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## **SOLAR-READY COMMUNITIES**

In Wisconsin, installation of renewable energy systems is projected to increase in coming years. This increase is driven by the reduction in costs of solar arrays, decommissioning of obsolete coal and nuclear power plants, and increases in renewable energy goals by utilities. The size of solar photovoltaic systems (PV) range from smaller residential/business systems to those that comprise many acres. Due to the workforce and economic benefits, it is anticipated siting large-scale solar farms will become competitive in future years.

To best position Wood County, solar-ready designation through SolSmart is being pursued. SolSmart is a program funded by the US Department of Energy. [www.solsmart.org](http://www.solsmart.org) Mid-State Technical College and the Midwest Renewable Energy Association are already performing activities which can apply towards some of the SolSmart designation requirements for the county.

The primary elements of SolSmart designation include:

### **Community Engagement**

Make information about solar PV easily accessible to interested people and businesses. It is anticipated that this will be accomplished through a webpage on the county website, discussions with local municipalities, and assistance with informational and training programs.

### **Planning and Zoning Guidance**

Work with interested municipalities to provide guidance for becoming solar-ready. In general, interested municipalities would review their ordinances for unforeseen impediments to installation of solar PV. Permitting processes should also be streamlined. Incorporating solar into municipal or strategic plans is also beneficial.

Municipalities obtaining the SolSmart designation are also eligible to receive in-depth technical assistance from the National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL). NREL provides economic assessments and technical feasibility analysis for solar PV on municipal-owned buildings or land.

Wood County municipalities interested in learning more about becoming a solar-ready community can contact:

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