

PROBLEM STATEMENT

CT cities and towns currently have to compete with commercial solar projects for state incentives. Unfortunately, over the years, this has led to long delays for municipal solar projects and sometimes municipalities are shut out of the incentives.

IMPACTS

Health & Quality of Life

Municipalities that maximize rooftop, parking lot, and already disturbed lands for solar lower their electricity costs and those savings can be used for other services including those related to health. Additionally, solar pairs well with heat pumps and having solar may encourage municipalities to switch to heat pumps for heating and cooling thereby reducing fossil fuel pollution in their communities. Solar is also a foundational element for community resiliency hubs.

Modernize the Energy Sector

Local distributed energy resources (DERs) benefits the community and the grid. Solar can island off when the grid is down and still serve the local load. Alternatively, when load is great elsewhere it can send power to the grid. DERs are more flexible and when paired with batteries they are especially useful in balancing load.

Economy

Local solar projects help reduce energy costs caused by volatility in the energy market. Local projects also reduce the need for new transmission lines. Such projects also provide local jobs.

Climate Change

Municipal solar projects result in less fossil fuels being burned to create electricity. Methane, the largest fuel source for electricity generation in CT, is a huge contributor to global warming.

Clean Energy

Solar, in addition to electrification of buildings and vehicle fleets, is the most effective way for municipalities to do their part to transition off of fossil fuels to clean energy.

Democracy

What could be more democratic than protecting and enhancing the ability of a town to be as self-sufficient as possible when it comes to its own energy and reducing the costs of town services for everyone in the community?

CURRENT POLICY STATUS

Municipalities have to compete with all other solar projects entered into bid through the NRES program.

Municipal solar benefits all members of the host community. Municipalities shouldn't have to compete with commercial enterprises for solar incentives.

LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

- The CT General Assembly should pass legislation similar to that passed in 2023 Connecticut Public Act 23-119 which provided a separate solar program for schools (see Additional Resources section). They should create a program with a 50MW annual cap for municipal projects on municipally-owned property.

THREATS TO PROGRESS

Investor-owned utilities lack the incentive to increase solar programs. Additionally, solar prices are still higher than they should be.

FAST FACTS

What percent of submitted NRES projects get funded?

Each year solar developers for commercial and municipal projects bid into the NRES program in order to acquire available state incentives. PURA chair Marissa Gillett, in testimony at the 27 February 2024 E&T Hearing, stated that 162 MW of projects were accepted in years 1 and 2 but nearly an equal amount was rejected (162.8 MW). Municipal projects currently receive no preference in NRES so are just as likely as commercial projects to be rejected.

What percent of municipalities have solar for their buildings?

Less than half of Connecticut's municipalities have solar on their municipal buildings. And of the those that do have municipal solar, few have achieved the maximum solar deployment across all town properties.

How do municipal leaders feel about caps on the state's solar programs?

Over the years, municipal leaders working to maximize the solar potential for their towns have been frustrated by the caps of the state's various solar programs. Getting locked out of these programs reduces their ability to decrease town energy costs and work towards clean energy goals.¹

Are there any other states prioritizing or encouraging solar on municipal buildings?

We can find precedence for preferential treatment of municipalities in Massachusetts which has a \$.02/kWh adder for public entities. 225 CMR 20 . NH prioritizes encourages municipal projects through its Municipal Solar Grant Program which awards up to \$1,480,000 to municipalities for small solar projects.

What percent of CT electricity comes from solar?

Connecticut is far from achieving 100% clean energy in the state. Even in regards to electric generation, solar accounts for less than 5% of all generation and probably closer to 2%.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Connecticut Public Act 23-119, titled "An Act Supporting Solar Energy in Schools." This law, passed in 2023, authorizes a solar energy program specifically for public schools, with an annual cap of 25 MW set aside for solar installations. This cap is separate from existing renewable energy program limits. (Connecticut General Assembly)
- The program is set to take effect in 2025, aiming to facilitate the integration of solar energy systems in public schools across Connecticut. By aligning school construction funds with energy program initiatives, the legislation enables schools to utilize state funds for solar installations, thereby promoting clean energy usage and potentially reducing energy costs. (Titan Energy Northeast, CT Public).



MORE INFORMATION

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¹. [texthttps://ctmirror.org/2022/02/13/solar-program-reform-efforts-likely-in-the-ct-legislature-but-already-face-disagreements](https://ctmirror.org/2022/02/13/solar-program-reform-efforts-likely-in-the-ct-legislature-but-already-face-disagreements)