

Shorewood Seeks To Go Solar

Overview

In the fall of 2017, following the success of the 2016 [Solar Shorewood](#) group-buy program, the largest to date in Wisconsin (with installations totalling 52 kW on 15 Shorewood buildings), the Shorewood Conservation Committee administered a survey to residents in order to gauge interest in solar energy opportunities in Shorewood and Southeastern, WI. The goal of the survey was to understand the opinions of the community around renewable energy and community solar projects; what they see as the benefits and potential barriers around solar energy.

The results from the survey reflect a strong desire by residents to have a decision in how and where their energy is produced. While some residents have the financial means, roof orientation, lack of tree cover, etc., requisite for residential installations, many in Shorewood are not able to check all the boxes needed to produce or access clean energy without the help of public utilities or government entities.

Government officials, utility regulators, and utility employees should be encouraged to craft policy and programs to help citizens achieve their desire for energy from clean sources in Shorewood and throughout Southeastern, WI. This survey and the successful Solar Shorewood program show that citizens and customers will respond if presented with opportunities to participate in programs designed to foster the development of locally produced clean energy.

Key Results

Although the survey was available to those outside Shorewood, the majority of respondents were Shorewood residents. Results from 269 participants signal overwhelming support for the increased availability and accessibility of renewable energy:

- Nearly 96% believe renewable sources are very important in the U.S.
- Over 80% said it was very important to have a choice in how their energy is produced
- Nearly 98% are interested in the option to purchase locally produced solar energy from their utility
- Over 86% would be willing to spend slightly more for electricity if produced with local renewables
- Over 80% installed or considered installing solar panels, citing a desire for increased energy independence and potential overall savings on electricity as primary drivers
- Nearly half of respondents stated high upfront cost of installing solar panels as the primary barrier
- Over 71% of respondents were interested in participating in a community solar program and nearly 90% wanted to learn more about such options

Recommendations

While there may be many ways to help residents achieve their goal of locally produced clean energy, the options below may reduce barriers to entry noted by residents in the survey:

- 1) **Revamp Neighborhood Improvement Loan Program** to include energy efficiency and solar panel installation (reduces cost barrier).
- 2) **Explore opportunities for a Community Solar Program** with the local utility or other government entities. MG&E successfully introduced a Community Solar Program in its service territory in cooperation with the City of Middleton. This option can help residents overcome many, if not all, of the barriers that were brought up in the survey.

- 3) **Invest in Village Municipal Solar Projects** to demonstrate alignment with resident concerns and lead the way by making investments in solar power installations to the maximum extent feasible on all new or renovated village buildings and other structures, including North Shore Fire station, Shorewood Library, and potentially school properties. In so doing, the Village will move forward on its own commitment to 25% renewable energy by 2025.
- 4) **Promote Solar Incentives to the BID** and encourage property owners to participate in Milwaukee County's commercial PACE (property-assessed clean energy) financing program. PACE allows businesses and nonprofits to obtain low-cost, long-term loans for solar energy and energy efficiency investments. More information about the program: <http://www.pacewi.org/>.
- 5) **Explore the Implementation of a Residential PACE Program** similar to the PACE program currently offered by Milwaukee County to commercial property owners.

The Shorewood Conservation Committee is dedicated to helping Village leadership achieve its ambition to serve as a model "ecomunicipality". We believe that vigorous promotion and adoption of renewable energy goals is the next, best step in making good on this aspiration.