



THE ECONOMICS OF LOAD DEFECTION

HOW GRID-CONNECTED SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY SYSTEMS WILL COMPETE WITH TRADITIONAL ELECTRIC SERVICE, WHY IT MATTERS, AND POSSIBLE PATHS FORWARD

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A photograph of a weathered wooden building with a window and an electrical meter. The window has peeling white paint and is set in a wooden frame. To the right of the window is a rusted metal electrical meter mounted on a wooden shingle wall. The meter has a circular dial with numbers and a small window. A white pipe runs vertically through the meter. At the bottom of the image, there are green plants with small white flowers.

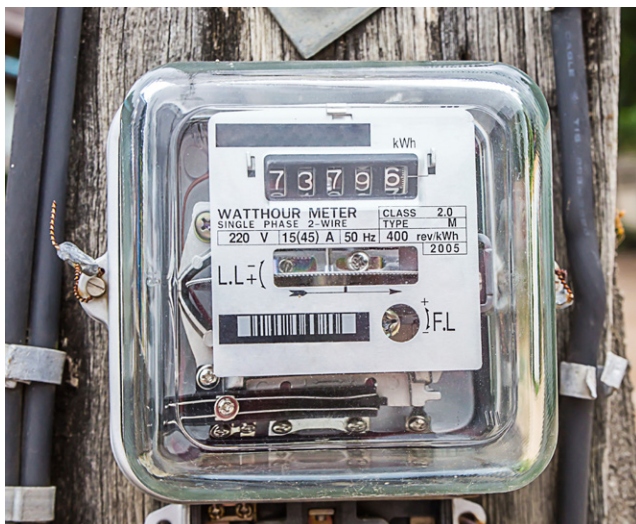
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXEC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When *Greentech Media* published its annually updated list of cleantech buzzwords in December, its list for 2014 included “grid defection.”¹ Our February 2014 analysis *The Economics of Grid Defection* was a central piece of that conversation. We found that in the coming years and decades—and certainly within the economic life of new investments in conventional generation—large numbers of residential and commercial customers alike will find it economical to defect from their utilities and the electricity grid and supply themselves with power from solar-plus-battery systems. This finding foretold a future in which customers will have a choice to either cost-effectively self-generate without the grid or be a traditional customer with the grid.

While the presence of such customer choice has important implications, the number of customers who would actually choose to defect is probably small. The far more likely scenario is customer investment in *grid-connected* solar-plus-battery systems. Since such systems would benefit from grid resources, they could be more optimally sized, thus making them smaller, less expensive, economic for more customers sooner, and adopted faster. More specifically how system configurations and economics would evolve over time, and what magnitude of customers, load, and revenue that could represent, are the focus of this analysis.



ANALYSIS

In particular, we sought to answer two core questions:

- 1. *Lowest-Cost Economics:*** When grid-connected customers have the option to source their entire load either from a) the grid, b) a solar-plus-battery system, or c) some combination of the grid, solar PV, and batteries, how does that configuration change over time based on lowest-cost economics for the customer? And how do the relative contributions of grid- and self-sourced electricity change over time to meet customer load?
- 2. *Implications:*** What are the potential implications for utilities, third-party solar and battery providers, financiers/investors, customers, and other electricity system stakeholders? And what opportunities might be found in grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems?

We evaluated the economics through 2050 for a median commercial and residential customer in five cities that represent a diversity of electricity pricing and solar resource intensity. We modeled forecasts for grid only, grid-plus-solar, and grid-plus-solar-plus-battery configurations to find the lowest-cost option over time (based on systems’ per-kWh levelized cost of energy equivalent). We also examined the relative contributions of grid- and self-supplied electricity for the lowest-cost option over time. For solar and solar-plus-battery configurations, we modeled largely self-consuming systems with no export compensation (i.e., optimized for behind-the-meter operation). Although export compensation via bill credits or direct payments (e.g., net energy metering, feed-in tariff, avoided fuel cost compensation) is today present in most geographies and would improve the economics presented here, we assumed no bill credit or direct compensation for exports as a conservatism to understand the economic implications in the most extreme case.

FINDINGS

Our analysis yields several significant findings:

Solar-plus-Battery Systems Rapidly Become Cost Effective

The economically optimal system configuration from the customer’s perspective evolves over time, from grid only in the near term, to grid-plus-solar, to grid-plus-solar-plus-batteries in the longer term. Compared to the date of economic parity for the

off-grid solar-plus-battery systems we modeled in *The Economics of Grid Defection*, the grid-connected systems of this analysis become economic for customers much sooner, with substantial utility load loss well within the economic life and cost recovery period for major assets. Smaller solar-only systems are economic today in three of our five geographies, and will be so for all geographies within a decade. New customers will find solar-plus-battery systems configurations most economic in three of our geographies within the next 10–15 years.

FIGURE ES1:
ECONOMICALLY OPTIMAL SYSTEM CONFIGURATION
RESIDENTIAL

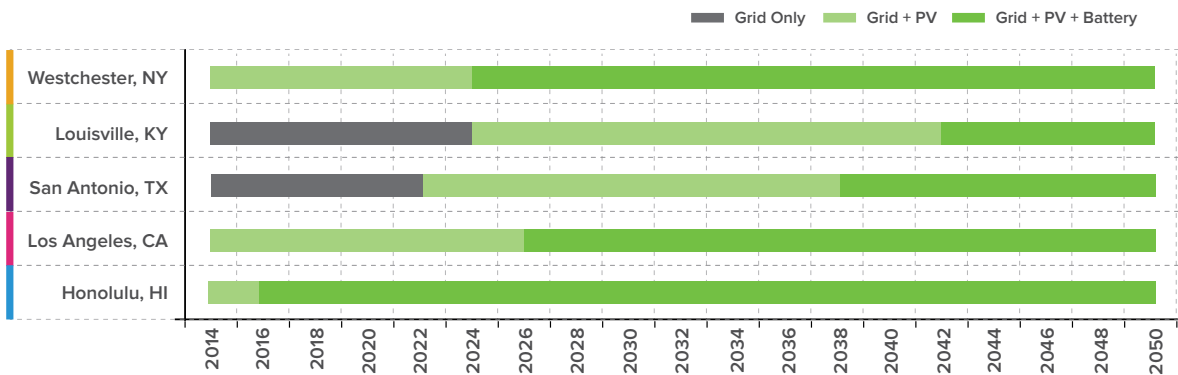
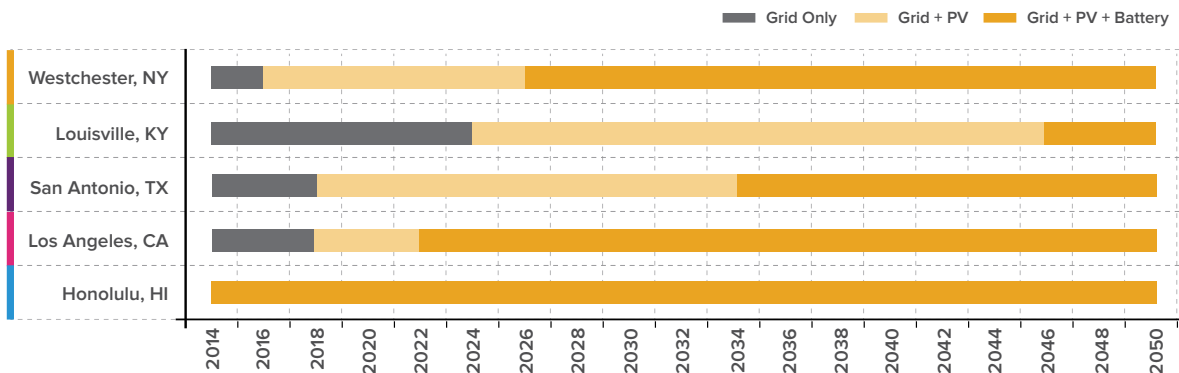


FIGURE ES2:
ECONOMICALLY OPTIMAL SYSTEM CONFIGURATION
COMMERCIAL



Solar PV Supplants the Grid Supplying the Majority of Customers' Electricity

The relative contributions of the grid and customers' solar and solar-plus-battery systems evolves over time. Initially the grid supplies a majority of a customer's electricity needs. Over time, as retail electricity prices from the grid increase and solar and battery costs decrease, customers logically reduce their grid purchases until the

grid takes a backup-only role. Meanwhile, solar-plus-battery systems eventually provide the majority of customers' electricity. For example, in Westchester County, NY, our analysis shows the grid's contribution shrinking from 100% today for commercial customers to ~25% by around 2030 to less than 5% by 2050. Inversely, solar PV's contribution rises significantly to make up the difference.

FIGURE ES3:
ECONOMICALLY OPTIMAL GENERATION MIX
RESIDENTIAL

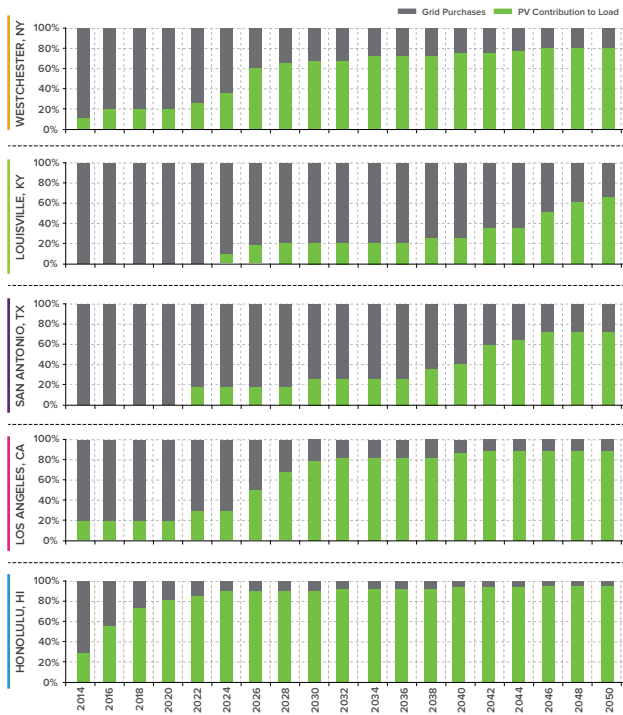
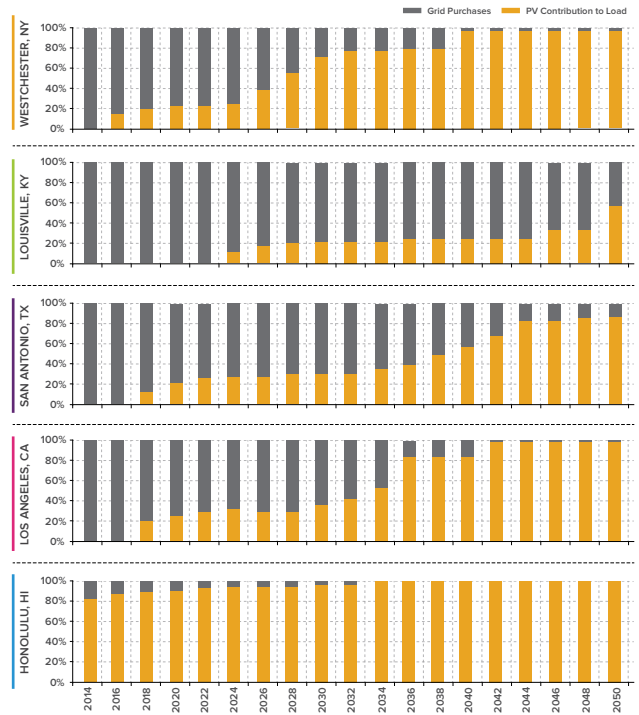


FIGURE ES4:
ECONOMICALLY OPTIMAL GENERATION MIX
COMMERCIAL



Artur Bogacki/Shutterstock.com

Potentially Large kWh Defection Could Undermine Revenue for Grid Investment Under Current Rate Structure and Business Models

Between 2010 and 2030, the grid will require up to an estimated \$2 trillion in investment, or about \$100 billion per year.² Currently those costs are to be recovered through revenue from energy sales. If even a small fraction of the kWh sales supporting that investment and revenue is lost, it will likely have a large impact on system economics.³ Notably, our analysis shows that grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems become economic for large numbers of customers, and those systems have the potential to supply greater and greater portions of customers' electricity. Assuming customer adoption follows optimal economics, the magnitude of potential kWh defection from the grid is large.

For example, in the Northeast U.S., by 2030—15 years away—maximum possible kWh sales erosion could be:

Residential

- ~58 million MWh annually (50% of utility residential kWh sales)
- 9.6 million customers
- ~\$15 billion in revenue

Commercial

- ~83 million MWh (60% of utility commercial kWh sales)
- 1.9 million customers
- ~\$19 billion in revenue

FIGURE ES5:
NORTHEAST POTENTIAL CUSTOMER DEFECTION
RESIDENTIAL

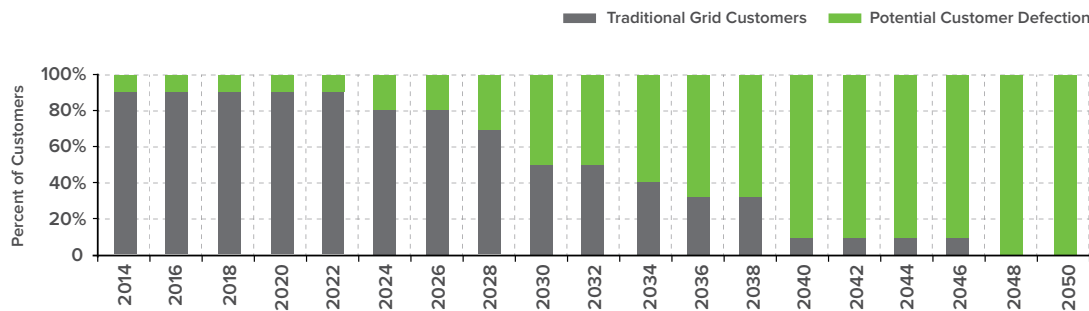


FIGURE ES6:
NORTHEAST POTENTIAL CUSTOMER DEFECTION
COMMERCIAL

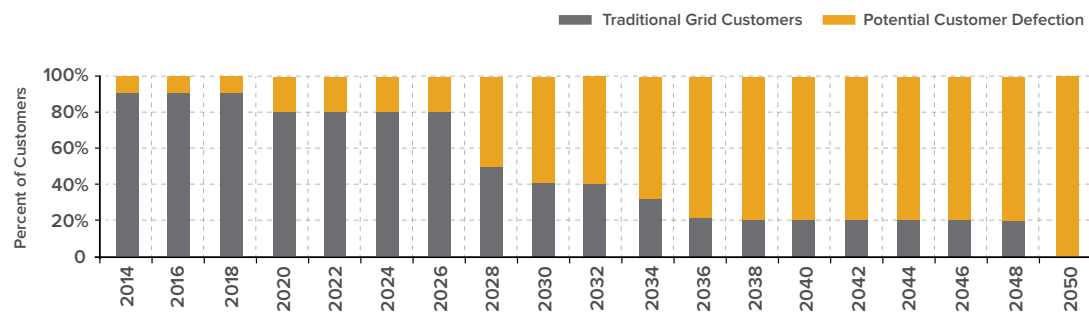


FIGURE ES7:
NORTHEAST POTENTIAL LOAD DEFECTION
RESIDENTIAL

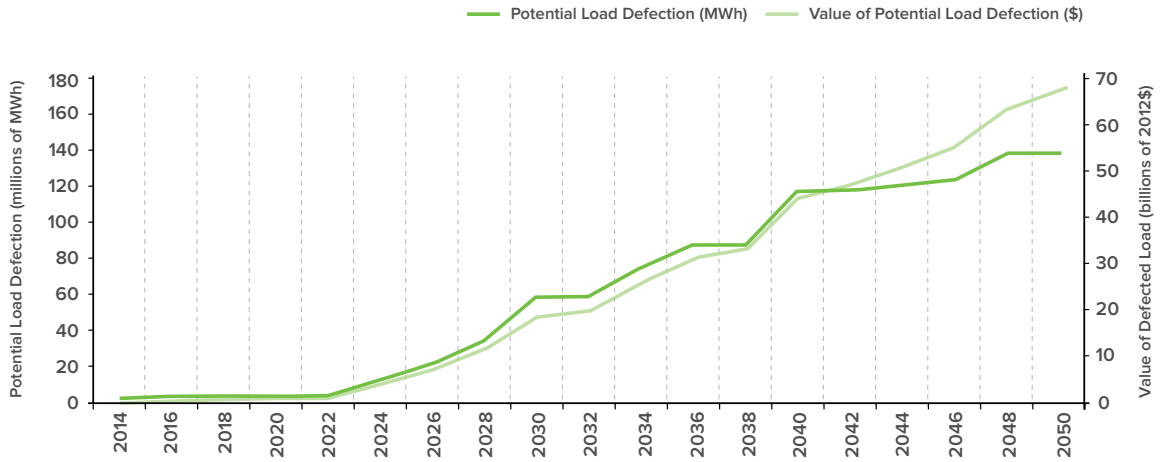
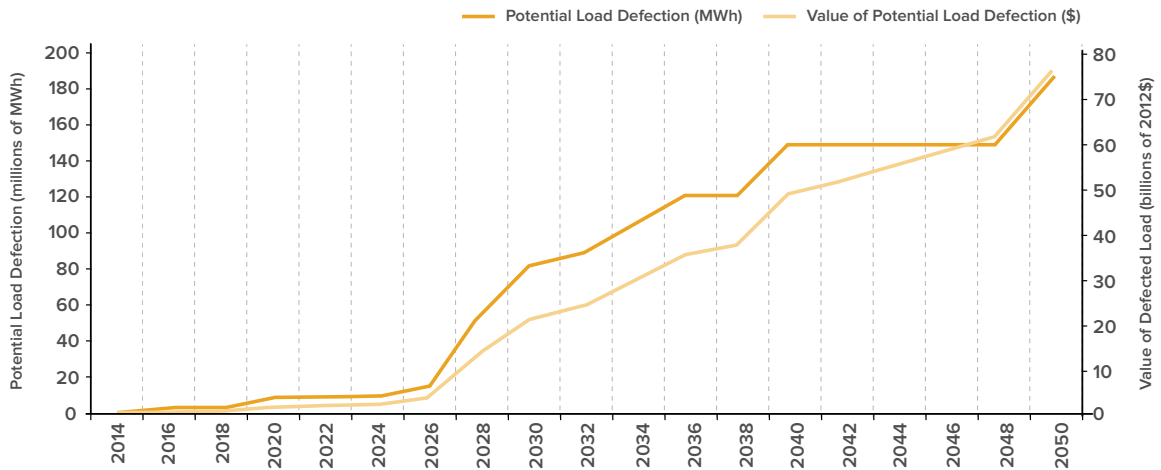


FIGURE ES8:
NORTHEAST POTENTIAL LOAD DEFECTION
COMMERCIAL



Eliminating Net Metering Only Delays kWh Loss; Fixed Charges Don't "Fix" the Problem

Net energy metering (NEM) is a contentious yet prevalent policy that has successfully supported distributed solar PV's growth in the U.S. Some argue that it hastens load loss from the grid (net-metered solar PV customers quickly reach effectively zero net grid purchases) and that abolishing net metering will preserve grid load. Our findings suggest that eliminating net metering merely delays inevitable significant load loss. Grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems will gradually but ultimately cause a near-total load loss even in net metering's absence. However, fixed charges—which some utilities have recently proposed—don't 'fix' the problem. Similar to our "with" and "without" NEM scenarios, residential fixed charges would likely alter (i.e., delay) the economics for grid-connected solar and solar-plus-battery systems, but likely wouldn't alter the ultimate load defection outcome. Customers might instead wait until economics and other factors reach a tipping point threshold and more dramatically "jump" from grid dependence to off-grid solar-plus-battery systems that offer better economics for electric service.

FIGURE ES9:
NET GRID PURCHASES WITH AND WITHOUT NET METERING
RESIDENTIAL - WESTCHESTER, NY

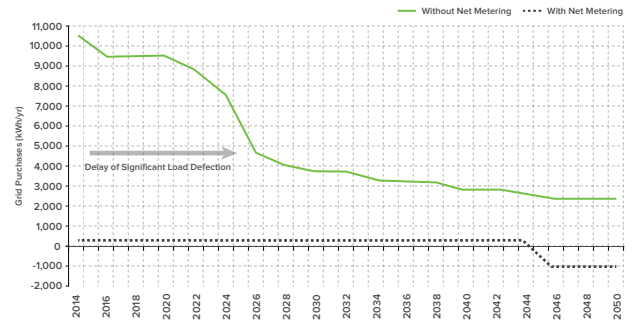
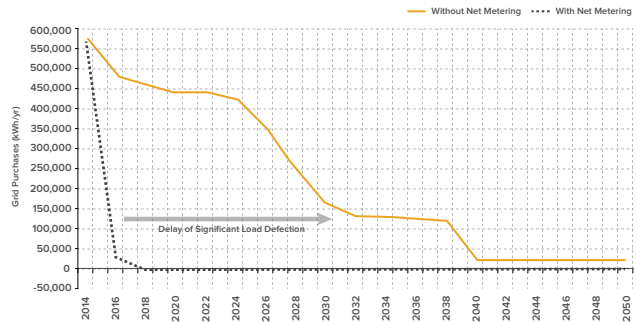


FIGURE ES10:
NET GRID PURCHASES WITH AND WITHOUT NET METERING
COMMERCIAL - WESTCHESTER, NY

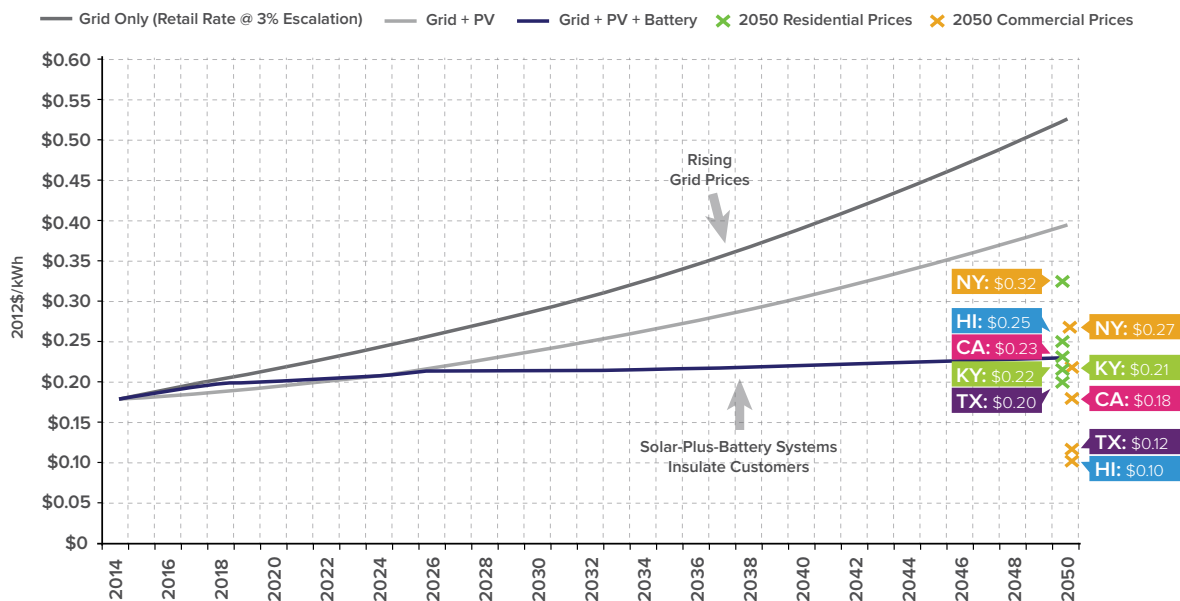


Peak Price for Individual Customers

Investing in their lowest-cost option for electric service through grid-connected solar and solar-plus-battery systems can effectively cap customers' electricity costs. No matter how expensive retail electricity prices get in the future, the levelized cost for grid-connected solar and solar-plus-battery systems keeps customers' bills at or below a 'peak price,' in some cases yielding a significant savings on their monthly utility bill. Peak per-kWh price stabilizes at \$0.10–\$0.30 for commercial customers and \$0.20–\$0.35 for residential customers across our geographies, regardless of how expensive grid-supplied retail electricity gets in the future. For example, for a median residential customer in Westchester County, NY, the average monthly electricity bill would reach \$357 for grid electricity by 2030 based on forecasts, while peak price through adding a solar-plus-battery system would be just \$268 per month. (Grid-facing costs such as T&D maintenance and central generation, as well as costs for grid-dependent customers who can't or don't invest in solar-plus-battery systems, are important related issues beyond the scope of this analysis.)



FIGURE ES11:
PEAK PRICE



IMPLICATIONS

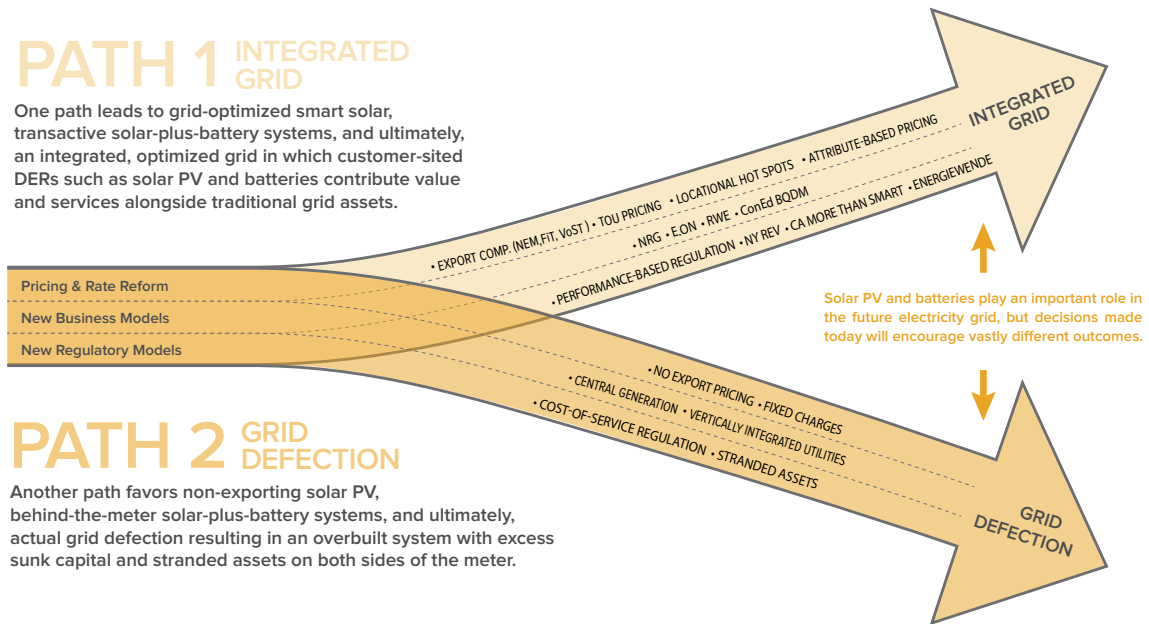
Although our findings show that utilities' kWh sales loss to grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems could be very large, customer adoption of these systems also presents a number of opportunities. Unlike the off-grid systems we modeled in *The Economics of Grid Defection*, where customers left the grid entirely, the grid-connected customers of this analysis crucially *do maintain their grid connection* assuming that potential fixed charges and other changes to retail electricity price rate structures don't become so onerous as to encourage customer grid defection. This means that although they could represent significant load loss, customers' grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems *can potentially provide benefits, services, and values back to the grid*, especially if those value flows are monetized with new rate structures, business models, and regulatory frameworks.

The impact on various electricity-system market participants and other stakeholders will be profound and comes with a number of considerations:

- **For owners and operators of central generation and transmission** (such as independent power producers and merchant power plants), our findings are likely bad news. Our analysis predicts that solar-plus-battery systems will accelerate the decline of sales from central generation, reduce peak price spikes in deregulated markets, and also encroach on markets for ancillary services. There is a real risk of stranded assets. Existing assets still within their economic life and cost recovery period will serve a smaller and smaller remaining load, requiring price increases to cover costs and returns. Meanwhile, assets in the planning pipeline won't see the future demand to justify their capacity and generation output.
- **For vertically-integrated utilities**, these systems will strain current business models, and adjustments will be necessary to fully capitalize on the rising adoption of solar PV and batteries. Distribution utilities whose revenue depends on volumetric sales of electricity (e.g., that are not decoupled) will likely face similar challenges.
- **For customers that invest in solar PV and solar-plus-battery systems**, the emergence of choice is good news. Our analysis suggests that, with smart solar-plus-battery investments, customers could see peak pricing emerge, insulating themselves from rising prices for grid-supplied electricity. Meanwhile, traditional grid-supplied customers and completely defected (i.e., off-grid) customers both had much higher pricing from rising retail prices and larger, more expensive stand-alone solar-plus-battery systems, respectively.
- **For distribution grid operators** (such as wires-only utilities), the emergence of distributed solar PV and batteries is good news: customers with solar and battery systems should be able to provide value to the distribution grid including upgrade deferrals, congestion relief, and ancillary services. However, new pricing, regulatory, and business models need to emerge and mature to capitalize fully on these opportunities.



FIGURE ES12:
POSSIBLE TRAJECTORIES FOR ELECTRICITY GRID EVOLUTION



The electricity system is at a metaphorical fork in the road.

Down one path are pricing structures, business models, and regulatory environments that favor non-exporting solar and solar-plus-battery systems. When economic and other conditions reach the right tipping point, this trajectory favors true grid defection. In the meantime, an upward price spiral based on stranded assets serving a diminishing load will make solar-plus-battery adoption increasingly attractive for customers who can, and lead to untenably high pricing for customers who remain on the grid, including low- and fixed-income customers who would bear a disproportionate burden of escalated retail electricity pricing. In this future, both grid and customer-side resources are overbuilt and underutilized, leaving excess capital on both sides of the meter.

Down another path are pricing structures, business models, and regulatory environments in which distributed energy resources such as solar PV and batteries—and their inherent benefits and costs—are appropriately valued as part of an integrated grid. Solar PV and batteries can potentially lower system-wide costs while contributing to the foundation of a reliable, resilient, affordable, low-carbon grid of the future in which customers are empowered with choice. In this future, grid and customer-side resources work together as part of an integrated grid with far more efficient deployment of capital and physical assets.

These two pathways are not set in stone, and there is some room to navigate within their boundaries. But decisions made today will set us on a trajectory from which it will be more difficult to course correct in the future. The time frame for making such decisions with long-lasting implications for the future grid is relatively short, and is shorter and more urgent for some geographies than others.

Three distinct market phases define the window's time frame:

- **Phase 1: An Opportunity to Experiment**
In phase 1, the grid alone offers customers the cheapest option for electric service. Solar-plus-battery systems come at a cost premium, so early adopters and technology providers will experiment with systems to leverage secondary values such as reliability. This phase gives utilities and regulators the longest runway to consider how to best capture the opportunities of grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems.
- **Phase 2: An Opportunity to Integrate**
In phase 2, solar-plus-battery systems become economic relative to grid-supplied electricity. With more favorable economics for greater customer adoption, this is an ideal time for systems to create and share value between individual customers and the grid.
- **Phase 3: An Opportunity to Coordinate**
In phase 3, retail electric pricing has escalated enough and solar-plus-battery system costs have declined enough that the latter becomes economic to serve a customer's entire load and grid defection becomes a viable choice. Such compelling customer-facing economics make it especially urgent for utilities and regulators to adapt to this new market environment.

The electricity industry needs to act quickly on three fronts:

- **Evolved pricing and rate structures:** Today's rate structures are overly simplistic for the 21st century needs of the grid. Broadly, pricing needs to evolve in three critical ways:
 1. *Locational*, allowing some electric-grid equivalent of congestion pricing or incentives
 2. *Temporal*, allowing for continued evolution of time-of-use pricing and real-time pricing
- 3. *Attribute-based*, breaking apart energy, capacity, ancillary services, and other service components
- **New business models:** Current business models need to evolve from the old paradigm of centralized generation and the unidirectional use of the grid (i.e., one-way electron flow from generators to consumers) to the emerging reality of cost-competitive DERs such as solar PV and batteries (i.e., grid-connected customers with behind-the-meter DERs and a two-way flow of electrons, services, and value across the meter). Creating a sustainable long-term DER market—considering the near and present opportunity of solar PV and batteries but inclusive of a much broader suite of DER technologies—will require aligning the interests of utilities, DER companies, technology providers, and customers. Aligning those interests requires that the value of DERs be recognized and shared on both sides of the meter.
- **New regulatory models:** Regulatory reform will be necessary for the electricity system to effectively incorporate new customer-sited technologies like solar and batteries as resources into the grid. Three critical outputs of these reforms are required to sensibly guide the adoption of solar-plus-battery systems in particular and DERs in general: 1) maintain and enhance fair and equal customer access to DERs, 2) recognize, quantify, and appropriately monetize both the benefits and costs that DERs such as solar PV and batteries can create, and 3) preserve equitable treatment of all customers, including those that do not invest in DERs and remain solely grid dependent.



INTRODUCTION

01

INTRODUCTION

THE ELECTRICITY GRID IS EVOLVING

The electric industry in the United States is facing the greatest disruption in the grid's century-long history. The incumbent model of central thermal generation and one-way electricity distribution to end-use customers out on the grid's distribution edge is proving increasingly outdated. Rapidly growing adoption of customer-sited distributed energy resources (DERs) such as rooftop solar, battery energy storage, micro combined heat and power (CHP), electric vehicles, and smart thermostats that can communicate with and respond to grid signals are fundamentally changing the electric grid's landscape.

Utilities and other transmission and distribution grid electricity system stakeholders (e.g., ISOs, RTOs, etc.) have, to date, done an admirable job maintaining reliable, cost-effective electric service. But regulatory mandates, declining costs of distributed technologies, climate change, shifting customer preferences, and other motivating factors are driving the electric grid's evolution toward even more affordable, more reliable, more resilient, and lower carbon electric service, all while accounting for a new era of choice and empowerment with how individual customers produce and use electricity. DERs figure centrally in that evolution.



DISTRIBUTED SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY SYSTEMS ARE HAVING A PARTICULARLY ACUTE IMPACT

- **Rapid cost reductions with game-changing functionality:** Their continuing cost declines and unique operational characteristics make them particularly poised to gain favor among residential and commercial customers alike—and when grid connected, to provide value to the grid and society as well, and not just to the individual customer.
- **Accelerating commercial application and innovation:** Growing numbers of third-party providers are already offering such technology pairings to commercial customers to smooth load curves and lessen demand charges, while solar-plus-battery systems are also becoming increasingly appealing among early-adopter residential customers, especially in places such as the Northeast where the memory of blackouts after storms like Hurricane Sandy are still fresh.⁴

Until recently, the general media and industry experts both commonly claimed “electricity cannot be stored economically.” Our analysis suggests that the fast-dropping costs of batteries, driven by their vast deployment in non-energy sectors (e.g., electronics, telecommunications, and automotive transportation) are showing otherwise.

Though not yet mainstream, solar-plus-battery systems are coming soon. Our February 2014 *The Economics of Grid Defection* report found that off-grid solar-plus-battery systems will reach grid parity in the coming years and decades in many geographies, within the 30-year time frame under which utilities typically recover costs on major grid investments.

THE FINANCE INDUSTRY IS TAKING NOTICE

In 2014, a chorus of analyses from major financial institutions—including Bank of America, Barclays, Citigroup, Fitch Ratings, Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, and UBS (with several directly citing *The Economics of Grid Defection*)—found that solar-plus-battery systems pose a real and present threat to traditional utility business models. Their perspectives varied, but all echoed the common theme of increasing challenges for the current utility business model:

Morgan Stanley, Clean Tech, Utilities & Autos March 4, 2014⁵

- “Our analysis suggests utility customers may be positioned to eliminate their use of the power grid.”
- “We expect ... batteries to be cost competitive with the grid in many states, and think investors generally do not appreciate the potential size of the market.”
- “...we see the potential for customers to decide to move off-grid.”

Goldman Sachs, Analyst note on Tesla stock March 2014⁶

- “...decreased reliability from an aging distribution infrastructure, a broadening desire to reduce the carbon footprint, and perhaps most importantly, the reduction of solar panel and battery costs could also work together to make grid independence a reality for many customers one day...the conclusion is very clear – the potential for this application could be very large.”
- “This puts [off-grid solar and storage] leveled cost of energy (LCOE) at \$0.20 [per kWh] by 2033 which would be at parity with the U.S. grid price.”

Barclays, Utilities Credit Strategy Analyst Report May 2014⁷

- “In the 100+ year history of the electric utility industry, there has never before been a truly cost-competitive substitute available for grid power. We believe that solar + storage could reconfigure the organization and regulation of the electric power business over the coming decade. We see near-term risks to credit from regulators and utilities falling behind the solar + storage adoption curve and long-term risks from a comprehensive re-imagining of the role utilities play in providing electric power.”

Morgan Stanley, Solar Power & Energy Storage: Policy Factors vs. Improving Economics July 28, 2014⁸

- “...we think that customers in parts of the U.S. and Europe may seek to avoid utility grid fees by going ‘off-grid’ through a combination of solar power and energy storage. We believe there is not sufficient appreciation of the magnitude of energy storage cost reduction ... already achieved, nor of the further cost reduction magnitude...”
- “Over time, many U.S. customers could partially or completely eliminate their usage of the power grid. We see the greatest potential for such disruption in the West, Southwest, and mid-Atlantic.”

UBS, analyst note on EV and solar August 2014⁹

- “The expected rapid decline in battery cost by (more than) 50 per cent by 2020 should not just spur EV sales, but also lead to exponential growth in demand for stationary batteries to store excess power.”

- *“Our view is that the ‘we have done it like this for a century’ value chain in developed electricity markets will be turned upside down within the next 10–20 years, driven by solar and batteries.”*
- *“By 2025, everybody will be able to produce and store power. And it will be green and cost competitive, i.e., not more expensive or even cheaper than buying power from utilities.”*
- *“We think large-scale power plants are the structural losers from this trend...”*

Citigroup, Energy Darwinism II
September 2014¹⁰

- *“...on our estimates, renewables with battery storage is due to reach grid parity in large parts of the world within 15 years, which is inside the typical 30–35-year economic lifecycle of utility assets...We expect centralised power generation (coal, gas, nuclear and lignite plants) to be the first to feel the effects.”*
- *“We see winners (i.e., regulated utilities who will earn a fair return on what they spend including transmission and distribution wires related expenditures, which will increase as more renewables are built) and losers (i.e., certain unregulated/hybrid utilities whose outlook is predicated primarily on the economic dispatch of power generating assets).”*

RISK WITH REWARD: GRID-CONNECTED SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY SYSTEMS OFFER OPPORTUNITY

Yet within this solar-plus-battery risk is also a great opportunity. Compared to the off-grid systems analyzed in *The Economics of Grid Defection*, optimally sized, grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems can reach economic parity sooner, and across more geographies, with faster customer adoption, and greater system benefits. This will herald a marked shift in the relationship between customers and utilities, and between customers and the grid. But since such systems will remain grid connected, they can offer value to that grid, rather than be seen solely as load defection from it.

RECENT TRENDS: DECLINING COSTS ARE EXPANDING CUSTOMER OPTIONS

Customer adoption of distributed solar and storage technologies has been growing, while costs for those technologies have been declining steeply. For example, residential rooftop solar’s installed cost per watt fell from \$8.2 in 2009 to ~\$4.5 through the first half of 2014, a 45% decline.¹¹ Meanwhile, U.S. installed solar PV capacity (MW/year) grew 1,066% over that same period, including 1,350% among residential solar.^{12,13} Battery energy storage, including the lithium-ion chemistries focused on in this report, is on a similar trajectory,^{14,15,16} though less mature than those of the solar industry. Batteries are on the cusp of accelerating cost declines driven by: 1) electric vehicle and consumer electronics adoption,^{17,18} and 2) a growing storage market addressing demand charge reductions and California’s energy storage mandate.

FIGURE 13:
SOLAR PV U.S. ANNUAL INSTALLED CAPACITY
HISTORICAL AND NEAR-TERM FORECAST

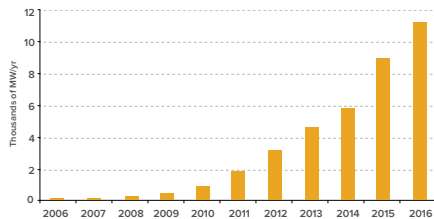
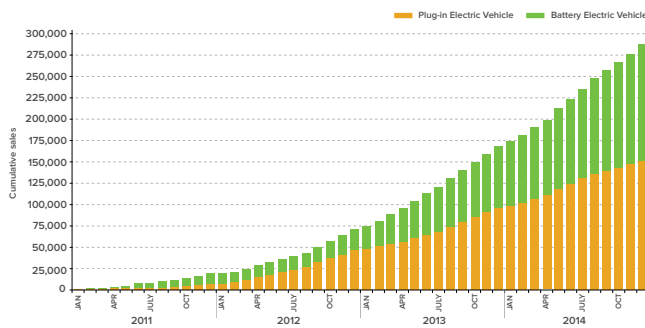


FIGURE 14:
U.S. CUMULATIVE SALES OF PLUG-IN
ELECTRIC VEHICLES



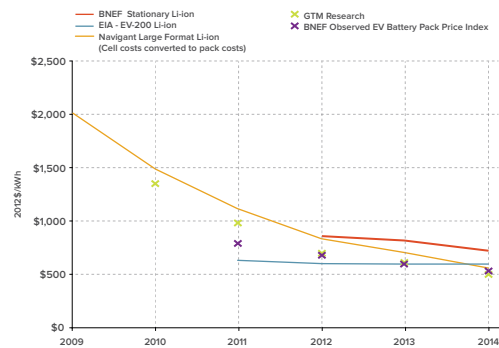
While these cost declines are important, actual customer adoption will depend on many additional factors beyond pure economics,¹⁹ such as a) relative hassle factor, b) available financing, c) valuing grid services provided so that customers on one side of the meter and utilities and grid operators on the other both see an expanded value proposition for such systems, d) customer demand for enhanced resilience, reliability, and other quasi-externalities, and e) future regulatory and rate structures that open, close, or expand market participation for solar-plus-battery systems and which either embrace customers that install these technologies or drive them away.

However, even low levels of adoption can have disruptive impacts on the financial health of utilities.²⁰

FIGURE 15:
HISTORICAL SOLAR PV INSTALLED COSTS



FIGURE 16:
LITHIUM-ION BATTERY PACK PRICES: HISTORICAL



In countries such as Germany—where customer-sited renewables adoption is ahead of the U.S.—utilities have seen their finances erode. Between 2008 and late 2013, European utilities lost a half-trillion euros off their market cap.²¹ And major utilities E.ON and RWE have shed their financially-strained central thermal power plant business units to focus on grid operation and integration of distributed renewables.^{22,23}

On the other hand, distributed energy resources such as rooftop solar and batteries can also have *positive* financial impact on utilities. For example, New York utility ConEd is looking at customer-sited DERs as a cost-effective alternative to a \$1 billion power substation upgrade in its Brooklyn/Queens Demand Management effort.²⁴

SECONDARY DRIVERS OFFER ADDITIONAL VALUE BEYOND CHEAPER KILOWATT-HOURS

There are a few places where customers are investing in these solar-plus-battery systems for their per kWh energy charge savings alone, displacing pricier grid-purchased electricity with cheaper power produced with on-site solar-plus-battery systems. Most notably, Hawaii—where retail electricity prices are the highest of any U.S. state—has seen a flurry of customers investing in these systems.

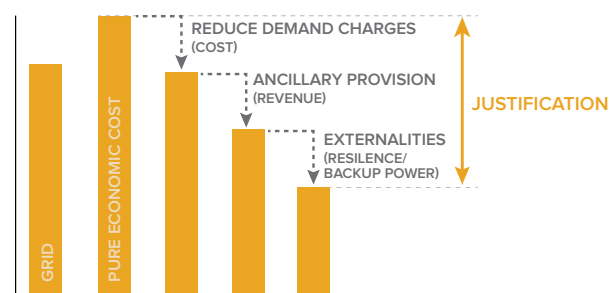
But customers, utilities, and third-party developers may find reasons beyond simple economic parity to invest in solar-plus-battery systems, including decreased carbon intensity, improved resilience, mitigated or avoided impact of future potential rate increases, ancillary services provision (e.g., frequency and voltage regulation), deferral of distribution system upgrades, reduction in peak power usage, and power quality management (see Figure 17).

In places where these additional value streams are sufficiently large and the market environment allows them to be monetized, solar-plus-battery systems can have net positive value today—even if their basic levelized cost of energy is still more expensive than retail electricity from the grid—and hence are making market inroads among early adopters.²⁵ For example, storage systems are providing demand-charge reduction in California, resilience in the Northeast, and remote-infrastructure support in off-grid applications (e.g., cell towers).^a

In fact, several companies—including Sunverge, Sunpower, and SolarCity/Tesla—are actively commercializing solar-plus-battery technology combinations with a variety of business models.²⁶ Most such business models focus on using solar-plus-battery systems to either decrease customer costs (e.g., cheaper per-kWh price for generation, lower demand charges) or increase customer revenue

(e.g., compensation for services provided to the grid), or both. With a recent influx of market participants, ranging from startups to established industry titans, and other companies declaring their intent to enter the solar-plus-battery market, mounting momentum of players moving into this solution space suggests that the market opportunity for solar-plus-battery solutions has expanded, and will likely only continue to do so as component costs decline.

FIGURE 17:
SECONDARY CUSTOMER VALUES BEYOND BASIC ECONOMICS



^a See, for example, the Konterra solar-battery microgrid in Laurel, MD, built by Solar Grid Storage with a 402 kW solar PV array sized to meet 20% of annual need and grid-interactive battery energy storage earning revenue from ancillary services in the PJM market. In San Francisco, Stem and CODA deployed distributed battery storage systems with energy optimization software for Intercontinental Hotels, helping reduce demand charges at facilities.



FIGURE 18:
GRID RELATIONSHIP SPECTRUM



CUSTOMERS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GRID IS EVOLVING

It remains unlikely that large numbers of customers would leap directly from grid connected to grid defected. Instead, a far more likely—and thus potentially even more disruptive—scenario is incremental customer investment in first solar-only and then solar-plus-battery grid-connected systems. This would lead to increasing levels of load defection, including among current grid-connected rooftop solar customers who “enhance” their solar PV with the addition of battery energy storage.

With greater awareness of how this transition might occur, customers will be in a better position to make decisions and investments that can lower their electricity bills and improve the quality of their service. In addition, our analyses can provide insights for entrepreneurs to grow businesses in new markets. At the same time, we hope to provide guidance to utilities and regulators who are 1) poised to send better price signals to guide and motivate a more-efficient evolution of the electric grid, 2) lead the creation of new business models both for utilities and customers, and 3) begin forging a new regulatory construct.

ABOUT THIS ANALYSIS: UNDERSTANDING THE EVOLUTION

This report explores how grid-connected solar-plus-battery system configurations and economics would evolve over time, and what magnitude of customers and load that could represent. In particular, we sought to answer two core questions:

1. **Lowest-Cost Economics:** When grid-connected customers have the option to source their entire load either from a) the grid, b) a solar-plus-battery system, or c) some combination of the grid, solar PV, and batteries, how does that configuration change over time based on lowest-cost economics for the customer? And how do the relative contributions of grid- and self-sourced electricity change over time in meeting customer load?
2. **Implications:** What are the potential implications for utilities, third-party solar and battery providers, financiers/investors, customers, and other electricity system stakeholders? And what opportunities might be found in grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems?

This analysis is evaluated from a customer-facing economics perspective but also considers the implications for utilities and regulators.

ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

02

METER

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ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

For parallelism and ease of comparison, we began this analysis with the same inputs and assumptions as *The Economics of Grid Defection*, held constant in most cases and updated where appropriate. A complete list of modeling assumptions, inputs, and results can be found in appendices A–F.

TIMELINE

We modeled present day (2014/15) through 2050 in 2012\$, just beyond the 30-year cost recovery period of rate-based utility investments that would be made today.

GEOGRAPHY

Our analysis focused on five locations through the United States, considering both residential and commercial customers in each locale:

- Honolulu, Hawaii
- Los Angeles County, California
- San Antonio, Texas
- Louisville, Kentucky
- Westchester County, New York (within the New York City metropolitan area)

We chose these locations because they cover a representative range of factors that influence solar-plus-battery system economics and operation, including annual solar resource potential, retail electricity prices, and quantity of currently installed solar PV²⁷ (see Table 1).

CUSTOMER CONSIDERATIONS: LOAD PROFILES AND SYSTEM SIZE LIMITATIONS

Modeled Load Profiles

We modeled both commercial and residential median load profiles specific to the regional climate for each of the five locations. For the commercial load profiles, we considered a generic ~43,000-square-foot, 4-story hotel. For the residential load profiles, we considered a ~2,500-square-foot detached single-family home.

Solar-Plus-Battery System Size Limitations and Configuration

We allowed system size and configuration to vary as economics dictated, making some modest constraints to account for the likely physical space limitations of residential customers. We modeled three primary system configurations: 1) grid only, 2) grid-plus-solar, and 3) grid-plus-solar-plus-battery. In all cases, system configuration (including size) and portion of load served by that system (grid vs. solar) optimized to find the lowest customer-facing cost.

TABLE 1: PROFILES OF GEOGRAPHIES

	WESTCHESTER, NY	LOUISVILLE, KY	SAN ANTONIO, TX	LOS ANGELES, CA	HONOLULU, HI
INSOLATION (kWh/m ² /day)	4.5 kWh	4.5 kWh	6 kWh	6 kWh	5.5 kWh
2014 AVG RETAIL PRICE (\$/kWh)	\$0.17–\$0.23	\$0.08–\$0.09	\$0.06–\$0.10	\$0.11–\$0.18	\$0.36–\$0.42
INSTALLED PV BY STATE (MW)	140 MW	3 MW	200 MW	1,900 MW	27 MW
MARKET STRUCTURE	Restructured	Regulated	Restructured	Restructured	Regulated



SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY SYSTEM COSTS

Our modeled forecasts for solar-plus-battery system costs used averaged projections from a variety of datasets developed through a thorough literature review for solar PV^{28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35} and batteries.^{36,37,38,39,40} Since capital costs are the predominant component of customer-facing costs, we used National Renewable Energy Laboratory-derived⁴¹ capital costs for both residential and commercial systems. In general, forecasts in this report largely reflect those previously used in *The Economics of Grid Defection*. However, in the time since that report's release in February 2014, new price points for both solar and storage have emerged that are proving less expensive, and in the case of storage, substantially so, than our averaged forecast.⁴² As an added conservatism, we did not adjust our analysis based on these data points.



FIGURE 19:
SOLAR PV INSTALLED COSTS: FORECASTED RESIDENTIAL

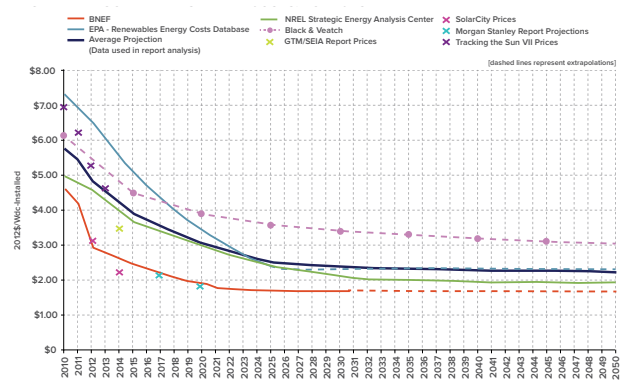


FIGURE 20:
INSTALLED PV COSTS: FORECASTED COMMERCIAL

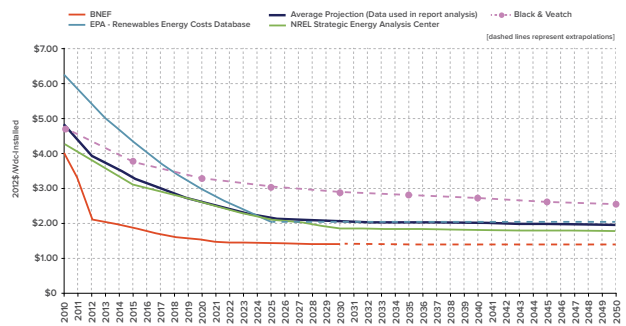
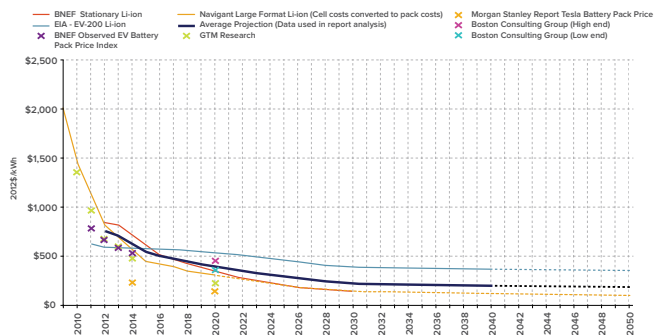


FIGURE 21:
LITHIUM-ION BATTERY PACK PRICES: HISTORICAL AND FORECASTED



RETAIL GRID ELECTRICITY PRICES

We projected utility retail electricity prices assuming no change to current pricing models and rate structures.^b We used an annual price increase of 3%-real (i.e., inflation adjusted) based on recent price trends from U.S. Energy Information Administration data. During the period 2004–2012, commercial and residential retail real prices annually rose an average 2.7% and 2.8%, respectively, for the geographies we studied (see Figures 22 and 23).^c With an aging grid requiring up to \$2 trillion in investment through 2030⁴³ to maintain, replace, and/or upgrade infrastructure, some regions in the U.S. have more recently been seeing real retail electricity price increases in excess of 3%.^{44,45} Until such trends change, a national average 3%-real per year price increase should represent a reasonable estimate for our analysis.

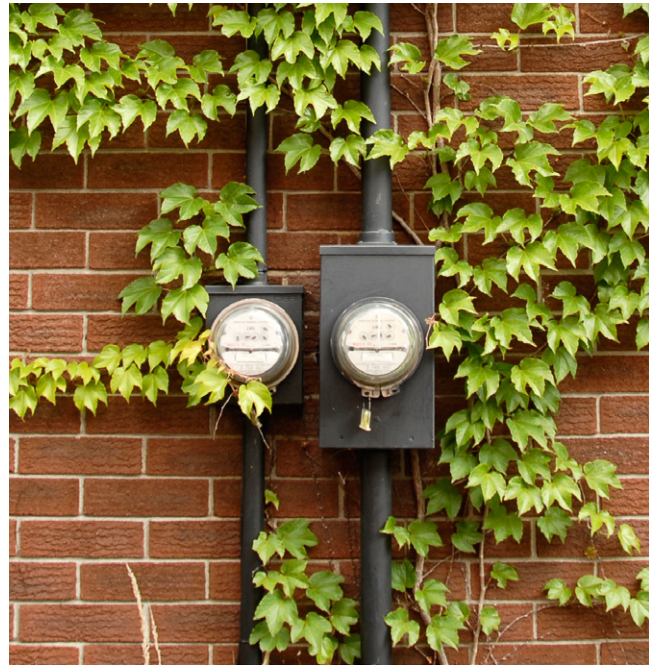


FIGURE 22:
AVERAGE RETAIL ELECTRIC PRICES
RESIDENTIAL - HISTORICAL AND 3% FORECAST FOR STUDY
GEOGRAPHIES (NY, KY, TX, CA, HI)

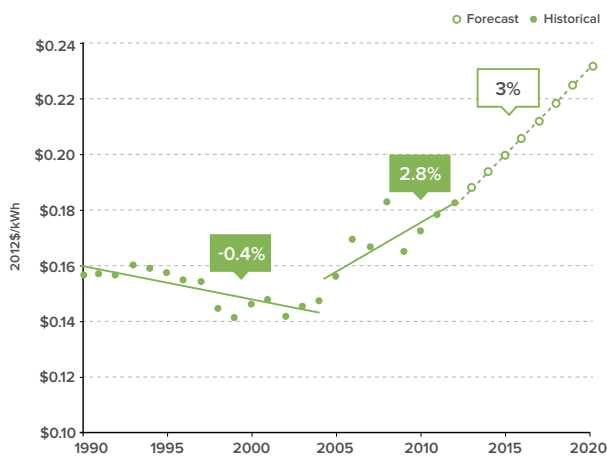
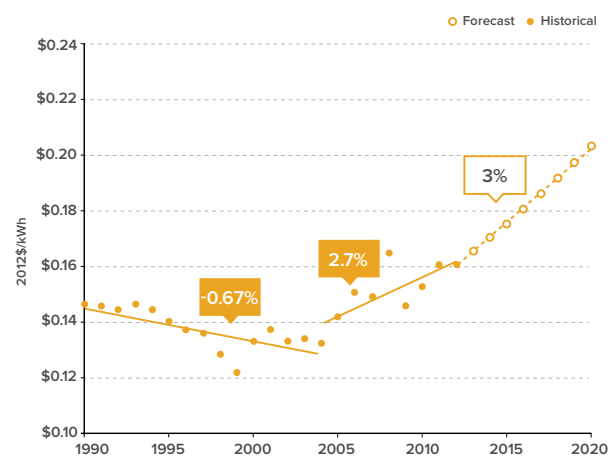


FIGURE 23:
AVERAGE RETAIL ELECTRIC PRICES
COMMERCIAL - HISTORICAL AND 3% FORECAST FOR STUDY
GEOGRAPHIES (NY, KY, TX, CA, HI)



^b Commonly, current rate structures are designed to support cost of service utility regulation. While several utilities and regulatory bodies across the U.S. have begun to experiment with alternate rate structures and cost recovery models, these remain the exception and not the norm. In our projections of future retail costs, we assumed there would be no changes to current rate structures or cost recovery models for utilities.

^c We are using the same data as in *The Economics of Grid Defection* to maintain continuity. As of late February 2015, updated EIA average price by state provider data was released, which included 2013 data. Those updated numbers yield 2005–2013 growth rates of 2.2% and 2.6% for the commercial and residential retail rates, respectively.

RETAIL RATE STRUCTURES

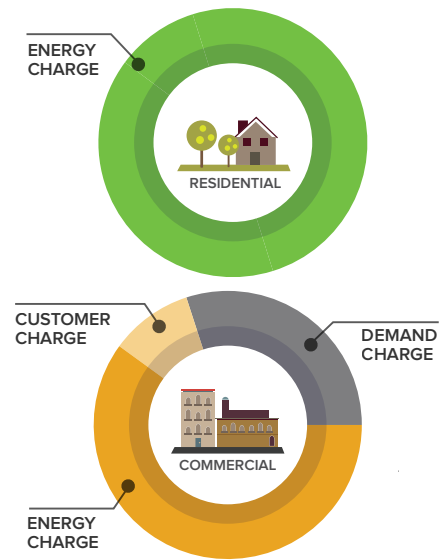
When modeling the economics of grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems relative to retail electricity from a utility, the retail rate *structure* is nearly as important as the magnitude of the rate. Whether a customer pays a pure volumetric price, has net energy metering, time-of-use pricing, demand charges, fixed charges, or other rate structures has an enormous influence on the economics. For our core analysis, we modeled the rate structures that cover the overwhelming majority of customers nationwide in each class:

- Residential customers: volumetric pricing (\$/kWh)^d
- Commercial customers: three-part pricing, which includes a volumetric component (\$/kWh), a monthly demand charge based on highest power load (\$/kW), and a monthly fixed charge (\$).

To develop geographic-specific prices for our analysis, we referenced tariff sheets compiled by the Genability rates database,⁴⁶ which we then escalated at 3%-real annually (see Table 2).

^d Residential fixed charges, which are a much smaller portion of the customer’s total bill than in commercial rates, were not considered, for simplicity.

FIGURE 24:
RETAIL RATE STRUCTURES



ENERGY CHARGE
kWh-based generation costs (e.g., fuel, wholesale electricity)

CUSTOMER CHARGE
Flat, monthly charge covering fixed costs of servicing customer regardless of use (e.g., billing, customer service)

DEMAND CHARGE
Costs of the generation, transmission, and distribution capacity to serve peak demand

TABLE 2: UTILITY RATES USED IN MODELING

2012 COMMERCIAL RATES									
		Escalation	WESTCHESTER, NY	LOUISVILLE, KY	SAN ANTONIO, TX	LOS ANGELES, CA	HONOLULU, HI		
Actual Rate	Consumption (\$/kWh)	Winter	\$0.11	\$0.04	\$0.06	\$0.06	\$0.37		
		Summer			\$0.07	\$0.08			
	Demand (\$/kW/month)	Winter	\$19.10	\$12.49	N/A	\$6.68	\$10.22		
		Summer	\$24.14	\$12.50		\$23.39			
	Fixed (monthly)	Winter	3% real	\$110.29	\$201.83	\$8.25	\$123.31	\$38.00	
		Summer		\$139.96					
	Timeline	Winter		Oct.–May	Oct.–Apr.	Oct.–May	Oct.–May	N/A	
		Summer		Jun.–Sep.	May–Sep.	Jun.–Sep.	Jun.–Sep.		
2012 RESIDENTIAL RATES									
Volumetric		3% real	\$0.21	\$0.09	\$0.09	\$0.17	\$0.34		

EXCESS ELECTRICITY

Behind-the-meter systems

The rate structures we used in our analysis did not value the grid services that batteries could provide, such as contingency reserves and voltage and frequency regulation, which would further improve their economics. Nor did we value any export—not even avoided fuel costs. *All solar-only and solar-plus-battery systems were modeled as largely self-consuming with no export compensation (i.e., optimized for behind-the-meter operation).* This analysis focuses on customer cost (i.e., levelized cost equivalent for electric services) and not potential revenue to the customer.

Net Metering Treatment

Under net energy metering (NEM), customers receive credit at the retail rate for energy exported to the grid. Although NEM is a prevalent policy found in most U.S. states, we considered it inappropriate to include in

our baseline analysis. Traditional regulatory and utility business model paradigms have involved the one-way flow of electrons across the meter from the grid to the customer. In that paradigm, DERs, when deployed, are about behind-the-meter value that accrues to the customer (e.g., self-consuming solar PV, batteries for backup power and demand charge reductions). Net energy metering represents just one of several newer policies (e.g., value-of-solar tariffs, feed-in tariffs, avoided fuel cost compensation) that compensate two-way flow of electrons across the meter.

Thus although export compensation via bill credits or direct payments is today present in most geographies and would improve the economics presented here, we assumed no bill credit or direct compensation for exports as a conservatism to understand the economic implications in the most extreme case. However, we do treat net metering as a special case later in the report.



MODELING SOFTWARE

We used the HOMER® hybrid optimization modeling software to find the lowest-cost electric system to meet electrical demand, ranking simulated systems by net present cost (NPC), which accounts for all of the discounted operating costs over the system’s lifetime. We used the HOMER model to determine the levelized cost of energy (LCOE), solar-plus-battery component sizes, and grid needs for each location.

EXTERNALITIES

We did not consider several variables that could meaningfully *improve* the customer-facing economics presented in our analysis:

- **Incentives:** We did not consider state-level incentives or the extension of federal incentives beyond their current expiration date.
- **Export compensation or alternate use of excess generation:** We did not assign any value to excess electricity production, although most locations currently have some form of compensation for electricity exported to the grid. Additionally, use of excess generation for water heating or other thermal applications could improve the system economics, but were also not considered.
- **Accelerated technology cost declines, lower interest rates, or integrated investments in efficiency and flexibility:** Any of these factors could improve the economics of these systems.^e
- **Secondary values:** We assigned no value to attributes of solar-plus-battery systems beyond direct bill savings (e.g., the potential value of reliability, ancillary services, or carbon reduction).

^e In our earlier report, we ran alternative scenarios to understand the effect of these factors and saw dramatic acceleration of parity for grid defection. We would expect a similar effect for this analysis.

We also did not consider several variables that could meaningfully *worsen* the customer-facing economics presented in our analysis:

- **Opportunity costs:** We do not account for any penalty a customer might place on solar-plus-storage as a result of locking in an energy source for a period of years.
- **Changes to rate structures or decreases in overall utility cost structure:** We extrapolate current pricing and overall bill increases for customers. Fundamental changes to pricing or breakthroughs that reverse current utility cost trends would weaken the investment thesis for solar-plus-battery systems. For example, the addition of fixed charges for residential customers—as some utilities have proposed—would retard the economics substantially in the near term, but might hasten defection in the longer term.



RESULTS

03



RESULTS

Our analysis yields several striking findings that will have important implications for regulators, utilities, DER developers, and customers. In general, grid-connected self-consuming solar will become economic for nearly all customers imminently, with grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems following soon after, much faster than the off-grid solar-plus-battery systems we modeled in *The Economics of Grid Defection*. These grid-connected systems will eventually cover the vast majority of customer load. This load defection will essentially relegate the grid to a backup-power-only role for customers that adopt these systems.

In greater detail, our key findings are:

Solar-plus-Battery Systems Rapidly Become Cost Effective

Distributed solar first and then solar-plus-battery systems covering only a portion of a customer's load will have compelling economics without the support of incentives or feed-in compensation in many important markets within 15 years.

The economically optimal system configuration evolves over time, from grid only in the near term, to grid-plus-solar, to grid-plus-solar-plus-batteries in the longer term. While many customers in many geographies already have economic solar with net energy metering, we found that smaller (e.g., 1–2 kW for residential customers), non-exporting solar PV systems that do not rely on net energy metering *will become economic for all customers in all geographies we studied within the next decade.*

FIGURE 25:
ECONOMICALLY OPTIMAL SYSTEM CONFIGURATION
RESIDENTIAL

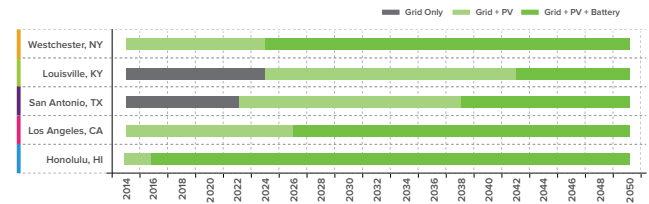
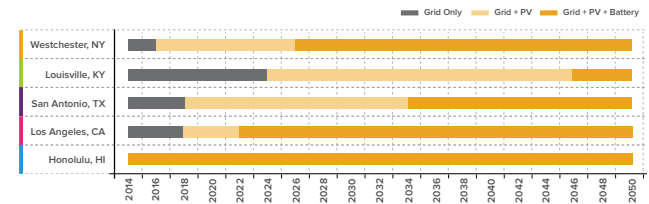


FIGURE 26:
ECONOMICALLY OPTIMAL SYSTEM CONFIGURATION
COMMERCIAL



In places like Honolulu, Hawaii, Los Angeles, California, and Westchester, New York, these systems are economic today. As grid retail prices increase further and distributed storage costs drop, new customers will find solar-plus-battery system configurations most economic in these three major markets within 12 years. Compared to the date of economic parity for the off-grid solar-plus-battery systems we modeled in *The Economics of Grid Defection*, the grid-connected systems of this analysis become economic for customers much sooner, with substantial utility load loss well within the economic life and cost recovery period for major assets.



A GEOGRAPHY IN DETAIL: WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NY

For commercial and residential customers in Westchester County, NY, the levelized cost of energy (LCOE) equivalent for grid-supplied electricity starts today at \$0.19 and \$0.21, respectively, escalating at our forecasted 3%-real in the years ahead. Within just a handful of years, small, non-exporting solar PV becomes economic to serve a portion of load as retail grid electricity prices continue to rise. By 2030, it makes even more compelling economic sense for customers to invest in grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems, which significantly reduce a customer's LCOE costs relative to grid-only electricity.

FIGURE 27:
ELECTRICITY COST OF SUPPLY
RESIDENTIAL - WESTCHESTER, NY

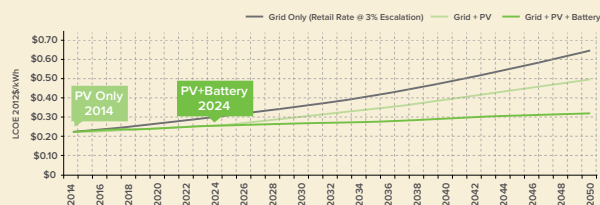
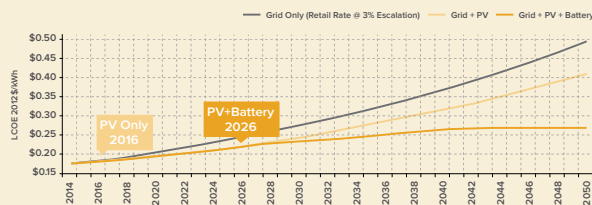


FIGURE 28:
ELECTRICITY COST OF SUPPLY
COMMERCIAL - WESTCHESTER, NY



Solar PV Supplants the Grid Supplying the Majority of Customers' Electricity

The relative costs and benefits of grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems suggest that significant load defection from the grid to these solar-plus-battery systems will be preferable before complete customer defection is economic.

Our analysis shows that the relative contributions of the grid and a customer's solar and solar-plus-battery systems to meet customer load evolves over time. Initially the grid supplies a majority of a customer's electricity needs. Over time as retail electricity prices from the grid increase and solar and battery costs decrease, customers logically reduce their grid purchases until the grid takes a backup-only role. Meanwhile, solar-plus-battery systems eventually provide the majority of customers' electricity. For example, in places such as NY, CA, and TX, our analysis shows the grid optimally supplying 80–100% of residential and commercial customers' load today but just 3–25% by around 2040. Reciprocally, solar PV grows from supplying little to no customer load to supplying a substantial majority to nearly all customer load over that same time period.

This evolution suggests that there is no “new normal,” either for the grid or for solar-plus-battery systems. Solar and solar-plus-battery solutions—including their customer-sited deployment and grid integration—will need to be adaptive. The economically optimal solar-plus-battery system configuration, size, and load served will change over time, suggesting shifting patterns of customer and third-party investment. Meanwhile, customers who previously invested in one system configuration at an earlier date may similarly consider subsequent further incremental investment, such as to expand a solar PV array and/or add supplemental battery energy storage.



FIGURE 29:
ECONOMICALLY OPTIMAL GENERATION MIX
RESIDENTIAL

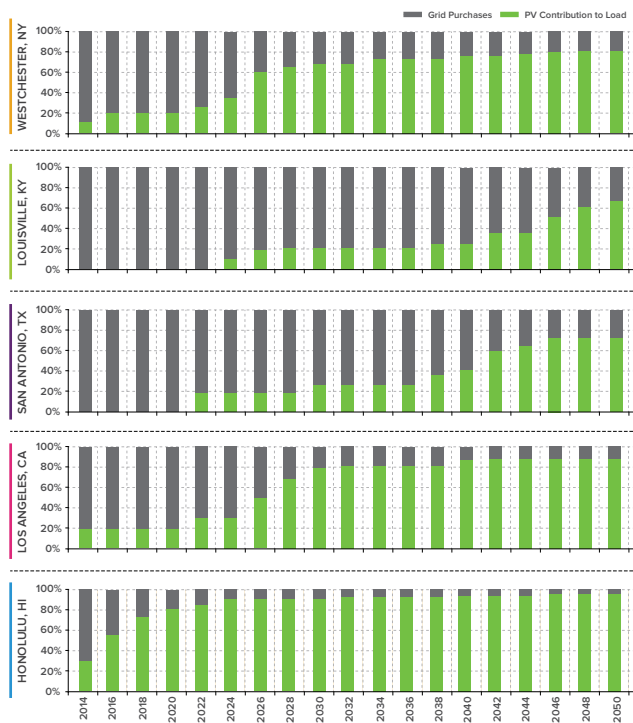


FIGURE 30:
ECONOMICALLY OPTIMAL GENERATION MIX
COMMERCIAL



A GEOGRAPHY IN DETAIL: WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NY

For commercial and residential customers in Westchester County, NY, grid purchases dramatically decrease within 10–15 years (by 2025–2030) from a majority to a minority of customer load, and eventually decline to ~3% and 20%, respectively, by about 2040.

FIGURE 31:
ECONOMICALLY OPTIMAL GENERATION MIX
RESIDENTIAL - WESTCHESTER., NY

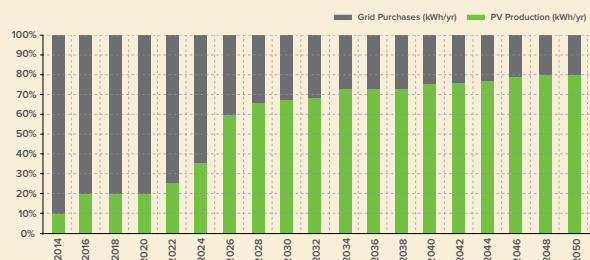
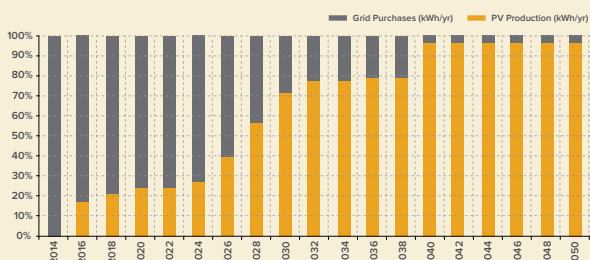


FIGURE 32:
ECONOMICALLY OPTIMAL GENERATION MIX
COMMERCIAL - WESTCHESTER., NY



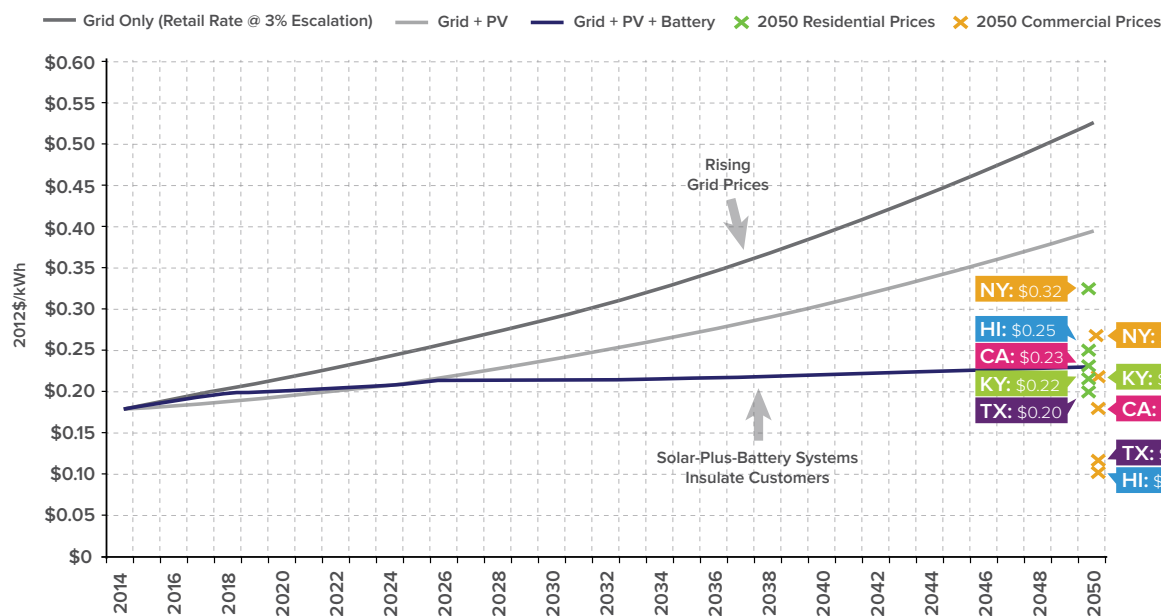
Peak Price for Individual Customers

The adoption of grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems will lead to lower and more stable prices for customers.

Regardless of how high retail electric prices climb in the future, investing in combinations of solar and batteries will enable individual customers to contain costs for electric service. The lowest-cost option for electric service can effectively cap customers' electricity costs for all scenarios we analyzed—about \$0.10–\$0.30 for commercial customers and \$0.20–\$0.35 for residential customers across the geographies—locking in pricing for a portion or all of their load and shielding them from future changes in rates. For example, for a median residential customer

in Westchester County, NY, the average monthly electricity bill would reach \$357 by 2030 and \$645 by 2050 for grid electricity based on forecasts, while peak price through adding a solar-plus-battery system would be just \$268 per month by 2030, leveling off around \$317 per month by 2050. The specific price cap differs slightly by geography, but all geographies exhibited this same trend. Importantly, though, this “peak price” finding holds only for electric service for individual customers who invest in solar and solar-plus-battery systems. System-wide, grid-facing costs such as T&D maintenance and central generation, as well as costs for grid-dependent customers who can't or don't invest in solar-plus-battery systems, are important related issues beyond the scope of this analysis.

FIGURE 33:
PEAK PRICE



Potentially Large kWh Defection Could Undermine Revenue for Grid Investment Under Current Rate Structure and Business Models

As grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems become economic for large numbers of customers, and as those systems supply greater and greater portions of customers' load, the magnitude of potential load defection from the grid is large, with significant potential impacts on revenue from energy sales and cost recovery for major and necessary grid investments.

Between 2010 and 2030, the grid will require up to an estimated \$2 trillion in investment, or about \$100 billion per year.⁴⁷ Those costs will need to be recovered through revenue from energy sales. If even a small fraction of the electricity load supporting that investment and revenue goes away, it will likely have a large impact. To examine a more comprehensive cross-section of customer economics and the magnitude of possible load defection, we looked at the Northeast U.S. more broadly (i.e., PA, NJ, NY, CT, MA, and RI) to see the maximum possible load defection the grid could see based on customer

adoption following the optimal economics of our analysis.^f (It will be up to the reader to decide what level of customer adoption is realistic. Our estimate represents an upper boundary to quantify the magnitude of the load defection at stake.)

In the Northeast U.S. alone, as early as 2020—just five short years away—customer load defection makes meaningful inroads to utility annual energy sales (~10–20%). By 2030, load defection rises substantially (to ~50–60%). And by 2050, maximum possible load defection reaches most of utility annual energy sales (~80–97%).

^f We used 2012 utility sales data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) to identify the total number of residential and commercial MWhs sold by utilities in the region, including the decile distribution (i.e., tenths) between the most expensive and least expensive MWhs. We then compared customers' lowest-cost option for grid-connected solar and solar-plus-battery systems to the range of utility retail per-kWh prices to determine what percentage of customers would be "in the money" with DERs throughout the region. Lastly, we multiplied the MWhs of customers who'd be in the money by the optimal portion of load served by solar and solar-plus-battery systems and the per-MWh cost for those deciles. This yielded, in MWh and 2012\$, the maximum possible load defection the grid could see based on the economics of our analysis.

TABLE 3:
POTENTIAL MAGNITUDE OF UTILITY LOAD DEFECTION

RESIDENTIAL				
	MWh	% kWh Sales	# Customers	2012\$ (Annual)
2020	3.5 million	10%	1.9 million	\$684 million
2030	58 million	50%	9.6 million	\$15.4 billion
2050	139 million	80%	20.7 million	\$65.8 billion

COMMERCIAL				
	MWh	% kWh Sales	# Customers	2012\$ (Annual)
2020	9 million	20%	500,000+	\$1.6 billion
2030	83 million	60%	1.9 million	\$19.4 billion
2050	186 million	97%	2.9 million	\$78.4 billion



FIGURE 34:
NORTHEAST LOWEST-COST OPTION VS.
GRID PRICE RANGE
RESIDENTIAL

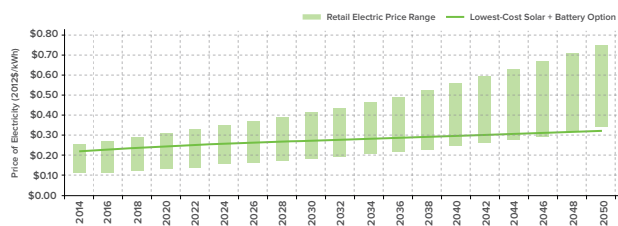


FIGURE 37:
NORTHEAST LOWEST-COST OPTION VS.
GRID PRICE RANGE
COMMERCIAL

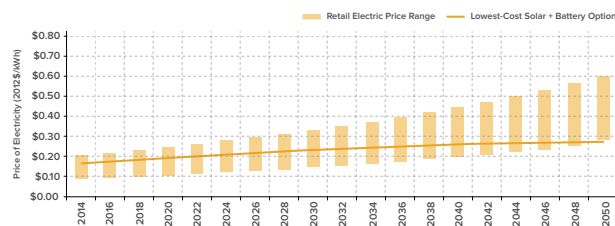


FIGURE 35:
NORTHEAST POTENTIAL CUSTOMER DEFECTION
RESIDENTIAL

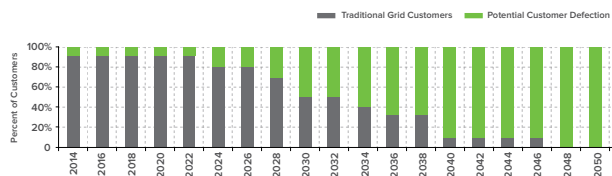


FIGURE 38:
NORTHEAST POTENTIAL CUSTOMER DEFECTION
COMMERCIAL

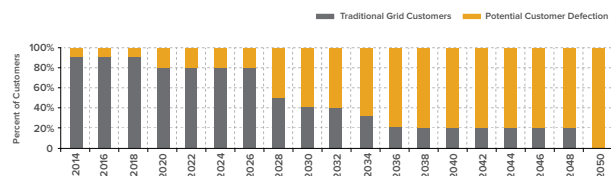


FIGURE 36:
NORTHEAST POTENTIAL LOAD DEFECTION
RESIDENTIAL

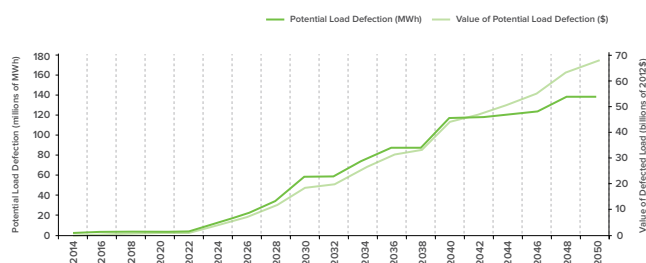
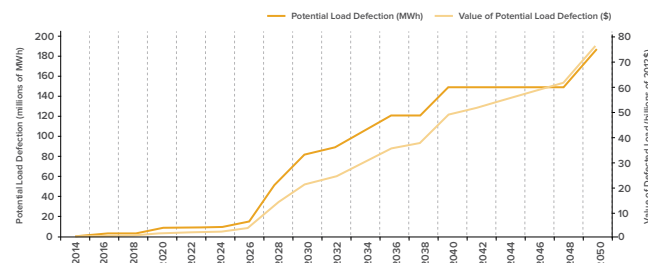


FIGURE 39:
NORTHEAST POTENTIAL LOAD DEFECTION
COMMERCIAL



Initially, grid-connected solar and solar-plus-battery systems are “in the money” compared to the more-expensive grid MWh throughout the Northeast region. But over time, grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems become more cost effective than even the cheapest grid prices across the region. As more and more customers find grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems their most economic option, potential customer adoption based on optimal economics encompasses all customers. As those customers’ systems supply greater and greater portions of their load, the defection—in MWh and 2012\$—grows substantially.

Eliminating Net Metering Only Delays kWh Loss; Fixed Charges Don't 'Fix' the Problem

Net energy metering is a contentious yet prevalent policy that has successfully supported distributed solar PV's growth in the U.S. The debate about its future is one of the most politically and emotionally charged topics in the electricity industry today. We found ourselves in the middle of a similar debate—to model the economics of grid-connected solar and solar-plus-battery systems with or without net metering. Finding convincing reasons for each case, we decided to study both.

Importantly, valuation for excess solar generation is not a binary option. “With net metering” and “without net metering” are only two options along a spectrum of valuation techniques we can offer customers with distributed generation. But for the purpose of this research, these two options presented the most practical bookends to define the realm of possibilities.

In modeling grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems with and without net energy metering, we found notable differences in gross and net grid purchases, system configurations, and total system electricity production. The results for commercial and residential systems were very similar for all geographies.

Our examination of Westchester County, NY, is illustrative. We found:

- ***Load defection happens almost immediately and entirely for customers with net energy metering.*** Customers today in areas that allow net metering typically purchase or lease a solar PV system that meets 100% of their total load. While net grid purchases also decline for non-exporting customers, the decline is far more gradual. However, the ultimate outcome is similar with substantial load defection—non-exporting commercial customers' grid purchases shrink to near zero eventually; residential customers' grid purchase decline is not as severe, but still tapers to only ~20% of load.⁹
- ***Net energy metering removes almost all incentive to add a battery to a solar system.*** For both commercial and residential customers, when NEM was available, adding a battery to the system was never the most economical option for the customer. Customers might still choose to invest in a battery if secondary values such as resilience (i.e., backup power) are important, or if they are charged a capacity-based fee for grid usage.
- ***Systems with and without NEM use the grid very differently.*** Though net-metered systems almost immediately decline to zero net grid purchases, gross grid purchases remain. Net-metered solar-only systems effectively use the grid daily like a battery, exporting surplus generation during day and buying back electricity at night when solar PV isn't producing. On the other hand, for self-consuming solar and solar-plus-battery systems, net and gross grid purchases are the same by definition and decline significantly. With the grid serving an infrequent but important backup role for these systems, important questions remain about implications for needed grid capacity and other considerations.

Though we didn't specifically model other scenarios, our quantitative findings with NEM are useful for qualitatively considering other possibilities, such as recent proposals to introduce more significant residential fixed charges to utility customers' bills. Similar to our “with” and “without” NEM scenarios, residential fixed charges would likely alter (i.e., delay) the economics for grid-connected solar and solar-plus-battery systems, but likely wouldn't alter the ultimate load defection outcome. Customers might instead wait until economics and other factors reach a tipping point threshold and more dramatically “jump” from grid dependence to off-grid solar-plus-battery systems that offer better economics for electric service.

⁹ For example, a 6 kW system is enough to meet 100% of a typical 3-bedroom home in Denver, CO, right in the middle of the typical installed range (Tracking the Sun VII).

Regardless, these considerations highlight the importance of rate structures—both on our analysis

and on the likely economics and timing of customer behavior, including DER adoption.

FIGURE 40:
NET GRID PURCHASES WITH AND WITHOUT NET METERING
RESIDENTIAL

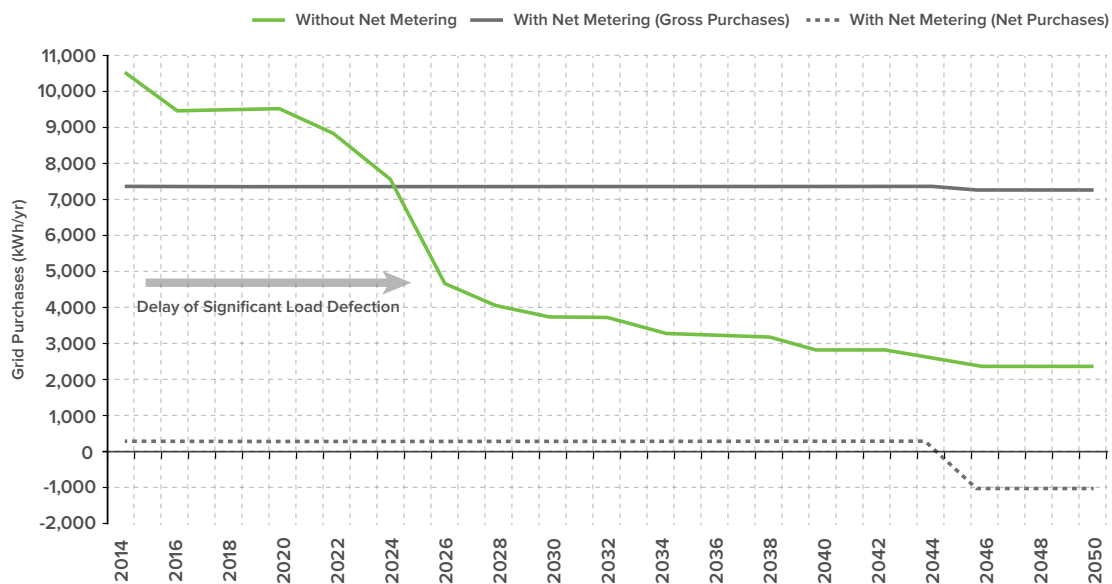
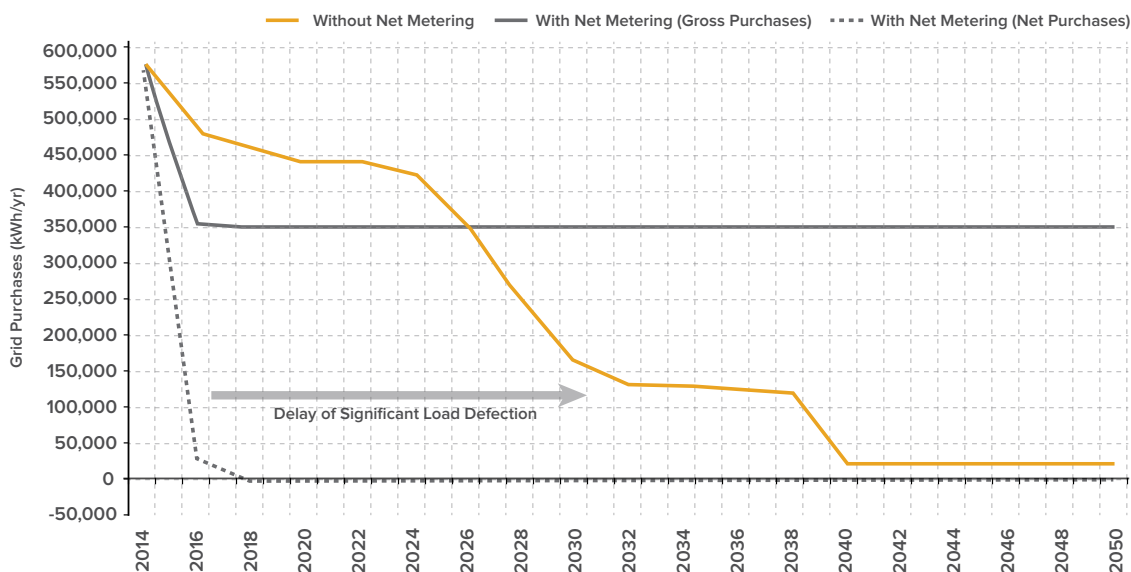


FIGURE 41:
NET GRID PURCHASES WITH AND WITHOUT NET METERING
COMMERCIAL



THE INFLUENCE OF RATE STRUCTURES ON SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY SYSTEM ECONOMICS

While future rate structures might look different from those we see today, we can test the potential impact of different types of rates on the economics of solar-plus-battery systems. We considered two variations on today's three-part commercial rate by shifting it to one of two extremes while keeping total utility revenue equal in all variations.

1. Fixed rate: a customer pays the same monthly fee for grid connection and grid power regardless of use of electricity (i.e., there are no demand or volumetric usage fees).
2. Volumetric rate: a customer pays only for kWhs used, regardless of pattern of use (i.e., there are no demand or fixed fees).

TABLE 4:
INFLUENCE OF RATE STRUCTURE ON SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY ECONOMICS

	FIXED	CURRENT	VOLUMETRIC
Structure of potential rate	Single fee for use (\$/month)	three-part rate (\$/kWh, \$/kW, \$/month)	Priced per consumption (\$/kWh)
Timing of parity for grid-connected solar-plus-storage systems	Up to 15 years later (coincident with timeline for grid defection)	<i>The Economics of Load Defection</i> Reference Case	Up to 7 years earlier
Likely customer behavior	Defer DER investment until off-grid parity point, and then defect	Invest to reduce both demand charges and total energy purchases	Investment in successively larger systems to continually lower electric cost
System profile	A completely off-grid system oversized to meet full customer load	Balanced investment between distributed generation and load-shaping (through batteries) to reduce demand charges	Solar-focused system to reduce grid purchases; no investment in improvements to load shape

Thus, rate structures can dramatically impact the timing by which solar-plus-battery systems become economic, the optimal configuration of those systems, and how such systems are used in concert with (or in the absence of) the grid.

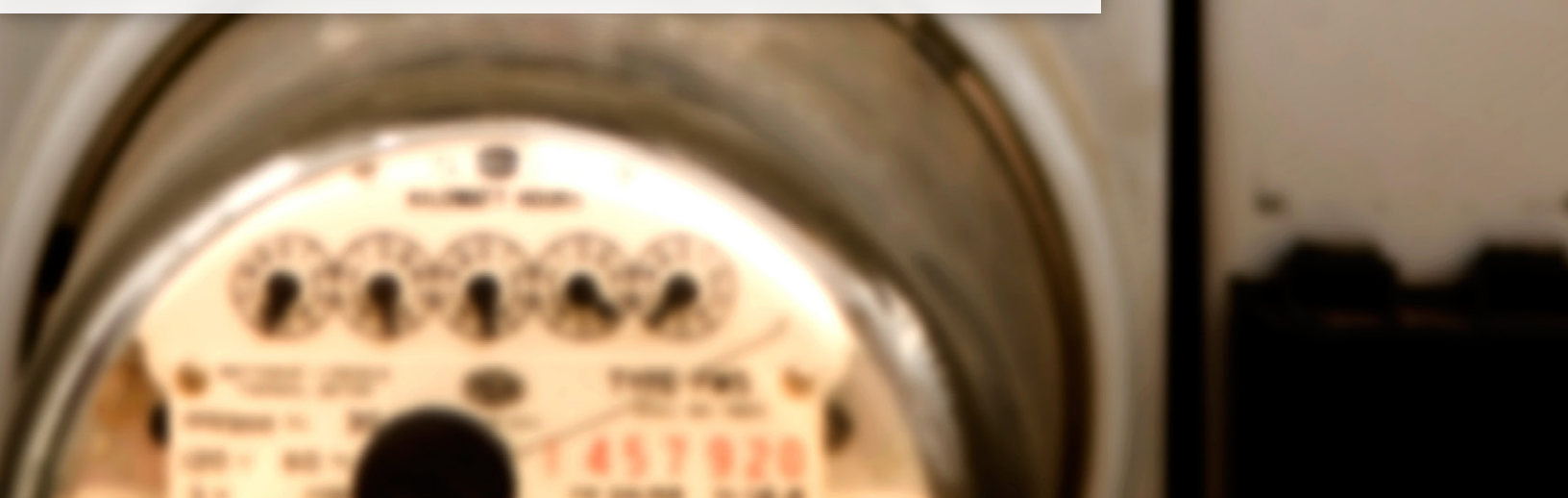
- A fixed rate has the benefit of stable revenues, but can push customers to defect from the grid without any intermediate steps when rates become more expensive than solar-plus-battery systems.
- A volumetric rate encourages customers to invest in efficiency and distributed generation, but can lead to unpredictable or peaky use of grid resources.

While here we only looked at the potential impact of two shifts within the conventional three-part commercial rate structure, a much wider variety of rate structures will in practice influence customer behavior. It will be important to try to link this customer behavior back to its potential impact on system-level costs.



IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

04



IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

BEYOND CUSTOMER SAVINGS: HOW GRID-CONNECTED SYSTEMS CAN BENEFIT THE GRID

There will always be specific applications where foregoing a grid connection will make sense (e.g., remote communities or industrial operations), in most instances, building completely off-grid solar-plus-battery systems will leave excess capital on both sides of the meter. Off-grid systems need to be oversized to guarantee stand-alone reliable service, while utilities' load loss from customer defection leaves central thermal generation capacity with smaller remaining load to serve. Similarly, failing to accurately represent the value of distributed resources can lead to excess and inefficient investment on both sides of the meter.

And although our findings show that utilities' load loss to grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems could be very large, customer adoption of these systems also presents a number of opportunities. Unlike the off-grid systems we modeled in *The Economics of Grid Defection*, where customers left the grid entirely, the grid-connected customers of this analysis crucially *do maintain their grid connection* assuming that potential fixed charges and other changes to retail electricity price rate structures don't become so onerous as to encourage customer grid defection. This means that although they could represent significant load loss, customers' grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems *can potentially provide benefits, services, and values not just to individual customers but also back to the grid and society*, especially if those value flows are monetized with new rate structures, business models, and regulatory frameworks.

A FORK IN THE ROAD FOR THE ELECTRICITY SYSTEM

The electricity system is at a metaphorical fork in the road, where the deployment of solar-plus-battery systems—including their configuration, operation, and value to the grid and customers—will be greatly affected by utility and regulatory action (or inaction). More and more of the country will see grid parity for solar PV systems, even without export compensation such as net metering. Geographies where PV is already at grid parity will begin to see grid parity for solar-plus-battery systems that will allow large amounts of load to self-provide.

Decisions made in the short-term can set markets down extremely different paths articulated in Figure 42. Solar PV and batteries will have value along both paths and figure centrally in any future electricity grid, but their role and the nature of that future grid will vary depending on choices made today that establish trajectories with vastly different outcomes.

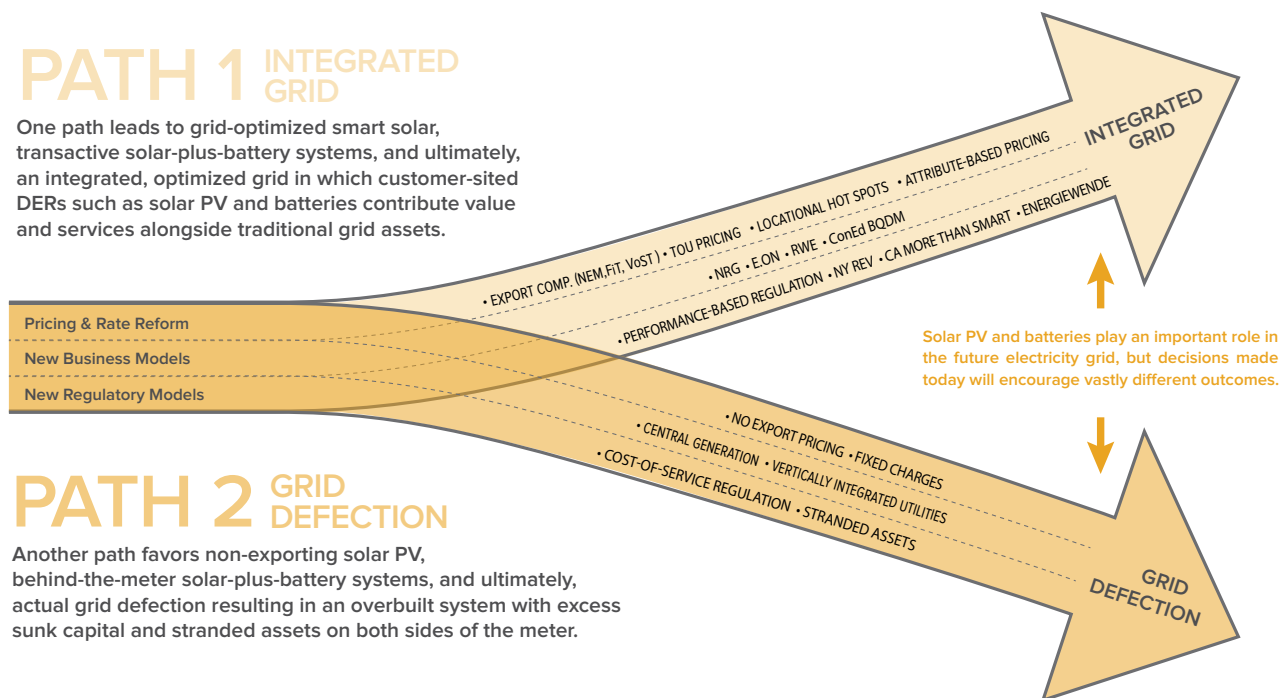
Down one path are pricing structures, business models, and regulatory environments that favor non-exporting solar and solar-plus-battery systems. When economic and other conditions reach the right tipping point, this trajectory favors true grid defection. In the meantime, an upward price spiral based on stranded assets serving a diminishing load will make solar-plus-battery adoption increasingly attractive for customers who can and lead to untenably high pricing for customers who remain on the grid, including low- and fixed-income customers who would bear a disproportionate burden of escalated retail electricity pricing. In this future customer-side resources are likely overbuilt and existing and planned grid assets are underutilized, leaving excess capital on both sides of the meter.

Down another path are pricing structures, business models, and regulatory environments in which distributed energy resources such as solar PV and batteries—and their inherent benefits and costs—are appropriately valued as part of an integrated grid. Solar PV and batteries can potentially lower system-wide costs while contributing to the foundation of a reliable, resilient, affordable, low-carbon grid of the future in which customers are empowered with choice. In this future, grid and customer-side resources work together as part of an integrated grid with more-efficient deployment of capital and physical

assets, with investments made in a way that supports the grid, providing an alternative to central generation and creating value in the distribution system through peak load management, ancillary services, congestion relief, and other services that support a more-connected, lower-cost electricity system.

These two pathways are not set in stone, and there is some room to navigate within their boundaries. But decisions made today will set us on a trajectory from which it will be more difficult to course correct in the future.

FIGURE 42:
POSSIBLE TRAJECTORIES FOR ELECTRICITY GRID EVOLUTION



THREE CATEGORIES OF ACTION

The electricity industry needs to act on three fronts:

- **Evolved pricing and rate structures:** Today's rate structures are overly simplistic for the 21st century needs of the grid. Broadly, pricing needs to evolve in three critical ways:
 - *Locational*, allowing some form of congestion pricing or incentives, as is done in some city centers and elsewhere
 - *Temporal*, allowing for continued evolution of time-of-use pricing and real-time pricing
 - *Attribute-based*, breaking apart energy, capacity, ancillary services, and other service components
- **New business models:** Current business models need to evolve from the old paradigm of centralized generation and the unidirectional use of the grid (i.e., one-way electron flow from generators to consumers) to the emerging reality of cost-competitive DERs such as solar PV and batteries (i.e., grid-connected customers with behind-the-meter DERs and a two-way flow of

electrons, services, and value across the meter). Creating a sustainable long-term DER market—considering the near and present opportunity of solar PV and batteries but inclusive of a much broader suite of DER technologies—will require aligning the interests of utilities, DER companies, technology providers, and customers. Aligning those interests requires that the value of DERs be acknowledged and shared from both sides of the meter.

- **New regulatory models:** Regulatory reform will be necessary for the electricity system to effectively incorporate new customer-sited technologies like solar and batteries as resources into the grid. Three critical outputs of these reforms are required to sensibly guide the adoption of solar-plus-battery systems in particular and DERs in general: 1) maintain and enhance fair and equal customer access to DERs, 2) recognize, quantify, and appropriately monetize both the benefits and costs that DERs such as solar PV and batteries can create, and 3) preserve equitable treatment of all customers, including those that do not invest in DERs and remain solely grid dependent.



BUSINESS MODELS FOR THE SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY FUTURE

Grid-connected, net-metered solar dominates current DER business models. The customer makes decisions on placement, size, and use, a third-party provider performs installation (and frequently maintenance) and provides financing, and the host utility performs interconnection and provides export compensation. As DER technologies improve, costs decline, and customers increasingly seek distributed energy resources to meet their local energy needs, current business models will need to evolve. The pace and direction of that evolution will depend on changes in pricing mechanisms and regulatory constructs. Several business models we believe are valuable today or will be valuable in the future include:

Grid-Optimized Smart Solar (e.g., smart inverter-enabled, islandable solar)

The majority of distributed solar PV installed today utilizes older, less-sophisticated inverters giving the system owners “dumb” solar, and at points, creating distribution system performance challenges for grid operators. Project developers can, and should, more readily offer customers grid-optimized smart solar that includes smart inverters with the capability for islanding, improved voltage ride through, and power quality management (e.g., reactive power support, etc.). Grid operators and utilities who stand to benefit from these more sophisticated systems through improved distribution system operability could help project developers accommodate the premium of the controls components with reduced and expedited interconnection fees and processes. Similarly, grid operators and utilities can send new price signals and more transparently share data with customers and third-party providers, such as to encourage solar PV panel orientation that more fully takes into account not only an individual customer’s load profile but also distribution circuit/feeder and macrogrid peaks both by timing and locational congestion.

Total Energy Service (a.k.a. Behind-the-Meter Optimization)*

As the portfolio of distributed energy resources available to customers grows in number, volume, diversity, and sophistication—including everything from on-site generation, to storage, to smarter appliances—customers will increasingly value service providers who can offer total energy solutions. A total energy service package, at its fullest, would include energy assessments, efficiency improvements, actual DERs (e.g., solar PV, smart appliances, batteries, controls, etc.), financing, monitoring, and management of the same. The integrated combination of these assets would allow customers new capabilities, such as responding dynamically to changes in pricing, adjusting consumption of on-site generation to maximize or minimize export, participation in demand-response markets, and other opportunities.

Utility-Coordinated, Customer-Sited Systems

At the intersection of new rate structures and new business models lies the opportunity for utilities to play an expanded control and coordination role for customers with solar-plus-battery systems. Different from battery-ready solar, in this model, utilities will more directly control the inverters, charge controllers, and other components in a customer-sited system. Further, iterations of this model exist where the utility could actually own and rate base the battery and/or the controls components in the customer-sited system as well.

Utilities as Finance Providers

Where utilities and grid operators are ready to manage and leverage higher penetrations of solar-plus-battery systems on their distribution systems, these actors can stimulate their broader adoption by acting as DER financiers. In this model, utilities leverage their comparatively larger balance sheets, lower costs of capital, ability to purchase and negotiate at scale, and established relationship with end-use customers to connect customers with financing solutions and system installers. This would most likely manifest itself in on-bill financing options for customers to install solar-plus-battery systems, and a matchmaking service with pre-qualified local installers. This model presents opportunities especially for customers who are not able to secure affordable financing through the private sector.

Distributed Systems Coordinator (e.g., Aggregators or Virtual Utilities)*

Where total energy services offer to coordinate many different distributed energy resources at one location for a single customer, a distributed system coordinator (DSC) would offer to coordinate similar systems (e.g., smart solar, distributed batteries, or electric vehicles) across many customers. As coordinator, the DSC could leverage the larger capacity and functionality of many systems to aggregate them, and bid them into local markets to earn revenue from sales of energy, capacity, or other ancillary services. DSCs could incent customer participation in their aggregated system through discounts or coupons for initial investments, monthly participation dividends, or in-kind system warranties. This business model can be especially supportive of regulatory models like distribution system operator (DSO),⁴⁸ distributed system platform (DSP),⁴⁹ and transactive grid approaches.⁵⁰

** = Model where utilities or third parties could act as the lead solution provider depending on the regulatory environment.*

MARKET PHASES OF OPPORTUNITY

The time frame for making such decisions with long-lasting implications for the future grid is relatively short, and is shorter and more urgent for some geographies than others. Three distinct market phases define the window's time frame:

- **Phase 1: An Opportunity to Experiment**

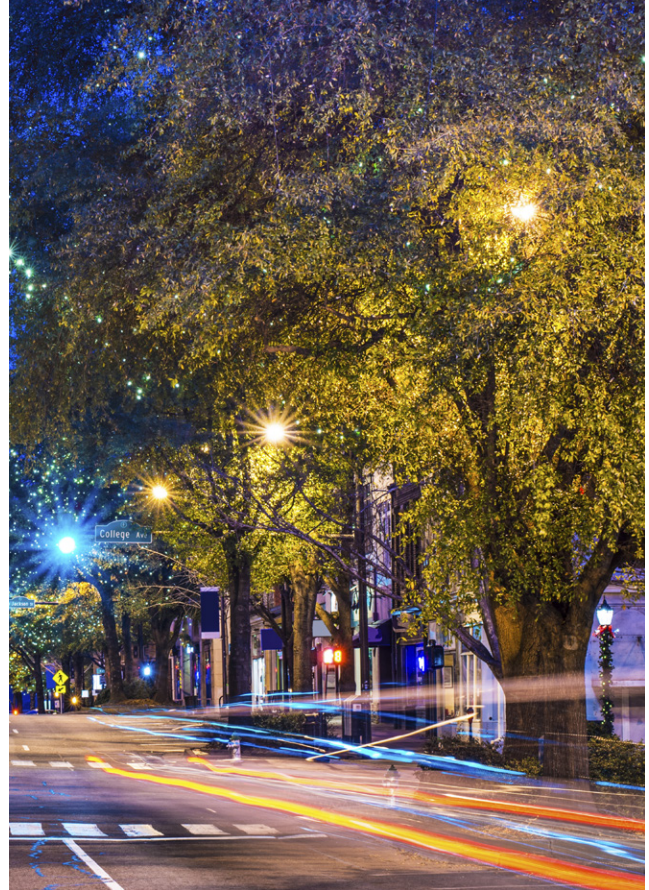
In phase 1, the grid alone offers customers the cheapest option for electric service. Solar-plus-battery systems come at a cost premium, so early adopters and technology providers will experiment with systems to leverage secondary values such as reliability/backup power and environmental benefits that are not readily available from traditional retail service. This phase gives utilities and regulators the longest runway to consider how to best capture the opportunities of grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems.

- **Phase 2: An Opportunity to Integrate**

In phase 2, solar-plus-battery systems become economic relative to grid-supplied electricity. With more favorable economics for greater customer adoption, this is an ideal time for systems to create and share value between individual customers and the grid. As grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems begin to offer economic savings compared to traditional retail electric service alone, it is in this place, at this time, that rate structures and business models can most dramatically affect the configuration of a customer's system to the sole benefit of the customer or the shared benefit of the grid.

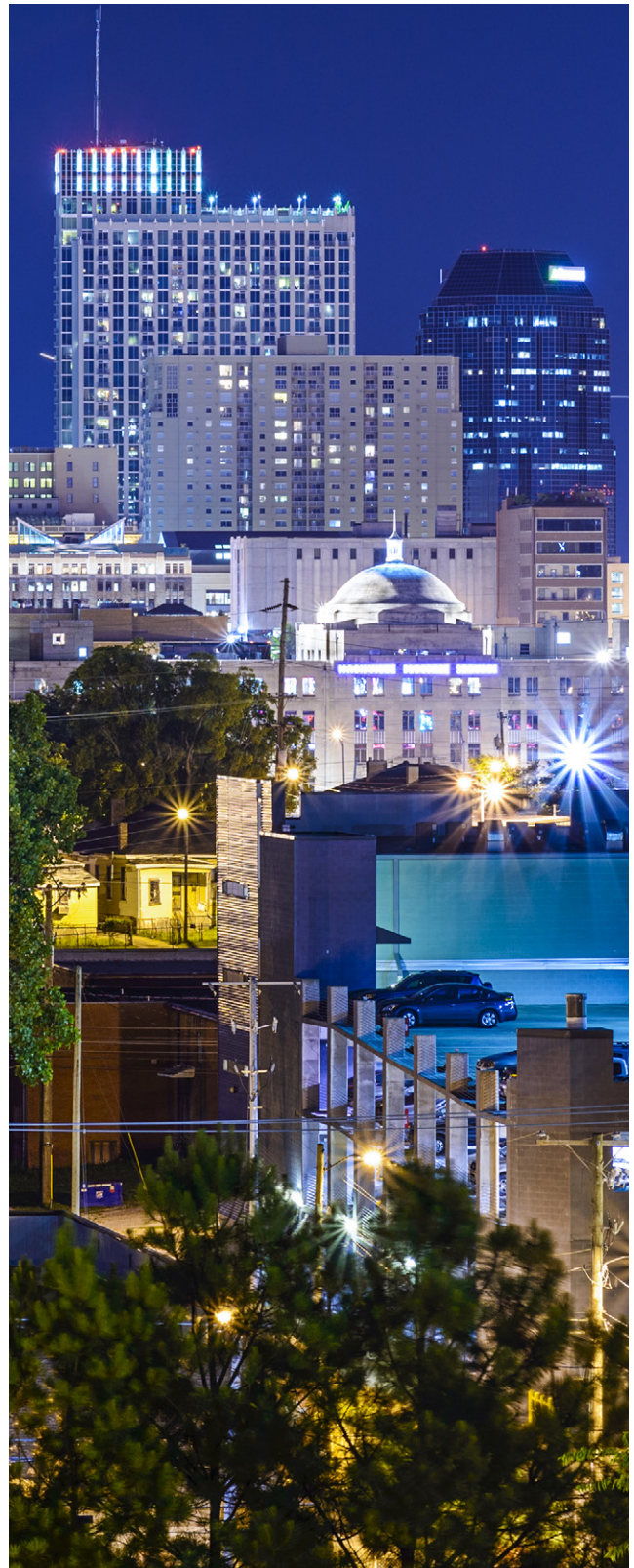
- **Phase 3: An Opportunity to Coordinate**

In phase 3, retail electric pricing has escalated enough and solar-plus-battery system costs have declined enough that the latter becomes economic to serve a customer's entire load and grid defection becomes a viable choice. Such compelling customer-facing economics make it especially urgent for utilities and regulators to adapt to this new market environment. In this phase, if utilities can identify where and how grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems are of the most value to the distribution and macrogrid systems, there is an opportunity to streamline and efficiently manage the growing number of interconnections. However, there is a risk that if utilities make interconnection and transaction with the grid too onerous, customers will pursue complete grid defection.

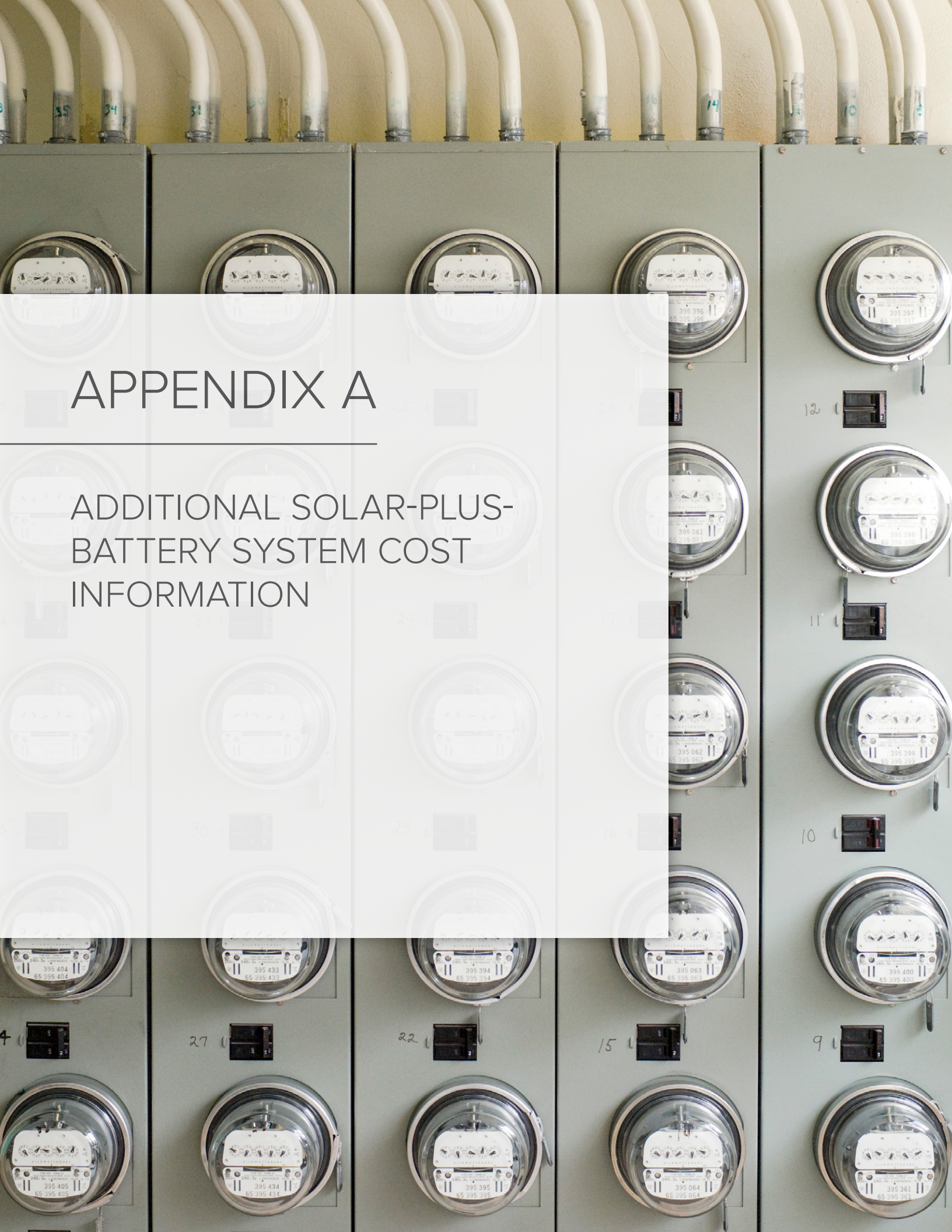


CONCLUSION

Regardless of how they are implemented, solar-plus-battery systems will play an important role in the electricity system of the future. For customers, they promise lower and more stable pricing; secondary values such as reliability; and a low-carbon alternative to fossil-fueled power plants. However, without a dramatic evolution of our electricity system to accommodate them, they will play the role of disruptor, with ever-increasing levels of load defection and some portion of actual grid defection straining incumbent electricity system generators and the customers who depend solely on the grid for their electric service. If, on the other hand, incumbent electricity system players are able to quickly recognize, and price, the values that solar-plus-battery systems provide, then these systems can play a very different role, by lowering costs for distribution grid operators, providing values laterally to other customers on the distribution grid, and reducing high costs associated with peak load. But to make this latter path a reality we will need pricing, business model, and regulatory changes, all designed with the goal of giving distributed solar-plus-storage systems a chance to compete on a level playing field with other resources on the grid. Given the fast-approaching and rapidly improving economics of these technologies, it is critical that these reforms happen quickly, prior to investments or investment pressure for systems that are designed primarily for load defection alone.



Sean Pavone/Shutterstock.com



APPENDIX A

ADDITIONAL SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY SYSTEM COST INFORMATION

APPENDIX A

ADDITIONAL SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY SYSTEM COST INFORMATION

SOLAR PV

All solar PV costs were normalized to 2012 U.S. dollars using the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index Inflation Calculator. Some data sources had merged PV cost curves, combining residential and commercial systems for average market costs. In these combined market data cases, we utilized market cost deltas from other references to create data resolution for residential and commercial costs.

The PV costs use total installed costs, and therefore include a grid-tied inverter. To separate PV costs from the inverter, we used the BNEF *PV Market Outlook* report as a reference because it included disaggregated PV, including separate values for the PV module, inverter, and balance of systems.

With this data, we calculated the proportion of total installed PV costs that came from the inverter alone. The average, 8%, was used to separate the installed curve into separate “PV without inverter” and “inverter” values.

The inverter included in grid-connected PV systems is a grid-tied inverter. A grid-tied inverter is not capable of islanding or providing other off-grid capabilities. In contrast, an off-grid inverter can operate without a grid connection and includes a battery charging system, additional control capabilities, and additional hardwire and wiring (but not batteries). An off-grid inverter is 25–30% more expensive than a grid-tied inverter.^h Using this as our basis, we applied a 25% increase to the commercial inverter cost curve and a 30% increase to the residential inverter cost.

BATTERIES

BNEF’s battery projections covered the period 2012–2030. In order to perform our modeling through 2050, we conservatively held the battery price reduction percentage constant year-over-year through 2050. Our final projection applied a 1.9% reduction to each year’s price, resulting in \$99/kWh by 2050. To arrive at 1.9%, we considered multiple best-fit curves, and selected a power-fit trend line as the most conservative and realistic forward projection of battery costs. We chose to use only the 2021–2030 data for our 1.9% annual price reduction since this range presented a steady and much more conservative outlook, compared to 2012–2020, which varied by 4–15% each year.

^h The 25–30% cost premium is based on confidential interviews with major inverter suppliers.



APPENDIX B

ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL PERFORMANCE ASSUMPTIONS

APPENDIX B

ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL PERFORMANCE ASSUMPTIONS

This appendix includes a description of a number of the detailed technical performance assumptions used in the modeling.

PARAMETER	VALUE	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
Solar panel lifetime	25 years	The expected lifetime of the solar PV modules.	This is typical of the lifetime warranty that solar panel manufacturers offer
Performance de-rate	78%	Actual installed performance as compared to laboratory performance. 100% would match laboratory performance.	Professional experience
Net installed capacity limit (residential)	20 kW _p	Represents a rough limit due to available PV array installation area. Actual limit will vary based on roof orientation/tilt, area, and PV array efficiency.	Assumed based on an available roof area of a typical home.
Net installed capacity limit (commercial)	None	Commercial space limits will vary substantially by business type and location, so were not included.	Assumed
Installed cost	Varies by year	See Appendix E: Financial Assumptions	
PV slope	Matched to latitude	The angle at which the PV panels are mounted relative to horizontal	Standard industry practice is to set the slope equal to latitude.

Table A1 – PV array technical assumptions

Battery technical assumptions

A battery enables an off-grid system to store energy and moderate power flows to maximize the operational efficiency of the system. A battery is a critical component of most hybrid power systems.

The battery used in the model is intended to represent a generic battery with 1 kWh of capacity. However, due to its current promise as an efficient, durable, shelf-stable battery with excellent power characteristics, lithium-ion (in particular LiFePO₄) was used as a basis for specification development. There

are many promising technologies that may exceed both the technical and economic performance of these batteries, including advanced lead acid, other novel chemistries, or flow batteries. The authors do not take a position on which chemistry is superior, but have consolidated professional experience with subject matter expert (SME) interviews and a literature review to develop the battery model used in the analysis. It is clear that the storage technology of the future will be low(er) cost, have high roundtrip storage efficiency, and have strong power performance relative to energy storage capabilities.

PARAMETER	VALUE	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
Capacity	1 kWh	The nominal storage capacity of the battery	Author-imposed selection to make analysis generic and transferable
Calendar life (float life)	15 years	The maximum lifetime of the battery, regardless of use	Professional experience validated with anecdotal review of LiFePO ₄ specification sheets
Lifetime throughput	3,750 cycles at 80% depth of discharge	The total amount of energy that can be cycled through the battery before it needs replacement	Professional experience validated with anecdotal review of LiFePO ₄ specification sheets
Roundtrip efficiency	90%	The round trip DC-to-storage-to-DC efficiency of the battery bank	Professional experience
Minimum state of charge	20%	The relative state of charge below which the battery bank is never drawn	Professional experience
Maximum charge power	1 kW	The maximum power that can be used to charge each battery	Professional experience validated with anecdotal review of LiFePO ₄ specification sheets
Maximum discharge power	3 kW	The maximum power that each battery can discharge	Professional experience validated with anecdotal review of LiFePO ₄ specification sheets
Installed cost	Varies by year	See Appendix E: Financial Assumptions	Review of literature validated with SME interviews (see main report for full source list)

Table A2 – Battery technical assumptions

Converter (inverter/rectifier) technical assumptions

A converter converts electricity from alternating current (AC) to direct current (DC) and vice-versa. A converter is composed of two major components: an inverter that converts AC electricity to DC, and a rectifier (aka charger) that converts DC to AC. Grid-tied inverter costs were derived from the PV costs listed in Appendix TK. We calculated the cost breakdown based on the BNEF PV Market Outlook report. It included disaggregated PV including separate values for the PV module, inverter, and balance of systems. The on-grid inverter costs represented from 7.8% to 9.5%, depending on the year. The average percentage, 8%, was used to derive the inverter costs from the installed PV cost curves.

The inverter installed in typical grid-connected PV systems is a grid-tie (aka grid-following) inverter. A grid-tied inverter is not capable of islanding or providing other off-grid capabilities. In contrast, an off-grid inverter can operate without a grid connection and includes a battery charging system, grid controls, and additional hardware and wiring (but not batteries). An off-grid inverter is 25-30% more expensive than a grid-tied inverter.¹ Using this as our basis, we applied a 25% increase to the commercial inverter cost curve and a 30% increase to the residential inverter cost.

¹ The 25–30% cost premium is based on interviews with a major inverter supplier that asked not to be identified.

PARAMETER	VALUE	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
Inverter type	Grid forming	An off-grid inverter can operate without a grid connection and includes a battery charging system, grid controls, and additional hardware and wiring (but not batteries)	
Rectifier/charger efficiency (AC to DC)	90%	The efficiency of converting electricity from AC to DC	Professional experience validated with SME interviews
Inverter efficiency (DC to AC)	95%	The efficiency of converting electricity from DC to AC	Professional experience validated with SME interviews
Off-grid inverter cost premium (residential/commercial)	30% / 25%	An off-grid inverter is more expensive than a grid-tie inverter	Major inverter supplier that asked not to be identified
Installed cost	Varies by year	See Appendix E: Financial Assumptions	Review of literature validated with SME interviews (see main report for full source list)

Table A3 – Inverter technical assumptions





APPENDIX C

GRID SERVICE TECHNICAL ASSUMPTIONS

APPENDIX C

GRID SERVICE TECHNICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Our analysis used several rate variables to model a grid connection. The rate variables allowed us to define the cost structure of buying electricity from the grid and selling it back through net energy metering.

Using scheduled rates we were able to set specific summer and winter schedules to match the rates

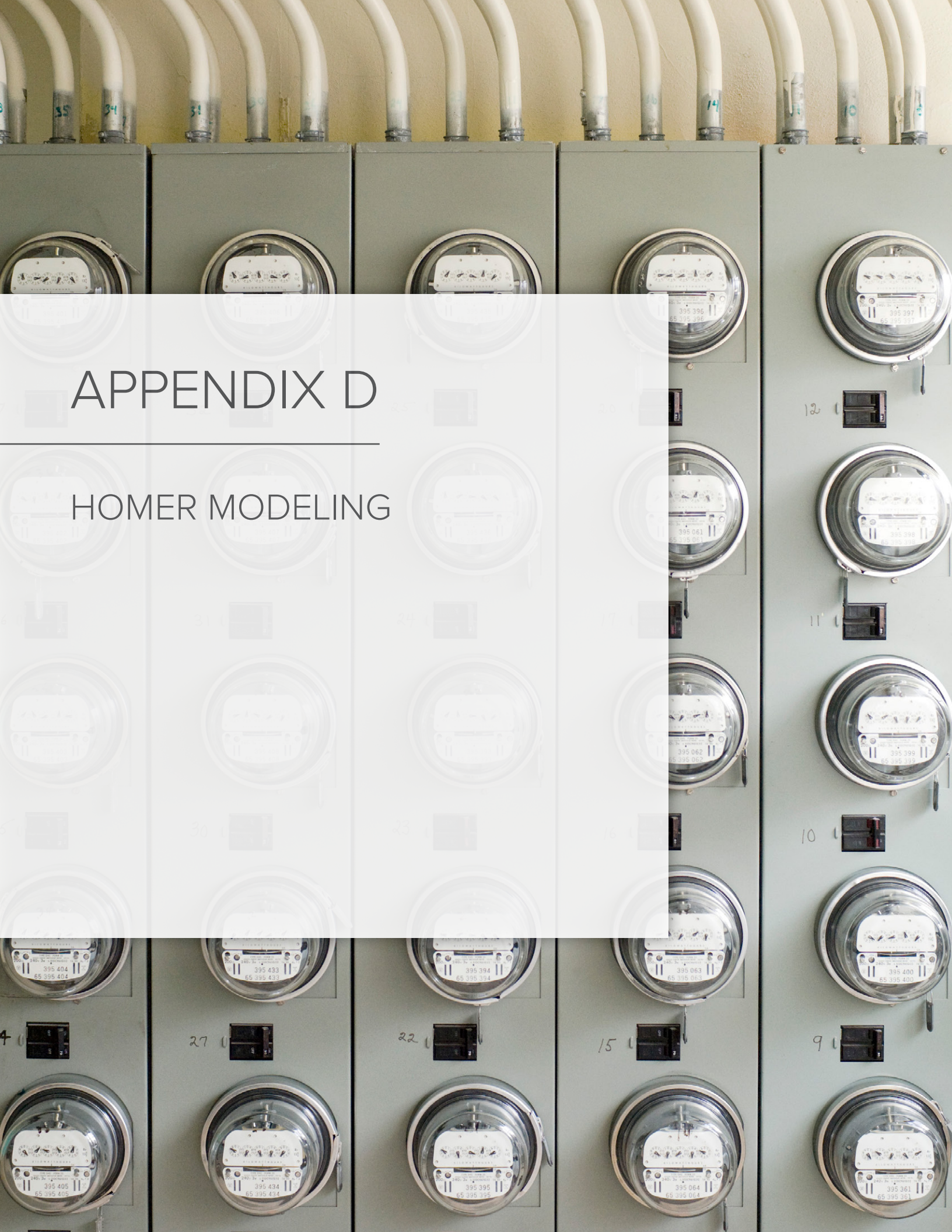
found in the Genability database. The residential models used a volumetric power price only, which did not change based on time of day or month in the year. Most of the commercial customers had different summer and winter rates, demand and fixed charges, which are further described in rate Table 2.

PARAMETER	VALUE	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
Rate type	Scheduled rate	Allows different grid rates to be applied by an hourly and monthly schedule.	Genability
Power price	Varies based on location (see table 2)	The cost of buying power from the grid in \$/kWh (i.e., volumetric rate).	Genability (with an annual 3%-real increase)
Demand rate	Varies based on location (see rate table TK) \$0.00/kW/mo for all residential models	The monthly fee charged by the utility on the monthly peak demand.	Genability (with an annual 3%-real increase)
System fixed O&M cost (this variable is found in the Economic Inputs section of HOMER)	Varies based on location (see rate table TK) \$0.00/year for all residential models	The fixed recurring annual costs that occur regardless of the size or architecture of the system. We used this variable to capture the rate fixed charges since the grid inputs do not have a place to input this cost.	Genability (with an annual 3%-real increase)
Sellback rate	\$0.00/kWh	The price that the utility pays for power sold back to the grid. Under net metering, the sellback rate only applies to net excess generation.	Conservatively set to \$0.
Time period	All Week	Signifies when the rate schedule applies; other choices are weekdays only or weekends only.	Genability
Net metering	Annual billing period	This setting allows energy to be sold back to the grid at the retail rate. At the end of the billing period (set to annually in our model), charges for the net amount purchased are calculated (purchases minus sales). If the net amount is negative, meaning more is sold than bought over the billing period, the utility pays according to the sellback rate.	
Emissions factors	Carbon dioxide (g/kWh) = 632 Sulfur dioxide (g/kWh) = 2.74 Nitrogen oxides (g/kWh) = 1.34	Emissions factors from grid power of various pollutants. These can be changed to match the generation mix of a particular area.	Default HOMER values were unchanged since this was not a core analysis area of our study.

Table A4 – Grid connection technical assumptions

PARAMETER	VALUE	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
Interconnection charge	\$0	One-time fee charged by the utility for connecting to the grid.	<p>Due to the complexity in interconnection charges from utility to utility, we chose to leave this value unchanged.</p> <p>Adding this charge presents an opportunity for further research to model all applicable charges for a specific utility and customer.</p>
Standby charge	\$0.00/year	Annual fee charged by the utility for providing backup grid power.	<p>Due to the complexity in interconnection charges from utility to utility, we chose to leave this value unchanged.</p> <p>Adding this charge presents an opportunity for further research to model all applicable charges for a specific utility and customer.</p>
Maximum grid purchase capacity	<p>Allowed for various levels ranging from 0kW up to but not including the peak demand for each geography. Additionally a value of 1000kW was included to represent an unlimited grid connection.</p> <p>*Net metered models used a value of 1000kW only.</p>	Maximum amount of power that can be drawn from the grid. HOMER finds the optimal value of grid purchase capacity per simulation time step.	<p>Tested a large range of values in the non-net metered models only.</p> <p>*To match current net metering schemes, no limit was set to the grid connection level.</p>

Table A4 – Grid connection technical assumptions (Continued)



APPENDIX D

HOMER MODELING

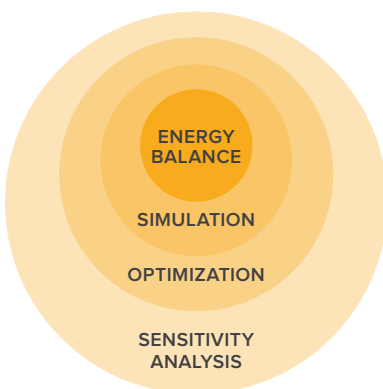
APPENDIX D

HOMER MODELING

The HOMER® software model uses a chronological annual simulation to determine how systems with different sets of equipment can be used meet an electrical load. The annual simulation includes an hour-by-hour energy balance that determines how energy generators and storage are dispatched. This simulation underpins all analyses in HOMER.

The input data for the simulation includes equipment costs, performance data, solar and fuel resource data, efficiency, and equipment sizes. Based on these inputs, HOMER simulates how these different systems will perform. By varying the HOMER capacity of installed equipment within a user-defined search space determines the optimal set of equipment in a location. HOMER’s optimization ranks the simulated systems by net present cost (NPC), which accounts for all of the discounted operating costs over the system’s lifetime.

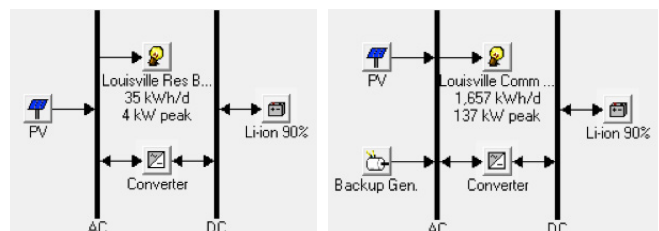
In addition to varying the capacity of the installed equipment, the user may also use HOMER’s automated sensitivity analyses by varying the underlying assumptions for a location—for example, the cost of diesel fuel or the installed cost of equipment. Sensitivity analysis is different from optimization because it varies things that a system designer cannot control. This enables the model to make a distinction between things the user can control in the design (e.g., the size of a diesel generator) from those the user can’t control (e.g., diesel fuel price). Together, simulation, optimization, and sensitivity analysis form the foundation for HOMER analysis:



An hourly simulation includes 8,760 annual energy balances in a simulation (one for each hour of the year). Optimizations encompass a number of chronological annual simulations, and a sensitivity analysis encompasses a number of optimizations. Together, these can be used to determine what system is optimally suited for a particular location, and how that optimal system might change in the face of data uncertainty or future variation.

Applying the HOMER model to the market

Using the HOMER software, we developed energy models for representative residential and commercial off-grid markets in each geographic region. Model inputs including component costs, electrical load profiles, fuel prices, and geographical location were based on the base case data. All residential sites were powered exclusively by PV and battery storage. Commercial sites were modeled both with and without a standby generator sized to 110% of the system peak load. In all systems, the PV array was modeled to include a dedicated inverter to allow it to connect directly to the AC bus. The battery bank was connected to the system on the DC bus. The converter to transfer electricity from the AC to DC bus was modeled to be a grid-forming inverter with battery charger. Each location had a different load profile, based on NREL OpenEI data. The HOMER model schematic for the Louisville residential and commercial models can be seen below.





APPENDIX E

FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS SECTION

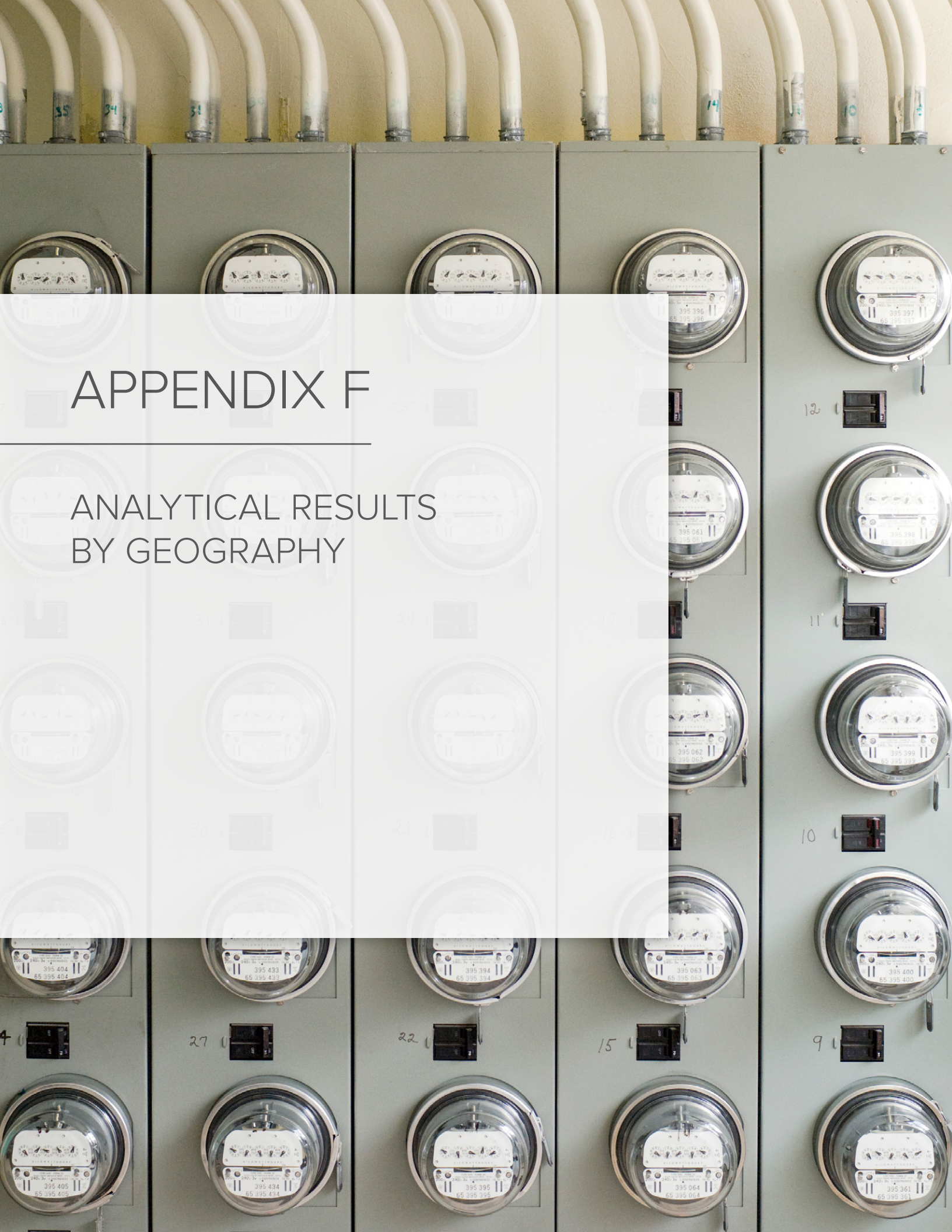
APPENDIX E

FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS SECTION

For the purposes of this report, the researchers made several key financial assumptions:

- 1. First-Party (Host-Owned) Ownership of Residential and Commercial Systems**—Many solar PV systems in the U.S. are built using a third-party financing model where the system host pays a per kWh rate to a third-party financier, allowing for system cost recovery over the life of the power purchase agreement. The third-party finance model is largely based upon the fact that third-party finance entities can utilize more tax credits than most property owners. However, since not all of the current tax credits are scheduled to extend far into the future, the researchers chose to model first-party system ownership.
- 2. The Models Only Consider Federal Tax Credits**—To control for potential incentives, only federal tax credits were considered for the models; no local or state tax treatments were applied. No assumptions were made about the renewal of key federal tax credits.
- 3. Assumed Discount Rates**—These rates were used to discount system operation and maintenance costs and forecast soft costs to the projected construction date. This allowed the researchers to determine the net present value of systems built in the future.

Interest Rates (weighted average cost of capital)		
Year	Residential	Commercial
2014	8.8%	9.5%
2015	8.2%	8.7%
2016	7.8%	8.7%
2017	5.1%	5.4%
2018	4.9%	4.9%
2019	4.6%	4.5%
2020	4.6%	4.4%
2021	4.6%	4.4%
2022	4.6%	4.4%
2023	4.6%	4.4%
2024	4.6%	4.4%
2025	4.6%	4.4%
2026	4.6%	4.4%
2027	4.6%	4.4%
2028	4.6%	4.4%
2029	4.6%	4.4%
2030	4.6%	4.4%
2031	4.6%	4.4%
2032	4.6%	4.4%
2033	4.6%	4.4%
2034	4.6%	4.4%
2035	4.6%	4.4%
2036	4.6%	4.4%
2037	4.6%	4.4%
2038	4.6%	4.4%
2039	4.6%	4.4%
2040	4.6%	4.4%
2041	4.6%	4.4%
2042	4.6%	4.4%
2043	4.6%	4.4%
2044	4.6%	4.4%
2045	4.6%	4.4%
2046	4.6%	4.4%
2047	4.6%	4.4%
2048	4.6%	4.4%
2049	4.6%	4.4%
2050	4.6%	4.4%



APPENDIX F

ANALYTICAL RESULTS BY GEOGRAPHY

RESIDENTIAL TABLES - HONOLULU, HI

Year	Volumetric Power Price \$/kWh	Grid kW	PV kW	1kWh Li-ion kWh	Converter kW	Total Capital Cost \$	Total NPC \$	Total Annual Capital Cost \$/yr	Total Annual Replacement Cost \$/yr	Total O&M Cost \$/yr	Total Annual Cost \$/yr	Operating Cost \$/yr	COE \$/kWh	PV Production kWh/yr	Grid Purchases kWh/yr	Grid Sales kWh/yr	Grid Net Purchases kWh/yr	Total Electrical Production kWh/yr	AC Primary Load Served kWh/yr	Renewable Fraction %	Excess Electricity kWh/yr	Battery Autonomy hr	Battery Throughput kWh/yr
2014	0.363	3.3	3	0	0	8,010	44,924	802	191	3,697	4,500	3,697	0.311	4,793	10,186	0	10,186	14,978	14,490	30%	488	0	0
2016	0.385	3.15	6	13	2	19,305	48,202	1,778	191	2,469	4,439	2,661	0.306	9,585	6,348	0	6,348	15,933	14,490	56%	746	6.29	2,630
2018	0.408	3.05	8	23	3	35,610	63,993	2,501	330	1,664	4,495	1,994	0.31	12,781	3,962	0	3,962	16,743	14,489	73%	992	11.13	4,755
2020	0.433	3.05	9	29	4	37,496	61,103	2,555	363	1,245	4,163	1,608	0.287	14,378	2,741	0	2,741	17,119	14,489	81%	1,058	14.03	5,925
2022	0.46	3	10	32	4	37,515	57,585	2,556	352	1,016	3,924	1,367	0.271	15,976	2,071	0	2,071	18,047	14,489	86%	1,828	15.48	6,519
2024	0.488	2.95	11	35	5	37,945	54,604	2,585	340	795	3,720	1,135	0.257	17,573	1,486	0	1,486	19,060	14,488	90%	2,703	16.93	7,042
2026	0.517	2.95	11	35	5	35,610	52,416	2,426	306	839	3,571	1,145	0.247	17,573	1,486	0	1,486	19,060	14,488	90%	2,703	16.93	7,042
2028	0.549	2.95	11	35	5	34,060	51,147	2,321	279	886	3,485	1,164	0.241	17,573	1,486	0	1,486	19,060	14,488	90%	2,703	16.93	7,042
2030	0.582	2.95	11	36	5	33,137	50,423	2,258	262	916	3,436	1,178	0.237	17,573	1,449	0	1,449	19,022	14,488	90%	2,655	17.41	7,083
2032	0.618	2.9	12	36	5	34,735	50,473	2,367	257	815	3,439	1,072	0.237	19,171	1,203	0	1,203	20,374	14,488	92%	3,965	17.41	7,245
2034	0.655	2.9	12	37	5	34,649	50,745	2,361	255	842	3,457	1,097	0.239	19,171	1,172	0	1,172	20,343	14,488	92%	3,924	17.9	7,280
2036	0.695	2.9	12	37	5	34,258	50,981	2,344	251	889	3,474	1,139	0.24	19,171	1,172	0	1,172	20,343	14,488	92%	3,924	17.9	7,280
2038	0.738	2.85	12	40	5	34,630	51,393	2,360	264	878	3,502	1,142	0.242	19,171	1,082	0	1,082	20,253	14,487	93%	3,812	19.35	7,379
2040	0.782	2.85	12	41	5	34,582	51,791	2,356	266	906	3,529	1,173	0.244	19,171	1,054	0	1,054	20,224	14,487	93%	3,776	19.83	7,410
2042	0.83	2.85	12	44	5	34,868	52,099	2,376	277	897	3,576	1,205	0.247	19,171	974	0	974	20,145	14,487	93%	3,675	21.28	7,498
2044	0.881	2.85	12	45	5	34,794	52,480	2,371	279	926	3,599	1,205	0.248	20,769	774	0	774	21,542	14,486	93%	3,645	21.77	7,525
2046	0.934	2.75	13	46	5	36,757	52,824	2,504	280	815	3,599	1,095	0.248	20,769	774	0	774	21,542	14,486	93%	3,645	21.77	7,525
2048	0.991	2.75	13	47	5	36,539	52,996	2,490	281	840	3,611	1,121	0.249	20,769	753	0	753	21,522	14,486	93%	3,645	21.77	7,525
2050	1.052	2.7	13	50	5	36,955	53,435	2,518	292	831	3,641	1,123	0.251	20,769	695	0	695	21,463	14,485	93%	3,645	21.77	7,525

Year	Volumetric Power Price \$/kWh	Grid kW	PV kW	1kWh Li-ion kWh	Converter kW	Total Capital Cost \$	Total NPC \$	Total Annual Capital Cost \$/yr	Total Annual Replacement Cost \$/yr	Total O&M Cost \$/yr	Total Annual Cost \$/yr	Operating Cost \$/yr	COE \$/kWh	PV Production kWh/yr	Grid Purchases kWh/yr	Grid Sales kWh/yr	Grid Net Purchases kWh/yr	Total Electrical Production kWh/yr	AC Primary Load Served kWh/yr	Renewable Fraction %	Excess Electricity kWh/yr	Battery Autonomy hr	Battery Throughput kWh/yr
2014	0.363	1000	9	0	0	24,030	24,437	2,407	0	41	2,448	41	0.09	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2016	0.385	1000	9	0	0	21,150	21,619	1,948	0	43	1,991	43	0.089	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2018	0.408	1000	9	0	0	27,270	27,923	1,916	0	46	1,961	46	0.087	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2020	0.433	1000	9	0	0	24,750	25,464	1,686	0	49	1,735	49	0.077	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2022	0.46	1000	9	0	0	22,590	23,347	1,539	0	52	1,591	52	0.071	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2024	0.488	1000	9	0	0	20,970	21,773	1,429	0	55	1,484	55	0.066	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2026	0.517	1000	9	0	0	20,070	20,922	1,367	0	58	1,426	58	0.063	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2028	0.549	1000	9	0	0	19,620	20,524	1,377	0	62	1,398	62	0.062	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2030	0.582	1000	9	0	0	19,260	20,219	1,312	0	65	1,378	65	0.061	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2032	0.618	1000	9	0	0	19,080	20,098	1,300	0	69	1,369	69	0.061	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2034	0.655	1000	9	0	0	18,990	20,070	1,294	0	74	1,367	74	0.061	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2036	0.695	1000	9	0	0	18,810	19,955	1,282	0	78	1,360	78	0.061	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2038	0.738	1000	9	0	0	18,720	19,935	1,275	0	83	1,358	83	0.06	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2040	0.782	1000	9	0	0	18,630	19,919	1,269	0	88	1,357	88	0.06	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2042	0.83	1000	9	0	0	18,540	19,908	1,263	0	93	1,356	93	0.06	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2044	0.881	1000	9	0	0	18,450	19,901	1,257	0	99	1,356	99	0.06	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2046	0.934	1000	9	0	0	18,360	19,899	1,251	0	105	1,356	105	0.06	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2048	0.991	1000	9	0	0	18,180	19,813	1,239	0	111	1,350	111	0.06	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0
2050	1.052	1000	9	0	0	18,180	19,913	1,239	0	118	1,357	118	0.06	14,378	8,083	7,970	112	22,461	14,490	64%	0	0	0

RESIDENTIAL TABLES - ALL LOCATIONS

Year	PV Capital Cost \$/Wdc	PV Replacement Cost \$/Wdc	Li-ion 1kWh Battery Capital Cost \$/kWh	Li-ion 1kWh Battery Replacement Cost \$/kWh	Converter Capital Cost \$	Converter Replacement Cost \$	Interest Rate %
2014	2.67	3.82	433.92	619.88	0.34	0.49	8.8
2016	2.35	3.35	354.23	506.05	0.3	0.43	7.8
2018	3.03	3.03	443.47	443.47	0.39	0.39	4.9
2020	2.75	2.75	391.23	391.23	0.35	0.35	4.6
2022	2.51	2.51	347.96	347.96	0.32	0.32	4.6
2024	2.33	2.33	308.99	308.99	0.3	0.3	4.6
2026	2.23	2.23	275.15	275.15	0.29	0.29	4.6
2028	2.18	2.18	248	248	0.28	0.28	4.6
2030	2.14	2.14	227.69	227.69	0.28	0.28	4.6
2032	2.12	2.12	220.7	220.7	0.27	0.27	4.6
2034	2.11	2.11	215.64	215.64	0.27	0.27	4.6
2036	2.09	2.09	211.58	211.58	0.27	0.27	4.6
2038	2.08	2.08	208.01	208.01	0.27	0.27	4.6
2040	2.07	2.07	204.68	204.68	0.27	0.27	4.6
2042	2.06	2.06	201.1	201.1	0.26	0.26	4.6
2044	2.05	2.05	197.64	197.64	0.26	0.26	4.6
2046	2.04	2.04	194.28	194.28	0.26	0.26	4.6
2048	2.02	2.02	191.04	191.04	0.26	0.26	4.6
2050	2.02	2.02	187.89	187.89	0.26	0.26	4.6



A close-up photograph of a mechanical watch movement, showing various metal components, gears, and a rotor with red markings. A white rectangular overlay is positioned on the left side of the image, containing the text 'ENDNOTES' in a simple, black, sans-serif font. Below the text is a thin horizontal line. The watch movement is highly detailed, with visible screws and engraved text on the metal plates.

ENDNOTES

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ENDNOTES

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