



# Selling Your Solar Home

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR SOLAR HOMEOWNERS



# Introduction



**Homeowners save money on their electric bills by going solar. They invest in energy freedom with a clean power source.**

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Solar pays back in another way. Homeowner-owned solar systems can increase home value by more than 4%\*.

That's because buyers want homes with minimal operation costs. Just as your solar panels have reduced your own electric bills, they will reduce the bills for the new homeowner.

Solar's growing popularity means that more homeowners than ever are looking to sell their solar homes.

If you are one of those homeowners, this guide is for you.

\* <https://www.zillow.com/research/solar-panels-house-sell-more-23798/>

# How to sell your solar home

## 1 Work with realtors and appraisers who have experience with solar homes.<sup>1</sup>

This will help you capture the full value of your solar home during the sale process. The National Association of Realtors offers its members a Green Designation.<sup>2</sup>

Realtors with this designation may be more familiar with solar and other energy retrofits.

## Determining the value solar adds to your home

The Solar Energy Industries Association is a trade group that represents the solar industry. It has developed a guide to help you understand how professionals appraise the value of your solar system. It offers recommendations on how to get the highest value when you sell your home.

[Click here to download.](#)

## 2 Request a real estate appraiser with solar experience.

Find one who is properly trained to evaluate solar on a home. Ask them about adding a green energy addendum to your appraisal. You may also want to consider getting a home energy performance certification by a third party. You can use this certification to educate your realtor

and appraiser on the value of solar and other energy-related features of your home. One example of this kind of certification is the [Pearl Home Certification](#). You can also search the Appraisal Institute's [list](#) of appraisers who are certified to appraise sustainable homes.

## 3 Provide your realtor with detailed information about solar usage.

Include how much you save monthly with solar and how long your system is expected to last. Your realtor can display that information during open houses. If you're unsure of the remaining lifespan of your panels, contact your solar installer. Request the product spec sheet for your

brand of solar panels. The spec sheet will list the term length of your panels' power production warranty. Subtract the age of your system from the warranty length. This will give you an estimate on your system's remaining lifespan.

## 4 Thinking about moving your solar array to your new home?

Consult your installer about the cost and viability of re-installation. State law may treat the system as a fixture. This would require negotiation with the homebuyer for its removal.

## 5 Did you finance your array with a loan?

Check with your loan provider on any requirements related to the sale of your home.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.seia.org/research-resources/guide-valuing-residential-solar-energy-systems>

<sup>2</sup> <http://greenresourcecouncil.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://greencommunities.com/appraisers/>

# What if you have a power purchase agreement or lease your system?

If your system operates under a lease or power purchase agreement (PPA), that means a third party owns the system on your behalf.

A lease or PPA provider can't block the sale of your home. Still, solar leases and PPAs can be challenging to navigate during the home sale process. It's important that you understand your contractual options and obligations.



## What to do ahead of time if you have a solar lease or PPA:

### **Re-read your contract carefully.**

Properties with solar arrays owned by third parties (i.e. your PPA or lease provider) often have something called a "UCC-1 Fixture Filing" associated with them in the real estate records. The statement is a notice of the third-party owner's rights to the system if the homeowner defaults on the contract. The third-party owner's right to file this statement is disclosed within the terms of the lease or PPA, so it's important to read your contract carefully.

**Work closely with your solar provider during the home sale.** Large purveyors of solar leases and PPAs like Tesla, Sunnova, and Sunrun have dedicated staff available to work with you, your realtor, and lenders during the sale of your home.

### **Call your solar provider about your options.**

You will need to take certain steps with the help of the solar provider in advance of the home sale depending on the option you select. The provider may also have helpful informational materials to help explain the process to you, your realtor, and to potential homebuyers.

**Work with your realtor to disclose the right information to potential buyers.** In some cases, a prospective mortgage lender might take issue with the presence of the UCC-1 Fixture Filing. This could complicate the mortgage application process for the prospective homebuyer. This Fixture Filing on the property may be removed or updated to the new owner depending on whether you are removing the solar array or transferring it to the new owner.

## If you've installed solar panels through a solar lease or PPA, here are three primary options when it comes time to sell your home:

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1

### Transfer the system to the new homeowner

The most convenient option is often to transfer the lease or PPA to the homebuyer. Solar companies have dedicated teams to facilitate the transfer. This is executed via a transfer agreement. Some transfer agreements qualify the new homeowner based on credit. Others will accept a mortgage approval. It is important that you clearly disclose the intent to transfer the lease or PPA to a potential homeowner. This will help to facilitate a smooth negotiation process

when you are selling your home. You should consider including the transfer agreement as a clause within a home sale contingency as an additional measure of disclosure, and to smooth the sales process.<sup>4</sup> When you have a lease or PPA, the third party owner is responsible for any operations and maintenance for the system. This may be an important benefit to a prospective buyer, but you may need to explain it to them.

2

### Buy out or pre-pay the remainder of the lease or PPA

One simple approach is to buy out the lease and convey the system with the house as an added benefit. This may be necessary if your prospective homebuyer does not want to take on your solar lease or PPA. You can lessen the likelihood of this by adequately disclosing the lease or PPA during the negotiation process. You should also provide information about the savings and benefits associated with the solar PPA. If your homebuyer refuses to assume your solar lease or PPA, and you can't find another buyer, you will most likely need to pre-pay the remaining value of the system in a one-time payment to your system's third-party owner. This will remove your contractual obligation to the system's owner. This one-time payment may give you ownership of the system. In some cases you may not be able to buy the system before a certain number of years, typically five, have passed on the contract. If you sell your home before that

time period you may be in the position of pre-paying the rest of your contract but not gaining ownership of the system. In that situation you would be making a payment to satisfy your contract obligations. The system's third-party owner would then come and remove the panels. Prepaying a lease or PPA in this situation is not ideal. Doing so will likely cancel out what you've saved by going solar. If you are able to own the system, the lease or PPA provider may offer a prepayment discount. Be sure to inquire accordingly. If you do end up owning the system after the prepayment, the value of that system can more clearly be passed on in the sale of the home. In some cases the homebuyer may not want the system on the roof for other reasons. If that happens and you can't move the system to your new home (Option 3 below) you may need to prepay the system and have it removed.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.criussolar.com/what-happens-to-my-solar-system-if-i-move/>



3

### Keep the lease or PPA and move it to your new home.

If you'd like to keep your solar lease or PPA, you may be able to remove the panels from your current roof and move them to your new roof. This would mean that the homebuyer would not assume the lease or PPA from you. Some lease and PPA providers will offer this arrangement to their customers. Some will not. You should check with your provider about the viability of moving your panels and continuing your lease or PPA. Even if your provider allows it, the removal and reinstallation of your solar panels may be complicated by a few factors.

Your lease or PPA provider will need to receive new interconnection approval from your utility to install the panels on your new roof. Leases and PPAs are based on a certain level of electrical production. Physical characteristics of the roof determine how much your system will produce.

Your new home will need a roof that allows your system to generate as much solar as your original home did to maintain the economic validity of the contract. There are several things that impact economic viability of a roof.

These include:

- roof orientation,
- shading, and
- the amount of available roof space.

Your lease or PPA provider will determine whether your new roof is compatible with the terms of your original agreement. If it is and the transfer is allowed, you may have to pay for the panels to be removed and reinstalled at your new home. These fees may range from \$500 to \$2,500.

**Explore these options  
before you list your home.**

Regardless of which option you pursue, it's important to consider what should be done before the home is put on the market.

# SOLAR UNITED NEIGHBORS



Learn how we can help you go solar:

**[SOLARUNITEDNEIGHBORS.ORG/GOING-SOLAR](https://solarunitedneighbors.org/going-solar)**

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Solar United Neighbors is a 501(c)3 nonprofit. We're a community of people building a new energy system with rooftop solar at the cornerstone. We help people go solar, join together, and fight for their energy rights.