Streamlining the Solar Permitting Process
Solar Permitting Best Practices
(updated January 2013)

1. **Availability of Permitting Information:** Information on permit fees, application requirements and process should be easily accessible via the city's website so applicants can review and prepare materials in advance. Municipalities should provide a submittal checklist of all requirements for rooftop solar PV and solar thermal permitting in a single online location.

2. **Fair Flat Fees:** Using a flat-fee method instead of a value-based method to assess permit fees streamlines the process and ensures that larger solar energy systems are not arbitrarily penalized. Fees should fairly reflect the time needed for city staff to review and issue a permit - that's something that remains constant regardless of system size. A reasonable residential permit fee should be $250 or less if best practices are followed.

3. **Expedited Review for Simple Systems:** The majority of small residential PV systems can be processed quickly if they meet clearly defined review requirements. We recommend adopting an expedited permitting review process for these systems that enables review over-the-counter or via electronic processing within one day. The *Solar ABC's Expedited Permit Process for PV Systems* provides a good example that can be adopted in full or used as a starting point. (Note, for larger systems, not covered by the *Expedited Permit* guidelines, municipalities should set and adhere to standard permitting requirements to make the process clear and transparent. The municipality should work to make these standards consistent with neighboring jurisdictions.)

4. **Online Processing:** Moving to a fully online permitting system can significantly reduce travel time for installers and workload for municipalities. We recommend adopting a system that enables submittal, review and approval of PV permits via email or a website.

5. **Maximum One-Trip Permitting:** Travel to-and-from the building department can be one of the most cost intensive parts of the permitting process for installers. Obtaining a PV permit should require no more than one visit to the building department for properly completed applications.

6. **Replace community-specific solar licenses, if required, with standard certification for installers.** We recommend accepting NABCEP PV installer and solar thermal certification in lieu of community-specific solar licenses.

7. **Train Permitting Staff in Solar:** Training building department staff to review permits and perform standard fire department checks reduces time and cost. Cities should make one or half-day workshops available to relevant staff. Trainings should be available to both building department plan check and review staff as well as for inspectors. Click here for free online training for code officials, developed by IREC (https://www.nterlearning.org/web/guest/course-details?cid=402)

8. **Remove Excessive Reviews and Inspections:** Eliminating reviews that do little to validate the safe and efficient operation of a proposed PV system (i.e. plan checks with aesthetic criteria) removes unnecessary costs and expedites permit issuance. For efficiency, we recommend requiring only one inspection for standard rooftop systems on existing homes or businesses.

9. **Reduce Inspection Appointment Windows**: Keeping the windows for inspection appointments at or below two hours reduces the amount of costly worker time spent waiting for inspectors to arrive. Inspectors could also call contractors as appointment time grows close to further save time.

THE **Vote Solar** INITIATIVE

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For more information please visit Vote Solar's Project: Permit webpage http://votesolar.org/solar-map/