

# Zillow Has Published a Primer on Home Solar — Here Are My Reflections on It

On April 27, Zillow published an article, "6 Questions to Ask as You Consider Home Solar." I thought it was pretty comprehensive, but it was for a national audience, and some of the questions are readily answered for us here in Colorado. I'll post a link to the full article at [www.GoldenREblog.com](http://www.GoldenREblog.com).

The article begins by asserting that, according to Zillow's research, homes which highlight eco-friendly features like solar sell up to 10 days quicker and for 1.4% more than homes that don't. That statistic, however, fails to distinguish between homes which have fully-owned solar installations, and homes that have leased systems or "power purchase agreements." Those alternative arrangements basically create a situation in which the homeowner purchases electricity from two companies instead of one — still a good deal, since the solar power typically costs less than the power purchased from the utility.

Zillow's question #1 is whether your home is suitable for solar. We all know, of course, that a south-facing roof without shading is best, but there are other considerations,

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By JIM SMITH, Realtor®

such as the condition of your roof. If your roof needs replacing before you put solar panels on it, you may want to include **Roper Roofing & Solar** in Golden among the solar companies you interview. It's the only solar company I know which is also a roofing company.

One question posed by Zillow is whether your HOA (if you have one) will allow solar. Fortunately, Colorado passed a law over a decade ago which requires HOAs to allow solar and other sustainable improvements. HOAs can regulate appearance but not prohibit solar. For example, it could require that solar panels be flush with your roof rather than angled out from it.

The article points out that if your home is not suitable for solar, you should look into community solar, for which it provides a link. Community solar is also a good alternative for renters and condo owners.

The second question is how to find a reputable installer. Personally, I like to hire a small (and local) family-owned company over a national business with a local sales team. I recommend **Golden Solar**, which has installed five systems for me

over the past two decades, and **Buglet Solar Electric**. The owners of those two companies, Don Parker and Whitney Painter, can answer question #3, which is what incentives and rebates are available on the federal, state, local and utility level. The current federal incentive is a 26% tax credit, which drops to 22% next year and expires the following year unless Congress extends it.

Question #4 is whether there's net metering, which allows you to "bank" your daytime production for nighttime use and carry forward your surplus solar production to future months and years. In Colorado, the answer is a resounding yes.

Question #5 is about battery storage. Net metering, in my opinion, makes home battery backup/storage unnecessary unless you are worried about power outages. (If you have life-sustaining equipment that requires uninterrupted electricity, battery storage might be appropriate.)

Where battery storage is essential, of course, is in off-grid applications, such as in a mountain cabin

without accessible electricity from a utility. I have listed such homes with impressive battery systems.

The last question which Zillow poses is whether a solar installation is worth it, admitting that this is a very personal decision.

A solar installation nowadays costs between \$10,000 and \$20,000 for the typical home, and you can ask the companies you interview what the return on investment will be. I have never worried about ROI, because installing solar, to me, is simply the right thing to do, satisfied to know that it does pay for itself, whether in five years or ten.

One piece of advice not in the Zillow article is to factor in the increased electricity you will need when you buy an electric vehicle — which you will at some point, since most manufacturers plan to phase out gas-powered vehicles. Xcel Energy lets you to carry forward surplus generation from year to year, and allows you to install more solar panels than your last 12 months' usage would otherwise suggest.

## You Might Want to Reconsider Gas Cooking

Upgraded kitchens are among every buyer's top selling points, and a great gas range such as a Viking or Wolf can draw raves and offers.

A February 2022 article in Smithsonian Magazine carries the revealing title, "**Gas Stoves Are Worse for Climate and Health Than Previously Thought.**" Find a link for that article at [www.GoldenREblog.com](http://www.GoldenREblog.com).

The article states that 40 million American homes have a gas range or cooktop. These appliances can emit formaldehyde, carbon monoxide and nitric oxides, and they could be leaking even when turned off.

Rita and I had a gas cooktop in our Golden home (now sold), and we were advised to always turn on the exhaust fan above the stove (vented to the outside, not recirculating like some fans) whenever we cooked, not just when your cooking creates smoke.

We've all heard that methane is a greenhouse gas, 80 times more powerful than carbon dioxide. You may not

know that natural gas is really methane under a nicer sounding name. The methane emitted by cooking with gas has health implications that are a more immediate and personal cause for concern.

The smart alternative to cooking with gas is cooking on induction electric surfaces. I purchased a single countertop induction unit for about \$50 and was impressed by its performance — and by its low 110V electric usage. I found that an equivalent amount of water took less than half as long to reach boiling on the induction cooktop as it did on the biggest burner of our gas cooktop. Familiarize yourself with induction cooking by using one of the \$50 units before making the switch to a full-size cooktop.



## How Does a 3-Day Test-Drive of a Tesla Sound?

As a Tesla enthusiast and long-time owner — I have owned Teslas since March 2014 — I have always wished I could let friends borrow my Tesla long enough for them to fall in love with it, but the usual considerations of insurance, etc., have stood in the way.

Now, it's possible for anyone to rent one of multiple Teslas, including my red Model S shown here, on



Turo, a car-sharing app that takes care of the insurance and other concerns in return for a 25% cut of the rental fees. On their app/website, you'll find every make and model of car, from Honda Civics to Teslas at rates ranging from under \$100/day to over \$400/day. My car is listed at \$117/day and has unlimited free Supercharging. Search for it on [www.Turo.com](http://www.Turo.com).

## Affordable Ranch Listed by Jim Swanson

This move-in ready south-facing ranch home with updates at **3865 W. 63rd Ave.** is ready for new owners. It has an Arvada address, but is in unincorporated Adams County. The corner lot and low-maintenance yard is great for pets. The open floor plan features a large living room with vaulted ceiling, plus a dining area with French doors adjacent to the kitchen. Quality kitchen appliances are included. There are 2 bedrooms and 2 baths on the main level, and 2 bedrooms, a full bath, and a nice family room in the basement. You'll like the high ceilings in the basement. Built in 1987, the Arlington Meadows neighborhood has great access to Denver and Interstates 25, 76 and 70. The Tennyson light rail station is only 10 blocks away, as well as the large Tennyson Knolls park. View more pictures and take a narrated video tour at [www.ArlingtonMeadowsHome.info](http://www.ArlingtonMeadowsHome.info), then call **Jim Swanson** at 303-929-2727 for a private showing.



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