
Making Solar Accessible to Everyone

A Presentation to the City of Berkeley
Environment & Climate Commission
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Berkeley's Climate Goals & the Just Transition



- Target: 90% reduction in total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Scopes 1, 2, and 3) by 2045
- Equitable transition to clean energy economy, including renters & low-income homeowners
- Residential solar offsets household cost of decarbonization upgrades

Solar Access Denied for Many

- Only 23% with rooftop solar are low income in U.S.
- Almost no renters
- Renters + lower-income homeowners can't offset electrical bills with solar



Alternative Option 1: Community Solar



- A great option when available
- East Bay Community Energy (EBCE) “Renewable 100” option is 3-5% more expensive
- Grid Alternatives: free rooftop solar for income-qualified homeowners

Alternative Option 2: Plug-in Solar

nytimes.com/2024

theguardian.com/environment/2024/dec/18/f-a-million-germans-have-them-there-must-be-something-in-it-how-balcony-solar-is-taking-off

News Opinion Sport Culture Lifestyle

The Guardian US

Germans Consider Change From
Plug-and-play solar panels on balcony railings across Germany under looser regulations.

The alternatives

'If 1.5m Germans have them there must be something in it': how balcony solar is taking off

In Spain, balcony panels benefit more than roof panels from the low winter sun. Photograph: Tornasol Energy

70% Americans Can't Get Rooftop Solar

Rooftop solar



Suitable roof
\$20,000+
Pays for itself in 10+ years
Homeowners only
All-or-nothing

Plug-in Solar



No roof required
<\$2k, 40% less per kW
Pays for itself 3-5 years
Renters or homeowners
Versatile mounting

Other Mounting Options



Clearing the Way for Solar-for-all

- 2024 Legislation in Germany
- 2025 Utah legislation
- Gatekeepers: landlord, HOA, property managers
- Relevant Berkeley regulations?

Safety

- Certified UL 1703 (panels) + UL 1741 (inverter)
- Overvoltage protection + temp monitoring
- Grid-tied Inverters = automatic shut-off
- Smart Power Meter = everything is behind meter
- Never backfeed to utility infrastructure
- Licensed electrician → ensure safe installation

Discussion Questions

- How does Berkeley enable or hinder plug-in solar?
- How could expanding solar access contribute to our City's climate goals and just transition?
- What would be a logical next step to advance plug-in solar access and its potential impact in Berkeley?

Let's Stay in Touch



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