Benefits of Community Solar

Do you want to save money and reduce your carbon footprint as an owner of a local renewable energy project? If the answer is yes, then check out Community Solar!

Why Community Solar?

According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), about 80% of energy consumers are unable to utilize rooftop solar because they have old roofs, shaded roofs, insufficient roof space, or because they do not own their homes. But Community Solar changes that. With community solar, EVERYONE has the power to choose solar energy as their source of power – regardless of homeownership or roof quality.

Stabilize Your Electricity Bills: Historically, electric rates from utility companies have risen in an unpredictable and sometimes volatile manner. When you choose Community Solar with NST you are able to lock in guaranteed savings by producing your own solar energy, which allows you to offset most of the cost of your monthly electric bill for years to come.

Lead in Sustainability: By choosing to participate in NST's Community Solar you are playing an active role in preserving our planet for future generations. The use of solar energy generated by Community Solar right here in New Hampshire displaces the need for fossil fuels like coal and natural gas, which are major sources of greenhouse gas emissions and other toxic pollutants.

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Frequently Asked Questions:

Cost and Ownership

1. How much does it cost?

Our community solar projects have a Membership Interest cost of ~$3 per watt. That means that if you buy a 5 kilowatt Membership Interest, your cost of ownership is $15,000 ($3/watt x 5000 watts) before any tax credits are applied.

2. Do I own the panels?

Yes, you own the solar panels that are included in your Membership Interest.

3. How do I finance this?

You can work with your own bank, or we can refer you to one of the local banks which have worked with us on similar projects in the past.

4. Can I transfer the ownership?

Yes, you can transfer the ownership of your Membership Interest in the future.

5. Does it cost more than putting panels on my roof?

The typical cost of a residential solar rooftop installation is about $3.25 per watt. Because there are certain economies of scale that accompany a larger project, we can offer pricing that is probably lower than you could expect to pay on a similarly sized solar project on the roof of your house.

6. What happens if I move?

Your Membership Interest is transferrable, so if you move out of state or out of your electric utility territory you can sell your panels. If you move to a new home or apartment within the same electric utility territory, you simply transfer the Net Metering Credits from your old home to your new one.

Tax Credits and Incentives

1. How do the tax credits work?

In order to encourage more growth of renewable energy the federal government has put incentives in place to help offset the cost. There is currently a 26% tax credit from the IRS, based on the total cost of the project, so for the customer that spends $15,000 on a 5 kW Membership Interest there would be a $3,900 tax credit bringing the net cost of ownership down to just $11,100.

2. Is this considered an investment?

Yes, as with any major purchase this should be considered as an investment that does carry some degree of risk. Every taxpayer's individual situation is unique, so prospective buyers should consult with their tax advisors before making a final decision. Norwich Solar Technologies is not a tax advisor and cannot provide individual guidance to prospective buyers.

Net Metering

1. How does Net Metering work?

All of our Community Solar Projects are equipped with an electric meter that measures the amount of electricity that is generated and fed into the power grid. The electricity is measured in kilowatt hours. Each kilowatt hour has a monetary credit that ranges in value according to a number of different factors. These monetary credits are applied to the electric bills of the Members according to their proportional interest in the project. As an example, let's say that your Membership Interest generates 1,000 kilowatt hours in a given month. If each of those kilowatt hours has a credit value of $0.15, then you would see a credit of $150 off of your electric bill that month. In the summer months when the sun is shining and the days are long, the Community Solar Project will generate significantly more power than it will in the winter. In months where the monetary value of the kilowatt hours generated is greater than what you need to offset your electric bill, the excess credits will be banked with the utility and rolled forward to the next month. In this way, the excess credits generated during the summer can be saved and used during the winter when the panels are not as productive due to less available sunshine.

2. What if I need more electricity than my panels produce?

The rules for Net Metering state that a single customer can only receive credits from a single Net Metered project. So in order to maximize the investment NST will do an analysis to determine how much electricity would need to be generated from the Community Solar Project to offset the maximum allowable amount on a customer's electric bill. If the customer still needs more electricity, it will continue to be provided by the electric utility as it is today.

3. What if my panels make more electricity than I can use?

You can direct the excess credits to go to another customer that has the same electric utility provider.

4. What happens in a power outage?

As a remote net metering customer you are still connected to power grid, so unfortunately if the grid goes down then you will not have power until the grid is restored. A remote net metering project is not a replacement to your electric utility.

Maintenance, Management, and Operation of Community Solar Projects

1. Who is responsible for the maintenance?

NST has created an LLC that is responsible for the operations and maintenance of the Community Solar project. Similar to a Condo Association, this LLC will manage the day to day operations of the project. There will be at least 2 Operations & Maintenance inspections scheduled each year to ensure that the solar project is operating at maximum efficiency.

2. What happens if you go out of business?

The LLC that has been created for the management of the Community Solar project is specific to this project and is not directly affiliated with Norwich Solar Technologies. It will endure for the life of the Community Solar project.

3. How can I see how much electricity my panels produce each month?

Each of our Community Solar Projects is equipped with an online Data Acquisition System that allows Members to view the generation of the total project via an app.