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Fourteen Communities Designated “SolSmart Gold” for Encouraging Solar Market Growth

Department of Energy-funded program recognizes total of 22 solar-friendly cities and counties across the United States

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, the [SolSmart](#) program funded by the [U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative](#) is recognizing 22 communities across the country for making it faster, easier, and cheaper to go solar. Fourteen communities will receive the gold designation under SolSmart, one community will receive the silver designation, and seven communities will receive the bronze designation.

SolSmart representatives will announce the designated communities today in a special ceremony at the annual conference of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) in Kansas City, MO.

These 22 communities are the first to receive SolSmart designation since the program launched in April 2016. A SolSmart designation signals that a community is “open for solar business,” helping to attract solar industry investment and generate economic development and local jobs. SolSmart aims to designate 300 communities during the three-year, federally-funded program.

The communities awarded *SolSmart Gold* designation are: **Austin, Texas; City of Boulder, Colorado; Columbia, Missouri; Fremont, California; Fort Collins, Colorado; Gladstone, Missouri; Hartford, Connecticut; Kansas City, Missouri; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Minneapolis, Minnesota; San Carlos, California; Santa Monica, California; Santa Rosa, California; and Satellite Beach, Florida.**

The community awarded *SolSmart Silver* designation is: **Boulder County, Colorado.**

The communities awarded *SolSmart Bronze* designation are: **Burlington, Vermont; Claremont, California; Denver, Colorado; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Redwood City, California; Saint Paul, Minnesota; and Somerville, Massachusetts.**

Among the gold designees, Fremont, California received special recognition for its work on solar-friendly permitting processes. Hartford, Connecticut received special recognition for solar-friendly planning, zoning, and development. Santa Monica, California received three special recognition mentions for solar-friendly permitting processes; planning, zoning, and development; and inspection.

“The communities receiving SolSmart designation are now well positioned to attract new solar businesses and take advantage of the dramatic job growth we’ve seen in the industry,” said **Andrea Luecke, President and Executive Director at The Solar Foundation**. “We hope many more cities and counties will be encouraged to join SolSmart and help even more homes and businesses go solar.”

“The good work that local governments undertake day-to-day often happens under the radar,” said **ICMA Executive Director Robert J. O’Neill, Jr.** “It is wonderful to see the Department of Energy recognize the accomplishments of these outstanding communities.”

To achieve designation, cities and counties take steps to reduce solar “soft costs,” which are non-hardware costs that can increase the time and money it takes to install a solar energy system. Examples of soft costs include planning and zoning; permitting; financing; customer acquisition; and installation labor. Soft costs now represent roughly two-thirds of the total price of an installed residential system. Reducing these costs leads to savings that are passed on to consumers.

“We are honored that Kansas City is among the first in the nation to receive the SolSmart Gold designation,” said **Troy Schulte, City Manager of Kansas City**. “Expanding solar energy not only helps fight climate change, but also attracts more entrepreneurs to the city while creating new jobs. A SolSmart designation shows that our city is truly on the cutting-edge of clean energy development nationwide.”

“Denver is proud to be a national solar leader, and we look forward to building on our achievements as one of the nation’s first participants in the SolSmart program,” said **Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock**. “Going solar — saving money, energy and the environment — in Denver should be accessible to every community and every household, and with this partnership we will help to make that a reality.”

The SolSmart designation team, led by ICMA, awards communities points based on the actions they take to reduce soft costs and other barriers to going solar. Based on the number of points they receive, communities are designated either gold, silver, or bronze. Cities and counties receiving a silver or bronze designation will have the opportunity to increase their point total and move up to the gold tier in the future.

A team of national solar experts led by The Solar Foundation offers no-cost technical assistance to help participating cities and counties achieve designation. Communities can also apply to host [SolSmart Advisors](#), fully-funded temporary staff who provide personalized, hands-on assistance to communities for periods of up to six months. The first round of communities selected to host SolSmart Advisors will be announced in the coming weeks.

“Local governments can make a huge difference in encouraging solar industry growth,” said **Danielle Bentz, Deputy Director, Policy, Electricity & Markets at SolarCity**. “A SolSmart designation shows that a city or county is committed to lowering costs and reducing barriers to solar. That’s good news for a community that wants to grow their economy by deploying clean energy.”

“These SolSmart-designated communities are setting an example for the rest of the country,” said **Robert Shanklin, President and COO of Brightergy**, a Kansas City-based energy company. “We’re glad SolSmart is recognizing these cities and counties for the hard work they’ve done to improve the business climate for solar.”

All U.S. cities and counties are eligible to join SolSmart and receive no-cost technical assistance to receive designation. Communities can begin the process by visiting [SolSmart.org](#).

About SolSmart

SolSmart is a national designation and technical assistance program that recognizes leading solar communities and empowers additional communities to expand their local solar markets. Funded by the U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative, SolSmart strives to cut red tape, drive greater solar deployment, and make it possible for even more American homes and businesses to access solar energy to meet their electricity needs. Learn more at SolSmart.org.

About ICMA

ICMA, the [International City/County Management Association](http://InternationalCityCountyManagementAssociation.org), advances professional local government management worldwide. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advancing professional management to create sustainable communities that improve lives worldwide. The management decisions made by ICMA's members affect millions of individuals living in thousands of communities, from small villages and towns to large metropolitan areas.

About The Solar Foundation

Our mission is to accelerate adoption of the world's most abundant energy source. Through our leadership, research, and capacity building, we create transformative solutions to achieve a prosperous future in which solar technology is integrated into all aspects of our lives. Visit us at TheSolarFoundation.org.

About the SunShot Initiative

The [U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative](http://U.S.DepartmentofEnergySunShotInitiative.org) is a collaborative national effort that aggressively drives innovation to make solar energy fully cost-competitive with traditional energy sources before the end of the decade. Through SunShot, the Energy Department supports efforts by private companies, universities, and national laboratories to drive down the cost of solar electricity to \$0.06 per kilowatt-hour. Learn more at energy.gov/sunshot.