



# CITY OF HARRISONBURG OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

MAYOR DEANNA REED

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To: SolSmart Program Administrators  
International City/County Management Association  
The Solar Foundation

From: Mayor Deanna R. Reed

Date: January 25, 2022

Re: SolSmart Solar Statement and Request to Join Solar Cohort

On behalf of the City of Harrisonburg, I am proud to announce our commitment to become a SolSmart-designated community. In partnership with the SolSmart team, the City of Harrisonburg's dedicated staff members will work to improve solar market conditions by increasing the efficiency of local processes related to solar development. These efforts will make it faster, easier, and more affordable for our residents and businesses to install solar energy systems and may also save our local government time and money.

SolSmart builds upon previous City initiatives and our community's efforts to achieve the following:

1. Creation of the Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee (EPSAC) which occurred in 2017
2. Development of Phase 1 of the Environmental Action Plan which was adopted in 2020
3. Development of the municipal and community greenhouse gas inventories completed in 2021
4. Creation of a Sustainability and Environmental Manager position in 2020
5. Adoption of the Resolution in Favor of Harrisonburg's Transition to Renewable Energy by 2035 in 2020
6. Establishing a "solar farm" on City owned land in conjunction with the Harrisonburg Electric Commission, the Virginia Municipal Electric Association, and Dominion Energy which is still in progress
7. Installing solar panels on Bluestone Elementary School using grant funds provided by the City's municipal electric utility, Harrisonburg Electric Commission, as funding allows, which is still in progress
8. Community organization's efforts to connect community members with solar opportunities have grown private residential solar installation from 4 in 2010 to 216 in 2021

The City of Harrisonburg will leverage SolSmart to achieve the following goals:

- Review current permitting processes and/or implement permitting solar permitting best practices.
- Review planning & zoning process and enhance siting options for solar PV while preserving community character and historic resources.
- Review inspection processes and train staff on inspection best practices.
- Support local solar energy development through public education and engagement efforts.
- Install solar energy systems on key local government facilities, as funding allows.

These efforts demonstrate that our community is committed to driving continual improvement in our solar market, and in the process of doing so, the City will see progress in all the related areas identified as community priorities in our Environmental Action Plan, Comprehensive Plan, and City Council Vision.

To measure progress along the way, the City of Harrisonburg will track key metrics related to solar energy deployment, such as installed solar capacity and the number of installations across sectors. In addition, we will call on our residents, businesses, non-profits, and others to get involved. We will develop and publicize our solar landing page to keep everyone informed of our actions and our progress as we move through our goals.

Finally, the City of Harrisonburg requests to join a cohort of other Virginia localities to collaborate with other jurisdictions to determine best practices, be engaged with solar topics, and to learn from other's successes.

Inquiries related to the City of Harrisonburg's SolSmart participation can be directed to Keith Thomas, Sustainability and Environmental Manager, [keith.thomas@harrisonburgva.gov](mailto:keith.thomas@harrisonburgva.gov), 540-434-5928 x2204.

Sincerely,

Deanna R. Reed  
Mayor