



Austin Solar Guide (Flyer)

Rachel Jenkins

Pecan Street, Inc.

NREL Technical Monitor: Sara Farrar

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**Subcontract Report
NREL/SR-7A40-89917
June 2024**



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Wondering if Solar is Right for Your Home?

Things to think about...

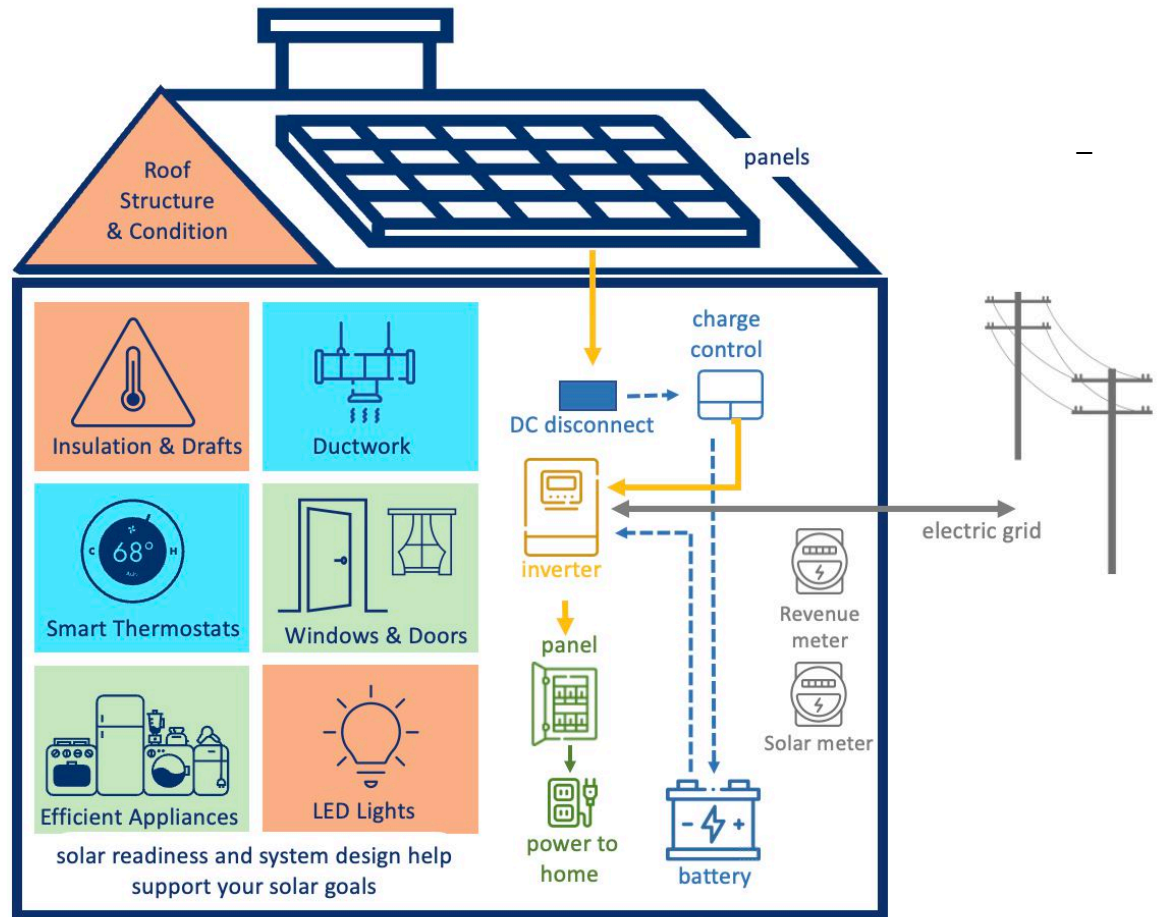
Your **roof** is one of the most important parts of deciding whether and when adding solar makes sense for your home. Is there enough shade free space for panels? Is it strong enough and in good repair?

Your **electrical panel** is also critical. Depending on the condition of your panel, the solar installer may need to work with Austin Energy to upgrade it.

Energy efficiency and weatherization improvements help make your home solar ready and lower your utility bill.

Getting an energy audit is a great place to start.

Austin Energy DOES NOT sell, install, or maintain solar systems. But they do provide trustworthy information and resources to help.
<https://austinenergy.com/green-power/solar-solutions/for-your-home>
<https://savings.austinenergy.com>



DC power produced by solar panels on your roof is converted to usable AC power by an inverter. Homes with solar panels are still connected to Austin Energy and **you will have power at night and on cloudy days**. You are billed for the energy you use, and you get a credit for the energy you produce. **Your bill will likely be lower, but on some months, you still may have to pay something.**

If you want to have power during blackouts, you need to add a **battery** to your system. When the power goes out, an automatic switch temporarily disconnects your home from local power lines. The battery can then power critical systems until local service is restored.

Checking with Austin Energy

Austin Energy's FREE Solar Education Course is one of the best ways to start learning about solar. Taking the course can also qualify you to get a rebate if you do decide that solar is right for you. The course is online, self-paced, and available in English and Spanish.

<https://austinenergy.com/green-power/solar-solutions/for-your-home/solar-photovoltaic-rebates-incentives>

The course covers important topics like:

- Roles of Austin Energy, the solar installer, and the homeowner
- Siting and sizing your system
- How Austin Energy meters and bills homes with solar
- Rebates, incentives, and financing
- Strategies for comparing contractor proposals
- Things to know about system maintenance

Austin Energy issues rebates, enforces guidelines for participating solar contractors, and inspects all solar system installations for safety.

Separate from Austin Energy, you will select a solar company to install your system. Your selected installer should coordinate with other City of Austin departments to manage the required permits.

You will also be solely responsible for maintaining your solar system unless operation and maintenance are part of your contract with your solar company.

Selecting and Contracting a Solar Installation

Shop for a contractor. Talk to multiple companies and choose the best fit for your needs and budget. **Ask questions. Get references.** You will want to know total cost, fees, what you will pay upfront, annually, and at the end, as well as how long you will make payments before the system is paid off. You will want to know how long installation will take, including the permitting and licensing process. What safety practices will be in place? Be clear on who will be responsible for which tasks, before during and, after installation.

Understand and be comfortable with the contract before signing. If it doesn't make sense or meet your expectations, ask for changes and/or seek legal assistance.

Get the contract in your native language. Look carefully at all costs and financing terms to ensure that it reflects what you discussed and agreed to. Contracts should include:

- Ownership terms, impacts on selling, refinancing, or modifying the property, including liens
- Warranties for equipment and workmanship and remediation terms for property damage
- Verifiable minimum performance and remedies terms if not met
- Details regarding system monitoring and ownership of data
- Start/end dates and payment schedule
- Contact information during installation and for the life of the system, including contingent contact if the company or product manufacturer ceases operations.
- Long-term maintenance plan and designated responsible party

Spotting Solar Scams

Scammers push quick contracts. If someone comes to your door, says they can assess your roof that day to give you an estimate on solar panels, asks to come inside and/or shows you a contract on the spot, stop the conversation. Installing a solar system is a big decision, and anyone pushing this much is suspicious.

Scammers claim Austin Energy sells solar. If someone selling solar tells you they work for Austin Energy, that they represent Austin Energy or they are a "preferred" company for Austin Energy, ask to see their identification badge. Austin Energy does not sell solar panels. Check Austin Energy's list of participating contractors who follow the utility's Code of Conduct and Ethical Requirements to sell you solar.

Scammers make too good to be true claims. If someone says you can go off-grid by installing solar or that you will not receive electric bills anymore, they are trying to trick you. Every Austin Energy solar customer is part of the electric grid and receives electric bills.

Scammers give false information. If someone says Austin Energy will pay for your solar, they are not telling you the facts. Austin Energy pays qualifying residential customers a \$2,500 rebate and credits solar customers for the energy their home solar panels produce through the Value of Solar reflected on the electric bill.

To learn more visit pecanstreet.org/austinsolarguide for more details and information to see if solar is right for you.