

Neighborhood Solar Aggregation Pacifica

When Pete Shoemaker decided to put solar electric panels on his Pacifica home in 2003, pooling together friends and neighbors to get discounted prices seemed like a good business idea waiting to happen.

Shoemaker contacted a local installer and then gathered together an informal group. “They were friends in the town. I was very active in the green community so it was a natural fit. The experience was very positive, and there was nothing particularly special about it.”

All seven homeowners in Shoemaker’s group eventually installed solar. Shoemaker estimates that his group received a 10% discount. Since he first approached the vendor and organized the group he received an additional discount.

But Shoemaker cautions that price alone isn’t the only factor that people should consider when evaluating installers. Based on his experience, Shoemaker said it sometimes makes sense to pay more for a company that has a longer track record.

Aside from financial benefits, approaching installers with a group of friends and neighbors can simplify the process and introduce a level of objectivity to discussions, Shoemaker explained.

“One of the upshots that I didn’t realize was not only that I got better pricing, but by meeting a sales person with people I trust - they are all there asking questions and it gives you high confidence that you’ve seen all relevant factors. It is always nice to have an independent person who’s not there to sell you something.”



Shoemaker’s solar roof.



Pacifica solar neighbors

“People can certainly go to solar installers on their own,” Shoemaker said, but working together “is a community building thing. You’ll have people you can talk to; it doesn’t hurt at all.”



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