Overview

In 2012, the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) formed a partnership with a consortium of city and county governments, Kansas City Power & Light (KCP&L) and solar industry experts to respond to the Department of Energy’s Rooftop Solar Challenge. The goal of the Challenge is to achieve measurable improvements in market conditions for rooftop photovoltaics (PV) across the United States, with an emphasis on streamlined and standardized permitting and interconnection processes. MARC, with its partners, is one of 22 groups nationally that have received the Rooftop Solar Challenge grant.

The Solar Ready KC project has sought to further DOE’s grant goals by fostering the solar installation process and planning improvements in the greater Kansas City region through collaboration, education and outreach. Participants in the Solar Ready KC initiative include:

- City of Kansas City, Mo.
- City of Olathe, Kan.
- City of Lee’s Summit, Mo.
- Johnson County, Kan.
- Clay County, Mo.
- KCP&L

The demand for solar power in the United States is at an all-time high. In the first quarter of 2012, developers installed 85 percent more solar panels compared to the first quarter of 2011. Total U.S. installations may reach 3,300 megawatts this year – putting the country on track to be the fourth largest solar market in the world. The rapidly declining price for solar technologies, in combination with federal, state and local policy changes are bringing increasing amounts of solar energy into the mainstream. The national trend toward renewable energy and the reduction in costs of solar power is currently being seen in the Kansas City region. During 2012, KCP&L anticipates an unprecedented level of 600 requests for net metered and interconnected solar systems.

The Solar Ready KC initiative will provide local government representatives with the latest information and best practices to prepare for policy and market changes and to position their communities and the region for this new renewable energy economy.

Background

For the first six months of the grant, MARC and its partners have worked diligently to identify best management practices (BMPs) in the area of solar permitting and planning and to investigate which practices would aid and improve local government processes currently in place in the Kansas City region.

Improvements in the permitting and planning process are one of the fastest and most effective means to facilitate solar installations. They can make the process clear and seamless by offering a centralized location for up-to-date information, standardizing permit fees, coordinating utility notification and establishing a process to pre-qualified plans and installers.

The BMPs highlighted in this document fall into two categories: process improvements and planning improvements. They are also presented in a step-by-step process to guide the reader through the proposed adoption strategy.

Conclusion

Consistent policies and streamlined permitting and planning processes implemented throughout the region will have lasting positive impact and make the metropolitan Kansas City region solar ready.

For information on Solar Ready KC and the Best Management Practices, including their supporting documents, visit www.marc.org/Environment/Energy/solar_ready_kc.html