

## **A Solarize Program for Brunswick**

**Introduction** - Solarize programs are designed to help residents overcome the financial and logistical barriers to installing solar power systems on their homes. They accomplish this by allowing pre-selected solar installation companies to offer group discounts. An aggressive outreach and education effort, coupled with a tight deadline for committing to the program, typically produces a substantial number of motivated potential customers. A second purpose of the program is to increase the visibility of rooftop solar in the community, with the result that even those companies not participating in the initial effort can benefit from higher demand for their services. Thus, a successful Solarize program can produce employment and other economic benefits to the wider community.

**Why rooftop solar?** – The benefit of rooftop solar to individual home owners is obvious – greatly reduced electric bills – but there are societal advantages as well. Most electricity is generated in large, centralized power plants, located many miles from the homes, stores, offices and factories in which it is used. According to the Edison Electric Institute, an association of investor-owned public utilities, its members will spend more than \$64 Billion dollars through 2016 on construction and maintenance of the transmission infrastructure required to move this electricity from each Point A to its many Points B. In addition, the U.S. Energy Information Administration reports that about 7 percent of all electricity generated in these centralized plants is lost during transmission. Both of these costs – those associated with infrastructure and those associated with the generation of electricity that never makes it to end users – are borne by the general public in the form of higher electric bills. Finally, although much of Maine's electricity is generated using renewable resources such as biomass, hydro and wind, fossil fuels continue to play a large role. The advantages of solar over fossil fuels with regard to greenhouse gas emissions and other forms of air pollution are well documented.

**Experience elsewhere** - The first Solarize program was launched in 2009 in a Portland, Oregon neighborhood. Within six months of starting their campaign, the program had signed up more than 300 residents and installed solar on 130 homes. These installations added 350 kilowatts of new photovoltaic capacity and created 18 professional-wage jobs for site assessors, engineers, project managers, journeyman electricians, and roofers. As a result of this success, other neighborhoods in the city adopted similar programs which produced 400 additional installations in 2010. Since then, the concept has spread across the country, with a new program in Freeport, Me, as well as several others throughout New England. Approximately 40 contracts for rooftop solar installations in Freeport have been signed in the program's first two months. In the Upper Valley region of New Hampshire and Vermont, 301 contracts were signed during the program's first two rounds, with the Town of Hanover leading the way with 62. A program serving two Rhode Island towns – Tiverton and Little Compton - resulted in installation of 55 new systems. The programs in Massachusetts and Connecticut were coordinated at the state level, with participation by 50 to 60 towns in each state. Solarize Connecticut has resulted in the installation of over 2,000 rooftop systems, while in Massachusetts the figure is 2,400 systems.

**Solarize Brunswick** - A Solarize program in Brunswick would involve a three way partnership among the Town, the Brunswick Recycling and Sustainability Committee (BRSC) and one or more solar

installation companies. The Town's role would be to issue a Request for Proposals to qualified companies, provide general oversight to program activities, and serve as a single point of contact for inquiries from interested citizens. Also, involvement by the Town would lend a sense of legitimacy to the program. The BRSC would perform outreach and educational activities for the program. The Committee would also form an evaluation panel, consisting of Brunswick residents with a variety of relevant backgrounds, to review bids received from the solar installation companies and make the initial selection. The solar installation companies would respond to the RFP, offering a tiered pricing plan under which the costs for individual projects would drop as the number of residents participating increases. The winning bidder would be given contact information, primarily e-mail addresses, for interested residents and would conduct all follow-up activities with them. Companies can either bid on their own or form consortiums with other companies.

The following steps would be involved in a "Solarize Brunswick" program:

- The Town issues a Request for Proposals to solar installation companies interested in offering competitive tiered pricing for a direct-ownership model for solar PV installations at private residences.
- The Town begins outreach activities to inform the public and gather e-mail addresses of those interested. Outreach includes development of a program website.
- One or more partner installers are selected to participate in the program.
- The partner installer initiates contact with interested residents to provide additional information and, if appropriate, schedule site assessments.
- The partner installer continues to conduct outreach activities.
- If the site assessment indicates that a solar installation is appropriate, the partner installer submits a bid to the resident.
- The partner installer executes the contract with the resident to install the solar PV system.

The table on the following page summarizes the activities of the Town, the BRSC and other volunteers, and the installer.

<b>Program Activity</b>	<b>Town Liaison</b>	<b>Other Town Staff</b>	<b>Recycling and Sustainability Committee/Volunteers</b>	<b>Partner Installer</b>
Start up	Review/approve RFP		Write RFP.  Recruit volunteers for outreach and bid evaluation activities.  Solicit e-mail addresses of potential customers.	
Installer Selection	Distribute RFP.  Review/approve evaluation panel recommendation.		Evaluate proposals and recommend winner or finalists to be interviewed.  Interview finalists and recommend winner.	Respond to RFP.
Outreach	Oversee outreach activities.  Issue list of known financing options.		Develop website.  Create and distribute informational material on the program.  Research and prepare list of known financing options.	Include program information on company website. Link to Town website.  Create and distribute informational material on the program.
Enrollment			Compile database of enrollees.	
Site Assessments/ Installations		Perform/oversee permitting, inspection, interconnection.		Conduct site assessments.  Install systems