



MEMORANDUM

TO: Kevin J. Murphy, City Manager
FROM: Katherine Moses, Energy Manager

Diane Nichols Tradd
Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

Kevin E. Coughlin
Deputy Director

SUBJECT: Informational Communication – SolSmart Gold Designation for City of Lowell

The City of Lowell recently received a Gold level designation from the national SolSmart program. This designation recognizes the City for taking bold steps to encourage solar energy growth and remove obstacles to solar development. For companies looking to expand, a SolSmart Gold designation is a signal that Lowell is “open for solar business.”

SolSmart is led by The Solar Foundation and the International City/County Management Association and funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office. More than 150 cities, counties, and towns have achieved SolSmart designation since the program launched in 2016. Lowell is one of only four communities in Massachusetts currently designated as SolSmart Gold.

SolSmart uses objective criteria to award communities points based on the actions they take to reduce barriers to solar energy development. Lowell received a total of 275 points in various categories, far exceeding the 200 points required for Gold designation. Lowell also received special distinction in the Inspection category. A special distinction is earned when a community gets over 60% of all eligible points available in a category. Development Services staff received special commendation in this category for participating in cross-training on solar PV, streamlining inspection visits, and making inspection requirements available online.

Through the designation process, Lowell documented and codified prior efforts the City has taken to encourage solar development, as well as created new processes to help make solar more easily understandable and accessible to the general public. As part of the designation process, the SolSmart Technical Advisor helped Lowell create a solar landing page that includes basic information on solar energy, as well as specific information on the permitting and installation process. Another valuable piece of the SolSmart designation process is that the Technical Advisor completed a high level assessment of additional properties that may have solar potential. Over the next few months, we will be working to further vet the buildings identified in the analysis, with a competitive procurement process to follow.

This designation continues to solidify Lowell’s leadership in the areas of energy efficiency and renewable energy development. The Department of Planning and Development looks forward to continuing to pursue opportunities consistent with the City’s energy and sustainability goals.

KM/ns

1/16/18

cc: Mike McGovern, Assistant City Manager
Diane Tradd, Assistant City Manager/DPD Director
Philip Ferreira, Housing and Energy Programs Manager