



FAQS

What is Simple Solar?

Simple Solar from CFU is a community solar project, or a large collection of solar panels. With customer support, CFU will build and maintain the solar panels near Prairie Lakes Park in Cedar Falls. The project will give citizens an affordable and flexible way to use solar energy. CFU customers can invest in units and subscribe to a portion of the energy output from the project.

Who can participate?

Cedar Falls Utilities residential or business electric customers can buy solar units. Units are sold on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Why should I choose to buy solar units versus installing a rooftop system?

While individual rooftop solar installations may make sense for some customers, Simple Solar units offer multiple advantages:

- You choose your investment level. When you purchase community solar project units, you don't have the large up-front cost of adding solar panels to your roof.
- You have no ongoing maintenance costs. CFU will maintain the equipment and solar panels. No worry or hassle for you.
- No rooftop is required. There is nothing to install or change at your home or business. Solar units are great for customers whose rooftops are shaded by trees and renters can participate.
- When you choose solar units, you are playing an active role in preserving the environment for future generations. The use of solar energy directly displaces the need for fossil fuels like coal and natural gas.

What do units cost?

Simple Solar units cost \$270. Payment may be spread over 12 monthly installments.

You will receive a monthly credit on your bill for the electricity generated by your share of the project. The credit will be paid for 20 years. Our estimate is a subscription will be paid back in 15 years. If CFU's cost to purchase electricity increases in the future, the solar bill credit will also increase and your payback time could get shorter.

How is the monthly credit on my utility bill calculated?

The project's size is expected to be approximately 1.5 megawatts.

To allocate among subscribers, the project output will be divided into approximately 8,500 units so each share represents the output of about half of a panel, or 170 watts.

The actual electric production will be metered in kilowatt hours (kWh). On a monthly basis, the kWh generated will be allocated equally to each share. The kWh value is the Per Share Energy (PSE) and is calculated by CFU for each monthly billing period.

The credit for each billing period is calculated as follows:

Customer credit = Number of units x
Per Share Energy x Energy Value (in \$/kWh)

The Energy Value will be determined by CFU, and is representative of market energy supply costs for the billing period. This value will be determined annually and will change in January of each year.

How do I calculate how many units to buy to cover my energy needs?

Each share is expected to generate 2.5% of an average home's annual electric usage. We estimate that a share will produce 250-325 kWh during its first year of production, with a total of 4800-6900 kWh over 20 years. CFU's Energy Services department can help customers determine individual average household or business electric usage and how many units are needed to offset varying levels of usage.

What exactly am I subscribing to? Do I own part of the solar panel?

You are not purchasing physical equipment, but rather subscribing to the output from the solar project. The solar equipment will be installed at Prairie Lakes Park in Cedar Falls and will provide electricity to the community. You receive a bill credit for the amount of solar energy your share of the project produces.

How big will the Simple Solar project be?

The project will likely be built on 8 acres of land.

How much energy will the solar project produce?

The panels will produce enough energy to power approximately 275 Cedar Falls homes.

What if a storm damages the solar panels? What if it is cloudy?

CFU will maintain the solar panels to maximize the amount of solar energy you receive from your portion of the project. In the event of equipment damage or failure, CFU will bring the equipment back to working order as quickly as possible, at no additional cost to subscribers.

The panels will be able to handle hail storms that are typical for Cedar Falls. Every major panel manufacturer accounts for hail in their warranties and conducts rigorous testing of their products for a variety of hail scenarios. If it is cloudy, the solar panels will produce a little less than they would on a sunny day. Changes in your amount of monthly solar energy production are normal since the amount of sunlight changes with the seasons.

Why did CFU choose to build a solar project instead of a wind turbine?

A similar-sized wind turbine would produce slightly more power per year than a solar installation. However, a wind turbine produces power during times of low electric system demand, such as cold winter nights. Solar energy is produced during the day, when there is more demand and electricity costs are higher. Additional considerations, such as zoning regulations and the fact that many prime turbine locations are located too close to the airport, make it unlikely that a utility-scale turbine will be built in Cedar Falls.

What happens if I move?

Your solar project units move with you to another residence in CFU's service territory and buyouts are available if you relocate outside our territory.

Should we wait to build the project when solar panels are cheaper?

No, many electric and solar industry experts are predicting solar costs to slightly increase in the next few years. This is largely due to the fact that after 2016, there is a substantial drop in available federal tax credits.

What is the project timeline?

Construction will be completed by the middle of 2016.

