



## **“Solarize Arlington” Community Outreach Plan**

The Town of Arlington is in an excellent position to be highly successful if selected for the second phase of Solarize Mass. The Town government has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to energy efficiency and renewable energy that predates its involvement in the Green Communities Program by nearly a decade. A review of Town permits shows that there are currently approximately seventy existing residential and commercial PV installations in Town, which suggests a relatively high awareness of solar energy in the community, although our largest commercial installations are “invisible” to the general public, such as the ones on the Theodore Schwamb Mill buildings near Forrest Street and Massachusetts Avenue, and the building on Broadway in East Arlington housing the Lahey Clinic. There is also a small PV system on the Ottoson Middle School, 63 Acton Road. The Town is also in the process of pursuing larger-scale PV systems for suitable Town buildings. The population is highly educated, environmentally engaged, and should be very receptive to the Solarize Mass message. There is also a strong history of community activism and volunteerism around sustainability, climate change and energy, which will be leveraged for the outreach plan, which is described below. Arlington is also home to one of the first Deep Energy Retrofit houses that is often included in the NESEA (Northeast Sustainable Energy Association) annual Open House tour.

### **1. Team**

As noted above, there exists a strong tradition of volunteerism and community action in Arlington, including on local sustainability. The team that has been assembled reflects this tradition, and effectively integrates the various roles and responsibilities of the different program participants.

***Municipal Representative:*** Charlotte Milan, the Town’s Recycling Coordinator, will serve as the Municipal Representative. She will work with the Town’s Geographic Information Systems professional to identify optimal street tree siting, and looks forward to using the Town’s GIS capabilities once again for this project. A longtime resident of the community, Charlotte also serves as the co-chair of Sustainable Arlington, the group that will play the key role in the outreach plan. See below for more information on Sustainable Arlington.

***Community Solar Coach:*** Ryan Katofsky will serve as the Community Solar Coach (as a volunteer). Ryan has a 3.9 kW PV system on his home, is a longtime member of Sustainable Arlington, is a member of the Town’s Energy Working Group, and has nearly 20 years of professional experience as a consultant in renewable and clean energy technologies, policies, and businesses. Ryan works from his home and can therefore easily attend meetings in town during both business and non-business hours.

***Energy Working Group:*** The Town’s Energy Working Group (EWG), currently chaired by the Town Manager, Adam Chapdelaine, has representation from Public Works, building maintenance services, and the Arlington Public Schools, as well as volunteers from Sustainable Arlington and the Permanent Town Building Committee. The EWG will serve as an additional resource to the Municipal Representative and the Solar Coach in ensuring full participation by the Town in implementing the Solarize Mass program.

***Sustainable Arlington:*** Sustainable Arlington, founded in 1999, is a local volunteer organization committed to local action on climate change and other sustainability issues that improve the quality of life in Arlington. Sustainable Arlington is a chapter of the Mass Climate Action Network and committee of the Environment Task Group of Vision 2020, a committee of the Town of Arlington that partners community volunteers, Town employees and Town leaders on a wide range of planning and other activities vital to the Town of Arlington, including Town Day. Sustainable Arlington has been a major driver behind the annual town Ecofest, and was the principal author of the Town’s climate action plan. Sustainable Arlington leadership engages a broad array of communication channels including a website, an e-mail discussion group, and a monthly newsletter that reaches over 200 people.

Sustainable Arlington has a proven track record of mobilizing volunteers, evidenced by the highly-successful *Home Energy Check* campaign, which in 2001, resulted in over 400 new energy audits and three residential solar installations. Separately, in the fall of 2011, Sustainable Arlington brought out volunteers to construct a community rain garden.

Sustainable Arlington members have been contacted about the Solarize Mass programs, and several have already committed to conducting the bulk of the work on the marketing and outreach plan, as they have done on previous, similar initiatives. In addition, several Sustainable Arlington members, including two member of the Steering Committee, have PV installations on their homes.

### **A-HEET**

Arlington Home Energy Efficiency Team (A-HEET) is an all-volunteer organization that weatherizes/air-seals homes in Arlington, saving the homeowners money by allowing less warm air to escape (during the winter) and keeping the cool, conditioned air inside (during the summer). While reducing carbon emissions from the home, volunteers have a good time learning and working with others in the community. Homeowners pay for the cost of materials. A-HEET has committed to reaching out to its network of volunteers as potential Solarize Mass program participants and to help with the marketing and outreach campaign.

### **Vision 2020**

Vision 2020 is a committee of the Town of Arlington that works with community volunteers, Town employees and Town leaders on a wide range of planning and other activities vital to the Town of Arlington. Vision 2020 is organized into various task groups, and can connect with the community via these groups. Sustainable Arlington, as a member of Vision 2020, is in regular communication with Vision 2020 leadership. Vision 2020 has committed to reaching out to its network, primarily to recruit potential Solarize Mass program participants.

## **2. Marketing & Outreach**

Arlington's plan includes a number of complementary activities designed to both raise awareness of Solarize Mass and directly connect potential program participants with the selected solar installer. It will combine electronic, print, other media channels, and face-to-face strategies. (See Solarize Arlington Action Planning chart below). There are numerous channels that can be used to quickly reach a large proportion of the community.

The above core team members will reach out to the following community groups and organizations:

- Arlington Chamber of Commerce; one of the large commercial property owners with PV installations is a member of the Chamber of Commerce.
- Arlington Public School PTOs (for individual schools)
- Houses of worship
- A-HEET: Arlington Home Energy Efficiency Team
- Housing Corporation of Arlington
- SAVE Club: Arlington High School's environmental group, which has already expressed interest in participating in the Solarize Mass program.
- Walking in Arlington
- Arlington Garden Club
- Arlington Recycling Committee
- Arlington Bicycling Advisory Committee
- Transition Arlington
- Boys and Girls Club
- Arlington Center for the Arts
- East Arlington Good Neighbor Committee
- East Arlington Livable Streets Coalition
- Summer Street Neighborhood Association
- Womens Action for New Development (WAND)

- Mystic River Watershed Association
- Friends of Great Meadows (Park)
- Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park
- Friends of Robbins Farm Park
- Friends of Spy Pond Park
- Menotomy Weatherization

### **Overall Plan**

- The Solar Coach, working with the Town, will develop a calendar and list of marketing activities and estimate how many volunteers will be needed for each (see preliminary schedule at the end of this document)
- A core team of volunteers will be established, primarily from Sustainable Arlington, A-HEET, and the Brackett School PTO Green Initiatives Group. Each main activity will be assigned to one member of this core team, giving additional structure to the effort, and additional volunteers will be solicited for conducting the activities.
- We plan to communicate regularly with the installer and MassCEC to ensure proper coordination.

### **Electronic Outreach strategies**

- Host a page on the Town's website with relevant information about the program.
- Send out periodic e-mail blasts and notices via:
  - Town of Arlington Notices, Town-managed email list with over 4,200 direct subscribers, plus other email groups in town (Arlington List serve approx 4,500 subscribers).
  - Chamber of Commerce members
  - School PTOs
  - A-HEET volunteer lists
  - Sustainable Arlington members list (170 members)
  - YourArlington.com, locally hosted online media outlet
  - Arlington Patch
  - Social Media channels to be explored.

Beyond program basics, content is expected to include:

- "Case studies" of existing PV systems in Town, e.g., see: <http://www.sustainablearlington.org/sa15/resources/news/1/248-a-new-solar-lease-in-town>
- Photos of existing PV installations in Town
- Updates on progress towards reaching the next pricing tier from the PV installer
- Calendar of upcoming events

### **Print, Television, and Other Media Outreach Strategies**

- Articles in the *Arlington Advocate*, the local newspaper
- Coverage in the Boston Globe Northwest section
- Public service announcements on Arlington Community Media
- Large Sandwich Board outside Town Hall, visible to Mass Avenue travelers
- Notices posted at public parks and facilities (e.g., Arlington Reservoir Beach, Spy Pond, Menotomy Rocks Park, Minuteman Bike Path and at popular playgrounds)

### **Direct Outreach Strategies**

- Presentation to Town Meeting (200+ members), Board of Selectmen's meetings and School Committee meetings, all of which are televised via local cable access
- Insert in July property tax bill (if financially feasible)
- Presence at weekly farmer's market
- Outreach at Public Works Community Collection Day on May 12
- Solar Home self-guided "tour" of PV sites in Arlington
- Announcement at EcoFest on March 31
- Booth at Town Day (if schedule extended through September)

- Use GIS technology to identify optimal roofs with guidance from MassCEC
- Door to door canvas in sections of Town to notify owners if we believe their property is well suited for solar
- Identify and contact existing homeowners with PV systems, and ask if they will have “house parties” for neighbors
- Creation of “outreach art” soft sculpture and visit it around the community at sporting events and in parks on weekends
- Engage customers who have signed up and ask them to: talk with their neighbors, volunteer, post to their Facebook page and use all available means to reach others

### ***Meeting Facilities***

For the Solar 101 and 201 meetings, as well as other community meetings, we plan to use the main auditorium in Town Hall. This room can seat up to 300 and has full presentation capabilities. The Town is in the process of reserving a date in April for the Solar 101 meeting. Other venues are also available.

### **3. Permitting**

The permitting process for solar PV in Arlington is simple and in most cases only takes a few days from date of application to issuance. The permit application is two-part; a wiring permit and a building permit. The wiring permit fee is \$30 per thousand and the building permit fee is \$20 per thousand, both based on cost of labor and materials. In the Northeast, wind and snow loads are of particular concern for public and property safety. For this reason, a professional engineer (i.e. structural) submits a report on the installation method for the specific proposed structure during the building permit application process and also submits a final affidavit stating the installation was completed per approved design prior to Inspectional Services issuance of its Certificate of Completion.

In Arlington, there are two bodies that oversee historic properties: the Historic District Commission (HDC), and the Historical Commission. Six historic districts are within walking distance of Arlington Center, and a seventh is in the Mt. Gilboa neighborhood. The Historical Commission generally gets involved in permitting where demolition is being considered for a historically significant property, and thus has no jurisdiction on roofs. The HDC has previously approved a solar PV installation on a house in a historic district. The HDC counsels against them in highly prominent locations where they would cause an adverse impact on a District, but has not issued any denials. In addition, a current hearing for solar PV in a historic district is pending, and the HDC Chair reports that the HDC is receptive.

Arlington’s Conservation Commission has no jurisdiction unless trees are removed in the wetlands buffer zone.

As part of the Solarize Mass project, the Town will evaluate methods for further simplifying and streamlining the permitting process. We expect the Inspectional Services Department will be able to process the permits within the program timeframe."

### **4. Local Interest**

As part of the preparation of this application, the Town conducted a survey via Survey Monkey, from March 13-19, 2012, to gauge the interest of Arlington residents in installing residential solar PV. A total of 707 responses were received, 33% (236) indicated that they would be interested in participating in a discounted program and could commit to installing solar PV before August 31, 2012, 53.8% (380) said maybe (*complete survey results included*).

Additionally, earlier this year, the solar installer Sunlight Solar made a public presentation to interested Arlington residents. Despite little publicity, approximately 20 households attended the meeting.

### **5. Incorporating Lessons Learned from the Pilot Program**

As part of the preparation of this plan, we have reviewed the *Solarize Massachusetts Pilot Overview* report, and have incorporated some of the lessons learned into our plan, as follows:

**Schedule**

Although we are fully prepared to work within the timeline contained in the RFP, we respectfully suggest that the MassCEC consider extending the sign-up period until the end of September. This would serve two purposes. First, it would provide additional time to reach out to people who are gone for most of the summer. Second, since Arlington Town Day, our popular and highly-attended annual community outreach event, is in mid-September, it will allow us to have a presence at Town Day and give some time afterwards to follow up with prospective program participants.

**Seeing Solar in Action**

Pilot program communities wanted to be able to show prospective program participants what a home with PV looks like. Unlike the pilot communities, which had only a handful of PV systems in operation, Arlington already has several dozen, some of which are easily visible to passersby. Nevertheless, to meet this important need, we are planning to conduct an open house “solar tour” of existing PV systems. Although it may be possible to also get a project permitted and built within the timeframe of the outreach campaign, this tour will ensure that people interested can see a variety of systems.

**Tree Cover, Building Characteristics**

Like some of the pilot communities, Arlington has extensive tree cover. Nevertheless, we expect that there will be significant suitable locations, as already evidenced by the relatively high adoption of PV in town. We will make sure that program participants understand this aspect of PV siting/suitability and we will work to ensure that we do an appropriate job at screening potential participants to avoid unnecessary time spent of sites that are not suitable.

Arlington also has many two-family homes, mainly in East Arlington, comprised of both tenant/landlord units and condominiums. These pay present some specific issues with respect to system sizing, net metering, and roof access. We will make sure to work with the selected PV installer to address these issues up front.

**Community Engagement & Outreach Methods**

We recognize the importance of a successful marketing and outreach campaign, and we believe that our plan, as outline here, will provide for significant community engagement using a variety of channels, including specific events and sustained information campaigns.