



GROW SOLAR

CHICAGOLAND

THINKING ABOUT GOING SOLAR?

Residents throughout Cook, DuPage, Kane, and Will Counties have an opportunity to participate in **Grow Solar Chicagoland**, a grassroots program combining volume purchasing with community education to make solar more accessible and affordable. Home and commercial property owners may participate in this program.

Regardless of where you live in the Cook, DuPage, Kane, or Will Counties, you can participate in any of the free informational Solar Power Hours. You'll learn about the basics of solar, its financial implications for a household, and how the solar group buy program works. After the session, get a free, no-obligation site assessment from the competitively selected solar installer. You have until September 30, 2022, to decide whether to get solar through the program.



Sign up and learn more at Chicagoland.GrowSolar.org

FREE EDUCATIONAL SOLAR POWER HOURS

VIRTUAL

(please register at Chicagoland.GrowSolar.org)

6/21 Tuesday: Solar Power Hour, 2:00-3:00 p.m. on Zoom – co-hosted by Kane County

6/23 Thursday: Solar Power Hour, 10:00-11:00 a.m. on Zoom – co-hosted by SAGES of Buffalo Grove

7/14 Thursday: Solar Power Hour, 11:00AM-12:00 p.m. on Zoom – co-hosted by City of Chicago

7/20 Wednesday: Solar Power Hour, 6:30-7:30 p.m. on Zoom – co-hosted by Gail Borden Public Library

7/26 Tuesday: Solar Power Hour, 7:00-8:00 p.m. on Zoom – co-hosted by Northwest Suburbs Organizing for Action Indivisible

IN - PERSON

(No registration necessary)

6/22 Wednesday: Solar Power Hour, 7:00-8:00 p.m. at DuPage Event Center and Fairgrounds Complex, 2015 Manchester Road, N County Farm Rd, Wheaton, IL – co-hosted by Sierra Club of Illinois and DuPage Clean Energy Coalition

6/29 Wednesday: Solar Power Hour, 7:00-8:00 p.m. at Conference Room #10 at Iowa Community Center, 338 N. Iowa, Villa Park, IL – co-hosted by Village of Villa Park

6/30 Thursday: Solar Power Hour, 7:30-8:30 p.m. at Palatine Library, 700 N North Ct, Palatine, IL – co-hosted by Palatine Cool Cities

7/12 Tuesday: Solar Power Hour, 12:00-1:00 p.m. at CrossRoads Community Church, 5433 S Austin Ave, Chicago, IL – co-hosted by Garfield Ridge Chamber of Commerce

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Community Solar in Illinois

FACT SHEET

March 2022

What is community solar?

Are you interested in solar power but prevented from installing solar panels because you can't afford it, don't have enough space or sunlight on your property, or live in an apartment?

Illinois' new community solar program allows electricity customers to enjoy the benefits of solar energy without installing panels on their own homes.

Through community solar, you can purchase a portion of the electricity produced by a solar installation—called a community solar garden—and in return receive credits on your electric bill.

Why is this possible now?

The 2016 Future Energy Jobs Act created Illinois' community solar program, and the 2021 Climate & Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) strengthened it. CEJA allocated funding for 250 MW of pending projects—for about 40,000 subscribers—and then about 150 MW per year of projects going forward.

How does community solar work?

Under Illinois' community solar program, subscribers enter into an agreement that helps fund a solar installation somewhere in their utility's service territory in exchange for a credit on their bills.

The owner of the community solar garden pays the upfront costs to build, maintain and connect the garden to the utility's power grid. Subscribers pay the owner for their portion of the electricity produced. The owner then reports the output of each solar subscription to the utility, and the utility company adds credits to the subscriber's electric bill equal to that output.

Here's how it works: Let's say your home uses 1,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity in a month, and your portion of the solar garden you subscribe to produces 950 kWh in that same month. You would receive a credit on your bill equal to your supply rate multiplied by 950 kWh, meaning that month you would only need to pay for the remaining 50 kWh.

HOW COMMUNITY SOLAR WORKS

MANY CONSUMERS ARE INTERESTED IN SOLAR POWER, BUT CAN'T INSTALL PANELS ON THEIR HOME. Maybe their house has too much shade, or they live in an apartment.

With community solar, you don't have to install panels. **YOU, YOUR NEIGHBORS AND BUSINESSES CAN SUBSCRIBE TO A PORTION OF A COMMUNITY SOLAR GARDEN.**

How you pay for it depends on the offer you sign, but your subscription helps the developer fund the garden. **IN RETURN, YOU GET A CREDIT ON YOUR ELECTRIC BILL** in proportion to your share of the electricity the solar garden produces.

ELECTRIC BILL

YOUR USAGE	\$
CREDIT	\$
TOTAL	\$

Designed by Citizens Utility Board CUB

Note: Community solar projects have a maximum size of 2 Megawatts (MW) of electricity output—roughly 10,000 standard (2 x 1 meter) panels. Also, the utility is required to buy the energy output that hasn't been subscribed out in a solar garden.

Then you receive a separate bill from your community solar provider for that 950 kWh generated by your subscription. Currently, all community solar companies in Illinois offer savings by charging you lower than what you would have paid ComEd or Ameren. Compare community solar offers on CUB's SolarInTheCommunity.com.

How do I know what a good deal is?

The Illinois Commerce Commission and the Illinois Power Agency have to sign off on community solar contracts, so there are consumer protections. But some offers might be better for you than others.

Here are some questions to ask when deciding between community solar offers:

- How long is the term of your contract with the community solar provider?
- Does the company charge a fee if you exit the contract early?
- How do you pay for your community solar subscription? If it is per kilowatt hour, what is the rate? Can that rate increase over the time of the contract?
- How much will you save? So far, people are expected to save anywhere from 10 to 20 percent on the electricity produced through their community solar subscription. Keep this in mind when looking at offers.
- Do they require a credit check?
- How will the company bill you? Electronically? A paper bill? How do they accept your payments? Can you choose? Do they require automatic payments?
- How much will you save? (So far, people are expected to save anywhere from 10 to 20 percent on the electricity produced through their community solar subscription. Keep this in mind when looking at offers.)

Other Frequently Asked Questions

What are the benefits of community solar?

Signing up for community solar can lower your overall electric costs, while also supporting renewable energy development in Illinois. Community

solar can also improve the power grid's reliability, and adding solar power to the grid lessens the need for expensive power plants, lowering market prices for all.

Who can be a subscriber?

All residential and business customers can subscribe to a community solar garden—as long as it's located in their electric utility's service territory. The minimum subscription per customer is 200 watts, or about one solar panel.

Do subscribers directly receive power from the solar garden?

No. Unlike a home with its own solar panels, there's no way to send the power generated by a solar garden exclusively to a subscriber's home. Like all electricity, power produced by a solar garden is sent to the utility's grid and distributed indiscriminately the moment it's created.

What if you move?

If you move to a new home within your utility's territory, you can continue your subscription. If you move outside the territory, you must cancel your subscription or transfer it to another customer who meets the eligibility requirements.

Will you pay a fee if you end your subscription early?

You probably will have to pay a termination fee. That's a good question to ask when you are considering a community solar project. Also ask if you are required to participate for a certain number of years.

What is the community solar disclosure form?

Both Illinois Shines and Solar for All require community solar companies to provide consumers with a disclosure form. This form includes contact information for your provider, how to file a complaint with the program administrator, the length of the contract term, when you'll start receiving bill credits, any fees you'll be responsible for, and whether your provider is guaranteeing savings.

Because each company is required to fill out the same form, it makes it easier for you to compare offers apples-to-apples, and make the best decision. The disclosure form includes a lot of the terms laid out in your contract, but still be sure to read your contract thoroughly.

NEED HELP FINANCING YOUR SYSTEM?

Clean Energy Credit Union is a 501(c)(1) tax-exempt organization that's regulated by the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) and receives federal deposit insurance from the National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund (NCUSIF).

- **12 or 18 month loan** that covers your solar tax credit (i.e. the Section 48D federal income tax credit that's available for new residential solar electric systems at up to 26% of the eligible project cost in 2020 and up to 22% in 2021).
- **12 or 15 year fixed rate loan** on the remaining portion of your solar electric system cost (i.e. up to 74% of the eligible project cost in 2020 and up to 78% in 2021).
- Combining both of these loan types together is commonly called a solar electric system "**combo loan**."
- **Solar electric system loans** allow you to swap your monthly electric bill for a monthly loan payment on a solar electric system — one which you would later own free-and-clear at the end of the loan repayment period.



Clean Energy Credit Union Loan Benefits

- Secured by the solar equipment that's installed, not by the equity in your home
- Loan amounts up to \$70,000 per loan
- Fixed interest rates
- No prepayment penalties
- Automatic electronic payments

cleanenergycu.org

HOW DOES A SOLAR GROUP BUY WORK?

A community brings home and small business owners together to purchase and install solar at a lower cost.



Reduced Price: A group buy lowers costs through the power of volume purchasing. The more homeowners and commercial property owners participate, the lower the cost will be for everyone. The price is also reduced because education and customer development is done early in the process, which saves the installer time and money.



Education: Solar group buys help neighbors decide where to start, what to budget, and who to hire. We provide educational sessions on the details of the program and more about solar technology, its costs and benefits, and whether solar might be right for you.



Competitive Installer Selection: A local Advisory Committee selects an installer through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process to ensure quality work at a lower cost to customers. The Installer is selected based on quality, experience, professional credentials, certification and price.



Enrollment: Interested participants will receive a free solar site assessment and cost estimate from the selected installer. After receiving the free cost estimate, the customer will decide whether or not to move forward with the solar installation. Site assessments and cost estimates come with no obligation.



What Can I Do? If you're ready to set up a site assessment immediately, you can call Windfree Solar directly at (847) 409-6994

Additionally, you can sign onto your electricity provider's website and gather your past electric usage information to help the installer determine the size of your array. Ideally, the installer will look at the past 12-24 months of usage.