SunShares Webinar Q&A

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SunShares Questions

1. **Is the discount of 15% on top of Federal tax credit of 30%?**
   The discount is off of each installer's regular turnkey pricing. If you sign up before Nov 15th, you are eligible for the 15% discount. Once you install, you should be eligible for the 30% federal tax credit as well. Please speak to a tax professional to get guidance relevant to your specific situation. For an overview of solar and battery storage tax credits, please review the US Department of Energy’s [Homeowner’s Guide to the Federal Tax Credit for Solar Photovoltaics](https://energy.gov/eere/solar/homeowner-guide-federal-tax-credit-solar-photovoltaics).

2. **Is the 15% Sunshares discount based off of pricing of the three specific vendors that are part of this program? I am basically wondering if other vendors may offer comparable prices to “discounted” prices from these particular vendors?**
   The SunShares discount is off of our installers' regular turnkey prices. We encourage residents to get quotes from multiple installers, including those outside of SunShares, to determine their best option, and having quotes from SunShares installers for comparison may be helpful during that process. Here are some [tips and resources](#) to help you find, compare, and select the right contractor for your project.

3. **Why is the cost of the Tesla Powerwall so much higher than what it is on Tesla’s website?**
   SunShares discounted prices are turnkey, which includes the battery unit, system design, permit, labor, and installation.

4. **I sent requests for quotes into the providers and haven't heard back, is there an issue with too many inquiries and losing some?**
   This year, we received twice as many sign ups as last year and are grateful that so many of you are deciding to power your home with clean energy. As the pre-vetted installers work through the list of sign ups, we ask for your patience. Please note that you may not be contacted by all three of our installers at the same time. And do not worry, by signing up, you have secured your discount for this season!
5. Would the solar vendor take care of the permitting process with the City of Palo Alto?
Yes, the vendors will obtain the necessary building permits for your project.

Solar Questions

6. What are the differences between the solar panels from different providers?
You can watch our installers answer this question live at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxC5LuP9LaA at time stamp 56:20. You can see all SunShares product offerings here: https://www.bayareasunshares.org/products-and-pricing. The vendors may be able to offer other panel modules than those listed here, but those are not guaranteed to be discounted as part of the SunShares program. Please contact a SunShares vendor to discuss the options that might be available for you.

7. What kind of inverters are used with the panels from each company?
Our installers talk about their inverters in the webinar recording here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxC5LuP9LaA at the time stamp 1:03:40. Please refer to our products and pricing page: https://www.bayareasunshares.org/products-and-pricing. For information about inverters please contact a SunShares vendor to discuss the options that might be available for you.

8. What are the issues with flat foam roofs? Ours gets recoated every 5 years though that may too short an interval.
Solar installations on foam roofs may require the involvement of a specialized roofing contractor. This may increase the cost and time required for your solar installation. The best way to understand the difficulty involved is to speak to our installers directly by signing up for SunShares. You can also watch our installers talk about foam roofs here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxC5LuP9LaA at the timestamp 54:20

9. Our home is single story, about 3000 square feet with about 1/2 roof flat and 1/2 raised angle (clear story windows, rising to 12 feet height in living room area). Entire roofing material is foam. What are issues if installing solar on foam roofing?
See answer #8 above.

10. Tesla declined to install its rooftop solar system on my roof citing my foam roof.
See answer #8 above.

11. Why does the solar estimator say, “Solar generation shuts down during power outages”? I kind of want solar when the power is out!
A standard grid-tied rooftop solar system will not provide electric power to your home in the case of a power outage. All grid-tied solar systems are required to disconnect from the grid during a power outage. This is so the “mini power plant” on your roof doesn't feed electricity back into the grid during an outage, which would endanger utility workers who are repairing the utility wires. Please read about “Solar Resiliency and Battery Storage” at www.cityofpaloalto.org/solar.
12. **Would you recommend solar tiles?**
   Please see our installers answer to this question live at
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxC5LuP9LaA at timestamp 1:07:20

13. **I heard that the government is giving out free solar panels if you live in certain state like CA. Is this true?**
   At this time, the City of Palo Alto Utilities is unaware of such programs. Utility scams are a rising concern. You can check with Utilities Program Services staff about the authenticity of programs by emailing us at utilityprograms@cityofpaloalto.org

**Battery Storage Questions**

14. **Do the installers install only the panels and battery or also help upgrade panels and EV charger?**
   Yes, they can help with panel upgrades and EV chargers.

15. **Is battery storage available from all the SunShares vendors in Palo Alto?**
   Yes, all the SunShares vendors offer batteries + solar. If you already have a solar system and want to add batteries, Solar Technologies and Infinity Energy are the 2 vendors who offer this option. All details & pricing are available at: https://www.bayareasunshares.org/products-and-pricing

16. **How do batteries affect exporting of electricity back to the grid?**
   Battery storage systems store excess electricity generated from your solar panels that would otherwise be exported back to the grid. This excess electricity can be stored for use during power outages, or later at night when your solar panels are not generating electricity.

   Having a battery storage system could reduce the costs of importing electricity from the grid at night. To get a solar and battery storage estimate for your home, log into MyCPAU.cityofpaloalto.org and click on “Launch Solar Calculator” on the home page.

17. **With the solar storage option, the stored power can also be used at night, not just during an outage, right?**
   Yes, battery storage systems allow the stored electricity to be used at night and during power outages.

18. **Can residents of Palo Alto go completely off grid and rid themselves of utility power?**
   Planning and Development Services (PDS) will evaluate projects on a case-by-case basis. Please contact PDS at building@cityofpaloalto.org for specific project questions.

19. **Does battery storage work with microinverters?**
   Yes! Please see our installers answer this question during the webinar by viewing the recording at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxC5LuP9LaA at timestamp 1:01:00

20. **Does Palo Alto participate now in the California home battery rebate program (SGIP)?**
   The Self Generation Incentive Program is a program funded by the Investor-Owned Utilities and the California Public Utilities Commission. is a ratepayer-funded program; that is, rates are raised slightly
to support the program. Palo Alto ratepayers do not contribute to this fund and hence do not benefit from it. Palo Alto electric retail rates are 30 – 40% lower than electric retail rates in PG&E territory, in part because Palo Alto avoids using ratepayer funds for programs that are not cost effective. Battery storage rebates are not cost effective from an overall customer perspective.

21. Does the solar estimator take into account nighttime usage of stored solar energy on a daily basis? The Solar Cost Estimator takes into account stored and exported solar energy on a monthly basis.

Battery Storage Questions

22. I know my panel needs upgrading. Should I do that independently from the solar system upgrade? All the vendors can support you if you need a new main panel. Please see our installers answer to this question at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxC5LuP9LaA at timestamp 1:05:50.

23. Will all 3 installers use the latest solar panel technology or older technology that has lower efficiency? You can see all SunShares product offerings here: https://www.bayareasunshares.org/products-andpricing. The vendors may be able to offer other panel modules than those listed here, but those are not guaranteed to be discounted as part of the SunShares program. Please contact a SunShares vendor to discuss the options that might be available for you.

24. Do any of the companies offer installation of Span smart panels with solar installations? You can see all SunShares product offerings here: https://www.bayareasunshares.org/products-andpricing The vendors may be able to offer other panel modules than those listed here, but those are not guaranteed to be discounted as part of the SunShares program.

Efficiency Questions

25. Is there a side by side comparison of costs for an apples-to-apples replacement of natural gas vs electric heat pump hot water heater? Heat pump water heaters are considered 3-4 times more efficient than electric resistance water heaters. The comparison is not apple to apples because the fuels are different, but heat pump water heaters are less expensive to operate in Palo Alto using our current utility rates and especially when paired with solar. Learn more about heat pump water heaters at www.cityofpaloalto.org/hpwh.

26. How much more power would we need to add heat pump house heating/cooling? Every home’s heating and cooling needs are different. Please contact the Home Efficiency Genie at 650-713-3411 to learn more about your home’s specific needs.

27. I thought my gas dryer was more efficient than an electric dryer - have electric dryers gotten that much more efficient?? Heat pump clothes dryers are very efficient, significantly more efficient than your gas dryers or an electric resistance dryer. You can learn more about heat pump dryers and their efficiency from Energy Star. Feel free to contact the Home Efficiency Genie if you have questions about clothes dryer efficiency at 650-713-3411.
28. My neighbor across the street indicates that his next door neighbor complains about the noise arising from heat exchanger. Any comments?
   Heat pump heating and cooling systems are quieter than traditional air conditioners. Per city codes, those units need to meet noise and clearance from property lines. Please contact the Home Efficiency Genie at 650-713-3411 for more info on heat pump systems.

Tax Credits Questions
This answer applies to the following questions about the Inflation Reduction Act’s tax credits:

Please speak to a tax professional to get guidance relevant to your specific situation. For an overview of solar and battery storage tax credits, please review the US Department of Energy’s Homeowner’s Guide to the Federal Tax Credit for Solar Photovoltaics.

29. I installed solar in 2016 and want to add storage for backup. Can I add that now and get tax credits?
30. Are there income limits for the federal credits? Is the tax rebate tied to income levels of the resident?
31. Just confirming if the panel upgrade is done in conjunction with the solar installation, the cost of the panel upgrade can be counted as part of the solar installation for the 30% tax credit?