

Solarize Massachusetts Community Outreach Plan - Acton MA

1) Team: Brief Description of the members of the designated team for the community

The Town of Acton has a robust, well-networked volunteer community that serves the schools, the Town, and residents at large. These groups and their members would be able to drive the marketing and outreach for PV education and find the homeowners interested in new solar installation as required by the Solarize Massachusetts program. Evidence of the strength of Acton's remarkable volunteer community was demonstrated this winter when Acton was, we learned, the fastest town to qualify for the recent Sagewell Free-Home-Energy Scan Challenge (www.sagewell.com). Volunteer groups, working in concert with the Town Manager, were able to get more than four hundred Acton homeowners to sign up for these free energy scans in under 10 days.

Acton, one of the earliest achievers of the Commonwealth's Green Community status, also is eager to learn from and leverage other local communities experience in moving towards more sustainable and equitable resource use. Efforts include learning about the successful Solarize MASS experience of Harvard MA directly from key participants who spoke at Senator Jamie Eldridge's recent Green Advisory Council meetings and include Acton residents conversely speaking to Harvard groups about steps that town could take to attain Green Community status.

Key Acton Groups able to engage in Community Education & Outreach for this Solarize MASS initiative include:

1. **Green Acton**, a grass-roots green group founded in 2008, (<http://greenacton.org/>)
2. **The Green Advisory Board** of the Town of Acton, advising the Town on adopting sustainable energy policies, including guiding it to Green Community status, (www.acton-ma.gov/index.aspx?NID=100)
3. **ABPip**, Acton-Boxborough Parent Involvement Project, a parent-led enrichment program in Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, with strong school ties, (<http://actonpip.org/>)
4. **The Discovery Museums**, a hands-on science, learning center in Acton for "children of all ages" (<http://www.discoverymuseums.org/>)
5. **The Green Council** at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, advisor Kate Crosby, Energy Advisor Acton Public Schools/Acton Boxborough Regional High School (<https://sites.google.com/a/abschools.org/sustainabilityabrhs/>)
6. **The Acton Chinese Language School**, a non-profit dedicated to teaching Chinese language and culture to Chinese-American and non-Chinese American students and adults in Acton and surrounding towns. (<http://www.acls-ma.org/>)

2) Marketing and Outreach:

Acton's marketing plan to motivate community-driven solar PV installations would be built around the unique characteristics of the Town and its residents. The Community Solar Coach, Chris Schaffner, would hold an initial meeting with the six key outreach groups listed above and then let them leverage their own considerable networking abilities. Effectively, this would be a multi-nodal outreach effort - appropriately more organic in design than hierarchical.

Key attributes of the marketing and outreach plan would be to:

- Facilitate communication between MassCEC, town officials, installers, residents and business owners:
- Leverage experience of existing solar-powered homeowners in Acton; including eight at the co-housing complex, Half-Moon Hill in West Acton;
- Hold outreach and volunteer canvassing at uniquely Actonian venues, such as the popular outdoor Acton Boxborough Farmers' Market which draws a wide segment of the community to a historic section of West Acton on a weekly basis;
- Hang a Solarize Mass street banner over the main commuter route through town (route 27), which sees an excess of 30,000 vehicles per day;

The Acton community driven outreach strategies would combine social media, media outreach, cable access television public service announcements, visibility at town-wide events, and personal outreach of volunteers and program participants - all actions shown to have produced successful outcomes in neighboring communities.

The educational and outreach events could be held in numerous locations throughout Acton where volunteer groups already have access. Meeting rooms available to these groups, capable of holding more than 100 persons at a time, include, The Acton Town Hall and The Acton-Boxborough Regional Junior and Senior High auditoriums. Meetings could be also held at The Acton Public Safety Building and the Acton Community Access Televisions state-of-the art studio which just opened in 2012.

3) Permitting:

The Town of Acton has long had a renewable friendly permitting process. For the typical solar PV installation on an existing residence, the following steps are required.

1. Visit Building Department for the necessary building and electrical permits.
2. Building Department would verify that all zoning dimensional requirements are met.

3. If the existing building is located in an Historic District a Certificate of Appropriateness, or Certificate of non-applicability would also be required from the Historic District Commission. It is anticipated that installations would only be allowed in the Historic districts if they are not visible from the street.

4. Conservation Commission approval would not typically be required, unless a stand-alone ground mounted array is proposed within protected wet-land setbacks.

The table below summarizes the permitting process.

Permitting Component	Requirements	Review Timeline	Cost	Associated Links
Building Permit	Proposed Installation meets State Building Code	Generally over-the-counter, max 30 days	\$14.75 per \$1000 value	http://www.acton-ma.gov/index.aspx?nid=114
Electrical Permit	Proposed Installation meets State Electrical Code	Generally over-the-counter, max 30 days	Depending on number of inspections required, generally less than \$80	http://www.acton-ma.gov/index.aspx?nid=114
Historic District Commission	Projects in Historic District must comply with town By-law	Public hearing within 45 days, decision with 60 days of application	\$50	http://www.acton-ma.gov/index.aspx?nid=101
Conservation Commission	Not anticipated	n/a	n/a	n/a