

How Renters Can Go Solar

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If you're a renter — like [80% of San Francisco residents](#) — you may think solar is out of reach for you. But the fact is, at least [75% of Americans](#) can't put solar on their own roof, even if they don't rent. The good news is that there are more and more options for renters and the rest of the 75%.

At a recent panel discussion at the [Matter of Trust Eco-Center](#), renters had a chance to learn about some of these options.

Approaching your landlord

If you want to see solar panels on your roof, you'll need to get your landlord on board. A few tips:

Before approaching your landlord, see who else in your building is interested in solar. There's always power in numbers!

Landlords have two options: install solar for the building's common electricity, or install solar that tenants can buy into for their units via [virtual net metering](#) (VNM) — which just means that the property owner can allocate a solar system's energy credits to their tenants. By using solar for the common electricity, the landlord may be able to [save money with solar](#). With VNM, the tenants help pay for the system by paying for the power they get from the panels.

If your landlord decides to go with VNM, ensure there's an out so that tenants who don't want solar are not forced to buy in. Also ensure it's clear if rents or electricity costs will go up.

VNM can be shifted each month — so if a renter on the program moves, the next tenant can take over that power if they choose to. Your landlord may want to put in a system somewhat smaller than is needed, to be sure they can sell all the power the system generates.

Other options for renters

If you can't convince your landlord to go solar, or if it turns out your roof isn't suitable for solar, don't despair! There are other ways you can participate in and benefit from solar power:

Shared renewables: There's more to VNM than just getting power from panels on your roof. A bill now making its way through the California legislature, SB 43, would expand that to allow anyone to buy into clean power generated at a different location. Check out the [California Shared Renewables site](#) to learn more and see how you can get involved.

[CleanPowerSF](#): This clean power program coming to San Francisco will allow any PG&E customer to choose renewable power instead of what they're getting now.

Investing in solar: Whether or not you can get solar on your roof, you may want to put your money to work while doing good. [Mosaic](#) lets any California resident invest in clean-energy projects and get a good return on investment, with as little as \$25.

Volunteering and donating: There are plenty of solar projects to donate to or volunteer for, through organizations like [RE-volv](#), [Everybody Solar](#), and [GRID Alternatives](#).

With new opportunities for solar coming along all the time, it won't be long before we'll have solar for everyone!



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