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OVERVIEW

Solar power is on the rise – nationally, installed solar capacity grew by 30%¹ in 2014 alone. Environment Oregon is currently working to pass five-year solar installation targets in five cities (Eugene, Ashland, Corvallis, Lake Oswego, and Milwaukie) and the commensurate policies to aid in meeting these targets. So far, over 90 local businesses and hundreds of local residents have endorsed bold solar targets in their cities.

Solar targets proposed by Environment Oregon represent a combined 245% increase in solar power in the cities over five years, or the equivalent of more than 3,000 residential solar rooftops² (city-specific data below). If Oregon increased installed solar capacity at the same rate, it would be the equivalent of 28,000 new solar rooftops statewide in the next five years.

PROPOSED TARGETS:

City	2015 Installed Solar Capacity (kW)	2021 Installed Solar Capacity Target (kW)	2021 Equivalent Solar Rooftop Target (Roofs)	Installed Solar Capacity Increase
Ashland	1,160	2,500	500	215%
Corvallis	4,070	10,000	2,000	240%
Eugene	4,180	10,000	2,000	240%
Lake Oswego	329	1,000	200	300%
Milwaukie	732	2,200	440	300%
Cumulative	10,471	25,700	5,140	245%³

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Solar Installation Target: As a starting point, any city interested in promoting solar power at the local level should set a solar installation target. The US Department of Energy identifies several key benefits of a municipal solar installation target⁴:

1. Clarifies the role solar energy will play in achieving a community’s broader environmental, climate change, or sustainability goals;
2. Helps create momentum for a solar program with stakeholders working toward common goals;
3. Guides the strategy for increasing solar installations in a community and enables leaders to track progress against a published target;
4. Aids in attracting the solar industry to bring jobs and economic benefits to the community.

¹ [Solar Market Insights Report 2014 Q4](#); Solar Energy Industry Association

² Based on average residential system size of 5 kW: <http://www.seia.org/research-resources/solar-photovoltaic-technology>

³ Percentage represents increase from current cumulative installed capacity to 2021 cumulative target

⁴ [Solar Powering Your Community: A Guide for Local Governments](#); U.S. Department of Energy



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Reduce Soft Costs: As solar panels become more affordable and efficient, “non-hardware” costs, or soft costs, add up to as much as 64% of the total cost of a solar installation.⁵ Cities can help bring down these costs by adopting the “five simple solutions” recommended by Northwest Solar Communities⁶, which include:

1. Adopting a permit checklist for solar installations;
2. Establishing reasonable building permit fees;
3. Providing permit information online;
4. Training permit staff in solar installations;
5. Implementing online permitting.

Example: For unincorporated areas of Clackamas County, the County adopted a flat fee of \$190 for the two hours of work needed to review, process, inspect, and issue necessary permits for solar installations.⁷

Collective Purchasing Program: Collective purchasing programs involve a community working together to streamline the process of going solar and, at the same time, bring down the overall cost of installation through volume discounts from solar installers. They mitigate three large barriers to entry for residents into the solar market: upfront costs, complexity for consumers, and customer inertia. Local governments can organize collective purchasing programs in their community by setting up the logistical framework, doing marketing and outreach for the program, and providing monetary and staff resources.

Example: This model was pioneered nationally by the City of Portland. From 2009 and 2011, six “Solarize Portland” campaigns supported by the City added 1.7 MW of solar power on 560 homes. In 2010 alone, the number of total PV installations was almost 400% over the previous year.⁸

Solar on Government Buildings: Installing solar panels on government buildings can save municipalities money on their electricity bills while at the same time providing an example to residents that solar works in their city. One avenue cities can pursue is a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). With a PPA, cities work with a third-party that installs and owns a solar system on the city’s empty rooftop space in return for energy at a guaranteed rate below the retail rate of power.

Example: Metro is currently installing a 2 MW rooftop solar array on the Oregon Convention Center financed through a PPA with SolarCity and grants from Pacific Power and the Energy Trust of Oregon. When completed, the installation is expected to generate enough energy to power 184 Portland homes every year.⁹

Community Solar: In February, the Oregon Legislature is expected to consider legislation that would allow for community solar arrays in the state. Community solar allows individuals and businesses unable to install solar panels on their roofs an opportunity to share in the costs, risks, and benefits of solar projects through their utility bills. The program, if adopted by the Legislature, would allow municipalities, among other entities, to own and develop community solar arrays and sell subscriptions to individual panels to members of the community. A city could alternatively choose to subscribe to panels in an array developed and owned by a third-party developer or utility company. **Note: this is not currently actionable without further state legislative action.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT CHARLIE FISHER: Charlie@environmentoregon.org or (971) 266-2511

⁵ [Benchmarking Non-Hardware Balance-of-System \(Soft\) Costs for U.S. Photovoltaic Systems](#); National Renewable Energy Laboratories

⁶ [Solar Permitting Factsheet](#); Northwest Solar Communities

⁷ [Solar Permitting Factsheet](#); Northwest Solar Communities

⁸ [The Solarize Guidebook](#); Northwest SEED

⁹ [Ambitious rooftop solar array planned for Oregon Convention Center](#); Oregon Convention Center