

THINKING ABOUT GOING SOLAR? NOW IS THE TIME!

Powering your property or community building with solar comes with a variety of benefits. Solar pays you back over time through low or eliminated electricity bills for decades. A photovoltaic (PV) system is a cost-saving asset that increases the value of your property. Not to mention, your PV system makes a positive environmental impact. Did you know that electricity production is the #1 source of harmful greenhouse gases? It's a benefit of solar that doesn't show up when calculating savings and return on investment.



STEPS:

1 Make Energy Efficient Updates

Before adding solar to your home or business, do an assessment of your property and make any energy efficient updates to appliances, windows, lighting, etc. These updates will help limit the size of your array and cut down on the cost of your PV system by limiting your need for additional energy. Most utilities have incentives for efficiency improvements – be sure to ask your utility. Once you choose a qualified solar installation company to go with, they will also perform a thorough assessment of your electrical “loads” and make recommendations for energy efficient upgrades. If you do plan on making energy efficiency updates in the future, make sure to inform your installer so they can take that into consideration when designing your system.

2 Do Some Research on Your Solar Needs and Goals

Power from the sun can be used in a variety of applications, depending on your needs any one, or a combination might suite your site. Contact your utility and ask for a years' worth of your energy usage/utility bills. Your installer will help you identify the option(s) that are best for your site and goals.

Solar PV - the most common application used to generate electricity for a property.

- Grid-Tied and Off-Grid Systems (battery-based storage) can be considered
- Pair solar with Beneficial Electrification, for an all electric building powered by clean energy!
- If you have an Electric Vehicle, take your charging needs into consideration when going solar

Solar Thermal Hot Water System - this application reduces demand for fuels needed to heat your water.

Solar Thermal Hot Air System - this system is used to heat buildings and lower the cost and demand for fuels that heat buildings.

3 Site Assessment

Figuring out if your site has enough sunlight or sun hours to make solar possible is an important factor in going solar. Getting a solar site assessment of your property will help determine whether your site is suitable for solar, and where/what type of solar system is right for your site. Most installers provide site assessments free of charge! If your site isn't suitable for solar – don't fret, more and more utilities are offering options to purchase renewable energy from them, or you can participate in community solar subscriptions.

- If you are interested in performing your own solar site assessment, register for our PV 201—Solar Site Assessment course. MREA also rents Solar Pathfinders for a small fee. courses.midwestrenew.org

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Know Your Local Rules

Check with your local unit of government about any ordinances in place that might impact your solar project. Examples of these ordinances are setbacks and structural assessments for insurance. Your chosen qualified solar installation company will have a good handle on this process, but it's worth knowing in advance.

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Budget

Financing your solar project is an important piece of the puzzle. MREA offers members access to the Clean Energy Credit Union, making it easier for our members to afford clean energy products and services. Incentives and grants are available for financing your project. Your Installer will help you navigate the financing process and calculate your ROI. Visit the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency (DSIRE) to see incentives in your location: dsireusa.org.

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Install Solar

Select a company, sign a contract, and install your system. It usually takes from four to six months from the time you sign an agreement to the time a project is completed and operational, depending on the type of solar technology and the incentive process. If installing PV, your contractor will facilitate an interconnection agreement with your utility that will allow you to track your production and get paid for excess production with net metering. See our "Selecting a Solar Installer" handout for more information and recommendations on how to select an installer.

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Solar is Contagious

Installing solar often means your neighbors will too! You could be an inspiration for others. Don't be afraid to tell your solar story, and share it with neighbors, family, friends, colleagues, even local media outlets. Let them know about the process you went through. More solar = cleaner air, water, and a happier environment (not to mention big savings on your energy bill)! Your installer may offer a referral bonus, so make sure to ask if they do. Help educate others and showcase your site on the National Solar Tour: nationalsolartour.org

SEE MORE SOLAR RESOURCES AT:
midwestrenew.org/community-resources

