

Community Description

The Town of Amherst is located in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts. Host to Amherst College, Hampshire College and The University of Massachusetts, Amherst is a diverse and inclusive community offering numerous educational and cultural opportunities with a rich history of agriculture. Its topographical characteristics consist of a valley plateau surrounded by a circle of hills.

Amherst demographics according to the 2010 U.S. Census Data are as follows:

Population is 37,819

Total Housing Units 9,711

Owner occupied Housing Units 4,258

Total Households 9,259

Median Household Income \$52,281

Per Capita Income \$21,049

Percentage of the population 25 years or older with a high school degree or higher is 96.1%

Percentage of the population 25 years or older with a Bachelor's degree or higher is 70.6%

Marketing and Outreach Plan

The survey which was distributed throughout the community has served to begin marketing of the Solarize program! An article regarding Amherst's intent to apply to the Solarize program was published in the Amherst Bulletin – a free publication delivered to residents and available in local news kiosks. The article included the information for residents to access the survey. From the article and survey, numerous residents have either called or e-mailed to inquire about the program. The survey itself yielded 214 responses from which a distribution list has been created to distribute information and announcements. It is anticipated that this list will be expanded upon as more residents become interested in the program and will serve as the primary contact/supporter list.

The Solar Team will assemble to identify specific strategies, goals, targets and resources should Amherst become a Solarize community. The core team consists of seven members, including the Solar Coach. Should Amherst be one of the new communities to participate in the Solarize Mass program, the group plans to initially meet on a weekly basis to identify territories that each member (except the Solar Coach) will oversee as outreach coordinators, will set goals and timelines. There are a fair number of individuals who have offered their services to assist the team with outreach. The list of "second string" volunteers will be divided among the six members who will use those contacts to assist them with neighborhood outreach. The plan is to divide the town into sectors and task each coordinator with scheduling house parties or gatherings. The Town of Amherst has a skilled GIS expert who may be able to assist with creating a neighborhood map that divides the town into sectors and identifies those homes with optimum solar access.

The Solar Coach, Jeannette Tokarz, will serve to coordinate all outreach efforts and will serve as the central point of contact. She will work most closely with the installer and the Municipal Representative. One of her primary tasks will be to work with the group and the installer on developing outreach materials. She will be assisted in some of her duties by Solar Team member, Peggy Matthews-Nilsen.

The group intends to table at various events – especially those of our supporter organizations; the Amherst League of Women Voters, Transition Amherst and Grow Food Amherst. In addition, there is an annual Sustainability Festival held on the Town Common in April at which the group plans to have a booth space to promote the program. Weekly Farmer's Markets – including a winter market - offer numerous opportunities for direct outreach.

The team will outreach to the faith communities in town as a means to connect to a broad and diverse group of residents. The team plans to produce an informational program and public service announcements to be aired on the local access television channel and will create "Solar Tour" opportunities of local houses and businesses that

currently have solar installations in place.

Visual aids will be utilized to increase visibility of the team's efforts. Lawn signs around town, a thermometer to measure the kilowatts of solar energy that have been contracted and a banner display at Town Hall will serve as effective promotional tools. The group would like to create t-shirts with a tag line that will be given to those who sign contracts with the chosen installer.

A website will be developed to keep track of the program's progress and will serve as a resource for information. In addition a Facebook page will be created and maintained. The town's website will provide links to these sites. The group will request that all contacts and supporters distribute information about the program to their networks, thus expanding our reach beyond our own distribution list.

Marketing Budget

Solar Coach Stipend	\$500
Printed Materials	\$1,500
<u>Progress Thermometer</u>	<u>\$500</u>
TOTAL	\$2,500

Additional Requirements (Maximum 1 page)

Community Permitting and Requirements				
Permitting Component	Solar PV Requirements	Review Timeline	Cost	Associated Web Links
Building Permit (Roof Mounted)	Building permit*	1 week	\$30/5 panels	http://amherstma.gov/index.aspx?NID=608
Building Permit (Ground Mounted)	Building permit & site plan review or special permit	1 week, plus PB approval time	\$30/5 panels	http://amherstma.gov/index.aspx?NID=608
Electrical Permit	yes	Less than 1 week	Res: \$75 1 st 5 kW; \$5 each additional Com: \$75 1 st 5kW; \$20 each additional	http://amherstma.gov/index.aspx?NID=608
Conservation Commission	RFD for ground mounted systems within the Commission's jurisdiction	~ 2-4 weeks	\$50	http://www.amherstma.gov/index.aspx?NID=1269&ART=3052&admin=1
Historical Commission	EXEMPT unless in Dickinson historic district; review and approval by the local historic district required			
Community Bi-laws for yard signs	As of right, 2'x3'	Not required		http://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/262
Community Bi-laws for banners, signs, Thermometers, etc in public spaces	Design Review Board if Town Hall property and Business District and Select Board approval	Less than 30 days	\$50 (DRB)	http://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/136

*For non-residential properties, a special permit or site-plan approval may be required.