

Buying Green Electricity for Your Home

by the Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (MC-FACS)

Combat climate change by switching your electricity supply at your home, business, and place of worship to “green” electricity. Below is a quick reference. Details / FAQs follow the table about why MC-FACS selected these vendors.

Note – Prices change frequently – **Check the websites of each company for its current rate.**

Supplier Products URL	Price*	Considerations
AEP Energy <i>ECO-Advantage 100% Renewable Fixed Price Offer</i> (100% Wind) https://enroll.aepenergy.com/acquisition/zipcode	7.05 cents/kWh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large multistate utility • 12-month contract • Cancel at any time, for any reason, without penalty. • Better Business Bureau rating = A+ • When on AEP’s website, be sure to pick the plan with the wind turbine symbol.
Groundswell/WGL Energy Services <i>100% National Wind Power</i> (100% Wind) https://one.wglenergy.com/cmp/groundswell/	8.40 cents/kWh (12-month) 8.80 cents/kWh (24-month)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local, renewable energy non-profit • Has supply agreement with WGL Energy Services, an affiliate of Washington Gas Light. • 12-month or 24-month contracts • Cancellation fee is \$10 for each month remaining on the contract. • Better Business Bureau Rating = A+
<p>*For Pepco Maryland customers; different prices apply for BGE or Potomac Edison customers. Compare price to Pepco’s weighted average price of electricity (for October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020) of 7.75 cents/kWh. Pepco’s electricity is about 3% wind and solar; the rest is mostly coal, natural gas, and nuclear. The rates in this table would result in a savings of \$7.04 (in the case of AEP) or add either \$6.53 or \$10.55 (in the case of Groundswell’s two options) to the average monthly electric bill of \$133.68 for a residence in Maryland.</p>		

About Recommended Suppliers of Renewable Electricity

Many suppliers offer green electricity for purchase by Montgomery County residents, but their offerings can be difficult to compare. The MC-FACS Clean Electrons subgroup reviewed offerings in mid-2018 from all known suppliers for Montgomery County, and updated this information in April 2020. It recommends the suppliers listed in the above table for anyone considering making the switch to green electricity. Terms and facts briefly mentioned in the “Considerations” column are explained below in “What to Consider in Buying Green Electricity.”

Supporting Community Solar Projects

A complementary strategy to switching to the suppliers in the above table is to support the development of solar generation facilities in Maryland through community solar projects. Maryland has a program that allows you to support such projects and receive a credit on your monthly electricity bill for the amount of electricity that you support from a given community solar project. The first such project in the Pepco service area, organized by Neighborhood Sun -- see below table, had a subscription rate for its power that was 5% less than the Pepco rate, resulting in an overall savings on a subscriber’s utility spending. As a legal matter, you are not buying the solar power generated by the facility itself, but you are funding development of the generation facility while saving money overall. You can combine this support with

buying your personal renewable energy through one of the suppliers in the first table in this guide. Links to information on companies and groups developing community solar projects in Maryland open to all Pepco customers are provided in the following table. MC-FACS recommends Neighborhood Sun, although it does not currently have any projects open to Pepco customers (but it does for Montgomery County residents who are in BGE’s service territory). The previous version of this guide recommended Groundswell, but it does not currently have any open projects in Maryland. The MC-FACS Clean Electrons subgroup does not have experience with CleanChoice Energy for this community solar type of supply. Another company, Arcadia Power, has community solar projects, but they are open only to persons who agree to buy all their electricity from Arcadia Power (whose electricity options are not Green-e certified), so it is not recommended. Solar United Neighbors of Maryland maintains a listing of current and future community solar projects and other information at <https://cs.solarunitedneighbors.org/>.

Community Solar Organizer	Web Address
Neighborhood Sun (currently only for BGE customers in Montgomery County; new PEPCO-area project focused on low- and middle-income residents expected in July 2020)	https://neighborhoodsun.solar
CleanChoice Energy	https://go.cleancchoiceenergy.com/solar-in-md-monarch/

Why Green Electricity?

An important, easy way to combat global warming is to switch your electricity supply to “green” electricity (generated from wind- and solar-powered sources, both of which do not emit carbon dioxide). Electricity generation is the second largest source of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, after the transportation sector. Electricity sold by Pepco in Maryland from July 2018 to June 2019 was generated mostly by coal (26.2%), natural gas (33.6%), and nuclear (34.2%) – only 3.1% came from wind and solar. Scientists tell us we need to switch to clean electricity without delay. By buying electricity from wind and solar power, and/or by supporting community solar power projects, you are directly developing the stronger U.S. green electricity industry essential for that transition.

What to Consider in Buying Green Electricity

Under Maryland law, you can choose a supplier for your electricity other than Pepco (or BG&E or Potomac Edison if you live in the part of Montgomery County that they serve). Your monthly electric bill will then have one payment with two parts – the first part to Pepco/BG&E/Potomac Edison as the distributor, to maintain the electric wires in your neighborhood; and a second part for your “electric supply” that goes to the supplier that you choose. The process of signing up for a supplier is done online or by telephone and is simple – you will need to check your electrical bill to provide your current utility account number as part of the sign-up process.

The cost of green electricity is slightly higher than what Pepco/BG&E/Potomac Edison will charge for the “electric supply” part of your bill. For that reason, it is important to know that the green electricity you are paying extra for is really “green.” EPA recommends buying green electricity from suppliers that have undergone third-party validation – in the United States, the non-profit organization that provides that independent check is known as “Green-e.” **All the options in the first table are “Green-e” certified.**

When you sign up for a green electricity option, you will sign a fixed-price contract for a specific term (typically between 1 and 3 years). Some suppliers make you pay a penalty if you want to switch to another source of electricity before the contract term is up. If you want the flexibility to switch based on finding a better price, then you may want to pay attention to termination fees and consider a supplier that allows easy cancellation.

There are other differences among the types of suppliers in the marketplace that may be important to you. Some suppliers of green electricity are large multi-state utilities. They may have lower prices for green electricity. Others are smaller, more local firms that are explicitly organized to operate on socially responsible business principles in addition to making a profit (“B Corporations”), or that have been certified for environmentally responsible business practices (for example, through the Montgomery County Green Business Certification Program). Their prices may be higher, but if you

want your electricity purchase to support such socially beneficial goals, then you may want to consider this in choosing a clean electricity supplier.

Shortly before the end of your contract, your green electricity supplier must inform you of your options going forward. If you do nothing at that point, some suppliers will automatically renew you for another fixed term at a different fixed rate that may be higher. Some will put you on a variable rate that changes from month to month, which will likely also be higher. Some will just return you to Pepco/BG&E/Potomac Edison as your supplier, taking you off the 100% wind/solar program. It is important to pay attention to your options at the end of your contract term (be it 1 year from now or 3 years from now), so that you make a choice at that point that continues to provide you with the type of green electricity, cost, and other factors that you desire.

What This Guide Covers and What It Doesn't

This guide is for all residents of Montgomery County regardless of local utility company. It provides information on how to buy green electricity from companies that provide wind and solar energy (see the first table). It also provides information on subscribing to a community solar project, which can save you money on your overall electricity expenses (see the second table). It does NOT cover companies that install solar panels on your rooftop; the MC-FACS Clean Electrons subgroup recommends that as a third step but does not cover it in this guide. An excellent source of help on rooftop solar is the non-profit Solar United Neighbors of Maryland, which organizes cooperative purchases and installation of solar panels for [residents in Montgomery County](#).

About MC-FACS

MC-FACS represents a diverse community of faiths, whose voices are valuable in the conversation on climate change, and whose faith-based actions draw on a deep well of love for each other and the planet we share.

The MC-FACS network is inclusive and open to all faith and spiritual groups, ethnicities, and nationalities. We currently have members from Buddhist, Catholic, Earth-based, Hindu, Humanist, Islamic, Jewish, Protestant, Sikh, Society of Friends, Unitarian Universalist, and other traditions. MC-FACS also works in partnership with the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions of Northern Virginia, Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA), Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, and several secular organizations.

MC-FACS can provide speakers to any group on switching to green energy.

To join MC-FACS, sign up for announcements here:

<https://groups.google.com/forum#!forum/mcfacs>

click "Apply for membership"

To learn more about MC-FACS check out our Facebook page/About

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/MCFACS>

To help spread the word on green electricity and speakers, contact:

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For congregations interested in exploring energy upgrades, clean energy contracts, or solar panels for their facilities, Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA) can provide free advice and consultation. It maintains a comprehensive map of solar congregations, has a downloadable guide to going solar for congregations, and can advise on financing options for congregational facilities. Your congregation can find out more at: <https://ipldmv.org/go-green/>.