

**2020 Solarize Mass Plus
MENDON-UPTON
COMMUNITY OUTREACH PLAN**

VISION STATEMENT

The volunteer team, towns of Mendon and Upton and the installers will implement a multi-tiered, multi-pronged approach to accomplish early awareness, interest and involvement in the program. Initially, the Solar Coaches and Municipal Representatives will solicit additional volunteers to help with the marketing and education aspect of the program, using the various outreach methods below. Also, in all of the marketing, we will stress the fact that the Solarize Mass Plus program deeply discounts installing PVs and other technologies and encourage people to spread the word to their family, friends and other associates. Word of mouth promotion from people they *trust* is an important tool to utilize.

Various networks within the community--among them, the school system, sports, scouts, community organizations, and religious institutions--all will interact to create a fabric of relationships that constitute the community. The more the outreach with different segments of the community, the more multi-faceted and overlapping connections will happen. These connections will reinforce a sense of relevancy, normalcy, and relationship that will lead to greater participation in the program--more signups and greater adoption of the technology.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

Strengths

As a result of the success of the Solarize Mass programs in both Mendon and Upton and fairly consistent, subsequent adoption of solar installations, both towns currently have about a 9% installation rate on buildings in town, definitely a strength.

Municipal Representative Anne Mazar in Mendon over the decades has emphasized the cost-effectiveness of sustainable practices, from the town purchasing desirable land to protect it from development, to installing solar panels in the middle school parking lot, so she has credibility with townspeople who trust her judgment. Likewise, Municipal Representative Bill Taylor in Upton, with whom Anne Mazar has worked extensively, has had a similar role in town as a cost-effective and sustainable steward with longtime credibility.

Many of the buildings in town have east-west roof orientations. However, the cost of solar has plummeted and the technology has improved so much, that east-west orientation is less of an issue than it was in 2012. Therefore, many of the homes which weren't eligible before will be possible candidates this time. We tested the waters for local interest with a brief survey and as

of November 13, 2019, we have received 163 interested responses and counting. We are still receiving emails from interested people. More details on this follow in the Local Interest section.

Weaknesses

Mendon has a low-density population with houses spread out as an echo of its longtime agricultural history. As a result, many houses are shaded by trees.

Opportunities

Because a fair number of houses have shade, Mendon has an opportunity to create community solar projects in which residents could purchase shares, as the town of Harvard did in 2011. One possibility would be to use some of the municipal buildings and parking lots as locations for solar, since all the municipal electricity comes from existing solar farms. That keeps usable land open for other purposes.

Threats

Both Mendon and Upton's average income may make purchasing of these technologies challenging for many homeowners. However, we are looking into bank financing options for homeowners to provide more affordability.

MARKETING STRATEGY

Types of Marketing and Outreach Channels

GENERAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

Existing solar owners We will begin with the current solar owners in town and encourage their involvement by identifying potential Solarize Plus prospects among their friends and neighbors and using talking points created from Mass CEC materials in their neighbor-to-neighbor conversations. Also, radiating out, using similarly situated homes within a neighborhood is also a good initial tactic.

General Outreach We will make informational presentations to community groups such as Bloomer Girls, Upton Women's Club, Upton Men's Club, Mendon and Upton Senior Centers, Upton Grange, Sustainable Upton, Upton Historical Society, Friends of the Upton State Forest, Mendon-Upton Youth Soccer's SoctoberFest, Nipmuc Youth Softball, Nipmuc Youth Baseball and other sports organizations, Brothers of the Brush, Parent-Teacher Organizations in the different schools, Lake Nipmuc Association, Meadowbrook Woods Association, Southwick's Zoo, Metacomet Land Trust, Earth Ltd., Mendon Unitarian Church and any other churches, Girl

Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H Club, Maple Farm Sanctuary, Milford Chamber of Commerce. We will use the following various forms of outreach throughout the duration of the program:

ONLINE OUTREACH

Facebook We will start a Solarize Mendon Plus FaceBook page and publicize all Meet the Installers meetings and any additional informational meetings, as well as the program deadline. We will reach out to various existing local Facebook groups in both Mendon and Upton, including Sustainable Upton, to announce the program and provide frequent, informal updates to generate attention and high-traffic pages.

Town Website We will post a notice on the home pages of the town websites (www.mendonma.gov and www.uptonma.gov) to encourage residents to go to the link of our Solarize Plus website for more details.

Solarize Plus Program Website We will create a website to support the program. Through a link from the town websites, we will provide relevant, more detailed information on our website, including Meet the Installers community meeting(s) and additional technology informational meetings and the program deadline. We will post a videotape/photos of an existing third-party owned solar PV system for residents unfamiliar with solar to understand how it works. We will post videotapes of these meetings on the website.

BROADCAST MEDIA

Radio We will seek to publicize the program through multiple timely interviews on the local radio station, WMCR-Milford.

Cable Network We will televise any Solarize Plus meetings and run them on the town cable network. In addition, we would videotape the meetings and post them on the Solarize Plus website. We will use the town cable network to post Meet the Installers community meeting, any additional informational meetings and the program deadline. The Upton team will appear on the Upton cable interview program "Be My Guest" to promote the program.

PRINT MEDIA

Newspapers We will publicize in the *Milford Daily News*, a regional daily newspaper. For local newspapers, we will create more press releases in the *Milford Daily News*, a Gannett publication, and the *Upton/Mendon Town Crier*, which reaches EVERY household in Mendon and Upton. Anne Mazar, Chair of the Mendon Land Use/Energy Committee, writes articles about environmental issues in her monthly column "Think Globally, Act Locally" in the *Town Crier*. As the Solarize Plus Municipal Representative, she will write articles and include eye-

catching photos of solar panels and additional technology. With some of the budget, we will print flyers to be inserted in the *Upton/Mendon Town Crier* to notify residents of the Meet the Installers Community Meeting and any additional meetings. We will have some advertisements in both papers.

Brochures and Other Print Media With some of the budget, we will print and provide brochures/flyers in pertinent locations around both towns, such as the town libraries, some businesses, the Town Clerk's offices, other town government offices, and Southwick's Zoo, which receives about 235,000 visitors annually. We will distribute brochures/flyers at various local events.

When the weather is warmer, we will leave door knob hangers indicating that a resident's house is suitable for solar. We will post lawn signs indicating a resident has gone solar.

We will also include flyers in the property tax bills, which are sent out the last week in June to every property owner in the towns. Likewise, any town census information requested by the Town Clerks will also include flyers to go to all residents.

INFLUENTIAL ORGANIZATIONS AND TOWN COMMITTEES

Several organizations have already committed to participation in the program including: the Land/Energy Use Committee, the Board of Selectmen, the Lake Nipmuc Association, the Meadowbrook Woods Association, Southwick's Zoo, Metacomet Land Trust and Earth Ltd. for their support and involvement. Different members of the team have worked with one or more of the organizations named above on various other projects. These groups will help in the education and spreading the word about Solarize Massachusetts in Mendon. Since these mentioned groups are all environmentally-focused groups, there is a good chance that people involved in these groups will be interested in renewable energy. The team will continue to reach out to other groups including the Chamber of Commerce, the Lion's Club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and various town groups.

SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

Coordination with the Nipmuc High School environmental science classes and related clubs might include training students to evaluate potential solar candidates via Google Maps and educating students about air source heat pumps and enlisting them as informal community members in our effort to increase people's understanding of this technology.

We will do outreach to the various Parent-Teacher Organizations in the schools.

COMMERCIAL AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

Milford Area Chamber of Commerce The Milford Area Chamber of Commerce has 28 Mendon members whom we would contact.

Commercial Properties

As the program allows for small scale commercial (under 10kW) properties, we will contact small businesses to encourage their participation in the program. We will meet with any small business in Mendon and Upton, such as Alicante's Restaurant, New England Seafood Restaurant, Willowbrook Restaurant, and Lowell's Restaurant and small businesses on Route 16 and Route 140.

State Legislators We will also invite Senator Ryan Fattman and Representative Brian Murray to share their enthusiasm for the program to add further validity and gain people's confidence in the program. They may attend the Meet the Installers Community meeting, or put out the information in their newsletters or be involved in another manner.

SIGNAGE

Town Marquee We will post the Solarize Plus Meet the Installers Community meeting and updated information on the Mendon marquee on the Town Common at the stoplight in the center of town and lit at night. Upton has two town marquees, one next to the Town Hall and the other is portable; both can indicate town events such as informational meetings.

Sign at Town Beaches During the summer, we will work with the Parks and Recreation Departments of both towns to provide signs with updated program information at the Town Beaches.

TABLING AT LOCAL EVENTS

At the following local events we will offer brochures/flyers (from the budget) and inform Mendon and Upton residents about any upcoming informational meetings and sign up for the solar installer to visit.

- Upton Fourth of July fireworks
- Hazardous Waste Days
- Upton Heritage Day
- Annual Town Meetings
- Strawberry Festival, Mendon Unitarian Church
- VFW Flea Market days, Upton
- Lion's Club Fair, October \$65/booth
- MendonFest, October
- Mendon-Upton Youth Soccer Soctober Fest

Frequent tabling at both the Mendon Town Beach, the Upton Kiwanis Beach, Mendon Town Library and the Upton Town Library.

SECURING SIGN-UPS AND PARTICIPATION

Aiming to translate interest into action, the Solar Coach and Solar Team volunteers will work with the solar installer to ensure that anyone who has attended a Solarize Plus educational event will receive personal followup by email, phone call or postcard, offering to answer any questions they may have. Furthermore, those who have signed up will receive regular communications about Solarize Mass Plus events and the program's progress in order to sustain their interest and ensure follow-through with their installation during the sign-up period.

AMBASSADORS

For those who have signed up, we will invite them to be Solar Ambassadors for the program, provide materials and organizational support so they can reach out to their own personal and community networks. We will also ask Solar Ambassadors to host open houses and other home-based events, allowing friends and neighbors to meet with the selected solar installer and other residents who have gone solar, in a more relaxed, low-pressure social setting.

CUSTOMER EDUCATION

The Solar Coaches and volunteers will also work to educate potential customers:

- Responding to questions/inquiries such as the program, mechanics and pricing
- Helping homeowners assess their suitability for solar via web tools such as the US Department of Energy's PVWatts website (<https://pvwatt.nrel.gov/>)
- Maintain regular communications with those who have signed up

Meeting Locations

The two towns have a number of acceptable locations for meetings, depending on the anticipated attendance. The Miscoe Hill Middle School auditorium can accommodate 200 attendees and the Nipmuc High School auditorium has a capacity of 550. Smaller appropriate meeting spaces might be the Mendon Town Hall (50) and the Upton Town Hall (50), with the capability to broadcast live on local cable stations.

Multiple Technologies Promotion

Given the interest in the full range of technologies in our survey of 163 responses, (106 solar PV, 76 solar hot water, 62 air source heat, 56 ground source heat, 27 EVs, 66 battery storage), at this point we are somewhat reluctant to reduce the scope of technologies. We envision simplifying the choices for people by offering installers who can provide more than one technology where possible, e.g., air source heat and ground source heat, or solar PV and battery storage.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

As soon as the Mendon-Upton Solarize Plus Team receives word of our acceptance into the program in January, we will implement the plan to jump-start our outreach.

Initial Efforts

- Refine the outreach and marketing strategy
- Clarify the working relationship with supportive organizations, explore their ideas and methods of involvement
- Design and create marketing materials
- Design and set up the Solarize Plus website
- Announce our acceptance into the program through various media, such as newspapers, Facebook, town websites, and other avenues
- Conduct immediate initial outreach to alert existing solar owners and prospects identified through our survey of our acceptance into the program
- Create general awareness of the program

We hope these initial efforts will produce some early enthusiasm on which we can build as we expand into the general outreach in April.

General Outreach

In spring, we will hit the ground running and raise awareness. Once the installers have been selected, those efforts will be coordinated with the installers through the following measures:

- Make informational presentations to community groups
- Use online outreach with social media, town websites and the Solarize Mass Plus website
- Publicize through radio and cable network
- Get exposure with newspapers through various means
- Implement the broader reach through supportive influential organizations and committees
- Make connections with the schools to tie in learning about the technologies and engage students
- Contact small businesses

- Post program presentations through town signage
- Table at local events to spread the word

We will encourage people to sign up before school ends, summer begins in earnest and people are away.

In summer, we will keep the program in the public eye by the following:

- Use the local newspapers and social media
- Table at summertime events and town beaches
- Post signs at the town beaches
- Enclose flyers in the property tax bills
- Focus on small businesses
- Install yard signs for participating residents who've gone solar
- Encourage summer residents to take advantage to explore their energy options before the fall "rush"

In late August/early September and into the fall, we will reinvigorate the program by taking similar actions to those in the spring and adding others:

- Continue to make informational presentations to community groups
- Offer additional technology information presentations to ramp up enthusiasm again and focus on sign-ups
- Distribute door knob hangers on suitable residences
- Install yard signs for participating residents who've gone solar
- Use online outreach with social media, town websites and the Solarize Mass Plus website
- Publicize through radio and cable network
- Get exposure with newspapers through various means
- Implement the broader reach through supportive influential organizations and committees
- Make connections with the schools to tie in learning about the technologies and engage students
- Contact small businesses
- Post program presentations through town signage
- Table at several fall festivals in October to remind residents to sign up before the program ends and the federal tax credit reduces in 2021
- Publicize the program deadline for procrastinators

- Consider including specific strategies as part of the marketing and outreach plan focused on driving adoption in:
 - low- and moderate-income households, or **SEE LETTER FROM AFFORDABLE HOUSING COORDINATOR IN ATTACHMENT 3**
 - other underrepresented housing sectors, such as rental housing.
- If the Community chooses to include more than one additional technology in the Solarize Mass Plus campaign, discuss how the volunteer team will promote multiple technologies.
- Goals for installations per technology (optional).
- **Implementation timeline:** month-by-month outreach activities

For examples of past marketing proposals, visit the [Solarize Mass Plus website](#).

Please note, this section and the Solarize Mass Plus Section of your application will be made public as a part of the installer selection process, so be as thorough as possible.

Solarize Mass Plus:

(If not previously described in marketing and outreach plan)

Indicate preferred additional technologies and three reasons why this technology/ies was selected, including why your Community may be a good fit for each additional technology. Include information on how you will model outreach to include the additional technology and **be sure to use your review of the Plus Technology Selection (pages 11-13 of the RFP) as a point of reference.**

It is highly recommended that communities conduct a survey or poll to gauge interest, which could be used to guide technology selection

The Mendon -Upton Solarize Mass Plus Team conducted an online survey for Mendon and Upton results, which gave us an indication that people are eager to participate! 164 people responded.

Solar PV:

1. In our online survey there were 107 interested in adding solar PV. This indicates that there is a sizeable interest in both towns for solar PV.
2. In Solarize Mass, we were trying to explain the technology to people and it was not mainstream. It was the early adapters who bought it. Now, in Mendon and Upton, solar PVs are all around the towns. People see it as a beneficial, economically viable and a tested technology.
3. Our communities are well versed in climate change and the need to reduce their carbon footprint

Battery back-up:

1. In the first Solarize Mass, many people wanted the battery back-up for when there were power outages, but this was not an option. Now they can take advantage of this complementary technology. It would be ideal to have a solar installer that would install both solar PV and battery back-up.

2. There are 427 homes in our area with solar PV and 107 more that are interested for a total of 534 homes. This group will be targeted for battery back-up.
3. On our survey there were 67 who were interested in solar and batteries, but I think this number will grow as people learn more about the advantages.

Solar Hot Water:

1. Mendon does not have natural gas, so people are looking for more economical heating sources. On the survey, 77 people indicated an interest in this technology.
2. This is an easy add on for almost any home.
3. People that added the solar PV may want to continue this trend and add solar hot water. Again, it was previously not an option.

Air Source Heat Pumps:

1. Mendon does not have natural gas, so this would be a good technology to pair with the solar PVs. On the survey, 62 people indicated an interest in this technology.
2. This is very easy to install when changing the heat source. People are comfortable with this proven technology.
3. It can be an affordable heat source

Ground Source Heat Pumps:

1. Mendon does not have natural gas, so this would be a good technology to pair with the solar PVs
2. There is a lot of new construction in Mendon and Upton and this technology would be easier to install for homes that are in the process of being built. On the survey, 56 people indicated an interest in this technology.
3. There are local installers that install air and ground source heat pumps and they could evaluate the needs of a home for either technology.

EVs:

1. Mendon has one of the largest car dealerships in the state with 52 acres of cars and the dealership has a huge budget for marketing that we could take advantage of with selling EVs.
2. They are a Chevrolet dealer, but do not sell the Bolt EV. When asked a few years ago, they said EVs were only for people in cities. With education and the fact that the new Bolt has an average of 260 miles on a charge, this could be a desirable car for them to sell. We would be adding another MA dealership that would sell EVs, potentially expanding the EV market.
3. Carolyn Barthel, Solar Co-Coach and Anne Mazar, Mendon Municipal Rep, both have Bolts and love them! We have firsthand knowledge on the benefits of EVs and would be EV evangelists. Besides the energy savings and carbon reduction, most people do not know how incredibly fun they are to drive.