

## Community Description

**Great Barrington** has a special place in energy history in Massachusetts and throughout the world. On the evening of March 20, 1886 William Stanley powered lights along Main Street, demonstrating, for the first time, the use of alternating current as a means of transmitting electric power over long distances. We are proud of this heritage and are eager to help shape the future of energy by participating in Solarize Mass.

Since its founding in 1761, Great Barrington has been a county seat, market center, industrial center and, now, a thriving blend of farms, business, industry and tourism. It is the largest town in southern Berkshire County and the largest in a 20 mile radius that encompasses nearby New York and Connecticut.

In 2010, Great Barrington had a population of 7,104. There were 3,466 housing units, 2,879 of which were occupied. 2,148 (63.5%) of those were owner occupied. 300 (14% of the owner occupied houses) were identified as seasonal or second homes.

On October 10, 2013, Great Barrington approved a Master Plan. The following goals and strategies contained within the Master Plan indicate the Town's commitment to renewable energy initiatives such as Solarize Mass:

- Goal: *Promote renewable energy systems for residences and businesses.* Among strategies enumerated for this goal are
  - *Educate homeowners and businesses about small scale solar, wind, or other renewable technologies that may be available and feasible at their sites. Priority should be given to low income households, seniors on fixed incomes, and first-time homebuyers.*
  - *Actively pursue Solarize Mass program in Great Barrington in order to maximize the available solar incentives offered by the Commonwealth.*
- Goal: *Make Town operations self-sufficient in electricity use by 2025.*

Located in scenic Berkshire County bordering New York State and close to the border of Connecticut, **Egremont** still retains much of its original rural character since its incorporation in 1775. Egremont is 2 ½ hours from both NYC and Boston, making it a popular destination for second homeowners. Many of the world-renowned Berkshire County cultural venues that once offered programs in music, theater, and dance only in summer now offer year-long programming. Skiing in many of the area's ski facilities provide outdoor winter activity. A portion of the Appalachian Trail runs through Egremont (as well as Great Barrington), and this and many other top-notch trails offer superb hiking opportunities to outdoor enthusiasts. Thus Berkshire County has become a year-round destination and an ideal home for retirees.

Egremont has a long tradition of farming. Dairy farms remain, but in the past few years many smaller CSAs have begun operations to cater to the growing desire to produce and purchase goods locally. To that end, the local Berkshire currency Berkshares was started by an Egremont-based non-for-profit organization. Restaurants, inns, and B&Bs abound in Egremont, catering to the many visitors who find this an ideal vacation spot.

Egremont's population is approximately 1300 full-time residents, with about 600 second homeowners/seasonal residents. There are approximately 950 housing units (including commercial buildings), and 51% of the tax base comes from the second homeowners/seasonal residents. The large percentage of second homeowners who value Egremont's bucolic charm fit into the demographic of those who would install PV solar for their homes.

Egremont relies heavily on volunteers to carry out the many functions of government. With only 25 paid municipal employees and a yearly operational budget of \$2.2 million, many of the town's boards and committees are manned by dedicated volunteers. A case in point is the Egremont Volunteer Fire Department, where some members have served since young adulthood or are second or third generation firemen. This sense of community pride is a core part of Egremont.

**Egremont's small size excludes the town from applying to Solarize Mass on its own. The partnership with neighboring Great Barrington makes the joint venture stronger. By concentrating our efforts together the towns will deliver an efficient, concentrated marketing approach with project funding going twice as far.**

The Solarize Mass program has been successful in achieving the Tier 5 level in all four Berkshire County towns that have participated. We will consult with team members from these towns concerning elements of their programs that were successful and those that were not as successful as hoped. We are committed to continuing the unbroken record of success that our county has earned.

## Marketing and Outreach Plan

In both Towns, community awareness of Solarize Mass has already begun. In Egremont, information on the program went out to property owners in the recent tax bill. An online survey was conducted in both towns with an overwhelmingly positive response: 100% of 143 Egremont homeowners responding to the survey expressed their interest in getting a solar assessment for their homes, and 90% of Great Barrington's respondents expressed their interest in a solar assessment.

Using an approach similar to the one detailed below, the Egremont Green Committee worked on with CET to invite homeowners to have home energy audits and take advantage of the many programs National Grid was then offering (e.g., low-cost home insulation, lighting retrofits). That partnership with CET proved to be extremely successful.

### Overview of Program

Our marketing plan for the Solarize Mass program is based on a close partnership between the volunteer team, the installer and MassCEC to achieve the following:

- **Get the Word Out** – we plan to expose each homeowner with information about the Solarize Mass program multiple times. Through advertising, brochures, inserts in regular Town mailings such as annual Census or semi-annual tax bills, lawn signs and event tables (such as the annual Great Barrington downtown Holiday Stroll), we will generate awareness and enthusiasm. The volunteer teams in both towns, with support from MassCEC and the installer, will be primarily responsible for these activities. Egremont's small size works in its favor in this regard. Town-wide mailers, email and newsletters are proven-effective means of reaching homeowners and will be employed for this project. In both towns, email addresses of interested homeowners have been captured already by the online survey.
- **Maximize Personal Contact** – the benefits of the program to a homeowner or business can best be explained through personal contact. With the support of MassCEC and the installer, the volunteer team will conduct meetings and other events to provide general information. The volunteer teams will canvass neighborhoods to distribute information and establish personal contacts.
- **Follow Up** – The Solar Coaches will work with the installer to facilitate assessments, proposals and installations for all homeowners who elect to receive them. The Solar Coaches will tenaciously follow up with each proposal to answer outstanding questions and ensure that deadlines are met.

### Specific Marketing Elements

**Solar 101** –We will focus initial marketing efforts on achieving a successful Solar 101 event. This event will be held jointly for both Towns at Crissey Farm, a catering hall in Great Barrington whose owners will donate the space for this purpose. The presentation by MassCEC will feature technical aspects of solar installations and the financial and environmental benefits of the program. We expect that this first meeting will be attended by many who have heard of the program and are already positively inclined, thus resulting in a solid kickoff.

Solar 201 – If the project installer is not selected until after Solar 101, we will conduct a joint Solar 201 meeting to introduce the installer. This will be an opportunity to further reinforce our message and begin active sign-up for assessments.

Community Meetings and Events – The MassCEC participant survey that followed the 2012 Solarize Mass program indicated that Community Meetings and Events were the single most important factor for success. In addition to Solar 101 and Solar 201, we have lined up multiple community, business and religious organizations who are interested in sponsoring meetings and events. As mentioned previously, these include the regional Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, land trusts, and faith-based groups in both towns.

Branding – Great Barrington will work with the Egremont team to develop a “Solarize” brand that will encompass both towns. This will enable co-branding of our effort so that marketing efforts in one town will spill over to the other.

Newspaper, Radio and Web Media – Great Barrington is the southern Berkshire County media center, headquarters for the Berkshire Record, the Shoppers Guide, WSBS radio, and widely distributed email newsletters. Events in the Town are also widely reported in the Berkshire Eagle and WAMC radio and through Public Access Television. All of these outlets serve both towns. We will conduct an aggressive campaign to publicize Solarize Mass. We will issue frequent press releases around program events and personally contact media representatives. The Solar Coaches from Egremont and Great Barrington will also seek radio time on WSBS’s “Let’s Talk” live interview program and on WAMC, the local National Public Radio station, which has a dedicated reporter for the Berkshire region. In addition, a portion of our budget will be used to place advertising about specific events, such as Solar 101.

Neighborhood Outreach – We will organize volunteers to knock on every homeowner’s and business’s door. The purpose will be to distribute brochures and, if possible, arrange follow-up visits. Great Barrington will use its reverse-911 phone call system to inform residents of the program, the Solar 101 event, and other Solarize Mass events. Egremont’s small size allows its volunteers to contact every Egremont resident with a personalized phone call.

Mailing Inserts – Both Towns regularly send mail to homeowners and businesses containing tax bills, Town Meeting notices and the annual Town census. We plan to add Solarize Mass inserts to Town mailings to publicize events and explain program elements.

Brochures – A portion of our budget will be spent on printing Solarize Mass brochures that will promote the financial and environmental benefits of the program. These brochures will be available at Town Halls and libraries and will be distributed at events, event tables and through neighborhood outreach.

Web Pages – We will create a web presence through a web page as well as Facebook and Twitter accounts. The use of social media may be especially effective in reaching seasonal homeowners. On Facebook, we will feature success stories involving previously installed sites and, once the program gets started, the experiences of those who already signed up. We will use Twitter to promote specific events and news regarding the program. Both Towns will also use its municipal website to post information. Both towns have well-established Google Groups (Egremont Neighbors, Egremont Posts, and the HillGB), which will be employed.

Lawn Signs – Lawn Signs and banners will be created to promote Solarize Mass and refer people to print and web materials.

Event Tables – Volunteers will work at tables at community events such as the holiday farmers markets and downtown Holiday Stroll to distribute brochures and answer questions about Solarize Mass.

Movie Theater Ads – As an example of the type of collaboration we anticipate from the community, the owner of the Triplex Cinema, a local first-run cinema, has offered on-screen advertising that is shown as part of a slide show before each movie. We can use this to promote the program’s events and refer people to our print and web promotional material.

### Solar 101

As another example of business collaboration with Solarize Mass, the owners of Crissey Farm in Great Barrington have volunteered their space for the Solar 101, to be conducted jointly with Egremont. Crissey Farm is a local catering hall affiliated with Barrington Brewery (which uses solar hot water for its brewing process) and hosts events serving up to 200 people.

### Marketing Budget

The \$2,500 marketing grant for each community will be utilized for promotional expenses for Solarize Mass. No stipend will be provided to the Solar Coaches who have volunteered their time without compensation.

The items in the preliminary budget include the following for each community:

	Great Barrington	Egremont
• Postage and printing for town-wide mailings		\$1,000
• Brochure and inserts, printing expenses	\$1,000	\$500
• Banners and lawn signs	\$500	\$250
• Advertising	\$500	\$500
• Other expenses such as travel, meeting refreshments, equipment rental, other supplies	\$500	\$250

## Additional Requirements

### Community Permitting and Requirements

#### Great Barrington

Permitting Component	Solar PV Requirements	Review Timeline	Cost	Associated Web Links
Building Permit (Roof Mounted)	Yes	30 days	\$35 for 10,000, \$7 per \$1000 thereafter	<a href="http://www.townofgb.org">www.townofgb.org</a>
Building Permit (Ground Mounted)	Yes	30 days	\$35 for 10,000, \$7 per \$1000 thereafter	<a href="http://www.townofgb.org">www.townofgb.org</a>
Electrical Permit	Yes	30 days	Included with BP	<a href="http://www.townofgb.org">www.townofgb.org</a>
Conservation Commission	Roof – no; Ground -possible	Varies	Varies	

Historical Commission	No			
Historic District Commission	Possible	Varies	\$40	
Community Bi-laws for yard signs	No	5 days	None	
Community Bi-laws for banners, signs, Thermometers, etc in public spaces	Possible	5 days	None	

Exhibit 1. Community Permitting and Requirements Chart

**Proposed streamlining efforts:**

In Great Barrington, Chris Rembold will actively participate in this project and help the installer and applicants through the permitting process. In his position as Great Barrington Town Planner, Chris maintains a close working relationship with the Building Inspector and Town Boards, Commissions and Committees.

**Egremont**

Permitting Component	Solar PV Requirements	Review Timeline	Cost	Associated Web Links
Building Permit (Roof Mounted)	Yes	14 days	\$5 for \$1000/\$60 minimum	<a href="http://www.egremont-ma.gov">www.egremont-ma.gov</a>
Building Permit (Ground Mounted)	Yes	14 days	same	<a href="http://www.egremont-ma.gov">www.egremont-ma.gov</a>
Electrical Permit	Yes	14 days	\$50	<a href="http://www.egremont-ma.gov">www.egremont-ma.gov</a>
Conservation Commission	Roof – no; Ground -possible	14 days		
Historical Commission	No			
Historic District Commission	No			
Community Bi-laws for yard signs	No			
Community Bi-laws for banners, signs, Thermometers, etc in public spaces	No			

Exhibit 1. Community Permitting and Requirements Chart

**Proposed streamlining efforts:**

In Egremont, Mary Brazie, the Municipal Rep and town Office Administrator, will actively participate in this project and will help the installer and applicants through the permitting process. She works closely with Egremont Building Inspector Ned Baldwin. Egremont’s small size works in its favor – there is minimal wait time. Assuming all of the information needed is submitted with the application, building permits can be issued fairly quickly.

**Local Interest**

Both Great Barrington and Egremont created web surveys through Survey Monkey. Email addresses were obtained from the web survey, and all of those interested parties will be added to the general contact list.

143 Egremont homeowners responded to the web survey and 100% of the respondents stated they would be interested in having a solar assessment performed on their home.

174 Great Barrington homeowners responded to the web survey and 90% of the respondents stated they would be interested in having a solar assessment performed on their home.

## Group Proposal

The teaming of the Towns of Great Barrington and Egremont in this proposal provides benefits for both. Since both towns are served by the same print, radio and web media, marketing and promotional efforts by each will spill over to the other. Great Barrington is the market town for many Egremont residents, further leveraging marketing efforts in Great Barrington.

Egremont does not contain enough owner-occupied residences to qualify for participation in the program by itself, but the demonstrated interest and enthusiasm of Egremont's homeowners will help to increase the interest in Great Barrington's. In addition, Great Barrington will benefit from the experience of Egremont in reaching out to its high proportion of second homeowners.

The Towns of Egremont and Great Barrington have a long tradition of working together, sharing services and municipal cooperation. This is due to the relatively small populations in the two towns as well as the respect for the nature of the towns. Great Barrington has more business and Egremont is more rural – each has unique services and amenities to offer the other. Both towns have volunteer Fire Departments and under the compact of mutual aid send personnel on calls for fire, rescue and medical assistance. Police Departments in the two towns share certain equipment creating efficiency in purchasing. They also share personnel on assignments which cross town boundaries. The Egremont Water Department has users who live across the boundary in Great Barrington. Residents in both towns use the services at each town's libraries. The Boards of Health in both towns work on policy development and permitting requirements which are consistent in both towns. All of our partnerships involve openness, respect and cooperation which are imperative to the operations of smaller communities.

The Solarize Mass teams from both towns will work closely to increase the benefits from their mutual marketing investments. Specifically we expect to jointly promote our initiatives as follows:

- We will co-brand the program so that marketing materials and initiatives can be shared and benefit both communities.
- Solar 101 and 201 – Solar 101 and 201 will be conducted jointly at Crissey Farm in Great Barrington.
- Meetings – Since Great Barrington contains more capacity regarding meeting spaces, we will conduct joint meetings and events whenever possible.
- Brochures, signs – Brochures, banners and signs will be co-branded as much as possible to benefit both towns.
- Web presence – The web site, Facebook page and Twitter account will contain contact information, stories, and events from both towns.
- Public Relations – Through co-branding, PR by one Town will benefit both.
- Advertising – Because we share the same print, broadcast and web news markets, we can effectively share advertising budgets. This is equally true of donated advertising such as that provided by the Triplex Theater.