



For Immediate Release

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VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST HONORED IN SPECIAL CEREMONY FOR EARNING COVETED SOLAR DESIGNATION

Illinois Now Home to More Communities Earning the Distinction Than Any Other State

RIVER FOREST, IL (May 15, 2019) – In a ceremony packed with local, state and national officials, other leaders, and VIPs, the Village of River Forest received an award at Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont for earning the highly-coveted SolSmart Bronze Designation. This important achievement furthers solar power growth in the community with resulting new job creation, economic development and reduced carbon emissions. Twenty-two other communities were similarly honored.

The communities “did an exceptional job, working tirelessly in a multitude of ways to earn their designations,” says Geneva, Ill. Mayor Kevin Burns, who chairs the [Metropolitan Mayors Caucus](#) Environment Committee. “In addition, their staffs collaborated with counterparts at other municipalities to share resources and provide advice, assisting each other in their quests to achieve SolSmart designation,” Burns says.

The Caucus served as a SolSmart Advisor to 20 communities and was the chief catalyst in the communities’ drive to seek designation.

SolSmart is a national program designed to recognize communities that have taken key steps to foster the growth of mature local solar markets. Communities that meet the official criteria are designated SolSmart Gold, Silver, or Bronze. SolSmart is led by [The Solar Foundation](#) and the [International City/County Management Association](#), and funded by the [U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office](#).

To achieve Bronze designation, River Forest earned at least 60 points for adopting solar best practices across [eight categories](#) of strategic SolSmart activities. These include reviewing local zoning regulations and identifying restrictions that intentionally or unintentionally prohibit solar system development. River Forest also created and posted an online permitting checklist, detailing the required forms, permits, and steps, ensuring that the rooftop solar permitting process is faster and easier to install.

With the 23 new designations, Illinois shot past California and Colorado as the state with the most communities that have earned the SolSmart distinction. Indeed, the Chicago region's solar growth has been striking. The area was the top metro for solar jobs growth in the nation last year, with 1,180 jobs added in 2018 for a total of 4,275 jobs, according to The Solar Foundation's [National Solar Jobs Census 2018](#).

One reason for the Chicago area's boost is the Greenest Region Compact (GRC), developed by the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. This unique document guides municipal sustainability planning and unifies environmental action, regionally, through community collaboration. Its energy goals include advancing renewable energy and enacting policies to support clean energy. River Forest like nearly all the SolSmart designated communities, signed onto the GRC.

"Each community awarded SolSmart designation deserves their business owners' and other citizens' appreciation for providing clean, solar energy options, and advancing the Greenest Region Compact's commitment to enhanced sustainability," Mayor Burns says.

Added Lesley McCain of the Illinois Solar Energy Association, "The GRC in partnership with SolSmart has been instrumental in deepening the towns' understanding of what solar can do – the jobs and environmental benefits," she says. "We saw that towns did not have robust processes for permitting or allowances for solar. A lot of them were kind of waiting for some help to move forward. And the Greenest Region Compact through SolSmart has really advanced that."

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About the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus

The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus is a membership organization of the Chicago region's 273 cities, towns and villages. Founded in 1997 by then Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley and leading mayors from nine suburban municipal groups, the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus pushes past geographical boundaries and local interests to work on public policy issues. The caucus provides a forum for metropolitan Chicago's chief elected officials to collaborate on common problems and work toward a common goal of improving the quality of life for the millions of people who call the region home.

About SolSmart

SolSmart is a national designation and technical assistance program that recognizes leading solar communities and empowers additional communities to expand their local solar markets. Funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office, SolSmart strives to cut red tape, drive greater solar deployment, and make it possible for even more American homes and businesses to access solar energy to meet their electricity needs. Learn more at [SolSmart.org](#).