A Landowner's Guide to Solar & Battery Storage Leases

Plain-English answers on how leasing your land works, how you get paid, and what a fair lease should include.

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Good to know

This guide is general information, not legal, tax, or financial advice. Every property and lease is different. Talk to your own attorney and tax advisor before you sign.

Is my land a good fit?

Solar farm land

- 10-60 usable acres. In some states, a single project is capped at about 30 acres.
- Open, fairly flat ground. Farm fields and pasture work well.
- Near power lines or a substation and served by a major utility. We aren't leasing in electric co-op territories.
- In one of the 15 states shown below.
- Most of your usable land is outside wetlands and floodways.

Primary markets: New York, Maryland, Virginia, Illinois, New Mexico, Minnesota.

Secondary markets: Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Delaware, Ohio, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Colorado.

In Illinois, we lease solar farm land in both ComEd and Ameren territory.

Battery storage sites

- 5,000-50,000 sq ft of open outdoor space
- In ComEd territory in northern Illinois
- Near existing power lines
- Reasonable truck access

Large rooftops and parking lots: we look for those too. Ask about yours →

Ask about yours →
https://crcommunitysolar.com/submit-property.html?type=rooftop

Not sure? Send it anyway. We check the utility, power lines, and parcel details for you.

How a solar farm lease pays you

Option period (typically 4-5 years):

the developer pays you option payments while it studies the site and gets approvals. You keep farming. If the project isn't approved, you keep the option payments.

Construction:

you receive a large one-time payment when construction begins.

Operating lease (25-35 years):

annual rent, usually per acre, often with yearly increases. The developer pays project-related taxes.

End of the lease:

the developer must remove everything and restore the land.

See how lease payments work →
https://crcommunitysolar.com/landowners.html#payments

How a battery storage lease pays you

What is a battery storage site?

It's a fenced pad of large, cabinet-style batteries connected to the local power grid. It stores electricity when demand is low and sends it back when demand is high. It doesn't power your building and you don't run anything: the developer builds, insures, maintains, and eventually removes it.

Option period (typically 4 years):

the developer pays you option payments, typically $10,000 per year, while it studies the site and gets approvals. You keep the option payments even if the project isn't approved.

Construction:

you receive a one-time payment when construction begins.

Lease (typically 35 years):

annual rent while the battery site operates.

End of the lease:

the developer removes the equipment.

What the developer covers

- Property taxes on the project
- Insurance on the equipment
- Permits, safety, and maintenance
- Removal at the end of the lease
- Up to $2,500 to reimburse your own attorney for reviewing the lease

There's no cost to you.

Check My Site - Free
https://crcommunitysolar.com/submit-property.html?type=battery

Battery storage sites in northern Illinois
https://crcommunitysolar.com/batteries.html

What a fair lease should include

- Rent: how much, how it's figured (for example, per acre), and whether it goes up each year.
- Option period: how long it lasts, what it pays, and whether you keep the payments if the project isn't built.
- Construction payment: whether you get one when construction starts, and how much.
- The leased area: a map showing exactly which part of your land is leased, including access roads and power lines.
- Property taxes: who pays the taxes on the project, in writing.
- Insurance: the developer must carry insurance and protect you if someone is hurt or something is damaged.
- Crop damage: payment for any crops damaged during construction or repairs.
- Drainage tile and soil: your tile is mapped before construction, and any damage is repaired.
- Access and fencing: where roads, gates, and fences go, and how you'll reach the rest of your land.
- Removal: what gets removed at the end, how soon, and a bond or similar guarantee to pay for it. A removal bond is standard for solar farm leases in every state we serve. Make sure your solar farm lease includes one.
- If the project is sold: any new owner must keep every term of your lease.
- Ending early: when the developer can end the lease early, and what you're owed if it does.
- Your attorney: whether the developer pays for your own attorney to review the lease.

Use this list for any offer you get. We help you compare offers side by side.

10 questions to ask any developer

1. How much will you pay me each year, and does it go up over time?
2. How long is the option period, how much are the option payments, and do I keep them if the project isn't built?
3. Will I get a payment when construction starts? How much?
4. Which part of my land would you lease? Can you show me on a map?
5. Who pays the property taxes on the project? Is that in the lease?
6. How will you protect my drainage tile, soil, fences, and access to the rest of my land?
7. What insurance will you carry, and will you protect me if someone is hurt or something is damaged?
8. At the end of the lease, what will you remove, how soon, and is there a bond to pay for it?
9. If you sell the project, does the new owner have to keep every promise in my lease?
10. Will you pay for my own attorney to review the lease?

Taxes, farm programs, and insurance

Property taxes: with solar farm leases, the developer pays project-related taxes. With battery storage leases, the developer pays the property taxes on the project. Either way, make sure your lease says so in writing.

Income taxes: lease and option payments are income. Ask your tax advisor how they'll affect your taxes.

Farm programs: if any of the land is in a USDA program, such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), ask your local USDA Farm Service Agency office how a lease would affect it before you sign.

Mortgage: if your land has a mortgage, ask your lender whether it needs to approve the lease.

Insurance: on battery storage sites, the developer insures the equipment. For any lease, ask your insurance agent whether your own policy needs changes.

In Illinois, see 'If your land is in Illinois' below for how solar farm land is taxed.

'If your land is in Illinois'
https://crcommunitysolar.com/solar-guide.html#illinois

If your land is in Illinois

These answers apply only in Illinois.

Solar farm land

Who pays the property taxes on the solar farm?

The solar company does. In Illinois, the solar farm area gets its own tax parcel, and the tax bill goes to the solar company. State law makes the solar farm's owner responsible for the taxes on that land and its equipment. The rest of your farm isn't part of that parcel. Once the solar farm is removed and you farm the land again, it goes back to being taxed as farmland the next year.

Will my county approve a solar farm?

The developer handles the county application, the public hearing and the permits, so you don't have to. Since 2023, Illinois law has limited how strict county rules on solar farms can be:

- Counties can't ban solar farms in areas zoned for farming or industry.
- They must approve projects that meet the rules.
- They must decide within 30 days after the public hearing.

These rules cover land outside a city's or village's zoning area. Inside one, local zoning applies. We check which rules apply during your free review.

Will a solar farm damage my drainage tile or soil?

The Illinois Department of Agriculture has a standard agreement that protects farmland under solar farms. It's called an Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement (AIMA). The developer must sign it before the county hearing, and it becomes part of your lease. It requires the developer to:

- find and map your drainage tile with you before construction
- repair or replace any tile it damages, with tile of comparable quality
- keep your topsoil separate, and never use it for anything else without your written OK
- after the project is removed and topsoil is replaced, loosen compacted cropland to at least 18 inches where practical, or less where needed to protect drainage tile or underground utilities
- avoid working on your fields when they're too wet to farm

When we compare offers, we check that each lease includes these protections.

Read the agreement (PDF)
https://agr.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/agr/resources/aima/documents/std-solar-aima.pdf

What happens at the end of the lease?

Once the solar farm shuts down for good, the developer must remove it at its own cost within 12 months. Under the state's farmland agreement, that includes:

- the panels, racks, posts and equipment
- foundations, down to 5 feet
- access roads, unless you ask in writing to keep them
- putting back drainage tile in the solar farm area

An engineer's removal plan is filed with the county before construction. The developer must also give the county a bond or similar guarantee. It grows to cover the full estimated removal cost by the 11th year of operation. If the developer ever walks away, the county can use it to pay for removal.

Battery storage sites

Will my county approve it?

Since June 2026, Illinois law has limited county rules for battery sites over 1 megawatt. This covers land outside a city's or village's zoning area:

- Counties can't make their rules stricter than the state's.
- They can't ban battery storage in areas zoned for farming or industry.
- The county holds a public hearing and must decide within 30 days after it ends.

Inside a city or village, local zoning applies instead. Either way, the developer handles the permits, and we check which rules apply to your site during the free review.

What happens at the end?

The developer removes the equipment at the end of the lease. Where a county approves the site, Illinois law lets the county require:

- removal within 18 months after the project ends, including anything down to 3 feet below ground
- restoring the soil
- a bond or similar guarantee to pay for removal, which can protect you or the county

Is it safe?

Battery sites are designed to the national fire-safety standard for energy storage (NFPA 855) and reviewed by local officials. Where a county approves the site, Illinois law adds three more safeguards:

- safety-certified batteries
- training for the local fire department, offered by the developer before the site starts running
- a copy of the site's emergency plan for the fire department

These answers summarize Illinois rules in plain English. They aren't legal advice, and your lease and your county's process set the details for your property.

See Illinois solar farm leases →
https://crcommunitysolar.com/illinois-solar-land-lease.html

What CR does and how we're paid



We find land for the largest community solar developers in the country. Here's how it works for you:

• You send us your property. Our land team reviews it for free, usually within 1-2 weeks.

• If it's a fit, we bring it to the developers best suited to it, so more than one can make you an offer.

• We help you compare offers side by side. William stays with you through signing.

How we're paid: the developer pays us, so it's free to you. On solar farm and battery storage leases, you also get up to $2,500 reimbursed for your own attorney to review the contract.

10 years in community solar | Thousands of landowner properties reviewed | Hundreds of megawatts brought to developers

Find out what your land could earn.

Check My Land - Free
https://crcommunitysolar.com/submit-property.html

Call (508) 314-6097
tel:+15083146097

We reply within one week. Your free review usually takes 1-2 weeks.