

# Community Solar

## Solar Power Made Easy, Solar Power for All!

Solar power is booming in the US! Solar benefits households, communities, and the earth. By reducing dependence on fossil fuels, solar energy reduces air pollution and helps mitigate climate change. Additionally, the solar industry is a leading jobs creator in the energy sector with over 260,000 jobs in the US and over 4,000 in Maryland!

### What is community solar?

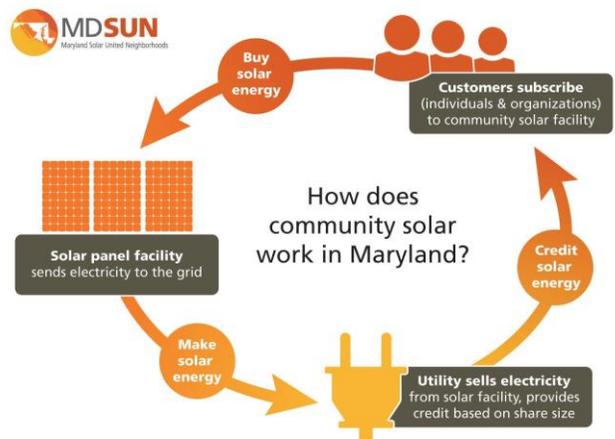
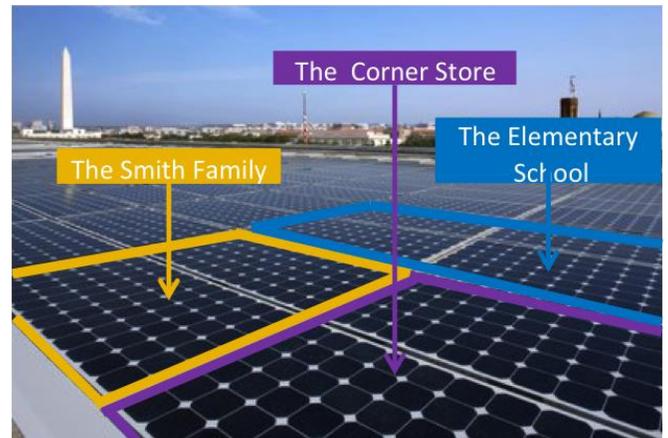
Maryland's community solar pilot program is changing the way solar energy is created in Maryland. Community solar allows customers to buy or subscribe to a portion of a shared solar system. This allows those who rent, have roofs unsuitable for solar panels, or are otherwise unable to install solar panels on their roofs to take advantage of the cost savings of solar energy. The local, offsite solar system functions as though the panels were located on an individual's home or business: the energy generated by a customer's share of the solar system is credited to their utility bill, creating savings and a positive impact on the environment.

### How does it work?

Maryland's community solar program works through a system of 'virtual net-metering'. In this arrangement, the household receives a credit on their monthly utility bill for the amount of electricity their share of the solar system produces.

For example, if a household uses 1000 kW of energy in a given month, their utility company bills them for that energy usage. Community solar changes this. If that same household uses 1000 kW of energy, but they had also subscribed to a community solar project that produces 800 kW of energy, they would only be billed for the remaining 200 kW of energy by their utility company. In this arrangement, community solar subscribers are 'selling' energy back to the energy grid and seeing that transaction reflected in savings on their energy bills!

Solar projects may differ across communities, solar developers, utility companies, or specific customer requirements. However, all projects are designed in a way that community solar subscribers are expected to see decreased rates.



## Why Make the Change?

Dirty energy is polluting our communities. The energy generated from dirty sources, like coal and natural gas, negatively impacts public health and the environment, disproportionately affecting low-income communities and communities of color. For example, Baltimore has one of the highest air pollution death rates in the country among major US cities and twice the statewide asthma mortality rate. As dirty energy continues to pollute the environment, Maryland will see extreme weather, rising sea levels, increasing demands on the electrical grid, and an increase in cases of asthma and other respiratory conditions.

Community solar provides an alternative! Solar energy does not pollute the environment and does not contribute to climate change. Community solar is revolutionizing access to and the affordability of solar energy. Additionally, solar energy is CHEAPER. Depending on the project, ratepayers can reduce their utility bills while helping to stem the detrimental effects of climate change. By subscribing to community solar Projects, you are taking an active stance in ensuring that Maryland's future is cleaner, greener, and healthier.

Community solar projects have no upfront equipment costs or down payments. Since this is a pilot program, community solar projects need subscribers to get built. By subscribing, you are ensuring that these projects are built and that community solar can grow and thrive in Maryland.

## How YOU Can Join the Solar Movement!

Solar Power for All! — Anyone who has a utility account in Maryland and meets the individual requirements set by each solar provider can join the pilot program.

Maryland's pilot program was designed to provide low- and moderate-income households the opportunity to participate in solar energy. This pilot program is a substantial step in ensuring that Maryland builds an equitable clean energy economy.

The only service territory not participating in the pilot program is the Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO). Anyone else can subscribe and take advantage of this unique opportunity to participate in the energy savings of solar energy — no roof required!

### There are currently two community solar providers in BGE:



**Neighborhood Sun:** Low-to-moderate income households in BGE can save 25% off their utility rates in a month-to-month contract with no credit score required. More info: <https://neighborhoodsun.solar/lmi/>

Other BGE customers can save 5% off their utility rates in a 3-year contract. No rooftop required and no money down. Currently accepting subscribers! More info: <https://neighborhoodsun.solar/bge-projects/>



**CleanChoice Energy:** BGE customers can save up to 10% off their utility rate by joining a local community solar farm in a 25-year contract. No rooftop required and no money down. More info: <https://cleanchoiceenergy.com/zip-community-solar/>



### Questions?

Contact CCAN's Healthy Communities Campaign Coordinator, Taylor Smith-Hams at [taylor@chesapeakeclimate.org](mailto:taylor@chesapeakeclimate.org) or (650) 704-3208.