

# SOLSMART APPLICATION

**There are three levels of SolSmart designation for communities – below are the requirements for each:**

## BRONZE:

- Provide a Solar Statement outlining your community’s solar goals, and commit to tracking key metrics such as number and capacity of installed Photovoltaic (PV) systems.
- Fulfill required actions in both of the Foundational Categories:
  - Permitting
  - Planning, Zoning, and Development
- Earn at least 20 points in each of the two Foundational Categories (above).
- Earn a total of 20 points from actions across the six Special Focus Categories: Inspection; Construction Codes; Solar Rights; Utility Engagement; Community Engagement; and Market Development and Finance.  
*Note: Actions in any of the Special Focus Categories count toward the 20-point target.*
- *Note: Early Adopter communities will receive 10 extra points applied toward a category of their choice.*

## SILVER:

- Fulfill the requirements to become a SolSmart Bronze Community.
- Complete the two Silver-required actions in the Planning, Zoning, and Development and Inspection categories.
- Earn 100 points overall from actions taken in any combination of categories.

## GOLD:

- Fulfill the requirements to become a SolSmart Silver Community.
- Complete the Gold-required action in Permitting.
- Earn 200 points overall from actions taken in any combination of categories.

## SPECIAL AWARDS:

- Communities that earn 60% of the points in a given category are eligible for special recognition.

## Community Data

Community applying:

State:

Community website:

Population:

Other solar awards/recognition earned by community:

kW of installed solar or number of installations:

## Contact Information

Local contact:

Contact title:

Organization:

Department:

Contact email:

Contact phone:

- I am authorized to apply for and seek recognition for my community.  
I understand that community data submitted through this application will be shared online.

# STEP 1: SOLAR STATEMENT

## Solar Statement – Required for Designation

**Our Solar Statement:** *(Cut and paste your Solar Statement in the box below)*

*Communities interested in pursuing SolSmart designation must indicate their commitment to supporting solar development in their community. These letters should include:*

- A commitment to participate in the SolSmart designation process*
- A statement of solar goals, areas of focus or community priorities (e.g. Encouraging solar development on vacant lots or supporting non-profit led initiatives)*
- Past achievements or programs related to solar and/or renewable energy*
- Commitment to tracking metrics related to solar and/or provide benchmark of available solar metrics (i.e. number of installed municipal systems or growth in residential installations)*
- A commitment of staff time and resources to improve the local environment for solar*

*These letters do not need to be more than a page in length. Examples are included below from communities that participated in SolSmart's Early Adopter program. The SolSmart team can assist communities in prioritizing and establishing goals. Resources and Examples: [Burlington, Vermont](#), and [Brownsville, Texas](#)*


**Documentation:** *(Please share a link to a public webpage where your Solar Statement is displayed or attach it as a document.)*

# STEP 2: FOUNDATIONAL CATEGORIES: PERMITTING AND PLANNING, ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT

To earn SolSmart Bronze designation, communities must:

- Complete the required actions in both Foundational Categories – i.e., Permitting and Planning, Zoning and Development.
- Earn at least 20 points in each of the Foundational Categories.

## Permitting

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
<b>Create and make available an online checklist detailing the steps of your community's solar permitting process (Required).</b>	Req'd	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<b>Provide a streamlined permitting pathway for small PV systems with turn-around time of no more than 3 days (Required for Gold).</b>	20 Req'd for Gold	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Distinguish between systems qualifying for streamlined or standard review.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Require no more than one application form for a residential rooftop PV project.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Review of solar permit fees for residential and commercial solar.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
 <b>Earn additional points:</b> Revise or demonstrate that permit fees reflect national best practices (e.g. \$400 or less for residential, and based on cost-recovery for commercial).	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Review permitting process for efficiency improvements and reduce processing time to 10 days or fewer.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Adopt a standard solar permit form aligned with best practices (e.g. Solar ABCs).	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Train permitting staff on best practices for permitting solar PV and/or solar and storage systems.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Train fire and safety staff on solar PV.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Develop a regular communication schedule to solicit recommendations from the solar installer community regarding procedural changes.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Offer an online process for permitting submission and approval.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Share open source permit data with fire, safety, and other key third parties.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<b>Total Points:</b> Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			

## Planning, Zoning and Development

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
<p><b>Review zoning requirements and remove restrictions that intentionally or unintentionally prohibit PV development. Compile findings in a memo, and commit to reducing barriers to PV during next zoning review. (Required).</b></p> <p>Examples include: height restrictions; set-back requirements; allowing solar "by-right" in residential and commercial zones without requiring a conditional use permit.</p>	Req'd	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<p><b>Allow solar by-right and as an accessory use in all major zones, and implement any zoning ordinance adjustments identified through the zoning review to improve solar-friendliness. (Required for Silver and Gold).</b></p>	20 Req'd for Silver and Gold	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<p>Review existing planning documents and identify new opportunities (not already included) to integrate PV into planning goals.</p>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<p>Provide clear guidance for solar in historic and special-use districts.</p>	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<p>Integrate solar and/or shared solar into relevant local plans (e.g. energy plan, climate plan, comprehensive plan).</p>	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<p>Include considerations for active and passive solar in development regulations (e.g. providing guidance for orientation of structures in subdivision regulations).</p>	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<p>Provide development incentives for solar within the subdivision or zoning process, or as part of other development incentives (e.g., density or height bonuses for buildings that plan to install solar or tax-increment financing).</p>	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<p>Encourage or incentivize solar development on parking lots, vacant lots, landfills, buffer lands around uses with nuisances (e.g. refineries, wastewater plants), brownfields or formerly contaminated lands, airport safety zones (with FAA approval), and non-building structures.</p>	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<p><b>Total Points:</b> Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.</p>			

# STEP 3: SPECIAL FOCUS CATEGORIES


To earn SolSmart Bronze designation, communities must:

- Earn 20 points (total) from actions taken across the 6 Special Focus Categories: Inspection; Construction Codes; Solar Rights; Utility Engagement; Community Engagement; or Market Development and Finance. Any action in any Special Focus Category counts toward the goal of earning 20 points.



## Special Focus: **Inspection**

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
<b>Provide cross-training of inspection and permitting staff on solar PV via in-person or online resources. (Required for Silver and Gold).</b>	20 Req'd for Silver and Gold	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Eliminate excess inspections and consolidate inspection trips for solar PV.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Offer inspection appointment times in lieu of appointment windows.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Make inspection requirements for PV available online.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Have a fixed time frame between inspection requests and scheduling of inspections of no more than 10 days.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Provide an online process for scheduling and responding to inspection requests.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<b>Total Points:</b> Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			


## Special Focus: **Construction Codes**

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
Develop and provide Solar Ready Construction Guidelines for developers to enable lower cost installation of future solar installations on buildings within the permitting office and online.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
 <b>Earn additional points:</b> Include guidance for solar on parking lots and other types of non-traditional structures.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Require or incentivize new construction to be solar ready to complete future installations at lower cost.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Offer design guidelines for PV aligned with National Electrical Code and fire code.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Adopt the most recent codes from the International Code Council.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<b>Total Points:</b> Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			


## Special Focus: **Solar Rights**

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
Conduct review of state policies related to protecting rights of property owners to install solar and solar system owners' right to sunlight on their property. Make this information available to residents.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Provide consumer protection resources on solar.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Develop local process to enable solar rights through a solar access ordinance.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Offer procedure for recording solar easements for property owners.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Engage homeowners and neighborhood associations and discourage unnecessarily restrictive requirements for PV through meetings with leadership.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
 <b>Earn additional points:</b> Encourage subdivisions to consider shared solar allowances.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
 <b>Earn additional points:</b> Work with homeowners associations to develop appropriate guideline documents for solar PV.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<b>Total Points:</b> Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			

## Special Focus: **Utility Engagement**

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
Review best practices for integrating interconnection with electrical inspections and share best practices with staff.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Discuss community or shared solar programs with the local utility.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Engage and communicate with the utility on community goals for solar, net metering, and interconnection processes.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
 <b>Earn additional points:</b> Coordinate with regional organizations or other local governments to engage utilities.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Coordinate utility and city inspections for solar PV, reducing the total number of inspections needed.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Launch and support a utility-provided community solar program.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<b>Total Points:</b> Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			

## Special Focus: **Community Engagement**

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
Host a solar workshop open to the general public and/or local government staff explaining PV opportunities and policies.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Create and distribute educational materials at relevant community events and through local government channels.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Establish partnerships with local non-profits or organizations on solar with multi-year goal or planned initiatives.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Publicly encourage community solar projects or solar projects on community facilities.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Engage the community in robust, ongoing discussion around climate, energy, or sustainability plans.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Create a solar landing page on local government's website with information on the community's solar goals and local resources for solar development.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Convene an active energy task force or solar working group that meets at least three times per year.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Encourage solar on non-profit or community facilities through fee waivers, technical assistance, or other support.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Conduct feasibility analysis for solar on brownfields, landfills, formerly contaminated lands and/or other under-utilized properties.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Install or lease land for solar development on brownfields, landfills, formerly contaminated lands and/or other under-utilized properties.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Support or host a community-group purchase program (e.g., Solarize).	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
 <b>Earn additional points:</b> Design program or create financing support options to encourage low-to-moderate income participation in community solar initiatives.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Create and publish job training and placement opportunities for solar in coordination with local community colleges.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Engage with regional organizations on advancing solar policies in the region including, but not limited to, unified permitting processes and group procurement opportunities.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Demonstrate activity in state-level conversations regarding solar PV.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Create and share an interactive solar map for your community.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<b>Total Points:</b> Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			

## Special Focus: **Market Development and Finance**

Action	Points	We've done this!	Documentation
Provide resources on active solar installers and/or local incentives for solar.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Make solar metrics publicly available.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Provide information to consumers about different solar PV financing options, including commercial options, such as Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing.	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Conduct feasibility analysis for solar PV installations on public facilities.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
If applicable, provide PACE financing in your community.	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Install solar capacity on local facilities.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Provide local incentives (i.e. permit fee waivers or rebates) or locally-enabled finance (e.g., a revolving loan fund) for solar.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Engage local banks, credit unions, foundations and/or community funds about lending for solar PV projects through in-person meetings, discussions, and/or workshops.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Demonstrate that the community's installed per capita capacity is above top 20% of states (>99 watts/person).	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Integrate solar with other distributed or emerging technologies such as storage, combined heat and power systems or electric vehicles in at least one installed or proposed project.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
Develop feasibility analysis or planning for resilient solar technologies for critical facilities and emergency planning such as solar and storage.	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share link:
<b>Total Points:</b> Add up the total number of points you believe you have achieved in this category.			



# INNOVATIVE ACTIONS

The actions identified in the categories above represent many of the most common and impactful efforts communities are taking to reduce soft costs and make going solar easier and more affordable for residents. However, we know that communities across the country are developing innovative ways to help reduce soft costs. If your community has taken action to reduce soft costs that wasn't captured in the above application, please share it with us in the table below. Innovative actions will be reviewed by a team of solar experts and each action may be worth up to 20 points.

## Innovative Actions

Category	Action(s)	Documentation
Permitting		Share link:
Planning, Zoning and Development		Share link:
Inspection		Share link:
Construction Codes		Share link:
Solar Rights		Share link:
Utility Engagement		Share link:
Community Engagement		Share link:
Market Development and Finance		Share link:

# Designation Checklist

Step  
Completed

## STEP 1: SOLAR STATEMENT

Solar Statement	Statement Submitted	<input type="checkbox"/>
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## STEP 2: FOUNDATIONAL CATEGORIES

Permitting	Required Action(s)	Points: 20+ required for Bronze	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning, Zoning, Development	Required Action(s)	Points: 20+ required for Bronze	<input type="checkbox"/>

## STEP 3: SPECIAL FOCUS CATEGORY POINTS

Inspection	Points:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Construction Codes	Points:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Solar Rights	Points:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Utility Engagement	Points:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Engagement	Points:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Market Development and Finance	Points:	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Special Focus Points**  
Must be 20 or greater for Bronze

**TOTAL POINTS including foundational**  
Must be at least 100 for Silver and 200 for Gold