



Solar Installations in Great Lakes Bay Region Expand Substantially in 2016 Due to Solarize Michigan

[Solarize Michigan](#), the state's first campaign to bring affordable solar technology to homes and small businesses, successfully led to the growth of solar deployment in the Great Lakes Bay Region of Bay, Midland and Saginaw counties last year. Further, the campaign is expected to continue reaping benefits down the road. Those are the findings in a report issued this week by the Institute for Energy Innovation (IEI).

"Solarize Michigan substantially increased installed solar capacity in the Great Lakes Bay Region in 2016, increasing installed capacity by more than 250 percent over 2015," said Dan Scripps, president of IEI. "More than 40 percent of the total solar deployed in the Great Lakes Bay Region is the result of Solarize Michigan, which should serve as a template for Michigan communities looking for opportunities to unlock the economic and energy benefits solar has to offer."

According to the report, Solarize Michigan made solar a simple investment through affordable solar technology to homes and small businesses. The seven-month campaign was led by the IEI in partnership with 5 Lakes Energy, a Michigan-based clean energy consulting firm, with funding from the Mott Foundation. Other partners included Saginaw Future, Midland Tomorrow and Bay Future.

Specifically the results of the Solarize Michigan campaign were:

169 solar assessments

16 solar installations

132.4 kW total installed capacity

Client investment estimated at \$397,500

78 percent increase in total installed capacity in the region

256 percent increase in capacity over 2015

The campaign also led to a solar installation outside the project area with a number of installations scheduled for this year based on leads it generated.



Community education and outreach were critical components of the program that offered workshops, presentations, and open driveway events to help homeowners learn more about the benefits of solar installation. Those education efforts, while instrumental, were impacted by outside factors including proposed legislation that would adversely affect the value of solar systems, company mergers and acquisitions that cast a pall over the local economy, and actions by some local assessors that revised state equalized values upward on properties with solar installations.

Midland Solar Applications, Michigan Solar Solutions and The Green Panel were approved installers, selected through a rigorous and competitive bidding process that considered experience, pricing and quality. Solarize Michigan also had an exclusive agreement with Suniva, which provided panels manufactured at their Saginaw facility at a discounted price for use in the program.

Solarize Michigan was modeled on other successful “solarization” programs across the country that allowed homeowners and small business owners to generate a portion of their own power with rooftop solar systems. Savings are achieved by partnering with solar installers and manufacturers, and by joining together large pools of interested homeowners and small businesses, negotiating discounts and passing the savings on to customers.

The full report can be found at: www.instituteforenergyinnovation.org

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