

'Community Solar' Makes Solar Available to Condo Owners and Apartment Dwellers

Driving around the metro area and elsewhere, you have probably noticed huge installations of solar panels on open land and wondered who built and who benefits from them. Installations, such as the one north of 64th Avenue on Highway 93, are owned by community solar companies or nonprofits.

The concept of community solar is to rent or sell portions of such installations to individual consumers. The kilowatt-hours generated by those solar panels are then credited to the usage on subscribers' electric meters.

It's a perfect solution for people

REAL ESTATE TODAY



By JIM SMITH Realtor®

who live in an apartment or condo building where they can't install their own solar panels. The really neat thing about community solar is that when you move, your solar generation is merely reassigned to your new electric meter — no need to install new panels.

Small businesses can also take advantage of community solar. Golden Real Estate, for example, moved in Nov. 2021 from its solar-powered office on South Golden Road into a storefront on Washington Avenue in downtown Golden. Community solar is the only way that we can continue to be solar-powered since we can't install solar panels.

Denver-based SunShare describes itself as the nation's oldest community solar company with over 10 years' experience building and maintaining "solar gardens" across the state. Their website says that they have built 116MW of solar panels and have 14,000 subscribers and three utility partners. Find more info at www.MySunShare.com.

Community solar was legalized in Colorado in 2010 with the passage of the Community Solar Gardens Act (HB 1342). The following year, SunShare opened for business, and in 2015 the Colorado Energy Office partnered with GRID Alternatives to construct a community solar demonstration project to serve low-income Coloradans.

Colorado Springs Utilities was the first utility to create its own solar garden for 278 subscribers in 2011. That 0.5-MW installation has since grown to a 2-MW installation serv-

ing 435 customers.

Community solar can be a good deal for rural landowners, providing a predictable revenue stream for otherwise non-producing acreage.

Renting or buying photovoltaic panels in a solar garden costs money, so you're still paying for electricity, but the rule of thumb is that what you spend on community solar is about 10% cheaper than buying the same amount of electricity from the utility.

Some of us don't worry about the size of the savings but simply "go solar" because it's the right thing to do. Any savings are just a bonus.

To learn more, in addition to visiting SunShare's website, I suggest Googling "community solar Colorado." You will find other companies offering community solar, learn the history of it in Colorado, and decide whether it is right for you.

You may find that existing solar gardens are sold out and you'll be put on a waiting list for a future solar garden.

Whether you are putting solar panels on your own property or subscribing to a solar garden, consider upsizing your investment instead of basing it on your current usage, since the chances are that you'll be buying an electric vehicle and you'll want electricity from the sun to

power it, too. Xcel Energy allows you to install solar panels based on twice your last 12 months' usage for that reason.

New Laws Limit What Landlords Can Include in Leases

If a landlord rejects a prospective tenant's application, the landlord must now provide a copy of the background report they used, and tenants are allowed to challenge that report's contents.

One new law prohibits landlords from requiring that tenants waive certain legal rights in their leases, such as the ability to participate in class action lawsuits or jury trials. It also prohibits landlords from charging renters a penalty if the renter doesn't give notice that they aren't renewing their lease, unless the landlord suffers an actual loss because he/she didn't receive notice.

The new law also limits how much landlords can charge in third-party fees, such as for pest control or trash collection.

Under the law, income requirements are capped at double the cost of rent. Proponents have said that some landlords have required that tenants earn three to five times as much as they'll pay in rent.

The law also caps security deposits at double the cost of a month's rent, and it limits how a landlord can use a prospective tenant's credit or rental history.

July Real Estate Market Analysis

Denver's real estate market has undergone notable shifts this year when compared to past averages. Typically, around 8,757 active homes are on the market in July. However, this year, the number of homes for sale was under 6,000.

High interest rates reduce the motivation for homeowners to sell, even if downsizing to a smaller property. Buyers face the same challenges due to higher interest rates. Many have postponed their real estate plans, waiting for lower rates.

The result is fewer transactions. This pattern is expected to continue through 2023. It resembles market activity from 2013 to 2019, with one notable deviation. This year, we're observing more frequent and larger price reductions in both size and number of properties. These dynamics are shaping the landscape for both buyers and sellers, prompting strategic decisions in the face of evolving market conditions.

Megan Aller contributed to this report.

Price Reduced on Bungalow in Denver's Park Hill

This charming brick ranch is at 2670 Kearney Street, on a double lot with extensive gardens. Both the bathroom and kitchen have been updated. New double-pane windows are throughout the house. Inside, original hardwood floors are on the main level. The sewer line was replaced in 2009. The other kitchen appliances and the A/C unit are about five years old. Outdoor amenities include a newer storage shed, a children's play structure with swings and a slide (removed if you want), and a large patio. There's an attached two-car garage and a third bedroom in the basement. Perfectly situated on a wide street, the house is a block from McAuliffe International Middle School. A new roof was installed three weeks ago. See more pictures, plus a narrated video tour, including drone footage, at www.ParkHillHome.site, then call listing agent Greg Kraft at 720-353-1922 to request a private showing.



New: Lakewood Home in Country-Like Setting

Set at the back of a quiet, off-the-beaten-path cul-de-sac, this home at 460 Ammons Street will check all the boxes for many house hunters. It has lots of light thanks to the floor-to-ceiling north-facing windows in the main-level living room/dining room. The 0.46-acre lot provides plenty of room for gardening. An expansive rock driveway includes tons of space for guest parking and all your toys — boat, RV, trailer, you-name-it! There are RV hook-ups for water, sewer & electrical. A riding lawn mower is included. There's no HOA to limit your use of this country-like property. You'll make good use of the wrap-around composite deck! The roof was replaced in 2017 with architectural hail-resistant shingles to save on insurance premiums. HVAC was new in 2018, and the sewer line was replaced in July 2021. Belmar and light rail are each 1.5 miles from this home. Visit www.LakewoodHome.info to take a narrated video tour of this listing inside and out, including drone footage. Open house is Saturday, Aug. 19th, 11am to 1pm. Or call listing agent Jim Smith at 303-525-1851 to request a showing! See how many boxes this home checks for you!



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"I cannot do all the good the world needs, but the world needs all the good I can do." —Jana Stanfield