

Our Greene Countrie Towne

Solar in the City

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

In 2018, some time after attending a presentation by Judy Wicks and contractor Solar States about Wicks' solarized Center City house, Nancy Colman, editor of the *Center City Quarterly*, requested an estimate. Her husband, David Colman, an architect and developer, reviewed the details, and the Colmans decided to have Solar States install solar panels on their roof. It took close to a year for design, PECO approval, L&I permits, and roof repair to be completed before installation could begin. Installation of the solar panels took only two days.

"The amount of power generated depends on roof size, orientation and shading," David Colman says. The Colmans' solar panels, connected to the house's main electrical panel, now generate about one-third to one-half of the house's power needs. (Nancy Colman reports that after one billing cycle, the household charges dropped from a typical monthly rate of \$150 – 200 to \$72. This does not, of course, indicate a pattern, but it is promising.)

On cloudy days, less solar power is generated, so PECO's electric grid must provide more power. When there are lots of sunny days and the panels generate excess power, it is transferred by PECO to the grid, and PECO credits their monthly electric bill. The Colmans chose not to store power because batteries are expensive and would not be cost effective. In places that have more sunny days, such as the southwestern U.S., solar panels could supply 100 percent of the power needed for an entire house.

As required in our historic district, the panels are not visible from the street. They consist of photovoltaic arrays, mounted on racks, ballasted to the roof but not penetrating the roof. According to David Colman, the arrays are designed to last 25 to 30 years.

Solar panels can be either purchased or leased. If you buy them, federal and city tax credits can offset not only the cost of the panels but also roof repair or replacement. [Solar States](#), a Business Member of Center City Residents' Association, offers

a discount to members. Nancy Colman says, "I was principally interested in saving the environment (along with a little money in the bargain, if possible.)"

For more information about solar energy for your home and for what's happening in Pennsylvania, go to [Philadelphia Solar Energy Association](#), a local nonprofit organization dedicated to expanding solar energy across the state, or contact [Liz Robinson](#), Executive Director.

The U.S. is the fifth-largest generator of solar power in the world. California leads the states with over 3 million solar-powered homes. Four other western states are in the top ten: Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, and Texas. Five states in other U.S. regions among the top ten are New Jersey, North Carolina, Massachusetts, New York, and Hawaii. All states in the top ten (except North Carolina), plus other states, have tax rebates or incentives for solar energy.



Solar panel array installed on a Center City roof.

Out & About

So Says Fodor's When You Can't Get to London, You'll Always Have Philadelphia

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

Fodor's Travel recommends Philadelphia as one of five top destinations to visit in the U.S. in 2021, in an article titled, "If You Can't Leave the U.S. in 2021, Visit These Cities Instead." Fodor's compares Philadelphia to London, highlighting our "dynamic food scene" as well as "an abundance of pubs, a tourist-friendly pier district, and wild, cranky residents with unique accents."

The other four destinations in the U.S. recommended by Fodor's are New Orleans (instead of Paris), Miami (instead of Rio), Burlington, VT (instead of Copenhagen), and the Redwood National Park (instead of the Amazon.)