Things to Include in Solarpunk Cities

This page is assembled from suggestions people on the subreddit and slrpnk.net community provided when asked what they'd like to see included in artwork of solarpunk cities.

Broad themes:

- Reuse and repurposing – Old buildings retrofitted to work better, construction debris patchworked into new buildings, other stuff like maybe parts of cars taken from their original context and repurposed into a new one. An existing building represents a lot of embodied carbon, the resources spent to extract/refine it's materials, transport them, build it, maintain it, etc, and that extends to most existing machines, devices, infrastructure, etc.
- Plants in practical, non-damaging locations, especially if they provide additional shelter, cooling, food etc
- Variety – solarpunk buildings should be built to fit their environment – what's practical, energy efficient, and even what materials are locally available will depend on where the scene is set. Our current society, with its wealth of fuel and concrete, tends to drop the same cookie-cutter building into every climate and just burn more fuel to heat or cool it rather than adapt the design to its surroundings. Solarpunk would have to look very different in the desert than in a temperate rainforest, or a prairie.
- Communal spaces. Third places where people can exist without having to buy something. Parks, common areas, libraries of all kinds, cafeterias, speakers corners, playgrounds etc. solarpunk architecture should feel like it exists for its community.
- Accessibility, whether that's ramps, signage, a lack of curbs, abundant seating, or any of a thousand other considerations.
- Local power generation – photovoltaic panels are common in solarpunk art, but there are tons of other options that use energy directly in the form we receive it, like solar steam generators (which can run steam engines/generators, as well as produce steam for industrial purposes, solar furnaces, solar ovens, windmills, even waterwheels could make sense based on location. Parabolic troughs are also used to heat transfer fluid which can be used in ovens or autoclaves. Anaerobic Biogas Generation from sewage (turning a sewage treatment or composting byproduct into usable gas and reducing greenhouse gas emissions) is also a good one, and has those distinctive domes.
- A de-emphasis on car infrastructure. It'll still need some vehicle access, for emergency services, heavy items transportation, and accessibility, but elements that make it more walkable, and even stuff like bike racks, are huge. Perhaps some mixed use buildings with shops or co-ops on the ground floors can help there too.
- Art, murals and decorations. There's an expectation in our current society that we should treat our homes like a product we plan to sell. We should make them generic and easy to market, and there are standardized ways most stuff is 'supposed' to look. With the shift away from capitalism, we may see embellishment not for commercial value but as self expression and messaging. A solarpunk society might decorate everything from buildings to machines, in all kinds of styles. That might mean folk art with historical roots, like zapista murals, it might mean carved panels on cabinets, or etchings on tools, metal sculpture, or who knows what.

The following is pulled together from various discussions on things people in the scene would like to see included in art of solarpunk cities and towns:

- Maintainable buildings (usually 4 stories or less, unless using/maintaining old skyscrapers) - although mass timber construction methods may change this.

- Repurposed buildings:
  - Malls,
  - Parking garages,
  - Gas station, maybe turned into a restaurant with outdoor dining under the canopy?
- Public transit in use: trains, streetcars, ropeways/cableways overhead, buses, water buses in canals and rivers (Bangkok has some great examples)
  - Streetcars used to be incredibly common, they're practical electric vehicles which were built and run with 1910s technology, metallurgy, and no real batteries. Some trams (such as the Karlsruhe Stadtbahn) travel on old freight lines outside of the city to extend their full range, others double as cargo transportation within cities.
- Bicycles/non-car personal transportation
- Roads reclaimed into:
  - gardens
  - speakers corners
  - playgrounds
  - communal kitchens
  - parks (maybe with some solar cooker grills, the kind with a parabolic dish underneath, which can swing/flip up over the grilltop when not in use)
  - any other third space
  - For some hands-on guidance check out the Tactical Urbanism Materials and Design Guide
- Public gardens, if doing plants on rooftops/balconies, consider practicality/whether they'd cause damage or become a hazard (falling trees kill people even without blowing off the roof of a skyscraper).
- Lots of public art
- Street musicians
- Renewable power sources where practical – ie, solar on rooftops but windmills will probably be set up outside of town
- Emergency Vehicles that fit pedestrianized streets
- Amphibious Emergency Vehicles where seasonal flooding is expected
- Cities built to survive flooding
- Possibly some neighborhoods which are transplanted from cities that may not do well as climate change worsens (little New Orleans?)
- Old wind turbine blades repurposed into bike shelters, foot bridges, picnic tables, and other things.
- Streetlights designed around reducing light pollution.