

Detroit Solar Toolkit

Solar FAQs



Q. Do we get enough sunshine in Michigan for solar to work?

A. Yes, our solar daylight hours are over four hours when averaged for the entire year.

Q. Can I still obtain a permit for solar if I have blight violations?

A. No.

Q. Can I mount solar panels on my garage?

A. Yes, that would be considered under Accessory Use Zoning.

Q. Where do you go online to submit permits for the City of Detroit?

A. ePlans is name of the online submission portal. <https://detroitmi.gov/departments/buildings-safety-engineering-and-environmental-department/building-permit-information/electronic-plan-review-eplans-building-permits>

Q. How should I handle a neighbors' branches growing over my yard, shading my solar panels?

A. Michigan does not recognize any common law rights to sunlight. Therefore, you have no right to solar access unless negotiated privately or by a state or local law.

Q. Do I need a mechanical permit for installing solar panels on my roof?

A. No. But an electrical permit is one of the requirements.

Q. How far from the property line do my solar panels need to be for zoning requirements?

A. There are no special requirements for solar energy systems.

Q. All of my plans have been submitted and approved by DTE, do I still need to deal with Detroit permits?

A. Yes, this is a safety and health issue for all residents so that EMS or firefighters can approach homes with awareness of electrical hazard potential.

Q. Can I submit all of my paperwork for DTE and City of Detroit online?

A. Yes.

Q. I already installed my PV array, Should I still file an interconnection with DTE and permits to the City of Detroit?

A. Yes, if you would like any net-metering credits for solar energy you are generating beyond your daily consumption. (The current net-metering option will only be available for interconnection applications filed before rate case decision sometime after April and before June 2019. If you are not connecting through the DTE smart meter, then you would not need to file with DTE. The City of Detroit could potentially cite you with a code violation.

Q. Can I legally share my electricity with my next door neighbor?

A. No. Current Michigan law will not permit you to transport over parcel boundaries to another entity.

Q. Can I install solar panels in the empty lot that I own next to me?

A. Yes, that system would be considered an accessory use for the empty lot.

Q. I'm a developer looking to install solar on some empty lots next to different homes I own in Detroit. Do I need to get permits for each system or can I just submit one package for them all together?

A. Each house is considered a separate system so they will all require individual review but you could submit all at the same time.

Q. Will my solar PV system still work if the power goes out in my area?

A. No. Solar PV systems are set up to shut down but a "hybrid inverter system" design can operate in "island mode" and allow you to be completely removed from the grid while still feeding power to your secondary/backup electrical panel.

Q. Do I still have to pay DTE even if I only use my own solar generated electricity and none of theirs?

A. After May 2019, you will be required to pay a monthly service connection fee despite not using any electricity through the DTE meter.