



Residential Solar Checklist

Step 1: Set a Goal

Solar installations vary in size (number of panels) or type (ground-mounted, rooftop, etc) and can be paired with other investments like battery storage or electric vehicle chargers. Setting a specific goal (e.g., lowering your energy bills, increasing resiliency to blackouts, etc.) can help you navigate the range of options available to you.

NOTE: Due to the way the electric grid is configured, homes with solar panels but without battery storage will still lose power during a blackout. This checklist exclusively covers solar panel installation; additional technologies may require additional permits or reviews.

Step 2: Find a Contractor

Finding the right contractor is critical to a successful project; several resources exist to help you make your decision. Make sure to shop around and compare quotes, reviews, and warranties.

- [Choosing a Solar Installer](#) (video)
- [Interstate Renewable Energy Council's Checklist for Residential Consumers Considering Solar](#)
- [Michigan Saves](#) list of contractors

Step 3: Weigh Costs and Benefits

Given the high upfront cost of solar installations, it is critical to ensure that your investment will save money in the long term. Several resources can improve the return on your investment.

- The federal government offers an [income tax credit](#) for 30% of the cost of a solar installation
- [Michigan Saves](#) offers financing for energy efficiency improvements, including solar installations
- While you still pay for energy you import from the grid (i.e., energy requirements beyond what your solar installation produces), you are credited for excess energy you export to the grid

NOTE: Other energy efficiency investments (weatherization, heat pump installation, etc) may generate larger savings. A [level 2 energy efficiency audit](#) can help you understand your options.

Step 4: Coordinate with DTE

Connecting to the grid to export excess energy requires coordinating with Dearborn's electricity provider, DTE Energy. Learn more about how you and your contractor can do so [here](#).

- DTE application fees range from \$50-\$500 depending on the size of the installation (most residential projects will cost \$50)
- DTE will notify you within 10 business days if your application is approved and provide the Interconnection Agreement for signature

Step 5: Contractor Applies for City Permits

Both building and electrical permits are currently required for solar installations. The City strongly discourages homeowners from applying directly for permits.



Building Permit Requirements:

- 3 copies of site plan
- Scaled construction documents
- Signed project contract
- Approvals from Home Owner Association or Historical District Review (if relevant)
- Administrative and Plan Review Fees (assuming no plan revisions): \$100 administrative fee + \$5 per \$1,000 of construction cost with a maximum of \$250
- Permit Cost (after plan review approval): \$100 + \$15 for each additional \$1,000 of construction value over \$2,000 up to \$1,000,000

Your contractor must have a valid State of Michigan Residential Builder or Residential Maintenance & Alteration license *and* be registered with the City of Dearborn. [Full fee schedule is available here.](#)

- Permit applications must be mailed to Permit & Plan Review Office, ATTN: Permits, 16901 Michigan Ave., Ste. 6, Dearborn, MI 48126
- Estimated turnaround is 10 business days
- To check the status of your permit, please call 313-943-2150

NOTE: Freestanding solar installations should be located in the rear yard and comply with requirements for accessory structures described in the [Zoning Ordinance](#).

NOTE: Additional documents may be required during city review. Property alterations may require an additional site plan review. Installations in public rights of way may also require additional permissions.

Electrical Permit Requirements:

- Approved building permit
- Plans are required for all building types and shall be prepared by or under the direct supervision of an architect or engineer licensed pursuant to Act. No. 299 or Public Act of 1980, as amended, and shall bear that architect's or engineer's signature and seal.
 - Plans are not required for one- and two-family dwellings containing not more than 3,500 square feet of building area
- Contractor must have a valid State of Michigan electrical license *and* be registered with the City of Dearborn.
- Residential fees (assuming no plan revisions): \$100 + at least \$80 depending on scope of work
- Permit applications must be mailed to Permit & Plan Review Office, Ste. 6 ATTN: Permits, 16901 Michigan Ave., Dearborn, MI 48126
- Estimated turnaround is 10 business days
- To check the status of your permit, please call 313-943-2150

NOTE: All permits expire six (6) months after date of issue. Failure to start the work authorized by a permit within this six-month period renders the permit invalid and a new permit must be obtained. Once work begins, noticeable progress must continue until completion. All work must be completed within eighteen (18) months of a permit issue date.

City of Dearborn
16901 Michigan Avenue
Dearborn, MI 48126
313-943-2150
dearborn.gov



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Step 6: Installation

Contractor installs your solar installation.

Step 7: Inspections

To ensure the safety of your new installation, the City then DTE must both inspect the system.

City Inspection:

- A residential solar PV system requires a minimum of three inspections:
 - Rough electrical inspection after the installation of any electrical equipment
 - Final electrical inspection before any equipment is turned on
 - Final building inspection after all work is completed
- An inspection must take place within six months of the permit issuance or a previous inspection.
- Inspections are scheduled using Automated Inspection Scheduling System at (313) 943-2400
- Use our [Rooftop Solar Residential Inspection Checklist](#) to minimize re-inspections and delays

NOTE: Additional inspections may be required depending on the scope of work.

DTE Inspection:

- DTE will require an approved electrical inspection sticker including the address, scope of work, date of approval, permit number, and inspector's signature
- More information about DTE's inspection criteria is available on [their website](#).

Step 8: Turn on the System and Enjoy the Savings!