

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 late morning – early afternoons for 2-3 hours typically 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
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
 - posting about your solar open house on our state Solar United Neighbors listserv
 - b. If you'd like, we can supply you with a flyer, RSVP webpage, and outreach language to help promote your solar open house. Email getinvolved@solarunitedneighbors.org to let us know.
 - c. We will also help spread the word about your solar open house on social media and our state Solar United Neighbors events webpage.

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Event Preparation – 2 weeks out

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

- a. Sign in Sheet (5 copies)
- b. Solar 101 Go Solar Guide (15 copies)
- c. Solar United Neighbors Membership Flyer (15 copies)
- d. How Solar Works Graphic (1 copy)
- e. Photographs of different solar installations (1 copy of each)



4. **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

5. **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

6. **Review Solar 101 Go Solar Guide**

- You are not expected to be a solar expert, but familiarizing yourself with the Go Solar Guide 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.

7. **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

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

“Solar United Neighbors is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that helps neighbors, small business owners, and community organizations go solar, join together, and fight for their energy rights. We are the only organization in the country dedicated to representing the needs and interests of solar owners and clean energy supporters.

We help people go solar in two ways – with a group or individually. Solar United Neighbors organizes solar co-ops or bulk purchase groups of 30 – 100 neighbors who are interested in going solar in different areas across the state. We facilitate an RFP process on behalf of each co-op group and help co-op members pick a single solar installer to serve everyone in the group. Co-op members get support from each other and Solar United Neighbors along the way with no cost or commitment to install solar particular area. We also help homeowners go solar individually through our paid membership program. By becoming a member for a fee of \$85 annually, homeowners get individualized support from our solar help desk through the process of obtaining and reviewing personalized bids from solar installers for their home.

Solar United Neighbors also advocates for solar-friendly state policies, organizes social and educational events for solar supporters, and offers opportunities for individuals to get involved in growing solar in their community. We are building a vibrant network of solar supporters locally and nationally and invite you to join us!



Day of Event

8. Set up – one hour before

- a. Have a phone or camera ready, so you (or ideally a spouse or friend) can take photos throughout your solar open house
 - i. photos of you showing your solar system to attendees, attendees talking and mingling, and even posed shots of groups of attendees in front of your solar panels are all great!
- b. Put out directional signs at major turns on the roads around your home (if needed)
- c. Set up a small table in front of your home or in the gathering area where people will sign in
 - i. Identify who will be stationed at the sign in table greeting guests (ideally a spouse or friend so you can spend your time interacting and talking about your solar system
 - 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.

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9. During your event

- a. Make sure everyone signs in!
- b. Greet and mingle with guests as they arrive
- 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
- 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
 - Why you chose to go solar
 - What the process was like
- 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 someone (ideally a spouse or friend) 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)

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- v. When your tour is complete, bring guests back to the main gathering space.
 - Show guests the Go Solar Guide and the other solar resources we've sent you
 - 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, you can have them reach out to us at getinvolved@solarunitedneighbors.org*
- vi. Repeat the tour as many times as needed!

After your Event

10. 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!

11. 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.

We'll be sure to add all of your solar open house attendees to our network so they'll begin receiving our monthly newsletter and regular information about solar happenings in their area and how to get involved.



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