

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Chicago-Area Metro and County Governments Streamline for Solar

Twelve municipalities and four counties in the Chicago region are taking steps to remove obstacles to solar energy development and reduce costs for homes and businesses. Over the next six months these local governments will participate in SolSmart, a rigorous national designation program recognizing communities for making it faster, easier, and cheaper to go solar.

The SolSmart program helps communities streamline government processes and implement measures to encourage solar development, in order to receive a SolSmart designation of Gold, Silver, or Bronze. The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, a membership organization of the Chicago region's 275 cities and villages and a leader in the field of municipal sustainability, will serve as program advisor to each government. Those that successfully meet the criteria will be awarded their designations at a ceremony in early 2018.

"This will be the largest group of communities in the country to move through the program together," said John A. Ostenburg, Mayor of Park Forest and Chairman of the Mayors Caucus' Environment Committee. "Their leadership and commitment to environmental sustainability and renewable energy intersects with recent efforts in Illinois to lead in these areas, the most notable being the Illinois Future Energy Jobs Act, which will bring over \$100 million annually for solar development. Participation in SolSmart better positions these local governments to take advantage of this investment and marks the region as a friendly, cost-effective place to do business."

All municipal participants are signatories to the Greenest Region Compact 2, created by the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and its membership to guide and unify regional sustainability efforts. In addition to renewable energy, the Compact also expands opportunities for municipal leaders to take action in the areas of climate, economic development, energy efficiency, land use, leadership, mobility, greener municipal operations, sustainable communities, waste and water.

All participants in the program will work collaboratively to earn SolSmart designation. For example, municipal and county staff are currently evaluating the use of a streamlined solar photovoltaic (PV) permit template. As this standard permit is already aligned with national standards, codes and best practices, it can ease the administrative burden for developers of small-scale residential solar PV systems and increase efficiencies in the permitting process for staff. Participating local governments will also work with partners such as the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 134 and the Illinois Fire Inspector Association to train staff to evaluate and inspect solar PV installations.

Each local government will receive expert review and recommendations on how to adapt zoning codes to remove barriers to solar development. SolSmart also awards credit for engaging and educating local residents and businesses on solar energy, as well as other activities that can expedite local solar development. The SolSmart program allows for flexibility in the strategies each participating municipality or county pursues to achieve designation.

SolSmart is a national program funded by the U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative and led by The Solar Foundation and the International City/County Management Association.

Participating local governments include:

City of Aurora
Village of Beach Park
City of Darien

City of Evanston
Village of Franklin Park
Village of Glencoe
Village of Hanover Park
Village of Hawthorn Woods
City of Highland Park
Village of Park Forest
Village of Richton Park
Village of Schaumburg
Village of South Barrington
Cook County
Kane County
Lake County
Will County

About the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus

The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus is a membership organization of the Chicago region's 275 cities and villages. Founded in 1997 by then Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley and leading mayors from nine suburban municipal groups, the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus pushes past geographical boundaries and local interests to work on public policy issues. The Caucus provides a forum for metropolitan Chicago's chief elected officials to collaborate on common problems and work toward a common goal of improving the quality of life for the millions of people who call the region home.

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