

The **DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION** wants to know:

IS YOUR MUNICIPALITY READY FOR RESIDENTIAL SOLAR INSTALLATIONS?

WHAT IS SOLARIZE?

Solarize is a program in which a community leverages collective buying power to allow individual homeowners to install solar PV systems on their homes at a discounted rate. Using volunteer organizers and community groups, the Solarize model tackles three major market barriers to residential solar PV installations: high upfront cost, complexity, and customer inertia. By leveraging the community's combined purchasing power, contractors save on marketing and lead generation costs, lowering the cost per watt to the customer. The volunteers also work to simplify the solar purchase process as much as possible, making information easily digestible and available, as well as shortening the inquiry-to-installation cycle from two years to three to six months. **This means more solar PV systems in shorter time frames in your community! To learn more about Solarize, check out [The Solarize Guidebook](#) from the U.S. Department of Energy.**

How is the solar market changing and why?

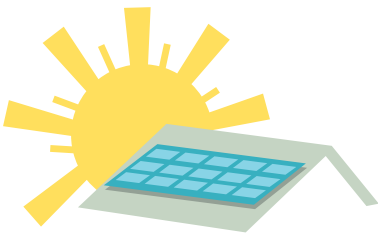
1. The price of residential solar is becoming more affordable. As predicted, the installed price of solar PV continues to drop – the cost of residential PV is now less expensive than it was after the PA Sunshine Program rebate in 2013. The latest numbers show:

- The price of solar in 2013 was almost half of what it was in 2009, and has continued to fall. Systems installed in early 2015 were 10% cheaper than they were even a year prior.
- 25% of total residential PV installed in the US came online without state incentives – that means the market is driving demand more and more.
- 51% of all new electricity brought online at the beginning of 2015 was solar, outpacing even natural gas.

2. Third party suppliers are entering into the market. Companies like [SolarCity](#) and [Vivint Solar](#), which offer alternative no-money-down financing for solar (also referred to as third-party ownership, solar leases, or solar PPAs), have established a presence in our region and are already driving a number of installations in the area.

3. The federal Solar Investment Tax Credit (ITC), originally set to expire at the end of 2016, has recently been extended. A 30% tax credit will hold through 2019, drop to 26% in 2020, 22% in 2021, and 10% thereafter. Solar is now expected to have 20 GW annual installed capacity by 2020 which would result in a tripling of the US solar market by 2021 ([Bloomberg New Energy Finance](#)).

4. Pennsylvania's Clean Power Plan poses potential changes to Pennsylvania's state policy on solar. To drive the state's targeted reduction in carbon emissions, Pennsylvania's statewide solar policy may change. For an overview of how the Clean Power Plan may affect Pennsylvania, please check out [this brief from the NRDC](#).



HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PREPARE:

- 1. Adopt permitting best practices** – this could be as simple as making sure your permitting requirements and process are posted on-line, or you could take the extra steps of developing a checklist, a pre-approved line diagram, or solar-specific education for permitting staff.
- 2. Adopt a supportive zoning ordinance for solar**– including provisions for solar in your zoning ordinance is an effective way to prepare for future solar projects, but be careful that you don't hinder the solar market in your jurisdiction by over-regulating. There are effective ways to zone for solar that protect your community's safety and character while still allowing for the maximum benefits of solar for residents.
- 3. Start your own Solarize program** – local governments can work with area non-profits or energy groups to start a Solarize program and help drive demand and reduce the cost of solar PV for residents.



HERE'S WHY YOU SHOULD PREPARE NOW!

- 1. Solarize!** Solarize will increase demand, and you may get multiple permit applications in all at once. The program demands a tight timeline of the installers in order to meet customer satisfaction. You may also discover that outdated parts of your zoning code are unintentionally prohibiting or limiting some solar installations.
- 2. As the market price for residential solar PV becomes more affordable** and more financing options for solar enter the market, municipalities should expect to see an increase in the number of installations in their communities.
- 3. The technical assistance, guidance, and access to national resources and expertise provided through the Solar Ready II grant program expires at the end of February 2016.** Take advantage of these valuable services while they're available!
- 4. There is more funding in the pipeline** for communities that have already begun to take steps to be solar ready. SPARC (Solar Powering America by Recognizing Communities) is an up-and-coming designation program from the U.S. Department of Energy to recognize communities that make or have made permitting, zoning, interconnection, or financing (soft cost) improvements. Technical assistance will be available to communities wanting to become designated. The designation program and criteria will launch March/April 2016. **To learn more and apply for SPARC technical assistance,** please visit the [SPARC website](#).
- 5. It's better to be proactive** – evaluating and streamlining solar approval processes can save you time and money and gives you confidence in your process.

HERE'S HOW DVRPC'S SOLAR READY II PROGRAM CAN HELP:

- 1. DVRPC and the Delaware County Planning Department is hosting a webinar on zoning and permitting best practices for solar on Thursday, February 11th at 10:00am.** We encourage ALL municipalities in the Solarize Greater Media campaign to participate and learn more about solar PV best practices for permitting and zoning.
- 2. Following the Webinar, DVRPC and DCPD staff can provide one-on-one guidance** to municipalities on how to update their permitting and zoning processes. **If you are interested in learning more, please register for the webinar or contact Liz Compitello ecompitello@dvrpc.org**