

# SSTI Monthly Newsletter

Maximizing Solar Potential across the Southwest

September 2012

## Customized, Interactive Roadmaps Released!

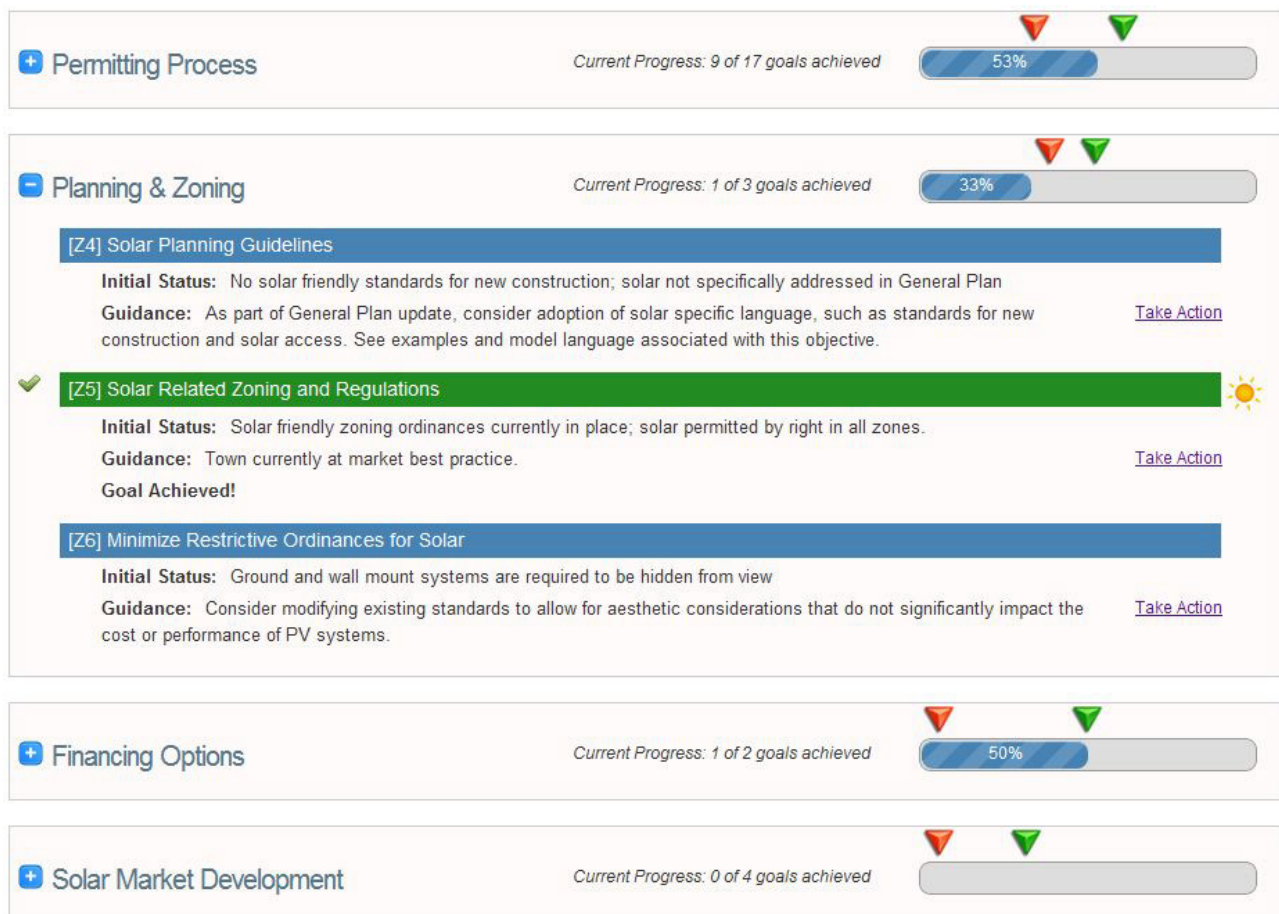
The solar roadmap platform has recently provided full access to customized roadmaps for each of the 40 communities participating in the SSTI program. Click [here](#) to visit the site and browse through the national map to learn about individual participants. Roadmaps have also been provided for utilities, regional organizations, and state energy offices in the southwest.

The platform is web based and interactive, allowing participants easy access to their goals and associated resources for implementation support. It also allows for clear, visual tracking of progress in achieving these goals and reaching U.S. Department of Energy targets. Progress is tracked by focus area, and compared to SSTI averages with separate indicators for permitting, planning and zoning, finance, and market development.

The roadmap goals for each agency are set to private by default, but many participants have chosen to make their roadmaps publicly available in order to showcase their participation in the program to local citizens and a broader national audience.

## What's Happening This Month

The SSTI team is visiting all municipal partners to present their customized roadmaps. This is an opportunity to learn about how the platform works and to ask questions about specific recommendations found in your roadmap. These visits will continue through the end of September.



## Online Portals for Solar Permitting Information – Case Studies and Templates

One goal being pursued by Rooftop Solar Challenge participants is to improve municipal websites by adding information describing the solar permit process and the forms required to obtain a permit. This allows for a more streamlined and efficient handling of permits for local governments, installation contractors, and solar energy system owners.

There are many simple and effective ways to improve information access and build out online content. Many leading examples are found in the SSTI resource library and within our roadmaps. Included among those is the City of Denver, which has a dedicated webpage with drop down tabs describing the required submittals, fees, process description and timeline. The City of Sacramento has a downloadable pdf which contains all the same information, including a detailed fee schedule showing how the fee is calculated and a 2 page inspection checklist. For those jurisdictions that don't want to begin from scratch, there is a template form from the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research in which jurisdictions can simply fill-in-the-blanks.

All of these resources are accessible through the solar roadmap resource library. Use the link below to visit the library, where you can search by keyword or focus area for these examples and others relating to permitting, planning and zoning, interconnection, net metering, and more:

<http://www.solarroadmap.com/resources/>

## Residential Aggregation Programs & Market Development Opportunities

One powerful market opportunity that many SSTI jurisdictions are exploring is solar aggregation programs. Aggregation programs look to unleash the power of buying in bulk in order to lower cost and spur more installation activity. Typically, potential solar adopters are grouped into a single purchasing pool which negotiates a reduced rate for PV systems. This can be a group of homeowners, local businesses, area government facilities and schools, or a combination thereof.

At the residential scale, the model was first popularized in Portland, OR in 2009 and spread across the U.S. to places such as Massachusetts and Salt Lake City after the success of that program. The number of systems installed under the system in the first 6 months was triple the number that had been installed city-wide in the previous year. On the municipal side, a prime example was the Silicon Valley Collaborative Renewable Energy Procurement Project. This project set the bar for number of participants, with 9 public agencies combining over 40 locations into a single procurement program. The cost reduction was estimated to be 12% below standard vendor pricing, and participating agencies saved 75 to 90% in administrative costs and time.

A variation on the aggregation model is pursued by Grid Alternatives, which has put on “Solarthons” in neighborhoods throughout California. During these one-day events, hundreds of volunteers from all walks of life join low-income homeowners to install solar electric systems on multiple homes in one neighborhood in one day, while raising money and awareness for Grid Alternatives' work. Individual participants ask family, friends and networks for a pledge to sponsor their work on a home. Businesses sponsor houses for employee volunteers, and solar industry partners sponsor job trainees to come get hands-on experience and network with local installers.

The Central Valley (Fresno) Grid Alternatives office serves low income families throughout the Valley's 12 counties, covering the SSTI cities of Atwater, Clovis, Hanford, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Visalia, Fresno and Mendota. Recent funding has allowed Grid to expand into Colorado, starting with 11 installations on Habitat for Humanity homes in metro Denver.



*Grid Alternatives volunteers set down solar modules on a low-income family's rooftop in Fresno, CA*

## Visual highlights from recent SSTI meetings



Atwater, CA



Brigham City, UT



San Joaquin, CA



Cortez, CO (solar array owned by Empire Electric)

### About Optony

Optony is a global research and consulting firm focused on enabling governments, schools, investors, and commercial organizations to bridge the gap between solar energy goals and real-world results. Leveraging our independence, domain expertise and unique market position, our clients are empowered to make informed decisions that reduce risk, optimize operations, and deliver the greatest long-term return on their solar investments.

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### About SEI

Strategic Energy Innovations (SEI), a nonprofit organization established in 1997, helps empower schools and universities, small businesses, local governments, affordable housing agencies, and agricultural communities to reduce pollution and save money through energy and resource efficiency.

[www.seiinc.org](http://www.seiinc.org)

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