

Solar Open House Toolkit



A Solar Open House is an informal meet and greet at a solar homeowner's home. It is an opportunity for homeowners who are considering going solar to see solar in person. They can ask questions about the process of going solar and interact with solar homeowners from their community.

These events are a great opportunity for solar homeowners to share their experiences and to help homeowners who are considering going solar gain a greater level of comfort with the process, hopefully encouraging them to go solar themselves!

This step-by-step guide will help you plan and implement a successful solar open house!



Reach out to us at: getinvolved@solarunitedneighbors.org about your interest in hosting a solar open house!

Planning & Logistics – 1 month out

1. **Choose a Date and Time** – Saturday afternoons for 2-3 hours work best
 - a. Confirm your chosen date and time with us so we can help spread the word about your solar open house and make sure you have everything you need
 - b. We will try to identify another past co-op member to join you at your solar open house so you'll have support when answering questions and talking about solar

2. **Begin Promotion**
 - a. Help spread the word about your open house in the weeks leading up to it by:
 - emailing friends, colleagues, and neighbors
 - contacting your neighborhood association and asking them to help promote
 - posting on Facebook and on your local community listservs and Nextdoor
 - posting flyers in the windows or bulletin boards of nearby businesses
 - b. We will supply you with a personalized flyer, RSVP webpage, and outreach language
 - c. We will also help spread the word on social media and by communicating with new co-op members in your area, encouraging them to attend

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Event Preparation – 2 weeks out

3. Display Your Solar Open House Yard Sign

- a. We will mail you a yard sign that lists the date and time of your solar open house. We ask that you put it in your yard close to the street, so when people pass by your home they'll know to mark their calendars!

4. Make sure you have all of the following materials (these will be mailed to you by Solar United Neighbors 2 weeks before your event):

- a. Flyers advertising your solar open house (30 copies)
Please pass these flyers out at homes in your neighborhood and post on bulletin boards of local businesses in your area
- b. Current Solar Co-op & Information Session Flyer (30 copies)
- c. Co-op Process Handout (15 copies)
- d. Co-op Sign Up Form (15 copies)
- e. Solar FAQs (15 copies)
- f. Sign in Sheet (5 copies)
- g. Photographs of different solar installations (1 copy of each)



5. Consider the Event's Flow

- a. Identify an area at the front of your home where you'll greet guests and have them sign in
- b. Identify the best gathering space at your home to accommodate several people
 - i. If you expect good weather, perhaps outside in your yard or on your porch
 - If outside – consider seating and shade (trees or a pop up tent)
 - ii. If you expect bad weather, perhaps your living room, kitchen, dining room, or garage with the door open
 - If inside – consider seating
- c. Identify the best path through or around your home to give guests a little tour of:
 - i. **Your inverter and electric box**
 - ii. **Your solar panels** (from a place where they are visible from the ground)
 - iii. **Your computer** (show the website that tracks your system's production – if you don't have this, show graphs or visuals of your solar production and energy savings)

NOTE: If you need help identifying the different components of your solar system, send pictures of your system to getinvolved@solarunitedneighbors.org and we'll label them for you!

Final Details – the week before your event

6. Refreshments

- Purchase some light snacks and beverages to have for your guests
- We will reimburse your costs up to \$50 – *please save your receipts to be reimbursed*
- Send your receipts to getinvolved@solarunitedneighbors.org

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7. Coordinate with other solar homeowner(s) who will be joining you (if applicable)

- Solar United Neighbors will put out a volunteer request for other solar homeowners in your area to join you and help out at your solar open house. If we find any interested solar homeowners, we'll introduce you via email and share contact information
- Ask the other solar homeowner(s) to arrive at your house 1 hour prior to the start of the event
- Ask the other solar homeowner(s) to bring a laptop or tablet with them
- Decide who will take pictures (digital camera is preferred over a smart phone)

8. Review Solar FAQs

- You are not expected to be a solar expert, but familiarizing yourself with the Solar FAQs document will be helpful when answering specific questions that guests may ask you. If you get questions you can't answer, don't worry! You can always provide the person with a Solar United Neighbors staff member's business card so they can follow up.

9. Read through the rest of this toolkit and practice

- Practice your 2-3-minute talk about your experience going solar
- Practice giving your solar home tour

Here is a short elevator speech describing Solar United Neighbors and what we do:

"Solar United Neighbors is a non-profit organization that helps neighbors and community organizations form solar co-ops to make going solar easier and save homeowners money. Solar United Neighbors also advocates for solar-friendly state policies while building our statewide network of solar supporters.

Signing up for a co-op doesn't cost anything and doesn't commit the homeowner to signing a contract to go solar. Co-op members leverage bulk-purchasing power to get discounted pricing and a quality solar installation while receiving support from Solar United Neighbors through the process. Solar United Neighbors helps the group facilitate a competitive bidding process and co-op members select a single company to install solar systems on members' homes.

Once the group selects an installer, each co-op members receives their own customized proposal at the group discount rate. Each homeowner then has 30 days to decide whether they would like to sign their contract and install solar. All along the way, Solar United Neighbors is there to answer questions, facilitate the co-op process, provide education about solar, and advocate on homeowners' behalf."



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Day of Event

10. Set up – one hour before

- a. Discuss plan of action with additional solar homeowner(s) and divvy up tasks
 - i. Assign someone to take photos throughout the open house.
- b. Put out directional signs at major turns on the roads around your home (if needed)
- c. Set up a small table at the front of your home where people will sign in
 - i. Decide who will be stationed at the sign in table greeting guests
 - ii. **It is critical that every person who attends your open house signs in, and provides their name, email address, and zip code.**
- d. Arrange seating, food, beverages, and hand-outs in your primary gathering space
- e. Set up a laptop in the main gathering space and open solarunitedneighbors.org, as well as the webpage you use to track your solar panels' energy production.



11. During your event

- a. Make sure someone is always at the sign in table, ensuring that everyone signs in and provides their contact information
- b. Greet and mingle with guests as they arrive. Ask questions such as:
 - i. How did you hear about this solar open house?
 - ii. What interests you about going solar?
 - iii. Have you attended a Solar United Neighbors information session yet?
- c. When you have a critical mass of people, address the group.
“Critical mass” may only be a few people. It’s best to make sure folks don’t wait too long for the tour to start.
 - i. Introduce yourself and the other solar homeowner(s)
 - ii. Let people know that you’re glad they came and are interested in solar
 - iii. Talk to the group for 2-3 minutes about:
 - When you went solar
 - How you got involved in the solar co-op
 - Why you chose to go solar
 - What the process was like



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- iv. Tell guests that you'd like to take them on a tour of your solar system
 - Begin your short tour, making sure that the other solar homeowner(s) stays to greet other incoming guests. On your tour, be sure to show:
 - a. **Your solar panels** – explain the number of panels, number of kilowatts your system produces, how long it took to install
 - b. **Your inverter** – explain what the inverter does and show where you can see that the panels are currently producing electricity
 - c. **Your computer or printed visuals** – show guests the website that allows you to track your solar panel production (if you don't have a web portal like this, any printed graphs or visuals of your solar system's production, installer proposal, & energy savings are great)



- v. When your tour is complete, bring guests back to the main gathering space.
 - Show guests the **co-op process flyer** and the **co-op information session flyer**
 - Show guests the laptop where they can **sign up to join the co-op** if they want
 - a. *Remind them that signing up for a co-op does not commit them to go solar or sign a contract with the installer*
 - Let guests know that you and the other solar homeowner(s) are happy to try to answer any questions they may have about going solar
 - a. *If you ever get asked a question you aren't sure how to answer, give the guest a Solar United Neighbors business card and have them reach out to us.*
- vi. Repeat the tour as many times as needed!

After your Event

12. Celebrate!

- a. Thank you for sharing your solar story, helping spread the word about solar, and adding your personal touch for homeowners who are considering going solar!

13. Send your sign-in sheets and photos to Solar United Neighbors

- a. Email your photos to getinvolved@solarunitedneighbors.org
- b. Either type up the names, email addresses, and zip codes of your guests into a spreadsheet or scan/photograph the sign in sheets – email to: getinvolved@solarunitedneighbors.org

Thank you for hosting a solar open house and sharing your solar story!