

Solar and Electric Vehicle Charging Co-ops

Project Overview

Building on the success of three previous solar co-ops, the City of Rockville collaborated with Solar United Neighbors (SUN) (formerly MD Sun/Community Power Network) and other community partners, such as Montgomery County, Takoma Park, Gaithersburg, and Poolesville to offer three more residential solar co-op opportunities.



The solar co-op model helps residents better understand the process of going solar and leverages group buying power to get a discount off the for a discounted installation price. While each participant signs an independent contract with the installer for their own system, pooling together to purchase larger quantities reduces the total cost of installation for both the group and individuals.

Since 2015, Rockville has participated in six solar co-ops to help residents install solar on their homes. In 2020, the co-op model expanded to help residents install solar and Level 2 electric vehicle charging stations.

1. **Rockville Solar Co-op (2015):** Included 208 participants, 63 installations; 441 kW of capacity, and \$1.3 million invested.
2. **Montgomery County Solar Co-op (2016):** Included 244 participants, 88 installations, 797 kW of capacity, and \$2.23 million invested.
3. **Montgomery County Solar Co-op (2017):** Included 145 participants, 55 installations, 533 kW of capacity, and \$1.17 million invested.
4. **Montgomery County Solar Co-op (2019):** Included 172 participants, 96 installations, 891 kW of capacity, and \$1.92 million invested.
5. **Montgomery County Solar and EV Charger Co-op (2020):** Co-op closed, results still pending. <https://mygreenmontgomery.org/2020/announcing-the-4th-solar-coop/>
6. **Capital Area Solar and EV Charger Co-op (2021):** Launched in April of 2021, this co-op expanded to include the Capital Area, with jurisdictions in MD, DC and VA. For the first time, Montgomery County, the town of Poolesville, cities of Bowie, Falls Church, Frederick, Gaithersburg, Rockville, Takoma Park, and Washington DC as well as Arlington and Frederick County joined efforts to promote residential solar installations: <https://mygreenmontgomery.org/2021/capital-area-solar-co-op/>

Program Benefits

Residents of each community directly benefit from solar education, reduced upfront installation costs, and reductions in their electricity bills. Community education is the backbone of the solar co-op program, with the most valuable educational resources like free public information sessions, and one-on-one support guidance for residents to learn the basics of solar technology, the installation process, and solar economics. Co-op participants have access to an installer to guide them through the installation process and provide information about the value of their solar products, local policies, financing options and other incentives. The installers chosen by the group also benefits from the program. Ordering equipment in bulk reduces shipping costs, and working within a consolidated area reduces travel time and marketing costs, allowing them to pass significant savings onto the participants. The program also supports the City's community green power goals by helping to increase the number houses with on-site solar installations.

Budget

Although there is not an annual budget allocated for the project, Rockville community members provided in-kind staff support and the Rockville Environment Commission contributed a portion of their annual \$1,000 budget to support printing of yard signs and other outreach materials. Rockville also utilized their existing media platforms to publicize the program, and provided free meeting spaces for information sessions and celebrations. Volunteers from the Commission and other jurisdiction partners also dedicated numerous hours to promoting the project at various community events, and also provided similar in-kind staff support. The non-profit, Solar United Neighbors, provides staff support and administrative resources to support the co-op. While it costs nothing to join the co-op and learn about solar, the non-profit receives a small fee from the installer for each successful co-op installation.

Program Outreach

Co-ops are publicized through a variety of platforms, including; a banner across a road in in Rockville Town Center, yard signs, articles in the Rockville Reports monthly newsletter, postings on online calendars, blogs, website and social media of the various partners (e.g., Rockville, MyGreenMontgomery, SUN, and other partners), local cable TV, and free info sessions held at various community buildings and virtual meetings. In 2020, the Rockville's Environment Commission and Energy Committee recruited high school students to produce a marketing video that received 288 views over a six-week period.

Examples of promotional material, website screenshots, and photos are included in the Appendix and links to sample articles include:

Rockville Reports Printed Articles

- <https://md-rockville.civicplus.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/1994>

- <https://md-rockville.civicplus.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/1996>
- <https://md-rockville.civicplus.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/2011>
- **Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGRdOb-wH14&feature=youtu.be>
- Rockville Reports Online articles (<https://rockvillereports.com/?s=solar>):

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL rockvillereports.com/?s=solar. The page features a blue header with the "RockvilleReports" logo and navigation links: Articles, Press Releases, Annual Report, and Print Archives. A search bar is located on the right side of the header.

Below the header, the page displays "SEARCH RESULTS FOR: SOLAR". There are five search results listed, each with a title, date, and a "Read More »" link:

- Solar Co-op: Affordable Options for Rooftop Panels or Vehicle Chargers**
April 27, 2021
If you are interested in rooftop solar, or are looking to install an electric vehicle charger, then this is the opportunity for you. Registration is now open for the Capital Area Solar Co-op. Rockville is joining Arlington, Frederick and Montgomery counties, and Bowie, Falls Church, Frederick, Gaithersburg, Potomacville, Takoma Park
[Read More »](#)
- Solar Co-op: Affordable Options for Rooftop Panels or Vehicle Chargers**
June 29, 2020
The 4th Rockville Solar Co-op presents an opportunity to harness solar to power your home or business or electricity to charge up your vehicle. Community members interested in installing solar panels on their home or business, or an electric vehicle charger, can take advantage of group pricing, rebates and tax.
[Read More »](#)
- Co-op Offers Rooftop Solar and EV Chargers**
May 11, 2020
The 4th Rockville Solar Co-op is now open. If you are interested in rooftop solar, or are looking to install an electric vehicle charger, then this is the opportunity for you.
[Read More »](#)
- Here Comes the Solar Co-op**
May 1, 2019
Homeowners looking to save on energy costs by using green energy should save the date for Tuesday, May 7, when the city will host an informational meeting, at 7 p.m. at City Hall, 111 Maryland Ave., about an upcoming solar co-op opportunity. The co-op presents an opportunity for homeowners interested
[Read More »](#)
- Coming Soon: The Return of the Solar Co-op**
April 29, 2019
Homeowners looking to save on energy costs by using green energy should save the date for Tuesday, May 7, when the city will host an informational meeting, at 7 p.m. at City Hall, 111 Maryland Ave., about an upcoming solar co-op opportunity. The co-op presents an opportunity for homeowners interested
[Read More »](#)
- Go Solar for Energy Savings**
December 27, 2017
Building on the success of the previous two years, the Rockville Environment Commission is again partnering with nonprofit Solar
[Read More »](#)

In the bottom right corner, there is a "Translate" button.