit solar PV development. Compile findings in a memo. <b>Required</b>	

### STEP 2 » EARN 20 POINTS IN PERMITTING

Require no more than one application form for a residential rooftop solar PV project. <b>5 PTS</b>	
Review solar permit fees for residential and commercial solar. <b>5 PTS</b>	BPA 26.7, Star Level 2
Revise or demonstrate that permit fees reflect national best practices (e.g. \$400 or less for residential, and based on cost-recovery for commercial). <b>5 PTS</b>	BPA 26.7, Star Level 2
Review permitting process and reduce processing time to 10 days or fewer. <b>10 PTS</b>	
Train permitting staff on best practices for zoning solar PV and/or solar and storage systems. <b>10 PTS</b>	

### STEP 3 » EARN 20 POINTS IN PLANNING, ZONING, AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Provide clear guidance for solar PV in historic and special-use districts. <b>10 PTS</b>	
Allow accessory use solar by right in all major zones. <b>20 PTS (Silver + Gold Prerequisite)</b>	BPA 26.1, Star Level 1
Include considerations for active and passive solar in development regulations (e.g. providing guidance for orientation of structures in subdivision regulations). <b>10 PTS</b>	BPA 26.1, Star Level 2

### STEP 4 » EARN 20 TOTAL POINTS IN SPECIAL FOCUS CATEGORIES

Make inspection requirements for solar PV available online. <b>10 PTS</b>	
Provide resources on active solar installers and/or local incentives for solar PV. <b>5 PTS</b>	BPA 26.2, Star Level 1
Create a solar landing page on local government website with goals and local resources for solar development. <b>10 PTS</b>	
Engage and communicate with the utility on community goals for solar PV, net metering, and interconnection processes. <b>10 PTS</b>	BPA 26.2, Star Level 2
Provide local incentives (i.e. permit fee waivers or rebates) or locally-enabled finance (e.g., a revolving loan fund) for solar PV). <b>20 PTS</b>	BPA 26.3, Star Level 2
If applicable, provide PACE financing in your community. <b>10 PTS</b>	BPA 26.3, Star Level 3
Demonstrate that PACE financing has been used to finance solar PV in your community. <b>10 PTS</b>	BPA 26.3, Star Level 3
Support or host a community-group purchase program (e.g., Solarize). <b>20 PTS</b>	BPA 26.4, Star Level 1
Install solar PV on local facilities. <b>20 PTS</b>	BPA 26.5, Star Level 1
Establish partnerships with local non-profits or organizations on solar PV with multi-year goal or planned initiatives. <b>5 PTS</b>	BPA 26.6, Star Level 2

THIS IS FOR DEMONSTRATION PURPOSES. THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF PATHWAYS TO SOLSMART DESIGNATION.  
CONTACT US AT [SOLSMART@SOLARFOUND.ORG](mailto:SOLSMART@SOLARFOUND.ORG) OR 202-866-0915 FOR MORE INFORMATION