

# A DIY Guide to Showing Up in Support of Local Clean Energy Projects

## Introduction

Supporting renewable energy in your community is one of the single most impactful actions you can take for the climate, your family's health, and the local economy.

The vast majority of solar, wind, and energy storage projects are permitted at the state and local level, where turnout at public meetings can be low. Opponents, often backed by fossil fuel money, are adept at filling this space with misinformation – in fact, [clean energy developers cite local opposition](#) as a top driver of project cancellations.

**This means a small number of supporters speaking in favor of a project can make the difference between cancellation and success – and getting just one project built (or a helpful ordinance passed) has thousands of times the benefits of any individual action.**


Imagine you and a few friends turn out in favor of a 100-megawatt solar array, outweighing opponents at a local public hearing. You successfully convince decision-makers to approve the project, replacing 100 megawatts of natural gas on your area's power grid. In that one action, you helped avoid as much planet-warming carbon emissions as removing more than 16,000 gas-powered cars from the road, recycling more than 7,000 garbage trucks full of trash, or growing more than 2.3 million tree seedlings for a decade. That's a lot of bang for your buck.

When people like you advocate for a clean energy future for your community, it can make all the difference. Here's how to do it.

<b>Step 1: Identify a project</b>	2
<b>Step 2: Get educated</b>	2
<b>Step 3: Speak up</b>	3
<b>Step 4: Show up</b>	4
<b>Step 5: Keep the momentum going</b>	4

## Step 1: Identify a project

### Where to look:

- **Local news:** Stay tuned to your local newspaper, digital media, radio, and TV stations to find stories about clean energy proposals in your community or region.
- **Public notices:** Consult municipal public notices (posted on a town, city or county website, in municipal offices, or in the local paper) and look for upcoming public hearings or meetings, or zoning or building permit requests from clean energy developers.
  - Typical spaces where clean energy projects might get permitted or approved: planning & zoning commissions, city or town councils, and county or state boards. [Here's a map showing energy permitting authorities state-by-state.](#)
  -  **TIP:** Developers sometimes notify close neighbors of a proposed project via mail or door-to-door, or may post flyers about informational meetings in public places, such as at a grocery store, coffee shop, or local library.
- **Social media:** Keep an eye on local Facebook groups, NextDoor posts, and other online message forums to find out about proposed projects from your neighbors.

**Don't assume a proposed project will pass – or fail.** Opposition may be brewing, but vocal support always goes a long way.


**GOAL: Identify a milestone.** Figure out when local officials are next taking some determinative action on the project – e.g. a public hearing, comment deadline, or vote – and work toward that in your advocacy, aiming to rally support in advance as well as in person on the milestone day.

## Step 2: Get educated

**Read about the project:** Developers may offer websites to share public information about the project. They'll also include details about its scope and benefits in various permit applications, which may be posted on a municipal or state website or can be requested from local officials. These documents can be dense and wonky, but don't worry – you don't need to understand all the technicalities. Just arm yourself with basic project facts.

**Learn about the technology:** Do your research with government and academic sources and well-established climate or clean energy organizations. Here are a few fact sheets – on [solar](#), [wind](#) and [energy storage](#) – to get you started.

**Cut through the misinformation:** Many claims circulating about a proposed project might be false or misleading. Be discerning in your research and look for up-to-date primary sources.

- Get answers to [common questions about renewable energy](#) from MIT Climate.
- Find more resources on [common false arguments against wind and solar](#).
- Read tips from the Union of Concerned Scientists on [how to spot disinformation](#).
-  **TIP:** Learn how to counter misinformation without amplifying it [with our handy guide](#).

### Understand the benefits for your community:



- Look for local economic benefits to uplift – e.g. new jobs, tax revenues for public services, infrastructure investments, lower energy costs, and more.
- [See how much emissions are avoided by different technologies](#) and [what those emissions mean in real-world terms](#).

Ask questions and connect with groups working on the issue: [Reach out to us for support](#).


**GOAL: Gather your talking points.** Compile a short list of compelling messages and facts to guide your advocacy. What excites you about this project? Why does your milestone matter? What questions do you want to be prepared to address for decision-makers or your neighbors?

## Step 3: Speak up

### Where to do it:

- **Word of mouth:** Talk about the project and why you're excited to support it with friends, family, and neighbors in person and online.
  -  **TIP:** Look for digital spaces where conversations about the project or related issues are already happening (e.g. newspaper comment sections on relevant stories, social media posts and threads) and chime in with your support.
- **Letters to the editor:** Submit a short letter to your local newspaper about why you support the project and what action you hope decision-makers will take on it. This is especially useful in response to a relevant story that recently appeared in the paper. For more ideas, [check out this guide from Citizens' Climate Lobby](#).
- **Contact local decision-makers:** Email or call the local officials responsible for making the upcoming decision on the project to directly tell them why you support it.
  -  **TIP:** Host a letter-writing party – make a template and get friends together to personalize and send their own versions to the newspaper or local officials.

### How to share compelling messages:

- **Make it personal and local:** Why is this project important for you and your family? How will it benefit your community directly? What local services do you rely on that it could help fund? What effects of a costly, unreliable energy system have you experienced that this project will help address? How are you experiencing pollution or climate change?
  -  **TIP:** Research shows that economic arguments are often more effective to sway people in favor of clean energy than messages about climate or health.
- **Know your audience:** How much do your neighbors and local officials understand about this technology and project benefits? Is this your community's first time debating a project like this? When in doubt, err on the side of basics – avoid technical jargon and explain the project's benefits in relatable, local terms, like you're talking to a friend.

- **Emphasize your milestone:** Be sure to encourage fellow clean energy supporters to show up at an upcoming hearing or vote, or to write to decision-makers ahead of time.
- **Don't take the bait:** Remember to [avoid repeating false claims in trying to refute them](#).

**GOAL: Share the benefits and build support before your milestone.** By effectively spreading the word about the project and upcoming opportunity to show support, you can raise awareness, inform your community, and rally others to join you in taking action.


## Step 4: Show up

**When your project milestone rolls around, be there to voice and/or show your support in person.** Don't mistake your earlier work for enough – this is the part that really counts!

**Know before you go:** Will there be a public comment opportunity? Does the governing body have posted advice or guidelines for making public comments (time limits, off-limits topics, etc)? Do you need to sign up to comment in advance? When in doubt, call ahead and get the details.

**Visibility matters:** Whether you'll be able to speak at the meeting or not, you may be able to show your support with buttons, signs, and shirts. Get creative! Just make sure to check the municipality or agency's rules beforehand – some may not allow signs at meetings, for example.

### Prepare effective public comments:

- Use the tips from Step 3 of this guide, above, to craft a compelling comment. Share your personal reason for supporting this project, keep it local, and stay out of the weeds. For more advice, [check out this resource from the Public Interest Network](#).
-  **TIP:** One minute ≈ 150 words. Many venues limit comments to three minutes per person. Practice with a friend or in front of the mirror and time yourself.

**Bring a friend (or three):** The more supporters you can bring out, the better chance you have to show officials the project is wanted. And with buttons, signs, or shirts, you can be sure local decision-makers know who in the audience is on the side of clean energy.

**GOAL: Get the project the permit or vote it needs to proceed! And, whatever the outcome, make it clear that your community supports clean energy.** By mobilizing in support of a local project, you're building support for clean energy among your friends and neighbors and ensuring that message reaches the people in power, with long-term benefits.

## Step 5: Keep the momentum going

**Congratulations – you did it!** You got educated, got involved, and turned out in favor of clean energy. Your hard work made a big difference in moving this transition forward. What's next?

**Do it all again for the next milestone or project:** Head back to Step 1 and find out what's next for this project, if it still has steps left in its process – or look for the next project on deck in your community. Keep speaking up and showing up in support.

**Stay engaged with the community of clean energy supporters you're helping to build:**

You might organize regular check-in calls or create a social media group with the people who joined you in this work to discuss local solutions and opportunities to take more action. You could host film screenings, start a book club, raise money, write letters or volunteer with local or national groups, and continue sharing ideas for how to support clean energy in your community.

**Share this guide with a friend:** Tell others what you've learned about why supporting clean energy projects in your community is so vital, and how you can take action to do it yourself.

**Questions?** [Click here to get in touch with us](#) for more support with a project in your community.

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