
Coates' Canons Blog: Solar Farms and Solar Rooftops

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Across North Carolina solar energy systems are filling pastures and cladding rooftops. According to solar industry reports, North Carolina ranked second in the country, behind only California, for solar photovoltaic capacity added in 2013. The rapid rise of the solar industry in North Carolina has many communities considering how to handle this new land use.

Two new resources from the UNC School of Government—a free online report and a free upcoming webinar—seek to assist communities as they plan for and zone for solar development.

The new report, *Planning and Zoning for Solar in North Carolina*, provides a foundation for communities to evaluate solar development and craft appropriate ordinances. The report is available [here](#). The webinar, featuring Tommy Cleveland of the NC State Solar Center and Adam Lovelady from the UNC School of Government, will explore similar topics of solar technology and how communities are responding to them. It is scheduled for Thursday, April 24, from 10:00-11:30 am. Registration is free and available [here](#). The report and webinar are free thanks to the generous support of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation.

Here are some of the questions that these resources begin to answer.

What is solar? The report introduces readers to types of solar technology and trends in North Carolina development. This includes basics of solar thermal and photovoltaic technologies; comparing ground-mounted, roof-mounted, and building-integrated solar; and distinguishing the various scales of development.

How are communities planning for solar? Solar energy is a largely untapped local resource. Many communities are incorporating solar development into their comprehensive plans—some are even creating specific community energy plans, addressing solar and more. Communities have found under-utilized public property may be developed for solar energy systems, including public building rooftops, undeveloped open space, and brownfields. Moreover, communities are seeking to facilitate private solar development by streamlining permitting for responsible solar development.



How are communities regulating solar? Many questions surround zoning for solar development. Through a review of local and model ordinances, the report considers aspects such as how to define solar development, potential land use impacts, and zoning districts and approval options. Additionally, the report walks through common zoning considerations for large scale solar farms as well as accessory solar uses. The report highlights where existing zoning provisions may conflict with efforts to permit solar uses. Finally, the report looks at zoning and subdivision provisions to protect and encourage future solar development.

Please take advantage of these free, online resources—the report and the webinar.

Links

- www.solarbuzz.com/news/recent-findings/record-2013-solar-pv-installations-promotes-us-strongest-market-outside-asia-pa
- www.sog.unc.edu/publications/reports/planning-and-zoning-solar-north-carolina
- www.sog.unc.edu/courses/webinars/planning-and-zoning-solar-nc
- www.zsr.org/