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**(Orange County, New York)** Solarize Hudson Valley, in close collaboration with NYSERDA, is helping to accelerate the long-anticipated widening of solar PV opportunity. The goal is to generate clean power, close by and available to all income levels. In Orange County there are at least 33 solar farms currently in the permitting process with town planning boards.

Community solar was enabled by the Public Service Commission in 2015 but has only recently become available to electric ratepayers in New York State. For the past 3 years, utilities have been engaged in a modernization process known as Reforming the Energy Vision (REV) to make the grid more efficient, resilient and affordable for all. New York State's goal is to reach 50% electric generation from renewable sources by 2030.

Community solar is one innovation that will enable this "scaling up" of renewable energy. These projects make solar available to many more people: not only homeowners, but renters, condo dwellers, small businesses, non-profits, churches and other institutions. Solar farms have no moving parts to maintain, no emissions to contain, and their fuel is free.

The location of a "solar farm" is critical to its feasibility. It must be sited very close to a utility line that is able to receive its power. It must also meet community standards. Current land use, historic land use, environmental factors, and landowner considerations for solar land leases are all factors. Many towns have worked diligently to write their solar regulations. Significant technical assistance is available to

municipalities through NYSERDA, our state's Energy Research and Development Authority. Their *Solar Guidebook* is an essential resource and is available online.

NYSERDA also provides community education and trustworthy information for consumers. The non-profit Solarize Hudson Valley program has been active since 2015 to evaluate and "vet" solar installers and to organize local Solarize campaigns. With the help of the Orange County Department of Planning, the program provided support and group purchase discounts for 130 Orange County homeowners.

Solarize Hudson Valley is now focused on Community Solar, and the Orange County Department of Planning supplied this statement in support of its goals: "Community Solar allows all county residents to purchase environmentally-friendly renewable energy while receiving real savings on their annual electric costs. We are glad that non-profit Solarize Hudson Valley is available to educate consumers and answer questions."

From among the many solar projects in development in the Hudson valley, Solarize Hudson Valley has vetted and selected two projects through NYSERDA's mandated RFP process. The projects are being developed by Nexamp, a Boston-based company. The solar farms are in the final permitting process in the Town of Wawayanda to serve Orange and Rockland customers, and in the Town of Wappinger to serve Central Hudson utility customers. Each will be able to take about 300 subscribers, and are expected to begin producing electricity in the early Summer of 2018.

This Community Solar initiative has several benefits. It is available to all Orange & Rockland utility ratepayers, regardless of income. Households can subscribe to a "solar farm" and receive credits on their electric bill that will, in most cases, reduce their total annual expense by 10%. There is no credit check, no sign-up cost, and no long-term commitment or cancellation fee. Orange & Rockland customers can request more information on the Solarize Hudson Valley website: [Solarize-hudsonvalley.org](http://Solarize-hudsonvalley.org) or call non-profit program manager John Wackman at 646-302-5835.

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