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Chicago-Area Communities Recognized for Advancing Solar Energy Growth

Chicago, February 2, 2018 -- Today, the national [SolSmart](#) program recognized 15 Chicago-area municipalities and counties for making it faster, easier, and more affordable for residents and businesses to go solar.

These communities have taken bold steps to encourage solar energy growth and remove obstacles to solar development at the local level. Based on their accomplishments, each community received an official SolSmart designation of Gold, Silver, or Bronze.

The communities were honored for their achievements in a ceremony today at the Argonne National Lab, with Congressman Bill Foster and Lieutenant Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti in attendance.

SolSmart is led by The Solar Foundation and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office. The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus served as a SolSmart Advisor to the Chicago-area communities, providing intensive technical assistance to help them achieve their designations. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provided additional support to the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus to advance these local clean energy policies.

The communities designated *SolSmart Gold* include City of Aurora, Village of Beach Park, Village of Park Forest, Village of South Barrington, and Will County.

Communities designated *SolSmart Silver* include Village of Hawthorn Woods, Village of Richton Park, and Village of Schaumburg.

Communities designated *SolSmart Bronze* include Village of Brookfield, Village of Darien, Village of Glencoe, Village of Hanover Park, Village of Highland Park, Cook County, and Kane County.

More than 180 cities, counties, and small towns have achieved SolSmart designation since the program launched in 2016, including a total of 18 communities in Illinois.

“Municipalities from throughout the region have worked together to prepare for the rapidly growing solar industry, resulting in the largest collaborative effort to become SolSmart in the country. This kind of collaboration exemplifies the strength of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus,” said Joseph Mancino, Mayor of Hawthorn Woods and Executive Board Chairman of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus.

According to Lesley McCain, Executive Director of the Illinois Solar Energy Association, “We applaud the efforts of these local governments to streamline solar practices. This will reduce the administrative costs of permitting and inspection, making solar energy more affordable, and assure solar industry standards are met.”

“More than 60 of our member municipalities share a goal to ‘enact policies to advance clean energy’, formally stated in our common sustainability pledge, the [Greenest Region Compact](#). SolSmart provided valuable expertise and a pathway for our member communities, to achieve this goal and enjoy the benefits of clean energy,” said John Ostenburg, Mayor of Park Forest; and Chairman of the Environment Committee and 2nd Vice Chairman of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus.

To receive designation, municipalities and counties make changes to their local processes to reduce the time and money it takes to install a solar energy system. This includes evaluating local permitting processes, as well as planning and zoning procedures. These actions help solar companies greatly reduce the cost of installations and pass those savings on to consumers, making the community “open for solar business.”

For example, communities in the Mayors Caucus cohort have established clear processes for solar building permits, set reasonable fees, offer expedited processing, and posted a helpful solar permitting checklist on their municipal websites. All participating communities have trained their planning, permitting and inspection staff in solar industry best practices to assure safe and reliable solar energy systems are installed.

SolSmart designated communities in the Chicago-area are now poised to take advantage of new opportunities for solar energy investment under the Future Energy Jobs Act. A SolSmart designation helps encourage solar companies to do business in the community, driving economic development and creating local jobs.

As part of the SolSmart program, a team of national experts provides no-cost technical assistance to help communities achieve designation. All cities and counties are eligible to join the SolSmart program and receive this technical assistance. Interested communities can learn more at [SolSmart.org](#).

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.