Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What are the land requirements for a solar farm?

A: We look for large tracts of land, generally the larger the better. Ideally, the land will be mostly flat with few drainage features such as creeks and not in a flood plain.

Q: What are the benefits of a solar farm?

A: Solar farms generate revenue for participating landowners and give them a stable income for decades.

Solar farms also lead to spending on local services and large increases in local tax revenue.

The environmental benefits are clear. Solar generated electricity is clean with no air emissions and solar projects don't need the huge amounts of water required for cooling traditional resources so these projects save precious water.
Solar farms bring hundreds of construction jobs plus some permanent jobs in operations and maintenance. The additional income in the community also helps support local jobs in other service areas that support the solar farm.

Q: How do solar farms affect property values?

A: Using data from independent real estate analysts and county appraisal districts, OCI went back and looked at actual sales data on land and homes near sites we built. This information goes back to 2012 and we found no impact on property values near these existing solar facilities. Not only did the value of nearby property not go down, it actually went up at the same rate as similar land and homes further away from solar farms.

Q: Who pays the taxes on my land?

A: When the project is built, the project equipment is subject to property tax and the tax assessment changes from the agricultural rate to the commercial rate for that county. These county appraisal changes take place once equipment is installed, so OCI picks up the cost of all property taxes after the project is built.

Q: What happens to the land and equipment at the end of our agreement?

A: All OCI leases contain requirements that equipment is removed and the land is restored back to its original state at the end of the Lease period. Texas law also requires that there is financial backing in place to ensure the funds are there to remove equipment and restore the land.

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Q: What happens in development phase vs. operations phase?

A: During the Development phase of a project, landowners continue to use their land for whatever they have been doing in the past. That's the time when OCI conducts electrical interconnection studies, design work, environmental assessments, surveying and any other work prior to building the project. Access to the properties for studies is minimal and coordinated with the landowner to ensure safety and so as not to interfere with the landowner's current use.

The Operations phase is from the start of construction through the life of the project. OCI gives six months or more notice when construction is set to start so the landowner can plan for the transition. Describe more fully

Q: How does a solar farm work?

A: Solar panels work by absorbing sunlight or photons and using that light energy to create a flow of electrons, or electrical current. These panels are mounted on racks and strung together. The racks can use trackers to follow the sun's course across the sky during the day to improve output. Solar panels are paired with inverters that convert the DC electricity into a more useable form of electricity known as alternating current (AC.) The AC electricity then passes through a transformer to ensure that the power is the appropriate voltage before it is sent to the electric grid.

Q: How is the land/grounds maintained once the solar farm is operational?

A: Depending on the area, local conditions, and how well the site was designed to deal with rain evacuation, a landscaping crew will take care of the vegetation and keep it under control to avoid potential fire hazards and/or shading with the solar modules.

If there is any erosion, we will perform some civil work to be sure all the site is perfectly accessible and the roads are in good condition.

Q: What can be reused and/or recycled from a solar farm?

A: Refurbishing old solar panels is still an emerging industry, but many of panels are likely to be reused. In other cases, recycling is possible. Glass composes most of the weight of a solar panel (about 75%), and glass recycling is already a well-established industry. Other materials that are easily recyclable include the aluminum frame, copper wire, and plastic junction boxes.