

# SOLARIZE PROVIDENCE COMMUNITY OUTREACH PLAN

## TEAM

- City of Providence Office of Sustainability
- City of Providence Communications Department
- City of Providence Office of Community Relations
- Mayor's Center for City Services (MCCS)
- Department of Inspections and Standards
- Department of Planning and Development
- West Broadway Neighborhood Association
- Groundwork Providence

## CITY OF PROVIDENCE OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

The mission of the Office of Sustainability is to provide a better quality of life for all residents while maintaining nature's ability to function over time by minimizing waste, preventing pollution, promoting efficiency and developing local resources to revitalize the local economy, as well as reducing energy consumption in city-owned facilities, to cost effectively lower utility operating costs, and to insure occupant comfort and safety in city facilities. Mayor Jorge Elorza and the Office of Sustainability launched SustainPVD in 2015 to make Providence a greener, healthier, more livable city by educating, empowering, and connecting residents, businesses, institutions, and municipal government to achieve the goals set forth by the *Sustainable Providence* plan. The plan seeks to promote an increased adoption rate of solar and other renewable energy. The plan's energy section includes a goal to "Expand renewable energy and clean energy projects and implement energy reduction policies and practices city-wide." and a strategy to "identify and implement renewable energy opportunities on City properties, as well as citywide." The City has already begun tracking the number of renewable projects in Providence, and will be releasing a dashboard that reports this information publicly beginning this spring.

## KEY TEAM MEMBERS

### LEAH BAMBERGER, DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABILITY

Leah Bamberger will serve as the designated municipal representative and will be the primary point of contact with the Program Administrators. She will provide the critical connection to other municipal departments to coordinate the planning and implementation of Providence's Solarize RI campaign. She brings a wealth of experience, having worked on a number of successful sustainability outreach campaigns, including Find Your Four this past fall, as well as the City of Boston's Solarize campaign. Leah has also spearheaded Providence's recent exploration of installing solar on municipal buildings, including writing and RFP, evaluating proposals, and selecting a bidder to move forward with a Power Purchase Agreement.

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## DINO LARSON, ENERGY MANAGER

As a full-time staff member of the Office of Sustainability, Dino Larson has supported numerous education and outreach efforts in the City of Providence. He contributed to the Find Your Four campaign, has supported municipal energy challenges in various city departments, and has supported the City's renewable and energy efficiency projects since 2010. He also has a background as an educator with Providence Public Schools. His knowledge in energy systems and renewable energy will be of great assistance, as he'll be providing outreach support and will serve as one of two members of the External Review Team to aid in the process of selecting the solar installers.

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## INTERNS

In addition to these full-time staff members of the Office of Sustainability currently has three interns working in the Office this spring, with plans to bring on one more. They will be available to lend their efforts to working on the Solarize campaign.

## CITY OF PROVIDENCE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

The Communications Department will lead efforts to generate press and earned media about Providence's Solarize campaign. The Solarize campaign will include three press releases in total, as well as a press conference tentatively scheduled for April 1 at the Home Show. The subsequent press releases will provide updates on the progress of the campaign and summarize the final results of the campaign.

The Communications team played an instrumental role in support past efforts of the Office of Sustainability, including Find Your Four (managed press conference), and getting front-page coverage of the Mayor's home energy assessment last summer.

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## KEY TEAM MEMBERS

- Evan England, Director of Communications
- Emily Crowell, Deputy Director of Communications
- Andrew Augustus, Press Associate

## CITY OF PROVIDENCE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Community Relations will support the Office of Sustainability by helping to engage a diverse set of community partners to drive participation in the program. Under the leadership of Representative Grace Diaz, Community Relations can help us reach a broader audience beyond the "usual suspects." She has well established relationships with neighborhood associations, faith-based organizations, and other community groups, and has worked with the Office of Sustainability on driving participation in a number of different events and programs including, most recently, the Resilient PVD Lab, which had over 200 participants in just three days. Several examples of community partners that the City plans to engage include the Summit Neighborhood Association, Hope Street Merchants Association, and Elmhurst Clean and Green.

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## KEY TEAM MEMBERS

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## GRACE DIAZ, SENIOR ADVISOR ON COMMUNITY RELATIONS

## OTHER KEY CITY DEPARTMENTS

Various other municipal departments will partner with the aforementioned Departments in order to make the Solarize campaign a success. The Mayor's Center for City Services (MCCS), which serves as residents' link to city services and has significant direct interaction with constituents, will be fully versed and equipped to answer questions about the Solarize program. The Department of Inspectional Services will be instrumental to our efforts by ensuring that the permitting process is streamlined. The Planning Department works closely with neighborhood and community organizations, maintaining solid relationships that will serve as conduits for information.

## WEST BROADWAY NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

West Broadway Neighborhood Association's (WBNA) mission is to organize neighbors and businesses on the West Side of Providence to preserve and promote our diverse, historic, urban community as a safe, vibrant, and sustainable place to be SWELL (Shop, Work, Eat, Live, and Learn locally). WBNA launched the first Solarize campaigns in the state, beginning in 2011 and has since run six such campaigns. Their kickoff meeting drew over 125 community participants and their efforts have resulted in 44 solar PV installations through the city. WBNA will serve in an advisory role throughout the process and will use their experience and contacts to help with outreach.

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## KEY TEAM MEMBERS

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### KARI LANG, EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT

In addition to serving as a key project advisor and supporter, Kari will serve as the second external reviewer to help choose solar installers.

## GROUNDWORK PROVIDENCE

Groundwork Providence is a non-profit, community-based environmental organization dedicated to creating healthier and more resilient urban communities in Rhode Island. Groundwork Providence has also agreed to support Solarize efforts via their outreach capacity, and possibly through a collaboration with their job training program.

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## KEY TEAM MEMBERS

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### AMELIA ROSE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Amelia Rose has over a decade of non-profit and community organizing experience. She most recently worked at the Environmental Justice League of Rhode island for 6 years where she oversaw programs and campaigns related to community involvement in brownfield cleanups, stormwater and climate change resiliency, healthy food access, and many other issues. She has served as Chair of the Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force for 3 years, helping to create Providence's first Sustainability Action Plan.

## PROVIDENCE DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The city of Providence occupies 25 square miles, and is home to a population of roughly 178,000 people, with a population density of 9,676.2 occupants per square mile (as of 2010). The city contains about 61,000 households as of 2014 (U.S. Census Bureau), with an average of 2.69 persons per household and a median household income of \$37,514 in 2014. In 2010, the most recent data available for housing units, the City had 71,530 housing units.

Despite intrinsic challenges such as building density, low homeowner occupancy rates, and higher than average poverty rates, there are still plentiful opportunities for expanding small-scale solar power in Providence. The 2010-2014 average rate of owner-occupied housing units in the City is 35%, yielding an estimate of about 25,035 owner-occupied housing units. According to the 2015 Tax Roll, 3,606 owner-occupied housing units are residential condominiums, indicating that the City has at least 21,429 owner-occupied housing units that could be good candidates for solar installations. Using tax assessor's data, the City can focus on neighborhoods that include a higher percentage of single-family homes and owner-occupied units.

## MARKETING AND OUTREACH PLAN

### OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

#### NEIGHBORHOOD SOLAR AMBASSADORS

With roughly 50 small-scale solar installations already in place in Providence, there is a large pool of potential solar ambassadors to draw from. Through the survey, 14 residents have already expressed interest in participating as a solar ambassador for their neighborhood. We would seek to identify at least one ambassador per neighborhood, with more in neighborhoods where there are greater numbers of owner occupied homes, such as Elmhurst and the East Side. These Ambassadors would serve as point of contacts for their fellow neighbors who are interested in going solar. Having a peer to consult with, versus a salesperson, provides additional comfort and support as they go through this new process. Ambassadors would also be asked to help with grassroots outreach as they are available. This would include attending community events such as farmers markets and Solarize Workshops. They could also do targeted canvassing based on the Providence Solarize database. Ambassadors would be asked to commit roughly six hours of volunteer time per month.

#### SOLARIZE DATABASE

Using the tax assessor's information, we will create a geo-database of all owner-occupied homes in Providence. We will then work with the solar vendor to identify properties that have the highest sun exposure based on ortho-imagery. While this will still be a very rough assessment, it will help focus our outreach efforts. This will enable us to maximize outreach resources, target specific neighborhoods that have a high density of homes potentially suitable for solar, and make outreach much more manageable in a large city like Providence.

#### MAILING

Depending on the size of this database and funding availability, we will send a letter from the Mayor to prospective property owners, informing of their solar potential and the opportunity to participate in Solarize RI. The letter would also put them in contact with their neighborhood Solar Ambassador.

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## WORKSHOPS

Working closely with SmartPower and the City's Community Relations staff, the City will host two to three solar workshops (depending on agreement with installer). The workshops would be held in different neighborhoods where there is the highest number of homes with high solar potential. The workshops would allow interested parties to learn about the program, ask questions, and sign up to participate.

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## PRESS

Providence Solarize RI will kick-off with a press conference on April 1 at the Home Show. The City is already planning a press event on this date where the City will receive \$7,500 from National Grid for successfully completing the Find Your Four energy challenge. The City will also be releasing its municipal energy report, which will include benchmarked data for the entire municipal building portfolio going back to 2010. With these compiled announcements, we hope to make a significant media-impression.

The press conference will include the Mayor, City Council members, Kari Lang from WBNA (a key partner), and a resident or small-business that has recently gone solar or will be signing up for the program.

The City will send a second press release two-thirds through the program (or when a major-milestone is achieved) to provide an update and encourage further participation. A third and final press release will be issued with the program's final results.

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

The City will utilize its various social media channels and e-newsletters to drive participation in its Solarize Campaign. SustainPVD communicates through Facebook and Twitter (380 and 450 followers, respectively), as well as distributing a monthly e-newsletter that goes to a growing list of over 500 recipients. In addition, we will leverage other City departments' communication channels such as Arts, Culture + Tourism (e-newsletter, Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr), Healthy Communities (Facebook) Department of Planning and Development (3,815 Twitter followers), and the Partnership for Providence Parks (Twitter and Facebook). The Mayor's Office also distributes a newsletter, tweets frequently, and provides bilingual Facebook posts, helping messages to reach a diverse audience. All of these channels are appropriate and broad-reaching means by which the City can spread awareness of the Solarize campaign.

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## CITY COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT

The Director of Sustainability will request individual meetings with all members of the City Council to inform them of the program, encourage them to sign-up, and work with them to identify a role for them to support outreach.

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## METRICS OF SUCCESS

- 10 Ambassadors
- 2-3 workshops with a total of 150-200 participants (depending on number of workshops)
- 300 signups
- Over 75 signed contracts