

Why Solar? Why Now?

Working with Revision Energy allows us to take advantage of the federal Solar Investment Tax credit, which is not directly available to a non-profit like the Gathering Place. Under our Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) Revision sells us all the energy produced by panels installed on our roof. After six years, we have the option to buy the panels or to continue the PPA. The purchase price (also called the buyout price) depends upon when we exercise the option to buy the panels. Solar investors like Revision use the tax credit to lower the cost of new solar installations for non-profits like us.

Our electricity source will be reliable. Central Maine Power will provide supplemental power at night, during cloudy days and in the winter months when the panels do not produce as much power because of the lower angles of the sun. Our power meter will be bidirectional. That means it can meter the power flowing into our building on a day when we need supplemental power and it can meter power flowing out of our building on a day when our panels produce more power than we need. By law, Central Maine Power must offer the Gathering Place a Net Energy Billing Agreement. With Net Energy Billing (sometimes called Net Metering), CMP tracks any excess energy production (measured in kiloWatt-hours or kWh) that go out from the Gathering Place on bright days. When we use more kWh than we produce in a given month, we are allowed to claim a credit based on previously produced excess. With Net Energy Billing we can pay bills that depend on our average energy consumption over a longer period of time, rather than on the instantaneous energy flow.

Laws in Maine are changing, but the Gathering Place was able to enter our contracts before the change and expects to benefit from net metering for many years to come. Over the years, our solar panels will save lots of money compared to the direct purchase of electricity from Central Maine Power. Our heating and cooling is provided by energy efficient heat pumps, so we are using resources wisely by using solar panels as a sustainable energy source.