

RIVER FALLS COMMUNITY SOLAR PROGRAM FAQ

Below are some frequently asked questions about community solar and the potential benefits of participating in a program.

What is community solar?

Community solar—often referred to as a community solar garden—is, in basic terms, a solar electric array that generates renewable energy and/or bill credits to multiple subscribers within the community. Subscribers—or program participants—can include local residents, businesses and non-profit organizations. Participating customers pay to subscribe to the program, and in turn, receive a credit on their monthly electric bill based on the solar energy production of the project.

What are the benefits of community solar?

Community solar programs benefit communities by providing local, clean, and affordable energy. They can also add to the local economy, limit impacts on delicate habitats, and provide more energy options to customers.

Why is community solar a good option for so many customers?

Community solar programs offer some unique options:

- Rooftop not required. Allows solar energy to be used by all, especially for renters and customers whose rooftops are shaded, too small or otherwise unable to install solar panels on their roof.
- Lower up-front cost. Avoid some of the initial costs involved that often accompany adding solar panels to your roof.
- No maintenance costs. Program participants are not responsible for ongoing maintenance or repairs.
- Customizable. Flexible participation levels to fit different budgets and energy needs.
- Transferable. If you move within the River Falls Municipal Utilities service area, you can transfer your subscription to your new address.

Does River Falls Municipal Utilities have a community solar program?

Yes! After completing the initial planning and development process, River Falls Municipal Utilities has a community solar program available as an option for our residential and business customers.

How do I participate?

To begin you can simply complete the subscription agreement available on our website. After signing the subscription agreement and paying the subscription fee, you'll be able to

enjoy a monthly credit on your electric bill for the duration of the community solar program.

How big is each solar panel and how many total panels will there be?

Each panel measures about 3.5' x 6.5' and is capable of generating 315 watts. There will be a total of 807 panels in the River Falls Municipal Utilities community solar program.

What kinds of panels are used in River Falls Municipal Utilities community solar program?

Our community solar program uses polycrystalline photovoltaic modules made by Canadian Solar. The balance of the system includes Schneider Electric Conext three-phase inverters and RBI Solar galvanized steel racking.

How large of a subscription can I purchase?

Our community solar program requires a minimum subscription of one panel, or 315 watts. The maximum subscription size for residential customers is 32 panels, or approximately 10 kW. The maximum subscription size for business customers is 238 panels (approximately 75 kW) not to exceed 100% of the business's estimated annual energy use.

How do I calculate what my subscription should be to match my energy needs?

River Falls Municipal Utilities can help you determine your individual average household or business electric usage and how large of a subscription you should get to match a desired percentage of your energy needs. For the average home in River Falls that uses 688 kWh over an average month, here is an example of how many panels the homeowner could subscribe to match different percentages of energy use:

Goal Usage Match (%)	Monthly Usage Match (kWh)	Approximate Panels
25%	172	5
50%	344	11
100%	688	22

Each 315 W panel is expected to produce approximately 32 kWh per month.

Please contact us at (715) 425-0906 if you need assistance in determining your average electric usage.

What is the subscription fee?

Subscriptions are \$567 per panel. Customer subscriptions must be paid in full prior to receiving the associated monthly credits. If for some reason the community solar program does not reach commercial operation as expected, subscription fees will be fully refunded to each subscribing customer.

How is the monthly credit on my utility bill calculated?

Solar energy production will be metered in kilowatt-hours (kWh). Your monthly credit will be calculated by multiplying your share of the total kWh produced by the applicable rate. Factors that affect the applicable rate are discussed below.

What factors affect the rate used to calculate the monthly credit on my utility bill?

Community solar programs generate electricity with beneficial environmental attributes referred to as “renewable energy credits.” These renewable energy credits (RECs) can have monetary value independent of the energy produced by the project. At the time you subscribe to our community solar program you will have a one-time option to:

1. Receive the value of the RECs as part of your monthly credit, or
2. Pay to have the RECs retired so that they may no longer be used for other purposes.

If you elect to include the value of the RECs in your monthly credit (option 1 above), then the monthly credit will be increased to 7.8 cents per kWh. If you would like to have the environmental attributes associated with your subscription retired (option 2 above), the monthly credit rate will be 7.6 cents per kWh.

Over the life of the community solar program, these rates are subject to periodic review and adjustment by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, the agency that regulates electric utilities in the State of Wisconsin. A review of the rate will take place at least once every five years.

How long will the community solar program be in service?

Our community solar program will be active for 20 years. The 20 year life of the program will begin once the array is constructed and connected to the electrical grid, estimated to be in the fall of 2015. Participants who subscribe after

the project is already online will only receive credits for the remaining months of the program. In order to get the most monthly credits from the program customers are strongly encouraged to subscribe prior to December 1, 2015.

Is community solar a good long term option?

In addition to the environmental benefits that solar energy provides, River Falls Municipal Utilities has developed a program that works for your bottom line.

Since the amount of solar energy varies each day depending on how much sunlight is available, a participant’s energy credits will vary from month to month. Based on an initial rate of 7.8 cents per kWh, panel manufacturer specifications and historical average solar conditions for the River Falls area, the average credit is estimated to be \$2 - \$3 per panel per month (\$24 - \$36 per year).

What if I move before the end of the 20-year term of the program?

If you move within the River Falls Municipal Utilities service area, you can transfer your subscription to your new address. If you sell your home and move out of our service area, your subscription can be transferred with the sale of your home, transferred to another customer in our service area, donated to a non-profit organization or sold back to River Falls Municipal Utilities (less depreciation and subject to subscription limitations and remaining life of the program). Donation of your subscription to an eligible organization/charity may be tax deductible. You should consult with your tax advisor to discuss all available options.

How will the solar panels be maintained to ensure they are still effective in 20 years?

WPPI Energy and River Falls Municipal Utilities are jointly responsible for ensuring that all maintenance activities, including inverter replacement, snow removal, etc. are performed as needed.

What happens at the end of the 20 year agreement?

The project will be evaluated as the 20 year life approaches to determine if it is still a viable project. If it is deemed a viable project, which we believe it will be, and is able to operate effectively, we will look for ways to extend the renewable energy value to continue to benefit the community and our customers.



At River Falls Municipal Utilities, we believe affordable public power strengthens our community and helps our neighbors. That’s why, through WPPI Energy, we’re partnering with other local not-for-profit utilities to share resources and lower costs.