



News Release

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Rockford Joins SolSmart Program to Accelerate Solar Use, Promote Jobs and Spur Business Development

ROCKFORD, III. – The City of Rockford has taken a new and important step to improve quality of life for residents, spur business development and job creation, and protect the environment by enrolling in SolSmart, a national designation program to make it faster, easier, and more affordable to go solar. Municipalities participating in SolSmart use the program’s resources to streamline development of solar power installations on homes and businesses, cutting electricity costs for them and reducing pollution for all.

Rockford is one of 22 new Chicago-area municipalities and counties that will receive expert technical assistance on solar energy development from the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (Caucus), which has been selected to serve as a “SolSmart Advisor” in the region. Experts say interest in new solar installations is skyrocketing in Illinois, leading Rockford to act now and get on the forefront of this rapidly-expanding green technology.

SolSmart is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office and led by The Solar Foundation and the International City/County Management Association. SolSmart awards highly-coveted designations of Gold, Silver or Bronze based on municipalities’ achievements and level of program involvement.

Among many resources provided, SolSmart offers communities a template for a standard installation permit that’s aligned with national standards, codes and best practices. This eases the administrative burden for developers of small-scale residential solar systems and increases city staff’s efficiency in permitting.

This is the second year that the Caucus has been selected as a SolSmart Advisor to Chicago-area communities. Previously, the Caucus’ expert guidance helped another round of 15 communities earn designation through SolSmart.

Participating local governments will receive extensive assistance from the Caucus on best practices to speed up local solar development. In addition to assistance from the Caucus and national SolSmart staff, local governments will also work with partners such as the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 134 and the Illinois Fire Inspectors Association to train staff to evaluate and inspect solar installations.

Municipalities also receive expert guidance on adapting zoning codes to remove barriers to solar development, engaging and educating local residents and businesses on solar energy, and other activities that can expedite local solar development.

All municipal participants are signatories to or evaluating adoption of the Greenest Region Compact, created by the Caucus and its membership to guide and unify regional sustainability efforts. Specifically, the Compact goal to, “*Enact policies to support clean energy*” is addressed by the SolSmart program. In addition to renewable energy, the Compact also sets high-level goals for municipal leaders in the areas of climate, economic development, energy efficiency, land use, leadership, mobility, greener municipal operations, sustainable communities, waste and water.

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About the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus

The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus is a membership organization of the Chicago region’s 275 cities, towns and villages. Founded in 1997 by then-Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago 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.