The City of Warwick is pleased to submit this application for consideration to participate in the Fall 2015 Solarize Rhode Island program.

As you may know, the City of Warwick has been a leader in efforts to protect, preserve, and restore our natural resources. During Mayor Scott Avedisian's more than 15-year tenure, the City has preserved more than 200 acres for open space and passive recreational purposes, been designed a "Tree City USA" for the 14th consecutive year and has been recognized by the Sierra Club as a "Cool Cities" leader.

We have installed LED lighting in municipal buildings and in city-operated traffic signals and crosswalks, and implemented a recycling program in all of our public schools and municipal buildings. Our automated curbside recycling collection program is one of the most successful in the state, year after year. Yard debris collection and an expanded recycling collection facility are also part of these efforts. In collaboration with a group of Westerly students, we established several sites around the city for collection of used cooking oil, which is recycled and converted to biodiesel fuel credits for needy families, and keeps Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG) from our waste stream.

As residents of the Ocean State, and with 39 miles of coastline in our community alone, we all have a particular responsibility to be good stewards of our waterbodies. A decade ago, the City was the first municipality to partner with two sea captains on their grass-roots effort to remove large debris items that had littered shoreline areas around the bay for decades. Now known as CleanBays.org, the group has removed well over 1200 tons of debris from Rhode Island's shorelines.

The City's Public Works and Planning Departments have teamed up with an advisory committee consisting of the Coastal Resource Center at URI, CRMC, Save The Bay and others to discuss issues and opportunities for planning and implementing green infrastructure in coastal areas. Our Sewer Authority continues to expand its infrastructure, bringing service to more households, and helping to reduce pollutants that end up in our rivers, streams, ponds, and bays. Upgrades at the treatment facility are helping the WSA to more effectively remove phosphorous, resulting in significantly lower amounts of the nutrient being discharged into the Pawtuxet River, helping to ensure better water oxygen levels and the health of the river and its aquatic life.

The City has also retrofitted our ice rinks, animal shelter, fire stations 2 and 3 and police headquarters with high-efficiency boilers, and have upgraded high-efficiency water heaters at the pool complex. A wind feasibility study, electric vehicle charging station feasibility study and the See the Light campaign have also been part of our efforts.

We partnered with SmartPower and National Grid to encourage residents to "Find Your Four" to reduce their energy consumption, and, with the support of the Central Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce, faith organizations, non-profit groups, neighborhood associations, and many others, we met our goal successfully.

The City's recently-approved Comprehensive Plan has as a priority and vision for the future the implementation of programs and policies that will further our efforts to make our community more sustainable and resilient.

Participation in Solarize Rhode Island, then, would be a natural extension of these efforts, and, based on past campaigns and the demonstrated overall community interest in environmental initiatives, including recycling, would realize success.

Further, in approximately the past two months, the Warwick Building Department has received some 20 permit applications for solar panel installation; clearly, there is interest within the community to utilize this technology.

Margie Ryan, sustainability coordinator; Sue Baker, business development planner; and Courtney Marciano, Mayor's press secretary, would be principally involved in the project. Sue Cabeceiras, Planning Department liaison to the Wildlife and Conservation Commission; Trish Reynolds, senior planner and a liaison to the Historic District Commission; Al DeCorte, building official; building department staff; and Karen Jedson, director, and Angela Myatt of the Department of Tourism, Culture and Development; Joe Blake, maintenance supervisor; and Department of Public Works Director David Picozzi will also be available as resources if/as necessary during the course of the program.

During the "Find Your Four" campaign and other programs the City has enjoyed support from a variety of community groups in our effort to raise awareness of the initiative. We will reach out to these organizations again to request their assistance in sharing information with their membership and/or allowing program representatives to speak with their groups and/or participate in events. These groups include the Central Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce; our 13 non-profit organizations; more than 40 faith organizations; more than a dozen neighborhood associations; and local environmental groups, such as the Buckeye Brook Coalition and the Wildlife and Conservation Commission; and the Warwick School Department.

Further, the City and SmartPower have developed a strong working relationship over time and we look forward to collaborating with them to promote this initiative successfully. In fact, the City and SmartPower earlier this summer had discussions relative to joining the Solarize At Work initiative and we are presently working with the Central Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce to soon jointly promote this program to city employees and chamber membership.

Warwick's population is nearly 83,000, making it the second-largest city in Rhode Island and among the largest in New England. With 39 miles of coastline, great recreational facilities, a diverse mix of housing choices, good schools, exceptional municipal services, proximity to Routes 95 and 295 and as home to T.F. Green Airport and the InterLink, Warwick has been named among the safest communities in the nation and has twice been named to the 100 Best Places to Live in America list by MONEY Magazine. Warwick, though comparatively large, is comprised of over 30 villages and has the feel of a much smaller, close-knit community. It boasts a diverse commercial base, including Route 2, which has over 250 stores within a five-mile stretch.

With 26,690 owner-occupied dwellings – 75 percent – and 8,802 renter-occupied dwellings, there are numerous opportunities to expand solar technology within our community. And, again, based on recent activity within the Building Department, we anticipate strong interest from the public in the Solarize program.

We anticipate a multi-faceted marketing approach, including a press conference to kick off the event, attended by the Mayor and representatives from appropriate state agencies and SmartPower; press releases as the program progresses to advise the public of the progress and encourage additional participation; op-eds for publication in local print and electronic newspapers; columns promoting the program in the New England Real Estate Journal, the Central Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce newsletter, and the Pilgrim Senior Center monthly newsletter. We will also employ social media, including Facebook and Twitter; flyers posted in municipal buildings, including the Police Station, City Hall, the Annex, Thayer and Warburton ice rinks, the McDermott Pool Complex, the public library (the busiest in the state) and its three branches, fire headquarters, public works, the Board of Canvassers, and the Warwick Sewer Authority. We will also ask retailers willing to help promote the program to post flyers in stores.

Additionally, prominent posting of information on the city's main page at warwickri.gov; and distribution of information through the aforementioned non-profit, civic, business, and neighborhood organizations would be utilized.

A resolution in support of Solarize Rhode Island is slated to be introduced before the Warwick City Council, whose meetings are broadcast on local cable as well as at warwickri.gov. Local workshops hosted by Solarize Rhode Island could be held in any number of municipal buildings, including City Hall Council Chambers, the Warwick Public Library, the Pilgrim Senior Center, the Buttonwoods Community Center, the Police Department community room, and any of our three public high schools.

The City would also work collaboratively with its state partners and SmartPower to schedule community workshops and arrange for a presence at other outreach opportunities and will be flexible in doing so to accommodate its partners' schedules.