

Community Solar in New York

Bolstering Your Community's Regulatory Control Over Renewable Energy Projects

What is Happening

Communities across Upstate New York are seeing a significant rise in the number of proposed solar energy and battery storage projects of all types. This includes rooftop solar, community solar, and utility-scale solar projects and associated battery storage. At the same time, laws and regulations are changing at the state level and communities are having a hard time keeping up. Some are finding themselves under-the-gun and are scrambling to amend their outdated solar energy codes, adopt new codes, and explore battery storage issues. Some have even had to issue a moratorium quickly to halt a proposed project so they could address these various code issues.

How does this effect your community?

With solar farms appearing across the Upstate landscape, municipalities are starting to ask questions, such as:

- How does solar benefit our community?
- How are we going regulate these projects?
- How do we ensure they do not adversely impact the aesthetic fabric and economic vitality of your community?
- What are the public safety issues we should know about with battery storage?
- How should we change our land use codes to best adapt to this reality?



Genesee/Finger Lakes
Regional Planning Council

Background

Over the past few years, you may have noticed New York's countryside transitioning from active agricultural farmlands into a new form of farming: renewable energy.

So how did New York get where it is at today? In 2016, New York State approved the Clean Energy Standard (CES) law, designed to reduce carbon emissions in the state by transitioning to renewable energy sources, like solar and wind. More recently, New York passed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act to further combat climate change and make New York one of the nation's leaders in addressing carbon emissions. The Act requires the state's utilities to produce 70 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2030 and sets specific targets of 6 GW of distributed solar by 2025 and 3 GW of energy storage by 2030.

As a result of this and other changes, New York State has become one of the most active solar energy production markets in the country. For example, according to the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) interconnection data, solar installations in New York State have increased from only 19 in 2000 to over 100,000 in 2020. We have moved from rooftop solar to small land-based projects to community solar to now large, utility-scale projects.



Where We Can Help

On behalf of the Genesee / Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council, MRB Group is here to help you with understanding local, state and federal regulations relating to both small- and large-scale solar energy systems and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS).

MRB can advise you on:

- NYS Article 10 Public Service Law
- Section 94-c Renewable Energy Siting Process
- Decommissioning Plan Review
- State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Environmental Reviews & Site Reconnaissance

- Planning Board & Zoning Board Services
- Pre-Design Permit Analysis & Regulatory Permitting
- Training & Workshops

Feel free to contact Connor Hartnett for questions.

QUESTIONS? CONTACT MRB GROUP
Connor Hartnett
G/FL Economic Recovery Coordinator
Connor.Hartnett@mrbgroup.com
(585) 381-9260 x245