SOLAR SITING STANDARDS

MEETING ENERGY DEMAND: UNLOCKING SOLAR IN VIRGINIA

The Problem – Virginia's Energy Deficit

Virginia's energy demand is rising faster than our ability to supply it. Without new generation, the Commonwealth faces higher costs, reduced reliability, and growing dependence on imported energy. Building new fossil fuel plants or pipelines would take years and cost billions—expenses that will ultimately fall on Virginia families and businesses. Solar is the only energy resource that can be built quickly enough to meet this challenge. Utility-scale solar, paired with battery storage, is already the fastest and most affordable form of new power generation. More than 5 GW of solar projects are in advanced development across Virginia—projects at risk without clear statewide standards.

Under today's patchwork of local ordinances, projects face years of delay, uncertainty, and added cost - 64 percent of Virginia's counties have banned or severely restricted utility scale solar development. Streamlined, consistent permitting is essential to put power on the grid quickly, keep energy affordable, and ensure Virginia meets its Clean Economy Act goals.

The Solution – Solar Siting Standards

Virginia needs a consistent, statewide framework for solar siting—one that gets projects built faster while ensuring they are high-quality, responsible, and respectful of local communities.

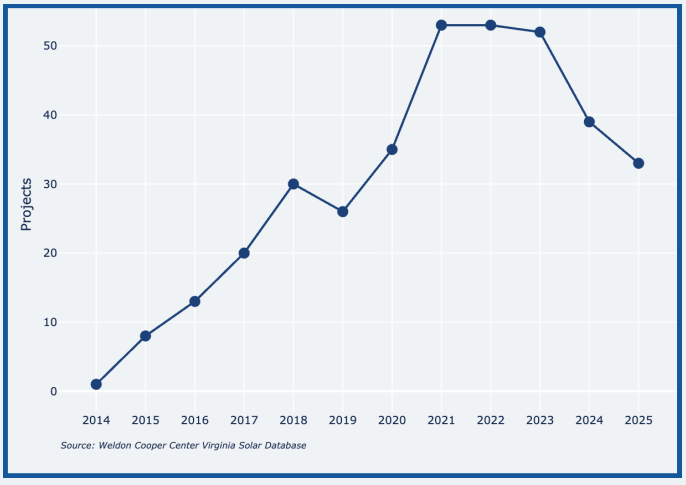
With solar ordinance standards:

- Localities have clear, reasonable criteria to guide decisions and still retain the ultimate decision-making authority on projects.
- Denials must be documented, ensuring fairness and transparency.
- Developers can address community concerns more effectively, producing better projects.

Bottom line: Solar siting standards are a common-sense reform. They speed up clean energy deployment, preserve local authority, and unlock new jobs, tax revenue, and affordable power for Virginia families and businesses.

Permit Approvals Decreasing Since 2022

Annual project data by local permit status



Key Benefits of Solar Siting Standards

- **Local authority preserved:** Communities keep the final say—no project moves forward without local approval.
- **Clear, consistent rules:** Predictable standards give localities, landowners, and developers a fair framework to work together.
- **Stronger economy:** Reform keeps Virginia competitive, protecting billions in investment and thousands of jobs from leaving for neighboring states.
- **Fast, affordable, reliable energy:** Solar is the only resource that can be built quickly enough to meet rising demand. Every lost project means fewer jobs, slower growth, and higher energy bills.

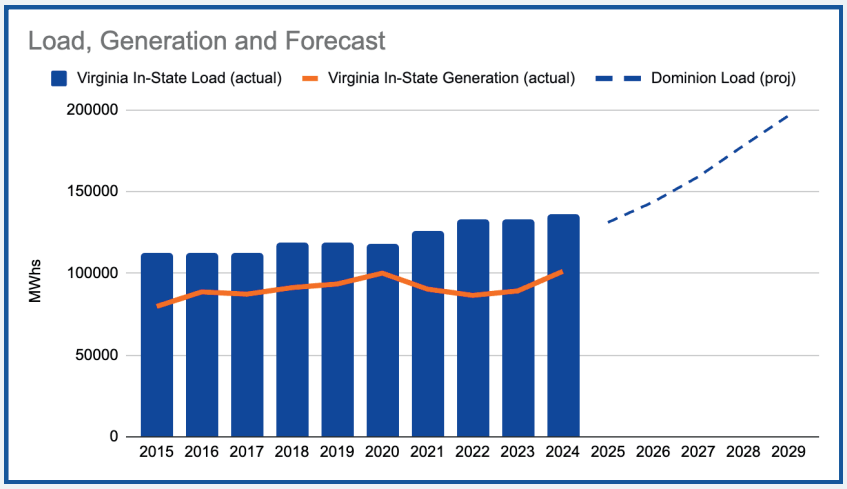
The Path Forward: How Solar Siting Standards Work

- Safe, responsible projects: Every project must meet strong standards for community needs and environmental protection—from siting to decommissioning.
- Local flexibility, fair rules: Guidelines give local officials tools to adapt standards to local conditions without blocking good projects.
- Respect for landowners: Solar gives landowners a fair, responsible option to support family farms and preserve their property.
- Proven standards in practice:
  - Where projects go: Setbacks from neighbors, homes, and key community sites.
  - How projects look: Fencing, height, lighting, and scenic protections.
  - How land is managed: Soil health, water management, and pollinator-friendly plantings.
  - Responsible cleanup: Mandatory decommissioning plans with funds set aside.
- Good local jobs: Competitive wages and apprenticeship opportunities for Virginia workers.

Why Now?

Virginia is facing a convergence of rising electricity demand, affordability concerns, and the urgent need for new generation that can be built quickly. Unlike fossil or nuclear plants that can take 7–10 years to come online, solar can be permitted and built within 1–2 years once siting barriers are resolved. That speed makes it the only scalable near-term option to meet Virginia's demand surge. Solar ordinance standards are the policy bridge that makes all of this possible.

Virginia's electricity load already eclipses in-state generation and is projected to increase



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