

# UNIFIED SOLAR PERMIT CASE STUDY: TOWN OF WARWICK

Questions answered by Supervisor Michael Sweeton

## Community Snapshot



32,065 people



104.9 square miles

Favorite clean energy project: Solar Hot Water Heater

Sustainability Website: <https://www.townofwarwick.org/community-preservation/>

## Solar Permitting Snapshot

Solar Permits Issued Annually (since 2017): 40-45

Year of Adoption of the Unified Solar Permit: 2018

Building Department Size: Full time inspector and clerk,  
part-time inspector and clerk

## Clean Energy Communities High-Impact Actions Completed



Benchmarking – Municipal Buildings



Benchmarking – Advanced Reporting



Energy Code Enforcement Training



Community Campaigns (Solarize)



Unified Solar Permit



# Is your community considering the Unified Solar Permit? Here's why the Town of Warwick thinks you should adopt.

## 1) Why did your community choose to adopt the Unified Solar Permit application?

We were asked to participate with Sustainable CUNY in the development of the Unified Solar permit for residential solar installations. We worked on this with other municipalities across NYS and when a final version was completed we were excited to be one of the first to put it into use.

## 2) Did your community have a solar energy law in place prior to adoption of the USP?

Yes, we adopted an update to our comprehensive plan to address sustainability and alternate energy goals. We also adopted zoning code changes in 2015 that specifically addressed and streamlined installations of solar energy systems. It specifically allowed residential solar by permit through the building department rather than the planning board to save residents time and money.

## 3) Did adoption of the permit application process result in an update of your solar energy law?

No, our code was actually ahead of the curve but the adoption of the unified permit simplified and accelerated the process for residents.

## 4) Did you see any change in the number of small solar installations as a result of adopting the Unified Solar Permit?

We saw a big surge the year we adopted the Unified Solar Permit, which has since slacked off. That may be due to our fairly high installment to date and perhaps some reduction in incentives from the State & Federal government.

## 5) What was the Permit application's impact on your building department's workload?

Adoption of the permit certainly saved time and simplified the process. The department was able to handle the surge in interest by residents.

## 6) What is the resident perception?

The Unified Permit has been well received by residents and I believe has made it easier for those wishing to install roof top or standalone solar.

## 7) Has resident perception changed since your community implemented the Permit?

I believe it did prompt those on the fence to move forward.

## 8) What is the solar installer perception?

Installers liked it as they want a known, predictable process which saves them time and money.

## 9) What advice would you give communities considering passing the Unified Solar Permit today?

If you want to save time and money for your residents, lessen the load on your staff and encourage installation of solar then by all means adopt the permit.