



Energy Ready: Energy in Georgia Communities & Preparing for What's Next

GPA Fall Conference
September 24, 2026

ICMA



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IREC

How Energy Ready is your community?

- We don't have any energy planning, zoning, or specialized permitting for uses like solar and EV charging
- We have some energy planning, mostly for uses like rooftop solar, but not solar as a primary use (large-scale solar)
- We have a good amount of energy planning, including rooftop solar, solar as a primary use (large-scale solar), and EV charging
- We have all of the above, plus regulations for technologies like battery energy storage systems (BESS) and other newer technologies
 - Please share!

What We'll Cover:

- **Julia Dietz**, UGA Carl Vinson Institute of Government
 - Georgia energy growth statistics, takeaways from communities
- **Kelsea Dombrovski**, AICP, International City/County Management Association
 - Planning and zoning for energy in your community
- What is Energy Ready?
- Questions and Discussion
- Resources



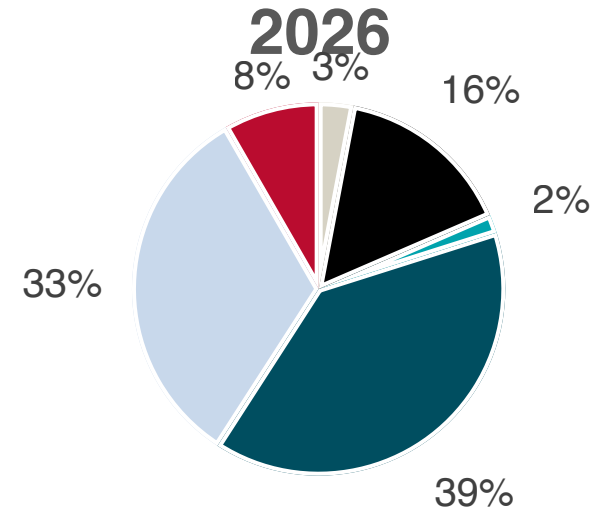
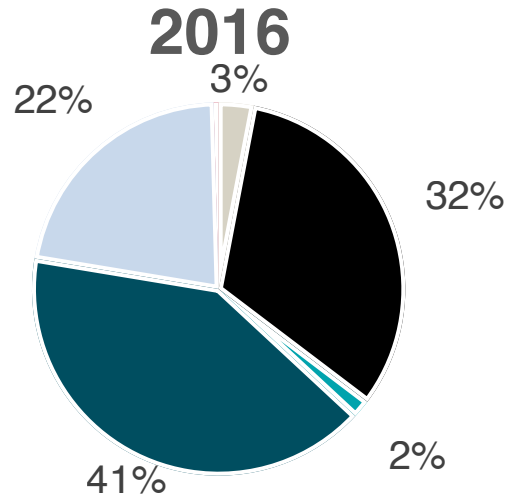
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Energy in Georgia Communities and Preparing for What's Next

Julia Dietz

September 24, 2026

Georgia Net Generation by Energy Source



Source: US Energy Information Administration



Increasing Energy Demand

Over the next six years, Georgia Power projects approximately 8,500 megawatts (MW) of electrical load growth, an increase of more than 2,600 MW in peak demand by the end of 2030 when compared to projections in the 2023 IRP Update.

Where is that demand coming from?

What does this mean?

Where will that new generation come from?





Where is Demand Growth Coming From?

Large-load economic development

- Data center growth projected to potentially add ~8,000 MW of demand by 2030

Electrification

- Adoption of electric vehicles and infrastructure is growing alongside electrification within long-standing industries

General population and economic growth

- Georgia has added more than 1.6 million residents since 2010 and is projected to add nearly 1 million more in the next 10 years
- More than \$91 billion in announced capital investments across 1,600+ locations between FY2022-2025
- 77% of new FY2025 projects are outside the 10-county Atlanta region



GEORGIA REMAINS A LEADER IN THE EV ECONOMY

*Companies have announced nearly \$24.4 billion worth of investments in EV and battery manufacturing and the creation of 26,400 jobs in the state of Georgia.**

IN THE SOUTHEAST REGION

#1 in EV Manufacturing Employment
#1 in EV Manufacturing Investment
#1 in EV Charging per Capita
#2 in EV Sales & Market Share

NATIONALLY

#2 in EV Manufacturing Employment



ANNOUNCED JOBS

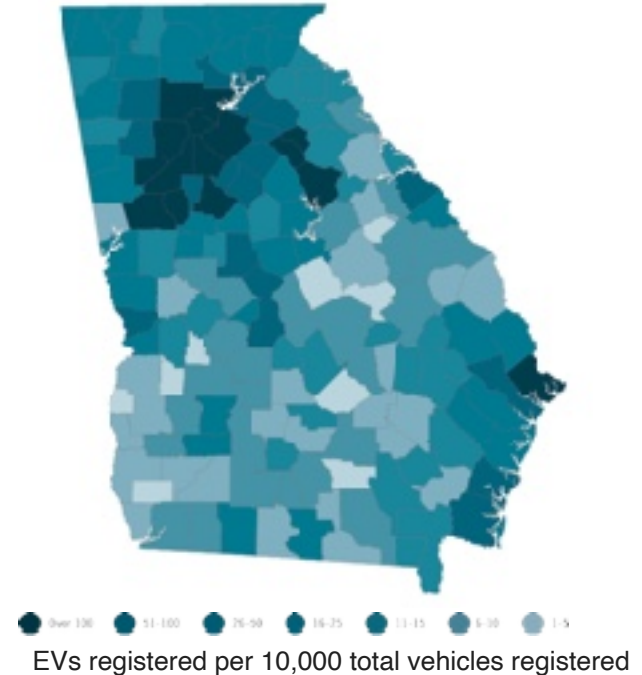
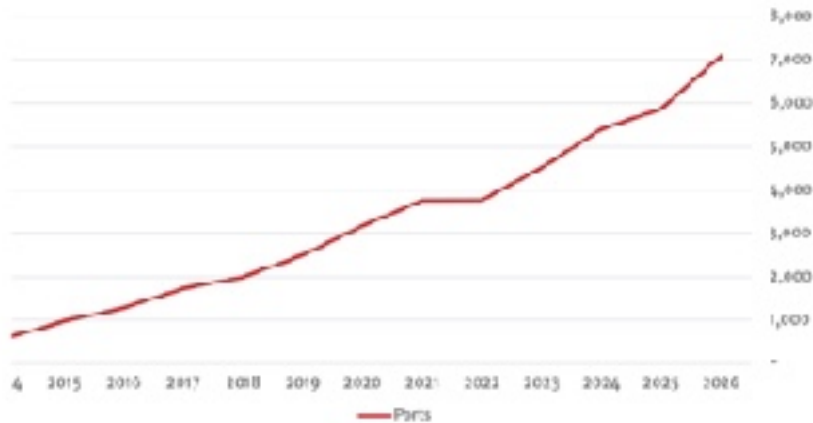
*Investment and job figures reflect announced projects and employment from 2018–2025



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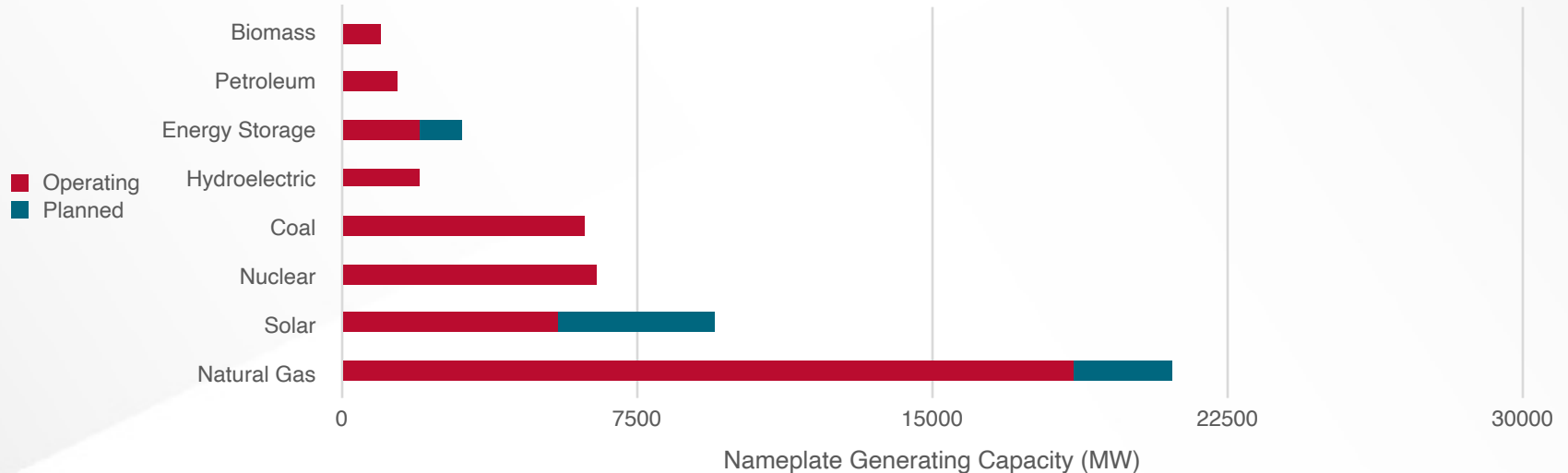
**PLUG INTO
GEORGIA**

EV OWNERSHIP & PUBLIC CHARGING IN GEORGIA ARE GROWING



Growth in Energy Generation

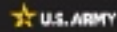
Georgia's Electric Generation Capacity
Operating and Planned through 2030



Source: US Energy Information Administration



Micronuclear



Army reaches agreement with private industry for nuclear micro-reactors

By U.S. Army Communication and Outreach Office August 28, 2020



WASHINGTON (AP) — The Department of Defense has agreed to a deal with a private company to build and operate a fleet of nuclear micro-reactors. The deal, announced by the Pentagon, would allow the military to use the reactors to generate power for its operations. The reactors would be used to power the military's operations in the future.

Traditional Nuclear vs. SMR vs. Microreactor

Illustrative comparison of scale and emergency planning

Traditional Large-Scale Reactor	Small Modular Reactor (SMR)	Microreactor
 Typical size (MW electric) >600 MWe	 Typical size (MW electric) 50–300 MWe	 Typical size (MW electric) 1–20 MWe
 Emergency planning radius 10 miles (up to 50 miles)	 Emergency planning radius <2 miles	 Emergency planning radius <1/3 mile

Source: US Army Janus Program informational materials, July 2026

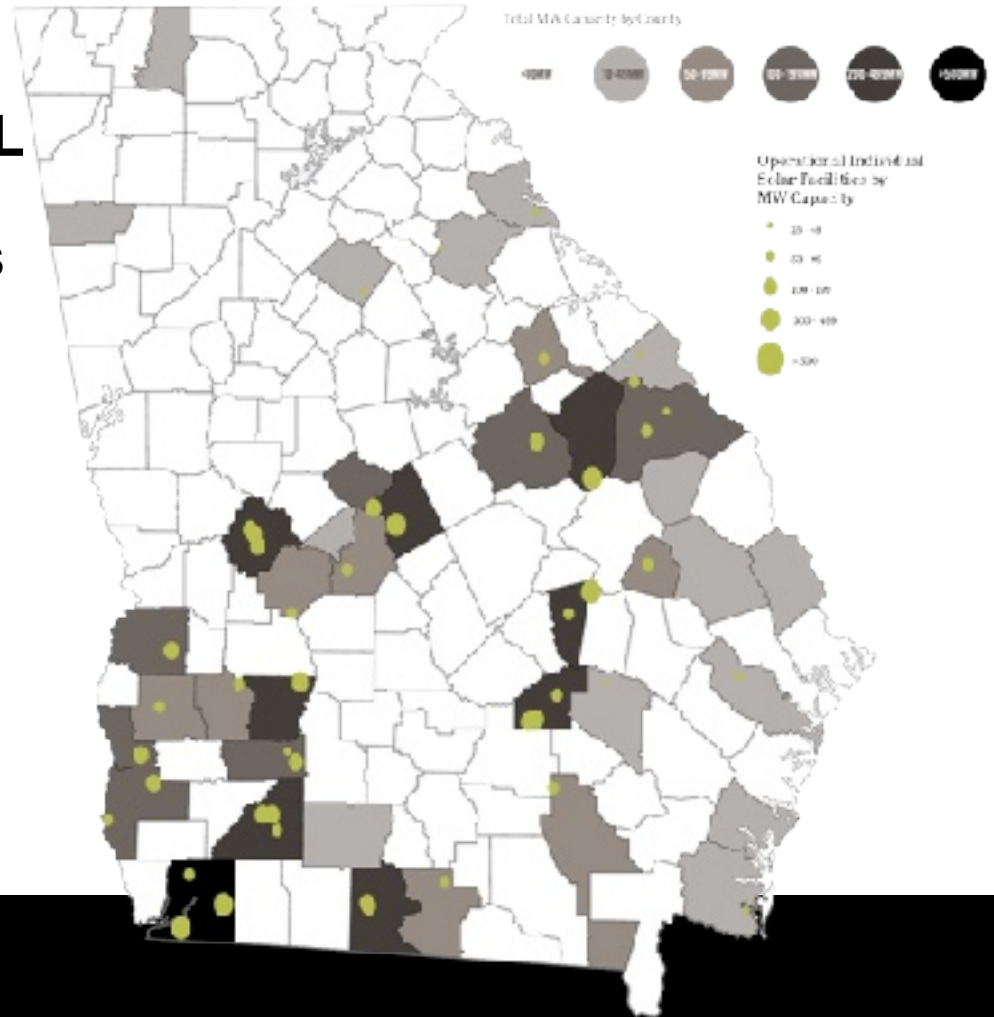


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OPERATIONAL Utility-Scale Solar Facilities in Georgia

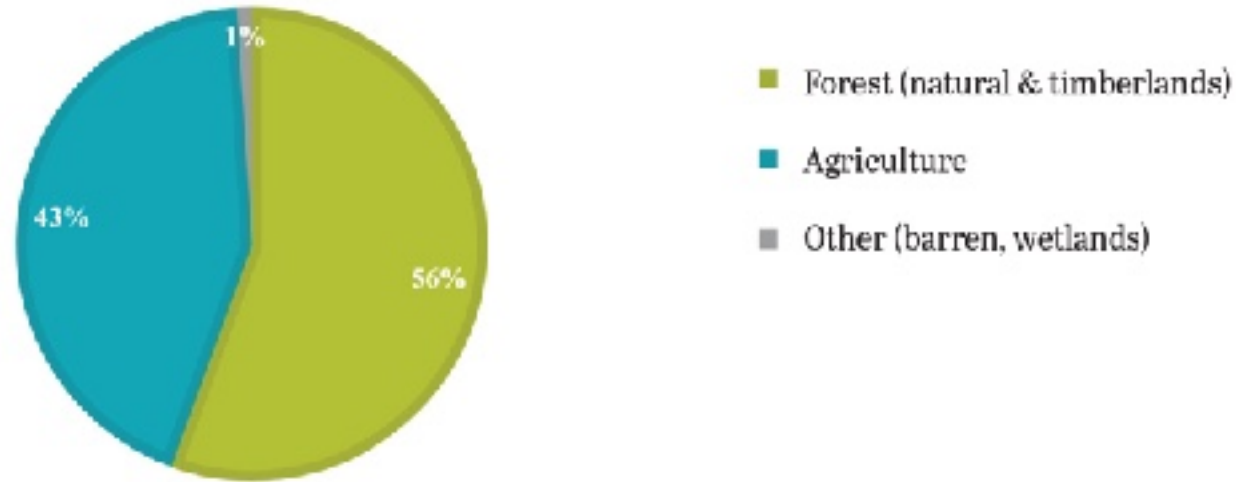
5,274 MW
115 Facilities
75 Counties
21,098-36,921
Acres

Data as of June 2025



Quantifying Farmland and Forest Land Conversion to Solar

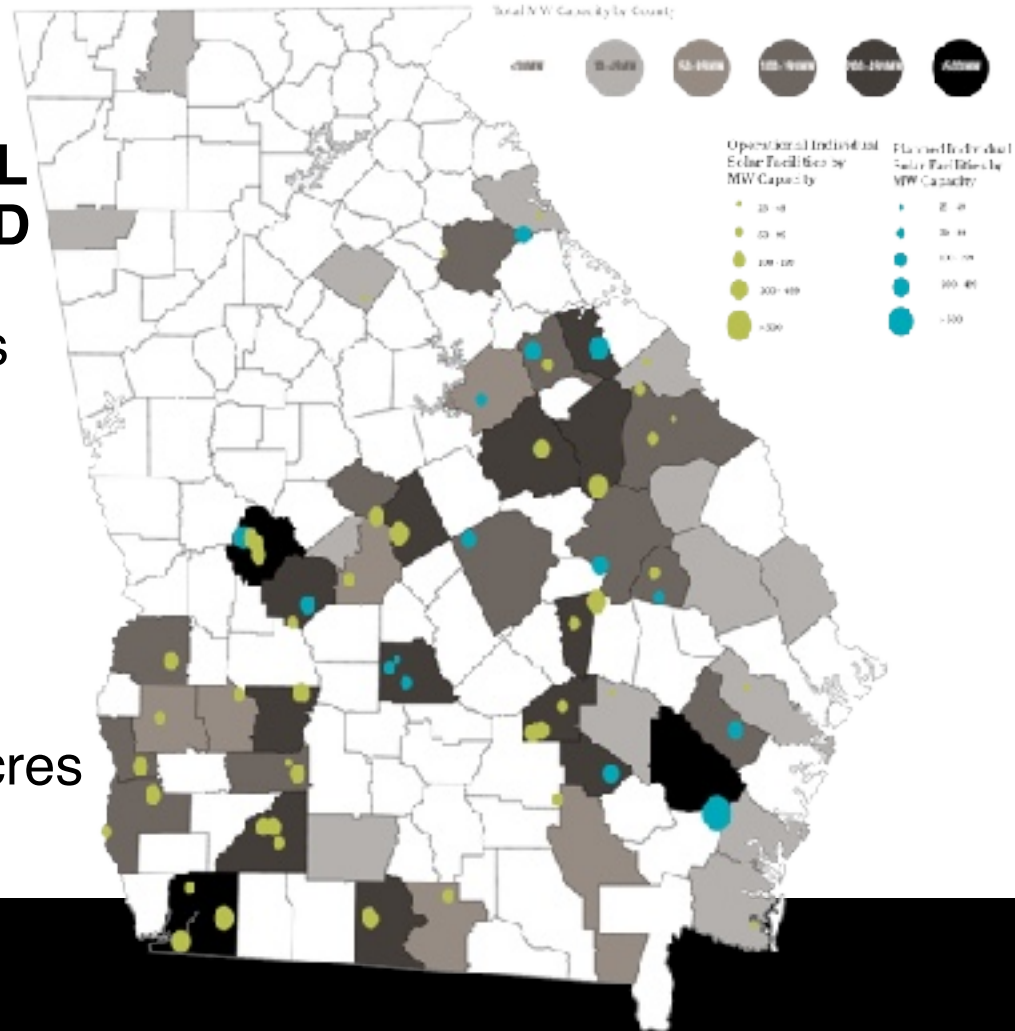
NATIONAL LAND COVER DATABASE ANALYSIS - LANDCOVER CONVERTED TO SOLAR (2000-2024)



OPERATIONAL AND PLANNED Utility-Scale Solar Facilities in Georgia by 2030

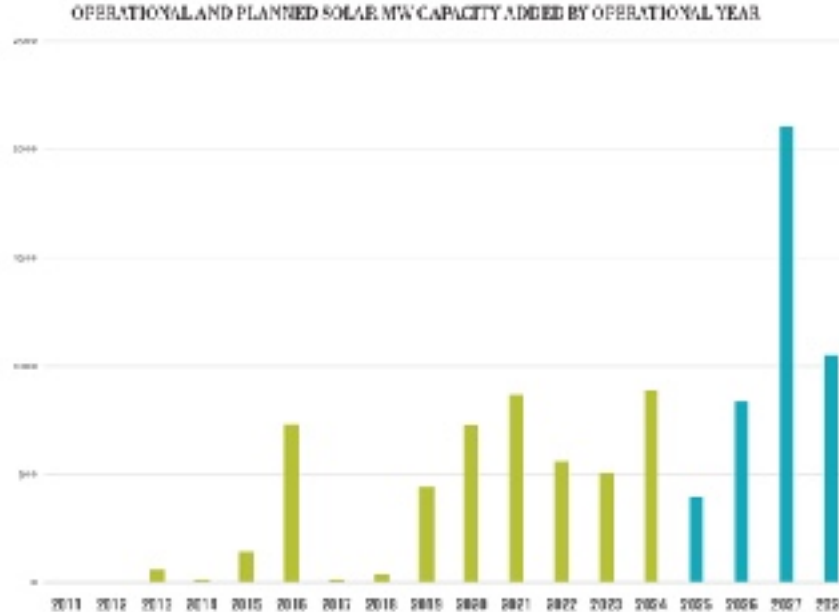
9,401 MW
129 Facilities
79 Counties
37,604-65,808 acres

Data as of June 2025



Growth Rate of Solar

81%
of utility-scale
solar has
become
operational in
the last 7 years
since 2019



Land Use in Context

37,604-65,808 acres in solar by 2030

In Georgia, solar represents **less than 0.15% of the 24 million acres of forest land** and **less than 0.3% of the 9.9 million acres of farmland**

91% of this solar capacity is located in **27 counties**

Just **5 counties** host **43%** of the total solar



County Experiences

- Interviews conducted with county leaders to identify concerns, opportunities, and needs around the expansion of energy-related development (solar, data centers, battery storage, etc.) in Georgia
- Results are being formally analyzed for research as well as directly inform the Institute of Government's development of resources and training



Early Themes

- Counties lack trust with developers and economic development authorities and seek sources of information they can trust
- Economic benefits are oversold and/or underdelivered
- Too many unknown environmental, health, and community impacts
- Moratoriums in place to give time to create ordinances to protect community priorities , though lack of confidence in where to begin



Resources & Events

Available Now

- Plug Into Georgia resources
- Utility-Scale Solar Leasing Use report
- Technical assistance



Coming soon

- Energy 101 Guidebook
- Biomass Energy Primer
- Solar Industry Economic Impact Report
- Listening sessions

Save the Date: UGA Electric Mobility Summit – March 16, 2027





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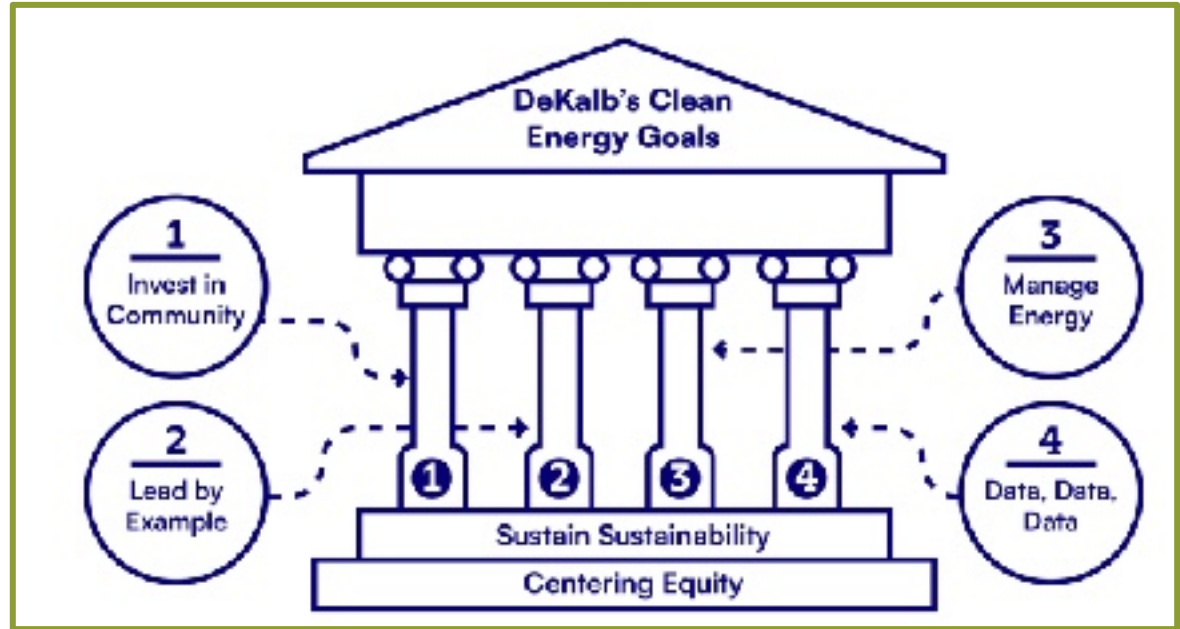
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Planning and Zoning for Energy Development

International City/County
Management Association
(ICMA)



DeKalb County, GA Clean Energy Transportation Transition Plan

Recapping Julia's Takeaways

- **Increases in energy demand** from data centers, EVs and electrification, pop. growth
- **Growth in planned solar generation and energy storage** through 2030 (4 years from now!)
- **Micronuclear on the horizon**
- **Large-scale solar installations**: existing and new in 79 counties, development in last 7 years
- **Need for trusted sources of information** on impacts, economic returns
- **Unclear how to start planning and zoning** for new energy uses during moratoria

6 Actions for Energy Planning & Zoning

1. Zoning review
2. Train staff
3. Community needs, wants, realities
4. Definitions
5. Permissible uses + locations
6. Permitting procedures



1. Zoning Review

- **Where are you starting?**
- **Review your current ordinance and maps** in the context of energy development:
 - Solar: rooftop, large-scale, primary use, accessory use
 - EVs: charging station locations, parking regulations, mentions in multifamily, commercial code
 - Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS): appropriate zone districts, similar uses
- **Make note of:**
 - What's present
 - What's missing
 - What's unclear
 - What's incomplete

2. Train Staff

- **Every 2 years, ensure staff receive updated training on energy development:** planning and zoning, and ideally, permitting and inspection staff
- **Training opportunities:**
 - Statewide planning conferences
 - Webinars, including many through Energy Ready; new and recorded
 - Peer learning: reach out to jurisdictions
 - Specific workshops, field trips, and other in-person learning opportunities



Tools and Resources



3. Community Needs, Wants, Realities

4. Definitions

Energy developments are distinct land uses; clear and transparent definitions help developers and communities understand the defined uses and related components, and streamline consistent development

- **Solar and battery system definitions may include:**

- Sizes in terms of surface area
- Energy system types
- Energy system components
- Related equipment and facilities
- Types of energy development
- Related terms

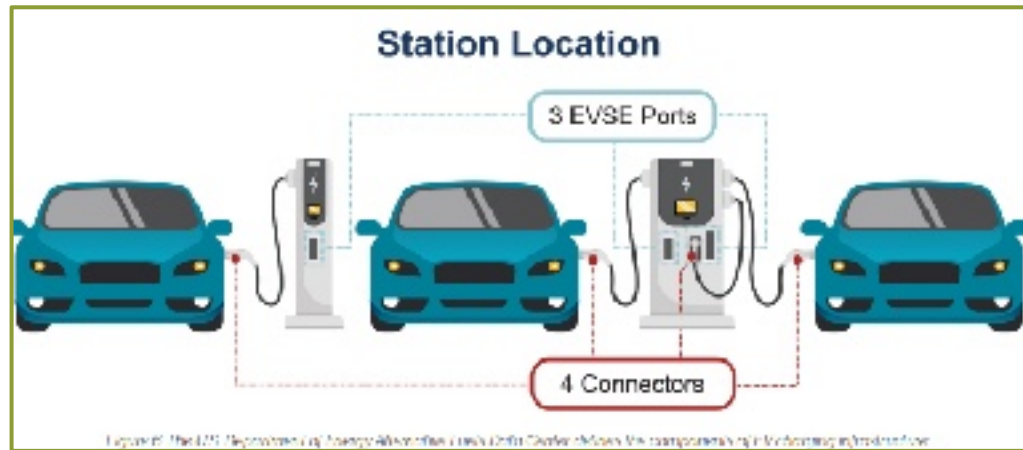
The **Footprint** of a Ground Mounted SES is calculated by drawing a perimeter around the outermost SES panels and any equipment necessary for the functioning of the SES, such as transformers and inverters. The Footprint does not include any visual buffer or perimeter fencing. Transmission lines (or portions thereof) required to connect the SES to a utility or consumer outside the SES perimeter shall not be included in calculating the Footprint.

Ground Mounted SESs shall be delineated by size as follows:

- **Small Scale Ground Mounted Solar Energy System (Small Scale SES)** means a Ground Mounted SES with a Footprint of less than [1 – 5] acres.
- **Intermediate Scale Ground Mounted Solar Energy System (Intermediate Scale SES)** means a Ground Mounted SES with a Footprint of between [1 – 10] and [15 – 50] acres.
- **Large Scale Ground Mounted Solar Energy System (Large Scale SES)** means a Ground Mounted SES with a Footprint of more than [15 – 50] acres.

4. Definitions, Continued

- **EV definitions may include:**
 - EV definition
 - Locations and relationships to parking regulations
 - Charging station types
 - Charging station components
 - Related equipment and facilities
 - Related terms



Planning and Zoning Guidance for Electric Vehicle Charger Deployment (2023)

- **Resources for example definitions:**
 - Model ordinances from state or national APA, or local COG
 - Energy Ready materials

5. Permissible Uses + Locations

- Important to **include definitions** of developments that are ***not* permissible** land uses
- Evaluate **where in your community** energy development could help, create challenges, open opportunities, make sense
- Permissible uses **by zoning district**
 - By right, may still require plan review
 - Potentially permissible, pending a specified review procedure (conditional, special exception)
 - Prohibited

Sample Use Permissions, MGCAC Model Ordinance

Type of District	Intermediate Scale Ground Mounted SES	Large Scale Ground Mounted SES
Residential	Permitted with a discretionary use permit	Prohibited
Agricultural	Permitted with a discretionary use permit	Permitted with a discretionary use permit
Commercial	Permitted by right	Permitted with a discretionary use permit
Industrial	Permitted by right	Permitted with a discretionary use permit

6. Permitting Procedures

- **Clear, transparent, and consistent review procedures, timelines, fees** help developers and communities successfully develop energy projects
- Work toward **consistency across project types**, identify opportunities for improvement
- **Review and update:**
 - Pre-submittal/pre-application meeting procedures
 - Application requirements
 - Developer community engagement requirements
- Timeline and fee updates may require additional study and approval, but can also be beneficial

Energy Ready

Energy Ready is a suite of **free, national technical assistance programs for local governments**, including SolSmart, Charging Smart, and Distributed Wind Smart. These programs offer expert guidance and public recognition for energy ready actions.

Energy Ready is led by ICMA and IREC, with support from the U.S. Department of Energy.



What Is SolSmart?

SolSmart helps local governments and regional organizations **improve planning and zoning** and **streamline permitting and inspection processes** to help **accelerate the adoption of solar** for their residents and businesses.



Apex, NC

What Is Charging Smart?

Charging Smart works with local governments to **develop planning and zoning procedures that facilitate the growth of EV adoption.** Municipalities can secure cleaner air, support economic growth, and bring electric vehicles to their community.



Brighton, CO

Georgia Charging Smart Cohort

Clean Cities Georgia cohort is beginning soon!

Reach out for details on timing and schedule:

Larry Heiman, larry@cleancitiesgeorgia.org



Upcoming Events

- Table here at the conference – come say hello!
- Energy Ready Webinars:
 - **Introduction to SolSmart**: Helping Local Governments Increase Affordable Energy Options
 - **Charging Smart**: Innovative Tools and Technologies to Accelerate Electric Vehicle Deployment
- **National Brownfields Training Conference**
 - The National Brownfields Training Conference is the largest event in the nation focused on land revitalization and economic redevelopment.
- Follow us on LinkedIn, @Energy Ready; sign up for our newsletter, top right corner: <https://energy-ready.org/>



Resources

- Energy Ready website, energy-ready.org
 - Program and technical assistance information: SolSmart and Charging Smart
 - Webinar recordings
 - Guidance documents
- Carl Vinson Institute of Government, [Energy Tools and Resources](#)
 - Georgia-specific EV and utility-scale solar resources
 - EV case studies directly from Georgia communities
- Solar@Scale, [website](#)
 - Guidebook
 - Webinar recordings

Questions and Discussion





Energy Ready

Thank You

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Acknowledgment and Disclaimer

Acknowledgment: This material is based upon work supported by the Department of Energy, under Award Numbers DE-EE0009951, DE-EE0011076, and DE-EE0011131.

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