



Weldon Cooper Center
for Public Service



Illuminating Solar in Virginia:

Solar Survey Reveals Local Development and Policy Activity

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Charlottesville, VA – The results of a first of its kind survey about solar energy in Virginia are now available. Initial findings of the new Virginia Solar Survey reveal regional, geographic and policy variations in the way that local governments are responding to increased solar energy and energy storage development across the Commonwealth.

Developed and conducted in 2021 through a partnership between the Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy), the Virginia Solar Initiative at the University of Virginia (UVA) and a statewide stakeholder group, the survey captured the responses of 82% of all Virginia counties and cities on a wide scope of topics ranging from local government procurement of energy, distributed generation solar to the siting and permitting of utility scale solar and energy storage development.

The comprehensive questionnaire collected important data from local government officials on solar readiness, policy and energy planning. The survey also captured the state of solar activity and development trends across the Commonwealth.

"These results will be an important tool in realizing the potential of solar industry growth in Virginia," said Virginia Energy Director John Warren. "The opportunity for advancement and improvement among the Commonwealth's various cities, counties and towns will create opportunities for business growth in Virginia's solar sector."

The stakeholder group included representatives from The Nature Conservancy, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the Virginia Association of Counties, the Virginia Association of Planning District Commission, SolSmart and The Berkely Group, with input from the solar industry. Once drafted, the survey was beta tested by eight Virginia localities. The input from this diverse group ensured a relevant and informative questionnaire that would lead to new and insightful data.

"This collaboration comes at a critical time. The Virginia Solar Survey reflects our mission-driven emphasis of providing public impact research that can empower communities, but also our

belief that many of the challenges facing the Commonwealth require cooperation across different sectors to address them. We are proud to be a part of this one-of-a-kind research initiative and are looking forward to encouraging its long-term success,” said Larry Terry, the Executive Director of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service.

The Center for Survey Research at the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at UVA assisted with developing the methodology, questionnaire development and implementing survey best practices.

The results of Virginia Solar Survey are compiled and analyzed in a new report issued today from Virginia Energy and UVA that broadly explores localities’ solar experience and how they are responding and adapting to the recent growth of solar energy in the Commonwealth. The report highlights high priority areas for future research, resources and support for local governments is identified.

Future topic-specific reports will expand on these results, including more detailed information on large-scale solar, distributed generation solar, local government energy procurement and energy storage.

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The Weldon Cooper Center serves Virginia localities and strives to meet the needs of its diverse communities. Cooper Center professionals are committed to producing impact-driven work for individuals, organizations, governmental bodies, and communities who seek to serve the public good.

The Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy) leads the Commonwealth to a reliable and responsible energy future. Created in 1985, the agency also assists in economic development, encourages energy efficiency and renewable energy deployment through various programs, regulates the mining and natural gas industries and is home to Virginia’s Geologic Survey.

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