



CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Guide to Going Solar For Homeowners and Businesses

Step 1: Consider your zone

Step 2: Contact installers and set up meetings

Step 3: Meet with installers and ask the right questions

Step 4: Choose the best solar option and solar company for you

Step 5: Go solar – celebrate your financial savings and the positive change you’re bringing to Rhode Island and the world!

Step 1: Consider your Zone

Solar panels are allowed on homes and businesses everywhere in Providence. If your building is located in a historic district or downtown, your project proposal will need an extra review by the [Historic District Commission](#) or the [Downtown Design Review Committee](#). Find out if this applies to you by using [this tool](#). If it does, just let your solar contractor know and they will help with the review process.

Going solar in a historic district is a simple process. Fill out an application on the HDC website to have your proposed changes reviewed. Solar panels are considered a minor alteration. As long as the changes meet the [guidelines](#), HDC staff in the Providence Department of Planning and Development will review the application and approve the project. If the proposed solar is deemed highly visible or otherwise disruptive to the historic quality of the building or area, it will go before the committee. The committee will review the case and determine if this is the only option for the resident to go solar. To learn more, visit the [HDC website](#) or contact Jason Martin in the Department of Planning and Development at (401)680-8517 or jmartin@providenceri.gov.

Step 2: Contact installers and set up meetings

Contact a few solar installers and set up a meeting to receive quotes from them. Most installers will offer a free solar assessment and tell you exactly how feasible a system is and what the financial benefits will be for you. These solar professionals will also be able to answer your questions about which solar systems, financing options, and incentives are best for your situation. The Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources (OER) has a [list](#) of solar installers that have received a Renewable Energy Professional license. You can also use a service like [EnergySage](#), which gives you competing solar quotes online for free.



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Step 3: Meet with the installers and ask the right questions

The Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) has a handy [Residential Consumer Guide to Solar Power](#) that includes questions to ask solar companies.

According to SEIA, some of the key questions to ask when considering purchasing a system include:

- What is the total cost of the solar system? How much do I pay up front, and how much over time, for how long?
- How much electricity will the system generate each year? Do you guarantee a minimum amount (a production guarantee)?
- What type of maintenance or cleaning is required? Are any maintenance services included?
- Who should I contact if I have a question about the system following the installation?

Some of the key questions to ask when considering a lease or PPA include:

- Will my payments increase over time?
- What happens if I wish to end the lease or PPA early?
- What are my options when I sell my home?
- Who is responsible for repairs and maintenance on the system?

Step 4: Choose the best solar option and solar company for you

Step 5: Go solar – celebrate your financial savings and the positive change you’re bringing to Rhode Island and the world!