

Community Profile

Energy burden is the average amount of income a household pays for energy costs. According to a Greenlink Analytics report, the average household energy burden in the US was 3.6% in 2019, while in Indianapolis the average household rate was 1.6 times the national average that same year. Even more, there is a major disparity in energy burden based on where a household resides. The 20% lowest energy burdened areas in the city had a median rate of only 3.4% in 2019. On the other hand, the 20% highest energy burdened areas had an average rate of 11.5% in 2019.¹ This energy burden disparity has huge implications in terms of continuing the wealth gap and economic inequalities within the city, which is why decreasing the energy costs of low-income families through solar co-ops is a vital tool in lessening inequity within Indianapolis.

Indianapolis LMI Co-op 2020

The LMI co-op resulted in 10 LMI families going solar at no cost! The success of the Indianapolis program is due to our focus on energy democracy, which is an energy system that is widely distributed and owned by many people. The community benefits and controls the energy they are producing. To ensure the financial protection of our members, we implemented safeguards to prevent our members from incurring economic hardship, including:

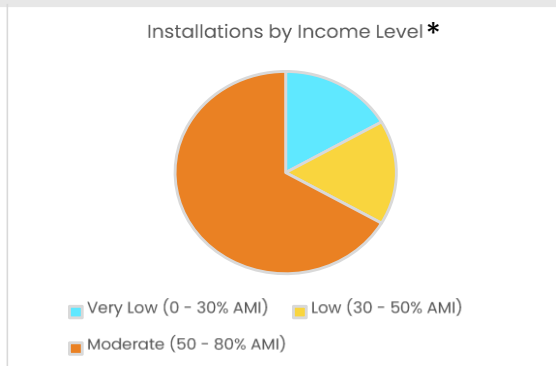
- 25-year warranties and maintenance plans
- Cellular-based monitoring by the installer for those members who did not have Wi-Fi
- Crowdfunding campaign to cover the costs of essential roof repairs and weatherization



Community Data

Indianapolis is a racially diverse city with 55.7% of the population White, 28.8% Black, and 10.9% Hispanic.

90% of the zip codes of LMI co-op participants had a poverty rate between 22.1-32.4%.



Program Impacts

Key program stats	
Total number of co-op participants (LMI and market-rate)	71
Number of LMI participants	10
Total LMI solar installed	39.6 kW
Money spent on system installation (not including program implementation costs)	\$122,089
Lifetime of solar systems installed	25+ years
Pounds of carbon offset for lifetime of solar system	2,139,530

Why Solar in Indiana?

Transitioning LMI homeowners to solar can substantially improve the housing security and health of LMI communities, create local wealth, build community resiliency, and catalyze further progress toward a clean, renewable energy system. In Indiana, the problem of energy poverty is very real. In 2019, Professors in the IU O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs released preliminary findings concerning low-income Indiana residents:

- 15% could not pay their energy bills in the prior month
- 13% received a shutoff notice
- 4% had their energy service disconnected

Partnerships

Local partners were integral to the success of the co-op. Although there were many organizations involved in the co-op, our main partners included: the City of Indianapolis, Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership (INHP), and the Kheprw Institute. We are still working collaboratively with each partner on Solar for All, which is a \$7 billion dollar funding opportunity presented by the EPA for the deployment of rooftop solar in disadvantaged communities throughout the US.

Co-op Partner Responsibilities

- Verifying Income of Applicants
- Facilitating Partner Connections
- Promoting the Co-op
- Building Trust with Residents



Opportunities for Growth

During the next five years Solar for All will play a huge role in progressing energy equity throughout the state of Indiana. The \$7 billion program will assist thousands of LMI households obtain access to rooftop solar. Statewide applications have been submitted from various organizations and government entities. Solar United Neighbors is a partner or signatory on three of the applications, including:

- Industrial Heartland Solar for All: A collection of 31 communities across 8 states in the Rustbelt of America led by Growth Opportunity Partners, the first Black-led Greenbank in the nation.
- Indiana Community Action Association Solar for All: Partners are both municipal governments and community organizations in Gary, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, and Columbus.
- Indiana Solar for All: Creating a More Sustainable and Affordable Energy Future- A collaboration led by the Indiana Community Housing and Development Authority and other public and non-profit organizations

Advocacy

All co-op members can join the Indiana Solar Action Team, which is an integral part of our solar advocacy work. The team is composed of 100 members who fight for democratic solar policy in Indiana. Members can learn about solar issues, participate in advocacy trainings, and even talk to elected officials about their solar rights. The Solar Action Team developed the Indiana Solar Bill of Rights promoting an energy system controlled by the community and protects Hoosiers' interests. The team's major objectives include:

- Passing Community Solar Legislation
- Ensuring Solar Access within HOAs
- Advocating for Energy Justice
- Protecting Net metering



* Based on 2019 HUD Median income for Marion County. For more information go to:

<https://inter-cdn.com/images/document/4755959/MARION.pdf>

1. Greenlink Analytics (2021). 6 years of energy burden impacts: Indianapolis in focus. Greenlink equity map.

https://www.equitymap.org/_files/ugd/4aef44_a319b40ecbcf4d3592dd01f78dff97b.pdf