



CITY OF HARRISONBURG
**PUBLIC
WORKS**

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To: Ande Banks, Interim City Manager
From: Thomas Hartman, PE, PMP, LEED AP, Director of Public Works
Date: January 25, 2022
Re: SolSmart Designation and Cohort Enrollment

Summary:

The Department of Public Works will present to City Council a request to pursue designation and technical assistance through the SolSmart program, as well as all staff to enroll in a Virginia Locality Cohort related to the SolSmart designation.

Background:

The City of Harrisonburg's adopted Environmental Action Plan includes a guiding goal that states "*Reduce Overall, Community-Wide Greenhouse Gas Emissions and the Intensity of Greenhouse Gases Emitted from Different Activities*" and a goal within Focus Area 1 – Buildings and Energy that states "*Encourage Efforts to Improve Energy Efficiency and Increase Renewable Energy and Sustainable Energy Sources*".

Last year, members of the Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee brought the SolSmart designation and technical assistance programs to staff's attention, and then in December 2021, the Committee suggested that the City pursue participation in the Virginia Locality Cohort.

Key Issues:

The SolSmart designation and technical assistance programs would aid the City in achieving the EAP goals stated above. [SolSmart](#) is a solar energy designation and technical assistance program led by the Interstate Renewable Energy Council, the International City/County Management Association, and other national solar experts, and is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. The program helps prepare communities for the solar energy transition at the local level. SolSmart offers no-cost technical assistance from a team of national experts that work with communities to identify local priorities and strategies to help make solar energy more affordable and accessible for residents and businesses. Successful communities are awarded the prestigious designation of SolSmart Bronze, Silver, or Gold. SolSmart designated communities across the U.S. recognize solar energy as a resource offering a multitude of benefits, including savings on energy bills, opportunity for economic development, and local job growth.

In addition to seeking a SolSmart designation and technical assistance, City staff is also seeking approval to enroll in a Virginia Locality Cohort. This cohort would meet periodically over the next 6 months as the City works towards its initial designation and begins the technical

assistance process. The cohort would allow staff the opportunity to collaborate with other Virginia localities as they work through the same SolSmart designation process.

Environmental Impact:

Increases in solar energy production to reduce greenhouse gases generated.

Fiscal Impact:

The SolSmart designation, technical assistance, and cohort programs are provided at no cost to the City.

Prior Actions:

Guiding goal and focus area goal from the adopted Environmental Action Plan.

Alternatives:

N/A

Community Engagement:

N/A

Recommendation:

Adopt the SolSmart Solar Statement and allow City staff to become a member of the Virginia Locality Cohort.

Attachments:

1. Presentation
2. SolSmart Solar Statement

Review: