

Rooftop Solar Challenge Updates

Solarize Projects

Solar bulk purchasing initiatives (called solarize programs or solar-co-ops) help reduce customer acquisition costs for installers, and reduce the cost of going solar for the community by leveraging bulk purchasing power.

In February, COG hired a team led by Community Power Network (CPN) to support COG's members in education, outreach and organizing activities to launch solarize programs or solar-co-ops in their communities. Eight COG members requested support from the CPN team.

CPN is currently working with residents in Bowie, MD and Arlington, VA to wrap up their co-ops, which recently selected installers and are in the feasibility evaluation & contracting stage.



DC Solar Home (Credit Isabel Ricker)



Rockville Solar Co-op Info Session (Credit: Corey Ramsden)

Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) and Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP), who are part of the CPN team, recently launched the second round of Solarize NoVA. This program is focusing on Herndon, Vienna, Falls Church and Loudoun County.

CPN is working with the City of Rockville and MD SUN on a solar co-op in Rockville, which is open to all Montgomery County residents. The co-op officially launched in April and has had two very successful info sessions so far (pictured at left).

Commercial Solar Initiative

Several COG members have identified a need for more emphasis on commercial-sited solar in the region. Due to the robust tree canopy in communities like Arlington and Montgomery Counties, some residential areas are too shaded for solar PV. Municipalities are interested in pursuing solar education and awareness initiatives for commercial building owners, and exploring the potential for commercial solar co-ops.

Motivations:

- Tree canopy makes taller buildings more attractive
- Putting solar on larger roof areas is less expensive (reduces the cost per kWh)
- Achieving renewable energy & climate change goals

Challenges:

- Commercial building owners may be off-site or hard to reach
- Solar co-ops are time-limited offers with standardized terms, but building owners may not be ready to go solar at the same time or with the same contractor
- Building owners may require shorter payback time and/or or lower upfront costs than residents.

What approach would you recommend? Are there other opportunities or synergies we should pursue?