



CITY OF HARRISONBURG PUBLIC WORKS

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Harrisonburg designated “SolSmart Bronze” for advancing solar energy growth

HARRISONBURG, Va. – The City of Harrisonburg has received a bronze designation from the national SolSmart program for making it faster, easier and more affordable for homes and businesses to go solar.

This designation recognizes Harrisonburg for taking bold steps to encourage solar energy growth and remove obstacles to solar development. For companies looking to expand, a SolSmart Bronze designation is a signal that Harrisonburg is “open for solar business.”

SolSmart is led by the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office. More than 450 cities, counties and small towns have achieved SolSmart designation since the program launched in 2016.

“SolSmart designation is a great step forward for the City,” Harrisonburg Public Works Sustainability and Environmental Manager Keith Thomas, said. “We are working to reduce barriers and provide access to information so more of our residents and businesses can explore their options to go solar.”

As a SolSmart designee, Harrisonburg is helping solar companies reduce the cost of installations and pass those savings on to consumers. This allows even more local homes and businesses to obtain affordable, clean and reliable electricity through solar. The actions Harrisonburg has taken will help encourage solar companies to do business in the area, driving economic development and creating local jobs.

To receive designation, cities and counties make changes to their local processes to reduce the time and money it takes to install a solar energy system. This includes evaluating local permitting and inspection processes, as well as planning and zoning procedures. SolSmart designees also develop innovations in areas such as community engagement, government operations and solar market development.



(Above) Thanh Dang, assistant director of community development (left) and Nyrma Soffel, office manager of community development (right), pose for a photo with the SolSmart Bronze designation sign.

One example of improvement is the partnership with the Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP) and Solar United Neighbors on their solar campaigns. Harrisonburg also created a solar landing page, updated permitting process including the rollout of the SolarApp, and employee training for building and permitting officials.

SolSmart uses objective criteria to award communities points based on the actions they take to reduce barriers to solar energy development. Communities that take sufficient action are designated either Gold, Silver, or Bronze.

As part of the SolSmart program, a team of national experts provides no-cost technical assistance to help communities achieve designation. SolSmart designees are now in 42 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Interested communities can learn more at SolSmart.org.

*The **City of Harrisonburg** is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 54,000 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is available online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.*

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