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THINK ENERGY



# THE ECONOMICS OF GRID DEFLECTION

WHEN AND WHERE DISTRIBUTED SOLAR  
GENERATION PLUS STORAGE COMPETES  
WITH TRADITIONAL UTILITY SERVICE

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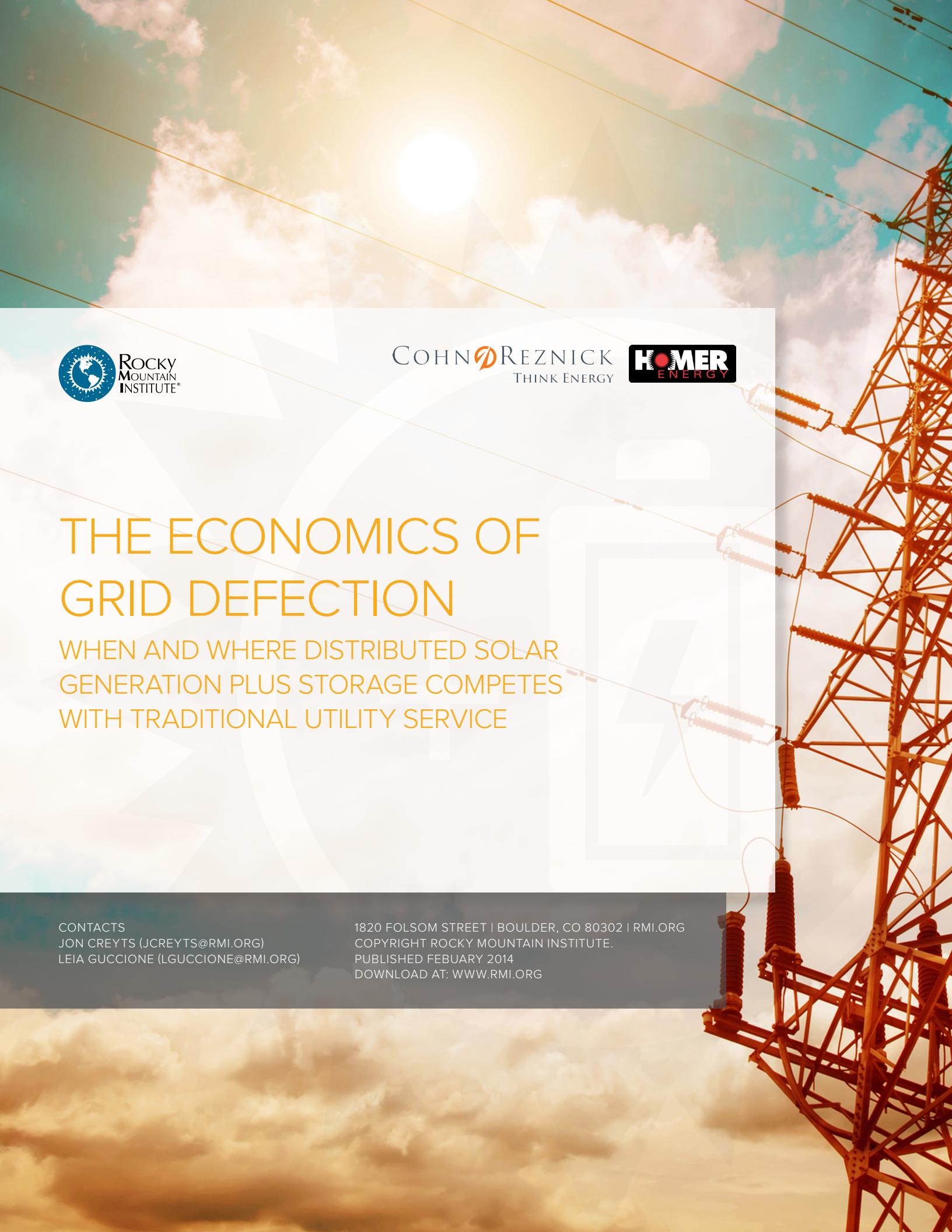
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXEC



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Distributed electricity generation, especially solar PV, is rapidly spreading and getting much cheaper. Distributed electricity storage is doing the same, thanks largely to mass production of batteries for electric vehicles. Solar power is already starting to erode some utilities' sales and revenues. But what happens when solar and battery technologies are brought together? Together they can make the electric grid optional for many customers—without compromising reliability and increasingly at prices cheaper than utility retail electricity. Equipped with a solar-plus-battery system, customers can take or leave traditional utility service with what amounts to a “utility in a box.”

This “utility in a box” represents a fundamentally different challenge for utilities. Whereas other technologies, including solar PV and other distributed resources without storage, net metering, and energy efficiency still require some degree of grid dependence, solar-plus-batteries enable customers to cut the cord to their utility entirely.

Notably, the point at which solar-plus-battery systems reach grid parity—already here in some areas and imminent in many others for millions of U.S. customers—is well within the 30-year planned economic life of central power plants and transmission infrastructure. Such parity and the customer defections it could trigger would

strand those costly utility assets. Even before mass defection, a growing number of early adopters could trigger a spiral of falling sales and rising electricity prices that make defection via solar-plus-battery systems even more attractive and undermine utilities’ traditional business models.

How soon could this happen? This analysis shows when and where U.S. customers could choose to bypass their utility without incurring higher costs or decreased reliability. It therefore maps how quickly different regions’ utilities must change how they do business or risk losing it. New market realities are creating a profoundly different competitive landscape as both utilities and their regulators are challenged to adapt. Utilities thus must be a part of helping to design new business, revenue, and regulatory models.

Our analysis focuses on five representative U.S. geographies (NY, KY, TX, CA, and HI). Those geographies cover a range of solar resource potential, retail utility electricity prices, and solar PV penetration rates, considered across both commercial and residential regionally-specific load profiles. After considering many distributed energy technologies, we focus on solar-plus-battery systems because the technologies are increasingly cost effective, relatively mature, commercially available today, and can operate fully independent of the grid, thus embodying the greatest potential threat.

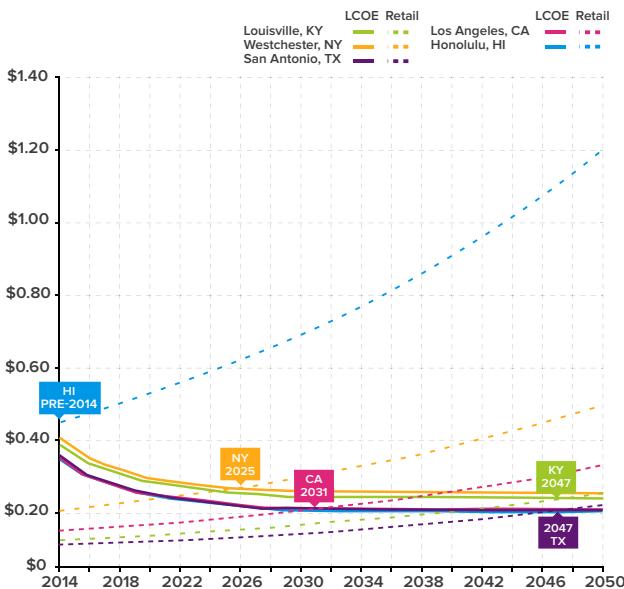


We model four possible scenarios:

1. Base case—Uses an average of generally accepted cost forecasts for solar and battery systems that can meet 100% of a building's load, in combination with occasional use of a diesel generator (for commercial systems only)
2. Accelerated technology improvement—Assumes that solar PV and battery technologies experience more aggressive cost declines, reaching or surpassing U.S. Department of Energy targets
3. Demand-side improvement—Includes investments in energy efficiency and user-controlled load flexibility
4. Combined improvement—Considers the combined effect of accelerated technology improvements and demand-side improvements

We compare our modeled scenarios against a reasonable range of retail electricity price forecasts bound by U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) forecasts on the low side and a 3%-real increase per year on the high side.

**FIGURE 1: OFF-GRID VS. UTILITY PRICE PROJECTIONS  
COMMERCIAL - BASE CASE**  
[Y-AXIS 2012\$/kWh]

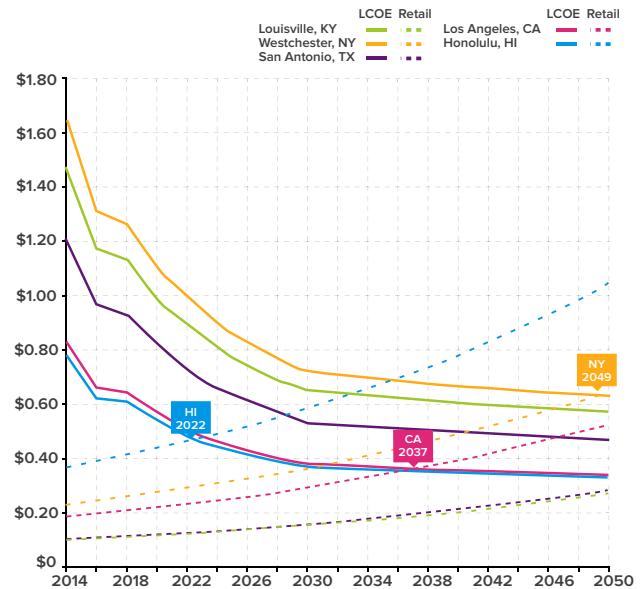


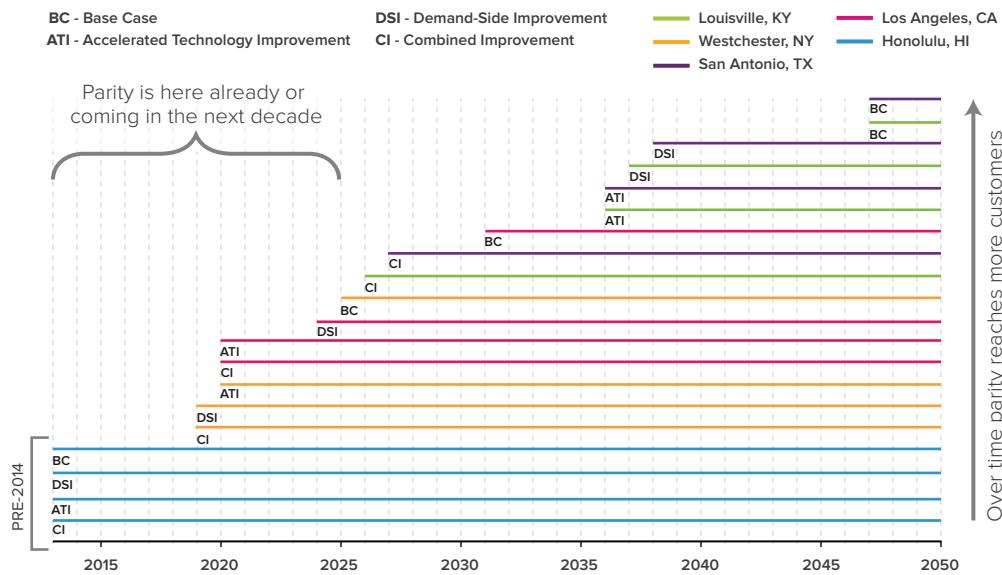
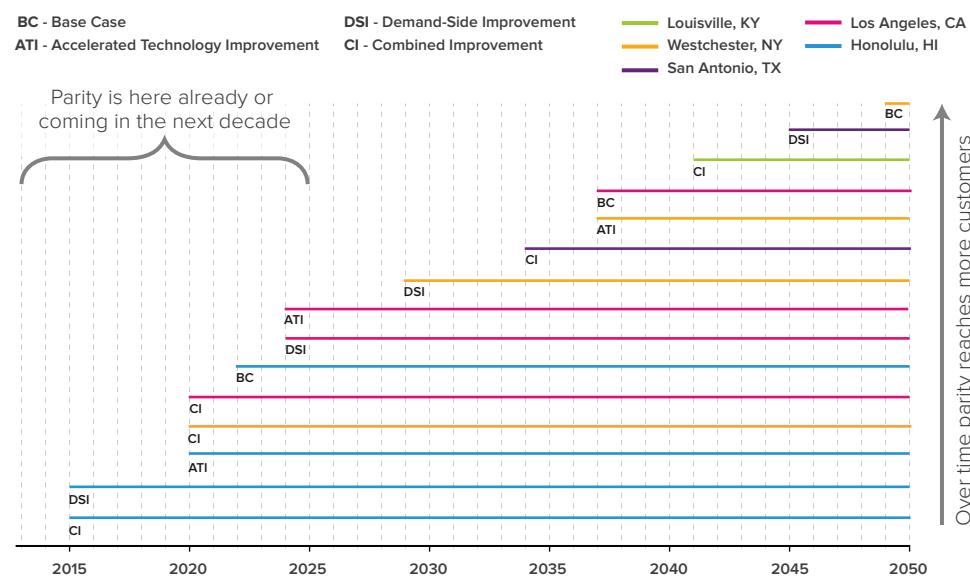
The analysis yields several important conclusions:

**1. Solar-plus-battery grid parity is here already or coming soon for a rapidly growing minority of utility customers, raising the prospect of widespread grid defection.** For certain customers, including many customer segments in Hawaii, grid parity is here today. It will likely be here before 2030 and potentially as early as 2020 for tens of millions of commercial and residential customers in additional geographies, including New York and California (see Figures 1 and 2). In general, grid parity arrives sooner for commercial than residential customers. Under more aggressive assumptions, such as accelerated technology improvements or investments in demand-side improvements, grid parity will arrive much sooner (see Figures 3 and 4).

**2. Even before total grid defection becomes widely economic, utilities will see further kWh revenue decay from solar-plus-battery systems.** Our analysis is based on average load profiles; in each geography there will be segments of the customer base for whom the economics improve much sooner. In addition,

**FIGURE 2: OFF-GRID VS. UTILITY PRICE PROJECTIONS  
RESIDENTIAL - BASE CASE**  
[Y-AXIS 2012\$/kWh]



**FIGURE 3: COMMERCIAL PARITY TIMELINE****FIGURE 4: RESIDENTIAL PARITY TIMELINE**

motivating factors such as customer desires for increased power reliability and low-carbon electricity generation are driving early adopters ahead of grid parity, including with smaller grid-dependent solar-plus-battery systems that can help reduce demand charges, provide backup power, and other benefits. Still others will look at investments in solar-plus-battery systems as part of an integrated package that includes efficiency and load flexibility. This early state could accelerate the infamous utility death spiral—self-reinforcing upward rate pressures, making further self-generation or total defection economic faster.

**3. Because grid parity arrives within the 30-year economic life of typical utility power assets, it foretells the eventual demise of traditional utility business models.** The “old” cost recovery model, based on kWh sales, by which utilities recover costs and an allowed market return on distribution networks, central power plants, and/or transmission lines will become obsolete. This is especially profound in certain regions of the country. In the Southwest across all MWh sold by utilities, for example, our conservative base case shows solar-plus-battery systems undercutting utility retail electricity prices for the most expensive one-fifth of load served in the year 2024; under more aggressive assumptions, off-grid systems prove cheaper than all utility-sold electricity in the region just a decade out from today (see Figure 5).

Though many utilities rightly see the impending arrival of solar-plus-battery grid parity as a threat, they could also see such systems as an opportunity to add value to the grid and their business models. The important next question is how utilities might adjust their existing business models or adopt new business models—either within existing regulatory frameworks or under an evolved regulatory landscape—to tap into and maximize new sources of value that build the best electricity system of the future at lowest cost to serve customers and society. These questions will be the subject of a forthcoming companion piece.

**FIGURE 5:** U.S. SOUTHWEST 2024 OFF-GRID COMMERCIAL SCENARIOS VS. ESTIMATED UTILITY DECILES [Y-AXIS - 2012\$/kWh]



# INTRODUCTION

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01

# INTRODUCTION

Utilities in the United States today face a variety of challenges to their traditional business models. An aging grid makes substantial investment in maintaining and modernizing system infrastructure a looming need. Meanwhile, myriad factors are making kWh sales decay a real concern, threatening the traditional mechanism by which regulated utilities recover costs and earn allowed market returns associated with infrastructure investment, as well as threatening the business model for all other types of utilities. These factors include:

- The falling costs and growing adoption of distributed generation (DG) and the prevalence of net-metering policies for integrating that DG
- Flat or even declining electricity demand, driven in part by increasing energy efficiency efforts as well as expanding demand-side strategies to manage electricity consumption

In addition, the electricity sector faces increasing social and regulatory pressures to reduce the carbon intensity and other environmental and health impacts of power generation.

Together, these forces undermine the “old” model of central power generation, transmission, and distribution. In particular, the combination of increasing costs and declining revenues creates upward price pressure. Yet higher retail electricity prices further prompt customers to invest in efficiency and distributed generation, creating a self-reinforcing cycle sometimes known as the utility death spiral (see Figure 6, page 12).

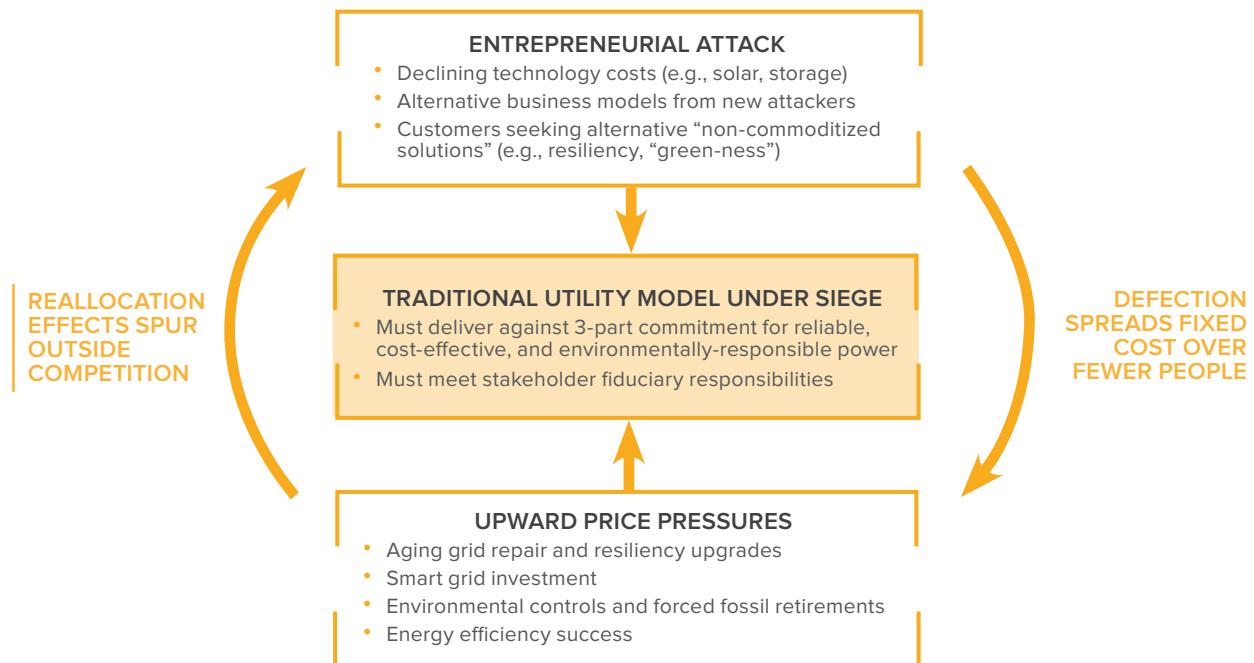
The idea of a utility death spiral, while not new, is increasingly relevant in its potential reality. Once upon a time, the utility death spiral was considered a potential outcome of efficiency. The growth of grid-connected distributed generation later added to death spiral concern. And while some customers have more choice than others, the trend of increasing

options for electricity supply is likely here to stay. Now, there’s also a fundamentally different growing threat and emerging opportunity wrapped up into one: combined distributed generation and energy storage. Other challenges, such as DG alone and energy efficiency, still maintain customers’ grid dependence. Combined DG and storage, and in particular, solar-plus-battery systems, give a customer the option to go from grid connected to grid defected—customers could secede from the macro grid entirely.

Utilities have recently acknowledged this day could come. The Edison Electric Institute’s January 2013 report, *Disruptive Challenges*,<sup>1</sup> noted:

Due to the variable nature of renewables, there is a perception that customers will always need to remain on the grid. While we would expect customers to remain on the grid until a fully viable and economic distributed non-variable resource is available, one can imagine a day when battery storage technology or micro turbines could allow customers to be electric grid independent.

Two mutually reinforcing accelerants—declining costs for distributed energy technologies and increasing adoption of those technologies—are rapidly transforming the electricity market in ways that suggest grid parity (i.e., economic and technical service equality with the electrical grid) for solar-plus-battery systems is coming sooner than many had anticipated.

**FIGURE 6:** PRESSURE ON TRADITIONAL UTILITY BUSINESS MODELS

## DECLINING COSTS FOR DISTRIBUTED ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES

### Trends for Solar PV

The distributed U.S. solar industry has experienced robust growth in recent years, delivering an average annual installed capacity increase of 62% from 2010 to 2012.<sup>2</sup> Lower hardware costs (largely thanks to the collapse in PV module prices) and the rapid expansion of third-party financing for residential and commercial customers have fueled this growth.

We expect solar PV’s levelized cost of energy (LCOE) to continue to decline through 2020 and beyond, despite both the likely end of the residential renewable energy tax credit and the reduction (from 30% to 10%) of the business energy investment tax credit in 2016. Further drops in upfront costs per installed Watt and additional improvements in solar PV finance (i.e., reduced cost of capital) will help drive the continued declines in solar PV’s LCOE.

**FIGURE 7:** OPPORTUNITY SPECTRUM FOR ELECTRICITY END USERS

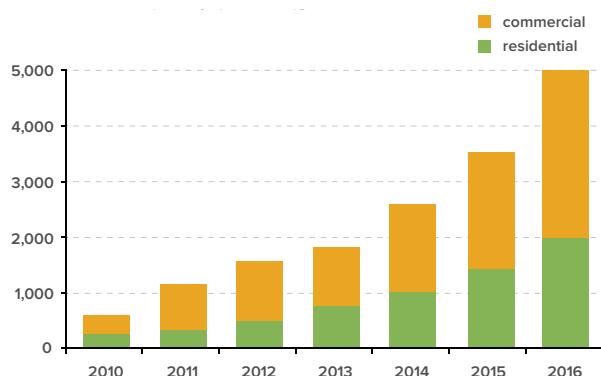


### Trends for Battery Technology

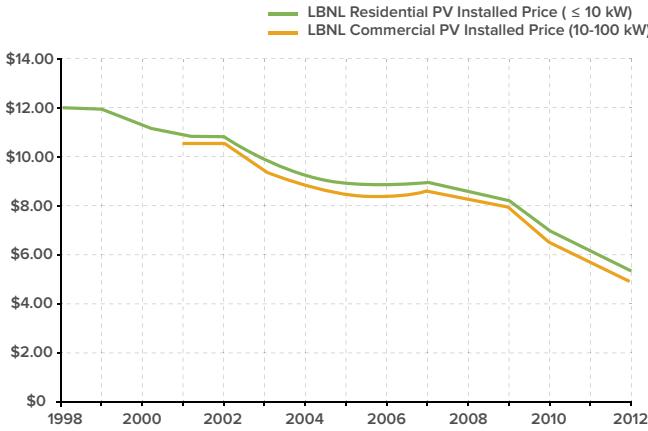
Electric vehicle (EV) market growth has driven the lithium-ion (Li-ion) battery industry's recent expansion. Though it lags behind the growth of the solar PV market, it has still been significant in recent years. Coupled with greater opportunities for on-grid energy storage, including those enabled by

regulations such as the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) Order 755 and California's AB 2514, battery demand is surging.<sup>i</sup> Opportunities in both the vehicle and grid markets will continue to drive the energy storage industry for the foreseeable future, yielding lower costs for batteries for mobile and stationary applications.

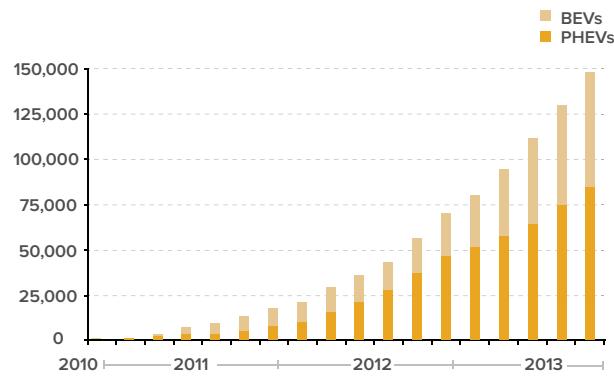
**FIGURE 8:** U.S. DISTRIBUTED PV INSTALLATIONS - ACTUAL AND PROJECTED<sup>2</sup>  
[Y-AXIS ANNUAL INSTALLED CAPACITY - MW]



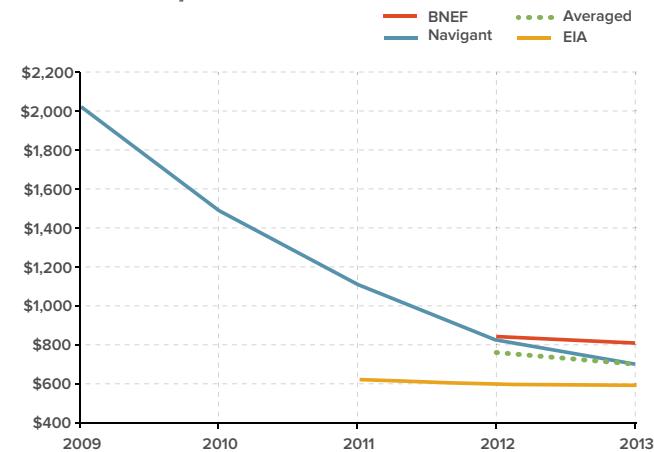
**FIGURE 9:** HISTORICAL PV PRICES<sup>3</sup>  
[Y-AXIS 2012\$/W<sub>dc</sub> - INSTALLED]



**FIGURE 10:** U.S. CUMULATIVE SALES OF PLUG-IN ELECTRIC VEHICLES<sup>ii</sup>  
[Y-AXIS CUMULATIVE SALES BY MONTH]



**FIGURE 11:** HISTORIC BATTERY PRICES  
[Y-AXIS 2012\$/kWh]



<sup>i</sup> FERC Order 755 mandates that frequency regulation resources are compensated for the actual quantity of regulation provided. This makes fast-ramping resources, such as batteries, more competitive in this service market. California AB 2514 requires the three investor-owned utilities in California (Pacific Gas & Electric, Southern California Edison, and San Diego Gas & Electric) to expand their electricity storage capacity and procure 1,325 MW of storage by 2020.

<sup>ii</sup> Historical cumulative sales trend of U.S. plug-in electric vehicles from December 2010 through August 2013. Based on data from the Electric Drive Transportation Association (<http://electricdrive.org/index.php?ht=d%2Fsp%2Fi%2F20952%2Fpid%2F20952>) and HybridCars.com (<http://www.hybridcars.com/market-dashboard/>). Accessed January 3, 2014. Adapted from Mario Roberto Duran Ortiz/Creative Commons ([http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US\\_PEV\\_Sales\\_2010\\_2013.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US_PEV_Sales_2010_2013.png)).



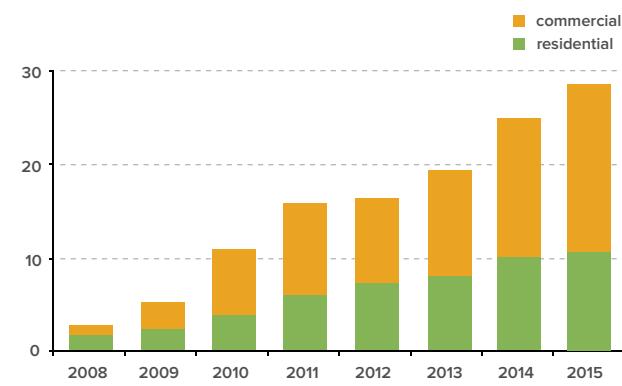
### **Support Technologies Unlock More Value**

The evolution of support systems—including improved energy systems controls—is progressing apace. Synergistically, these controls have improved the value proposition of solar PV and batteries, thus creating further demand. In addition, smart inverters have seen price reductions and continue to offer new capabilities, unlocking new opportunities for their application and the increased integration of distributed energy resources.<sup>4, iii</sup>

Given the fast-moving technology landscape, we took a conservative view that represents steady progress and is aligned with published projections. However, with high innovation rates in solar, storage, and support technologies, it is conceivable that we underestimate progress in our base case.

**FIGURE 12: SOLAR INVERTER DEMAND**

BY SEGMENT<sup>5, iv</sup>  
[Y-AXIS INSTALLED CAPACITY - GW<sub>AC</sub>]



<sup>iii</sup> The trend in the market is towards intelligent inverters that are dynamic and reactive to the grid. Areas of development include dual on- and off-grid capability; the use of reactive power to control voltage being supplied to the grid; integrated storage; increased reliability, lifespan, and efficiency; and better data capture and display.

<sup>iv</sup> Bloomberg New Energy Finance central demand scenario for solar inverters. Categories are: residential 0–20 kW, commercial 20–1,000 kW. Figures given in AC assuming that AC capacity is approximately 85% of DC.

### **FORCES DRIVING ADOPTION OF OFF-GRID SYSTEMS**

Based on our research and interviews with subject matter experts, we identified at least five forces driving the increased adoption of off-grid hybrid distributed generation and storage systems:

- Interest in reliability and resilience
- Demand for cleaner energy
- Pursuit of better economics
- Utility and grid frustration
- Regulatory changes

#### ***Interest in Reliability and Resilience***

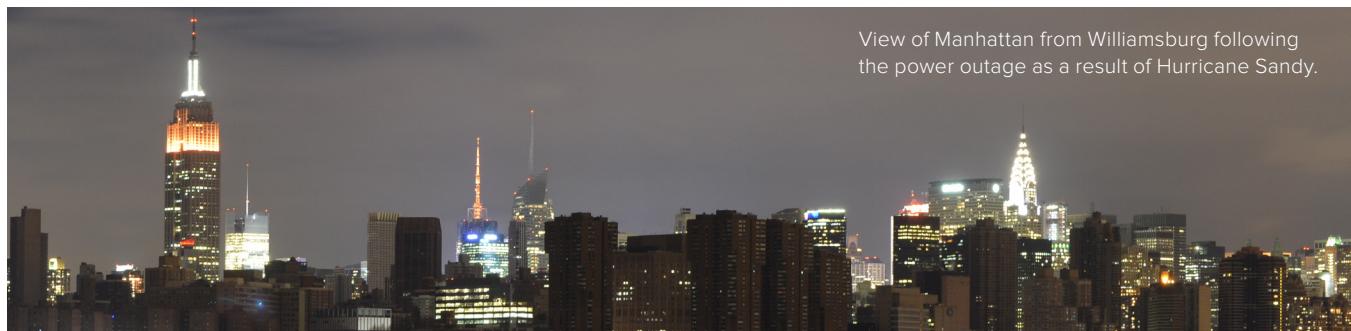
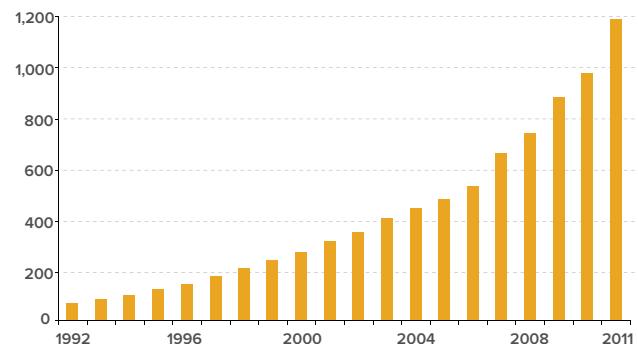
From severe weather events such as Superstorm Sandy, to direct physical attacks on grid infrastructure in Arkansas and Silicon Valley,<sup>6</sup> to reports on the potential for major system damage from geomagnetic storms, the fragility of the U.S. electric grid is now a nearly constant media topic.<sup>7,8</sup> As a byproduct of the U.S.’s early advance into the electrical age, our systems are among the oldest on the planet and experience triple the frequency disruptions and ten times the duration of system outages compared to some OECD peer nations such as Germany and Denmark.<sup>9</sup> In fact, in little over a decade, the U.S. has witnessed some of the most severe power outages in its history (see Table 1, page 14).

An increasingly popular solution to these reliability challenges is islandable microgrids, which produce and consume power locally in small, self-balancing networks capable of separating from and rejoining the larger grid on demand. They have a point of common coupling to the grid, and include both generation and loads that can be managed in a coordinated manner. Navigant Research forecasts the microgrid market to reach as high as \$40 billion in the U.S. by 2020.<sup>10</sup>



A more extreme example of this trend, yet similarly connected to reliability and resilience interests, is permanently off-grid buildings. Prior to 2000 off-grid solar installations made up over 50% of solar PV projects. While currently a minute portion of total solar PV sales, such off-grid solar has actually continued its growth in absolute sales (see Figure 13). Though the majority of solar PV was off grid prior to 2000 primarily because it was used in remote locations where grid connection was a more difficult and expensive proposition, we're likely in the midst of a new era of off-grid solar PV (with batteries) within grid-accessible locations. The conversation has shifted from being off grid out of necessity to being off grid out of choice.

**FIGURE 13: CUMULATIVE INSTALLED OFF-GRID PV IN SELECTED COUNTRIES<sup>12</sup>**  
[Y-AXIS MW]



DATE	EVENT	MAGNITUDE
October 2012	Superstorm Sandy	~8.2 million people in 17 states
June 2012	Derecho Summer Storm	~4.2 million customers across 11 Midwest and Mid-Atlantic states; widespread tree clearing and line restoration efforts in many cases took 7 to 10 days
October 2011	Nor'easter	~3 million customers in Mid-Atlantic and New England states; many lost power for more than 10 days
September 2011	Southwestern Blackout	~2.7 million customers across Arizona and Southern California lost power for 12 hours due to a technician's mistake during a high-load day
August 2011	Hurricane Irene	~5 million customers across the Mid-Atlantic and New England; outages lasted 2–6 days
February 2011	Rolling Blackouts in Texas	~1 million customers experiencing rolling blackouts due to forced outages at two major coal-fired power plants and high demand due to cold weather
February 2008	Florida Blackout	~4 million people lost power when a failed switch and fire at an electrical substation triggered widespread blackouts in Florida
August 2005	Hurricane Katrina	~2.6 million people across the Southeast lost power, although exact totals are hard to define, especially in Louisiana parishes that became unoccupied for months
August 2003	The Great Northeastern Blackout	~50 million people across eight states and Ontario lost power for up to four days after the mis-operation of the power transmission system

Table 1: Recent Major U.S. Blackouts<sup>11, v</sup>

<sup>v</sup> Major = those blackouts affecting 1 million or more people.

### Demand for Cleaner Energy

Demand for cleaner energy with a lower carbon intensity and softer environmental footprint is on the rise.

On the commercial side, major corporations such as Walmart, Costco, IKEA, and Apple are increasingly “going solar.”<sup>13</sup> According to the World Wildlife Fund’s *Power Forward* report, nearly 60% of Fortune 100 and Global 100 companies have renewable energy targets, greenhouse gas emissions goals, or both.<sup>14</sup> These commitments are driving increased investment in renewable energy, including distributed solar PV. As of mid-2013, cumulative U.S. commercial solar installations totaled 3,380 MW, a 40% increase over the previous year.<sup>15</sup>

On the residential side, a 2012 survey of nearly 200 solar homeowners found that even if solar’s economics weren’t favorable, 1 in 4 would still have chosen to install a solar PV system because of their passion for the environment.<sup>16</sup> An earlier survey of more than 640 solar installs—primarily residential—found that reducing one’s carbon footprint ranked nearly equal with reducing one’s energy bill among the top reasons customers chose to go solar.<sup>17</sup> Small residential applications for completely off-grid homes have existed within the United States for many years. These homes and businesses were usually owned by the environmentally-driven consumer, as these buildings had to be energy sippers, because of the then-high cost of renewable energy technologies such as solar, wind, and storage.

### Pursuit of Better Economics

Most remote locations without substantial energy infrastructure—like many islands—have been largely dependent on diesel fuel and diesel gensets<sup>vi</sup> to meet their electrical needs. In places such as Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Alaskan villages, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, expensive imported petroleum (e.g., diesel, fuel oil) provides 68–99% of electricity generation, resulting in retail electricity prices of \$0.36–\$0.50 per kWh or more.<sup>18</sup>

Thus on islands and anywhere with high retail electricity prices, there is a strong economic case for reducing the use of diesel fuel as a primary fuel source for electrical power, especially considering that the retail price of diesel in the U.S. has increased 233%-real in the past 15 years.<sup>19</sup>

Yet in 2013, liquid fuels were used for nearly 5% of global electricity production, accounting for 948 billion kilowatt-hours of generation, 387 GW of installed capacity, and nearly 5 million barrels/day of fuel consumption.<sup>20,21</sup> Further, projections from a new Navigant Research report suggest that annual installations of standby diesel generators will reach 82 GW per year by 2018,<sup>22</sup> signifying a growing opportunity for solar-plus-battery systems.

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<sup>vi</sup> The term genset (generator set) is used throughout this analysis to refer to a diesel engine paired with electric generator.





### ***Utility and Grid Frustration***

While in the past the grid barely warranted a second thought for most people, sentiment is changing.<sup>23, 24, 25</sup> This change will only get worse as interconnection delays and red tape, arguments over net metering, and potentially rising prices continue to affect consumers. This reputational erosion poses additional challenges to utilities, above and beyond the increasingly competitive economics of off-grid solutions.

For example, in Hawaii, where utility interconnection limitations are making it impossible for many customers to take on grid-connected solar, off-grid development is increasing (see Hawaii call-out box on page 36). Similar desires from individuals for some semblance of energy independence—particularly the right to garner external financing for systems on their private property—led to an unlikely political alliance between conservatives and liberals in Georgia in 2012, as well as current, similarly across-the-aisle political activities in Arizona.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Regulatory Changes***

Rapid scaling of solar PV, and now grid-connected solar-plus-battery systems, are requiring federal, utility, state, and local regulators to explore new regulatory frameworks. Distributed generation and storage don't fit neatly into the traditional utility model of generation, distribution, and load or existing pricing structures that recover utilities' fixed costs through energy sales.

In California, where battery storage targets and incentives have made solar-plus-battery systems more attractive, utilities including Southern California Edison, PG&E, and Sempra Energy have made it challenging for system owners with storage to net meter their power.<sup>27</sup> The utilities expressed concern that customers could store grid electricity on their batteries and then sell it back to the grid at higher prices. This upset current customers who have had battery storage for some time and were surprised

by the utilities' decisions. The matter impacts both California Public Utility Commission regulation as well as the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard.<sup>28</sup>

Perceived negative outcomes from regulation can drive customers, who desire solar PV and batteries for other factors, to pursue off-grid solutions.

In addition, incentives to promote storage could accelerate battery price declines, thereby increasing uptake of off-grid solutions. Several pro-storage regulations have recently been enacted (see box below). While they were primarily created with grid connectivity in mind, the overall development of the storage market and accompanying controls and other integration systems likely will lead to more robust and affordable off-grid storage applications.

**FERC Orders 755 and 784:** These orders opened the grid to storage by defining grid-level use and accounting for storage systems by favoring fast-reacting battery systems for frequency regulation and ancillary services. Grid operators thus gained a powerful tool to maintain power quality. While these tools are utility-scale now, these orders may someday be the foundation for residential-based frequency regulation and ancillary services provision.

**AB 2514:** California's legislature mandated an aggressive storage target of 1.3 GW by 2020. The bill includes a provision preventing utilities from owning more than 50% of statewide energy storage and allowing consumer-owned or -sited grid-connected storage to count toward the overall goal.

**AB 327:** This bill ensured that net metering will continue. Amendments to the bill eliminated the cap on the number of net-metered systems. The CA Public Utilities Commission (PUC) will now be tasked with determining how net metering is affecting the current rate model and how future rate-making policy will address reliability and freedom to generate electricity.

**Self-Generation Incentive Program:** California provides a subsidy for fuel cells, biogas digesters, and various forms of energy storage. A roughly \$2.00/Watt credit for energy storage systems has created the initial momentum for integrated solar-plus-storage solutions.

## ABOUT THIS STUDY

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02

# ABOUT THIS STUDY

## PURPOSE

Until recently, solar-plus-battery systems were neither technically robust nor economically viable. But the dual trends of declining costs for distributed energy technologies and accelerating maturity and adoption rates of those technologies are changing that. In fact, recent media, market analysis, and industry discussions have suggested that low-cost solar-plus-battery combinations could enable total defection from the electric grid for a growing population of energy users. Yet, quantitative analysis supporting these claims has been limited.<sup>vii</sup> We sought to fill that gap, exploring a central fundamental question:

## WHERE AND WHEN WILL SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY SYSTEMS REACH GRID PARITY IN THE U.S., ENABLING COST-EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER DEFLECTION FROM UTILITIES?

This report neither promotes nor discourages defection. It rather models current market trends and forecasts to identify where and when grid defection *could* happen, so that all stakeholders can consider its implications and plan a path forward accordingly.

<sup>vii</sup> Relevant studies include *Change and choice: The Future Grid Forum's analysis of Australia's potential electricity pathways to 2050*, by Australia's CSIRO Energy Flagship (<https://publications.csiro.au/rpr/download?pid=csiro:EP1312486&dsid=DS13>) and *Economic Policies for Using Storage to Enable Increased Renewable Energy Grid Integration*, by Japan's Research Institute of Economy, Trade & Industry (RIETI) (<http://www.rieti.go.jp/jp/publications/dp/09j001.pdf>).

<sup>viii</sup> Carbon considerations were based on the emissions of the system, not a full life-cycle assessment of the system's raw materials derivation, construction, use, and end-of-life dynamics. Low-to-no-carbon emission systems were desired due to assumptions of an increasingly carbon-constrained world, via regulations or other factors.

<sup>ix</sup> Batteries and solar are separately in wide use today, but not in combination in fully off-grid systems for developed world buildings with typical loads. However, considered separately (e.g., on-grid solar PV and lithium-ion battery packs for electric vehicles) their total implementation is over 400,000 in U.S. markets (~350,000 for distributed PV and ~70,000 EVs as of November 2013).

## WHY SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERIES?

Our when-and-where question focused specifically on the combination of solar PV plus battery energy storage. We initially considered a range of possible technologies, but ultimately filtered our choices by several criteria. The chosen technology combination should be:

- Zero or very low carbon<sup>viii</sup>
- Commercially available<sup>ix</sup>
- Technologically advanced/mature
- Capable of full grid independence (no electric and natural gas connection required)

Solar-plus-battery quickly emerged as the most promising combination. In addition, the availability of product cost forecasts and technical analysis allowed us to make a reasonable cost and service comparison to retail electric service.





## ANALYTICAL APPROACH

We conducted our analysis across five different locales (city or county). For each, we considered load profiles for both commercial and residential customers, a reasonable range of future utility retail price assumptions, and different scenarios that account for current solar-plus-battery cost trajectory forecasts as well as accelerated technology improvements and demand-side improvements (i.e., efficiency and user-controlled load flexibility) that could positively affect the economics of solar-plus-battery systems, potentially accelerating the timing of grid parity.

We analyzed potential off-grid solar-plus-battery operations, sizing, and economic value using the HOMER software, an energy system optimization tool designed to find the lowest-cost hybrid power system to meet an electrical demand. Varying the parameters and assumptions in the model can determine an optimal system configuration to meet specified performance requirements. 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. We used the HOMER model to determine NPC, LCOE,

and annualized cost of energy for solar-plus-battery systems, which we compared to the same parameters for the same load serviced by the local electric utility.

### Geographies

Our U.S.-specific analysis focused on five locations:

- Westchester County, New York<sup>x</sup>
- Louisville, Kentucky
- San Antonio, Texas
- Los Angeles County, California
- Honolulu, Hawaii

We chose these locations because they cover a representative range of conditions that influence grid parity, including annual solar resource potential, retail electricity prices, and currently installed distributed PV (see Figure 14).

Though not a primary driver of solar-plus-battery grid parity, the degree of utility regulation also varied. Three locations—Westchester County, NY, San Antonio, TX, and Los Angeles County, CA—are in significantly (NY and TX) or partially (CA) deregulated electricity markets.<sup>xi</sup> Two locations—Honolulu, HI, and Louisville, KY—are in regulated territories.

**FIGURE 14: PROFILES OF GEOGRAPHIES**

	WESTCHESTER, NY	LOUISVILLE, KY	SAN ANTONIO, TX	LOS ANGELES, CA	HONOLULU, HI
INSOLATION (kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	4.5 kWh	4.5 kWh	6 kWh	6 kWh	5.5 kWh
2012 AVG RETAIL PRICE (\$/kWh)	\$0.15–\$0.20	\$0.06–\$0.08	\$0.05–\$0.09	\$0.09–\$0.17	\$0.34–\$0.41
INSTALLED PV (MW)	122.02 MW	2.92 MW	131.16 MW	2074.53 MW	27.33 MW
MARKET STRUCTURE	Deregulated	Regulated	Deregulated	Deregulated	Regulated

<sup>x</sup> In metropolitan New York City area.

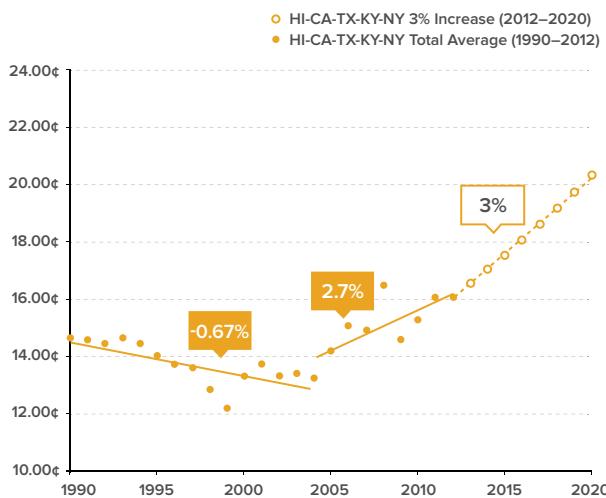
<sup>xi</sup> San Antonio is a vertically integrated municipal utility in a wholesale power region; Los Angeles has both a municipal and investor-owned utility, but uses the wholesale market for most generation.

## BASE CASE

### *Load Profiles*

We modeled both commercial and residential 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. For the base cases, we modeled both profiles with solar-plus-battery systems sized to meet 100% of annual demand, and for the commercial profiles, also a smaller solar-plus-battery system with a standby diesel generator.<sup>xii</sup> All scenarios were modeled to provide 100% load reliability during a typical meteorological year. Reliability metrics for off-grid systems are not perfectly transferable to grid reliability due to differences in system operations and the nature of the vulnerabilities that face each system.

**FIGURE 15:** STATE AVERAGE U.S. COMMERCIAL RETAIL RATES [Y-AXIS ¢/kWh]

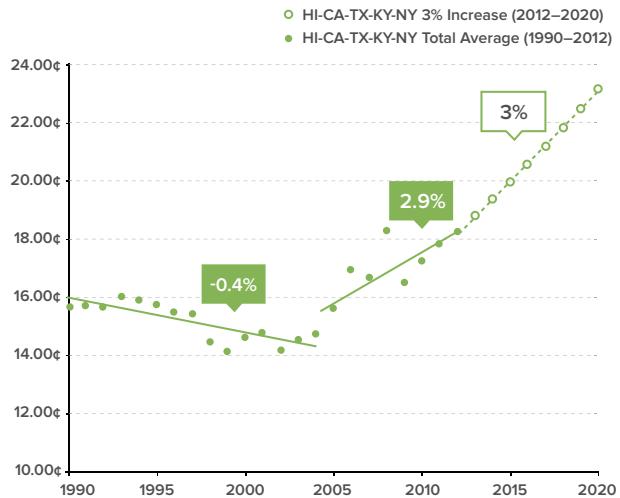


### *Utility Retail Price Assumptions*

Our modeling uses two projections—a lower and upper boundary—to create a ‘wedge’ of possible future utility electricity retail prices. Information from the U.S. EIA helped determine both boundaries. Note: these price assumptions do not take into account specific price structures in a region that can greatly influence the economics due to off-peak, mid-peak, and peak retail prices per kilowatt-hour.

The lower boundary uses EIA regional retail price projections extrapolated from 2012 to 2050 based on historical investment cycle averages. The upper boundary uses an annual price increase of 3%-real based on more recent capitalization trends. For the period 2004–2012, commercial and residential retail real (inflation-adjusted) prices annually rose an

**FIGURE 16:** STATE AVERAGE U.S. RESIDENTIAL RETAIL RATES [Y-AXIS ¢/kWh]



<sup>xii</sup> Diesel generators are much more common in commercial buildings compared to residential buildings, so we excluded them from our residential analysis.

average 2.7% and 2.9%, respectively, while rates in the geographies we looked at increased more than 3%-real during the period 2010–2012 (see Figures 15 and 16). Until such trends change, a 3%-real per year price increase should represent a reasonable upper boundary for our analysis.

There is significant evidence that similarly high rates of retail electricity price increases will continue. For instance, during the seven-year period 2005–2012, low and even negative load growth contributed to rising prices. During 2006–2010, annual average load growth across the U.S. was just 0.5%. Since 2010, it has been -0.7%. Such flat or declining load growth may well be the new norm. In addition, the 2012 Ceres report *Practicing Risk-Aware Electricity Regulation*

noted that “if the U.S. utility industry adds \$100 billion each year between 2010 and 2030”—based on the Brattle Group’s estimate that simply maintaining the U.S. electric grid’s aging infrastructure will require \$2 trillion in investment over 20 years—“the net value of utility plant in service will grow [to]... a doubling of net invested capital.... This growth is considerably faster than the country has seen in many decades.” This appears especially true in the near term as distributed energy and efficiency impacts and ongoing expenditures on grid reliability, modernization, and environmental controls put upward pressure on prices.

See Table 2 for a summary of lower and upper bound price projections for each geography’s electric utility.<sup>xiii</sup>



UTILITY	LOAD PROFILE <sup>29</sup>	LOAD SIZE (kWh/YR)	LOWER PRICE PROJECTION <sup>xiv, 30</sup>	UPPER PRICE PROJECTION
Hawaiian Electric Co.	Honolulu Residential Honolulu Commercial	14,481 722,700	1.05% 0.85%	3%
Southern California Edison	Los Angeles County Residential Los Angeles County Commercial	7,914 586,557	0.10% 0.10%	
Louisville Gas & Electric	Louisville Residential Louisville Commercial	12,837 604,809	-0.50% -0.40%	
CPS Energy	San Antonio Residential San Antonio Commercial	15,247 670,504	0.90% 0.70%	
Con Edison (NY)	Westchester County Residential Westchester County Commercial	11,927 577,431	0.30% 0.10%	

Table 2: Electricity Retail Price Projections

<sup>xiii</sup> Additional information and background modeling assumptions can be found in Appendices A, B, C, and E.

<sup>xiv</sup> Since the Energy Information Administration does not provide a specific percentage change for Hawaii, rates were calculated from average diesel price projections given by the EIA (2011–2015).

### Solar-Plus-Battery Base Case Assumptions

Our solar-plus-battery base case included projections for installed cost of solar PV systems, batteries, and cost of capital.<sup>xv</sup>

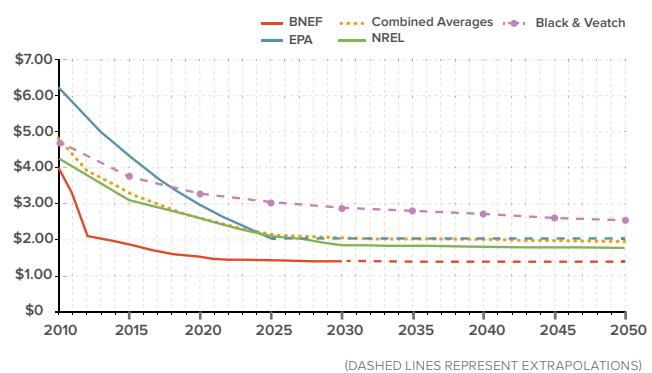
#### Solar PV

We undertook a thorough literature review to develop solar PV cost projections for customer-owned systems (vs. third-party arrangements) through 2050 (see Figures 17 and 18) and ultimately averaged four datasets:<sup>xvi</sup>

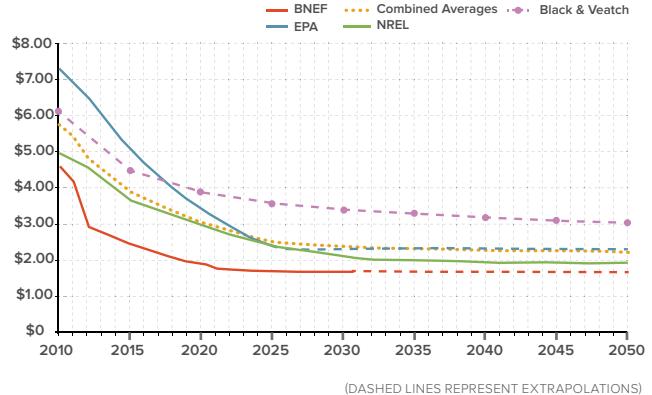
1. NREL Strategic Energy Analysis Center<sup>31</sup>
2. Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF)  
Q2 2013 PV Market Outlook<sup>32</sup>
3. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
Renewable Energy Costs Database<sup>33</sup>
4. Black & Veatch (B&V) Cost and Performance  
Data for Power Generation Technologies<sup>34</sup>



**FIGURE 17: COMMERCIAL INSTALLED PV COST FORECASTS WITH RMI PROJECTIONS**  
[Y-AXIS 2012\$/W<sub>dc</sub> - INSTALLED]



**FIGURE 18: RESIDENTIAL INSTALLED PV COST FORECASTS WITH RMI PROJECTIONS**  
[Y-AXIS 2012\$/W<sub>dc</sub> - INSTALLED]



<sup>xv</sup> Additional information on solar PV and battery cost data can be found in Appendix A.

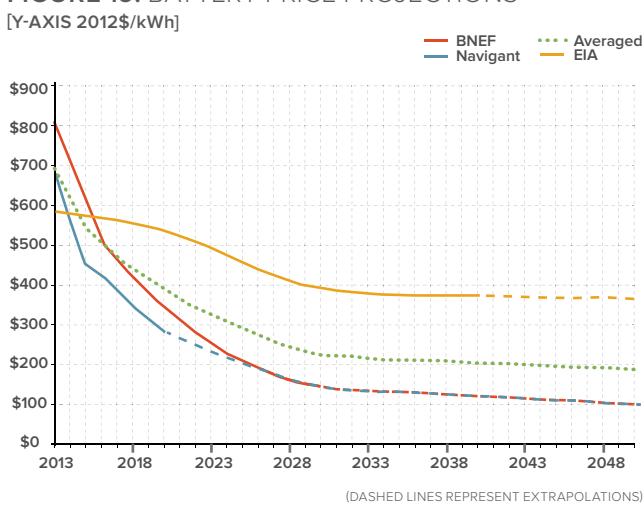
<sup>xvi</sup> These four sources proved to have the most reliable data available, both with regard to quantity and quality. Other datasets were considered but ultimately excluded from our analysis either because they had limited data points or were significantly divergent relative to current market costs (i.e., excessively high projections relative to present day installed costs).

## Batteries

Our base case model uses a lithium-ion (Li-ion) battery to provide energy storage. We focus on Li-ion batteries because there is the most data on current and future pricing for this set of chemistries. Li-ion batteries are the clearly preferred chemistry for portable and vehicular applications. For stationary applications, such as what this analysis considers, there are many other chemistries under development. We don't focus on them because there is less data available about them—this doesn't alter our fundamental points and conclusions, and in fact disruptive new developments in battery technology could only accelerate the time frames for reaching grid parity with solar-plus-battery systems.

We based our battery price projections on data from the EIA,<sup>35</sup> Bloomberg New Energy Finance,<sup>36</sup> and Navigant Research.<sup>37</sup> All of these projections employ a Li-ion battery learning curve derived from historic and projected consumer electric vehicle (EV) production.<sup>xvii</sup> These projections were applied to stationary Li-ion batteries with some modification to account for the differences between battery packs for stationary and mobile applications.<sup>38</sup>

**FIGURE 19: BATTERY PRICE PROJECTIONS**



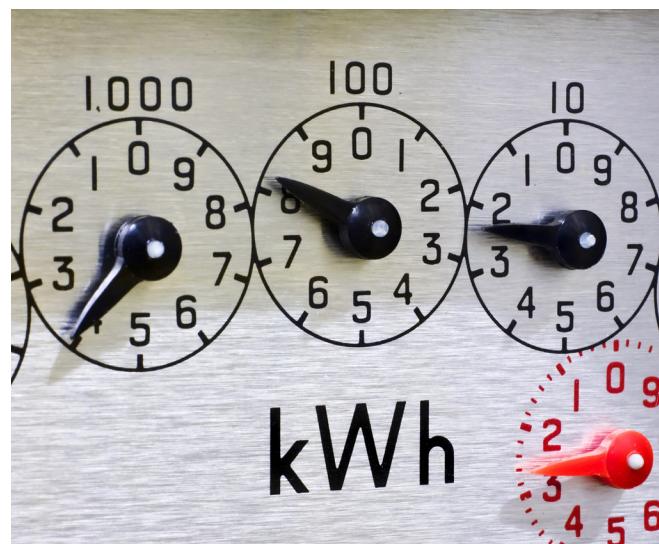
<sup>xvii</sup> The EIA Li-ion trend was significantly more conservative than similar, yet shorter term, Li-ion projections available from BNEF and Navigant. To the best of our knowledge from speaking with analysts, differing outlooks on the U.S. and global EV market largely drive these differences.

<sup>xviii</sup> The projected reductions in the residential cost of capital are largely predicated on the expansion of scalable homeowner financing products. The projected reductions in the commercial financing costs are based upon the expansion of several improved host-financing options to include green bonds and property assessed clean energy (PACE) programs.

## Cost of Capital

Costs of capital can have a substantial influence on customer-facing costs. Our base case model uses separate NREL-derived<sup>39</sup> capital costs for residential and commercial systems.<sup>xviii</sup> Importantly, solar PV systems (and, we expect, batteries in due course) are gaining access to cheaper sources of bulk capital and are expected to continue to enjoy that access.

**FIGURE 20: COST OF CAPITAL COMPARISON**  
[Y-AXIS INTEREST RATES]



## BEYOND BASE CASE

### **Solar-Plus-Battery Technology and Demand-Side Improvement Assumptions**

Our base case scenario framed the possibility for solar-plus-battery systems to reach grid parity under current trajectories—declining costs and increasing adoption rates—with no radical, disruptive

improvements or other developments. We considered four scenarios in total, including three scenarios that would accelerate the timing of grid parity:

1. Base Case (BC)
2. Accelerated Technology Improvement (ATI)
3. Demand-Side Improvement (DSI)
4. Combined Improvement (CI)

BASE CASE	ACCELERATED TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENT	DEMAND-SIDE IMPROVEMENT	COMBINED IMPROVEMENT
The base case scenario is built upon generally accepted cost trajectories for all technologies involved. It examines the cost of entirely off-grid solar-plus-battery systems. This scenario uses the current industry projections for solar PV costs and battery costs shown in Figures 17, 18, and 19. These represent a conservative view of incremental progress with existing solar PV and battery technologies. Under the base case scenario, we assume there are no radical improvements in technology performance or costs.	<p>The accelerated technology improvement scenario considers the impacts of sharply decreased total installed PV costs along with more aggressive battery price projections.</p> <p><b>Solar PV</b> The U.S. Department of Energy's SunShot Initiative<sup>40</sup> has goals of \$1.50/watt and \$1.25/watt (in 2010-\$) for residential and commercial installations, respectively, by 2020. These SunShot goals were included as the PV costs in our accelerated technology improvement scenario.</p> <p><b>Batteries</b> We conducted a range of interviews with energy storage experts from major national laboratories, energy storage system integrators, and battery technology companies. Our interviews yielded a range of price projections that varied between \$49 and \$300 per kWh. To model the battery for the accelerated technology improvement scenario, we took the target battery price of \$125/kWh, well within our interview price range, set by the U.S. Department of Energy EERE Vehicle Technologies Office to be consistent with our use of the SunShot PV price targets.</p>	<p>The demand-side improvement scenario considers the impact of full implementation of cost-effective energy efficiency and user-controlled load flexibility to shift the load profile, especially during an allowed period of capacity shortage.</p> <p>Bundled investments in DSI and off-grid technologies could be a cost-effective value proposition well before standalone systems without DSI are effective.</p> <p><b>Efficiency</b> We used efficiency measures profiled by the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in its 2008 report <i>U.S. Building-Sector Energy Efficiency Potential</i>.</p> <p><b>Load flexibility</b> Demand management capabilities that enable consumers to shift their load profile in response to resource availability also reduce the necessary size of the system. In the residential systems only, we modeled load management as a 2% capacity shortage. This requires load management<sup>xix</sup> for approximately 170 hours spread over many days over the course of the year, typically in the winter months when the solar resource is poorest.</p>	<p>The combined improvement scenario applies the lower-cost technologies considered in the accelerated technology improvement scenario, coupled with the more efficient and flexible load profile modeled in the demand-side improvement scenario.</p> <p>This scenario explores the same bundled investment strategy as the previous scenario, but assumes that aggressive DOE cost targets are met.</p>

Table 3: Solar-Plus-Battery Scenario Descriptions

<sup>xix</sup> A more detailed explanation can be found in Appendix B.



COMMERCIAL				
	Base Case	Accelerated Technology Improvement	Demand-Side Improvement	Combined Improvement
PV Cost [\$/W]	Average of selected forecasts	Straightline DOE 2020 Sunshot target of \$1.25/W for all years	Average of selected forecasts	Straightline DOE 2020 Sunshot target of \$1.25/W for all years
Li-ion Battery Cost [\$/kWh]	Average of selected forecasts	Straightline DOE target of \$125/kWh for all years	Average of selected Forecasts	Straightline DOE target of \$125/kWh for all years
Efficiency Measures	No change in electric consumption over time	No change in electric consumption over time	34% reduction in electric use at a cost of \$0.029/kWh	34% reduction in electric use at a cost of \$0.029/kWh
Retail Electricity Price [\$/kWh]*	Range: EIA projections (low) to 3% increase (high)			

RESIDENTIAL				
	Base Case	Accelerated Technology Improvement	Demand-Side Improvement	Combined Improvement
PV Cost [\$/W]	Average of selected forecasts	Straightline DOE 2020 Sunshot target of \$1.50/W for all years	Average of selected forecasts	Straightline DOE 2020 Sunshot target of \$1.50/W for all years
Li-ion Battery Cost [\$/kWh]	Average of selected forecasts	Straightline DOE target of \$125/kWh for all years	Average of selected forecasts	Straightline DOE target of \$125/kWh for all years
Efficiency Measures	No change in electric consumption over time	No change in electric consumption over time	30% reduction in electric use at a cost of \$0.029/kWh and 2% load flexibility	30% reduction in electric use at a cost of \$0.029/kWh
Retail Electricity Price [\$/kWh]*	Range: EIA projections (low) to 3% increase (high)			

Table 4: Solar-Plus-Battery Commercial and Residential Scenario Assumptions

\*Grid parity calculated when LCOE intersected upper bound (3% increase) of projected retail electricity price

### A Note on Pre-2020 Results

Our accelerated technology improvement scenario (and by extension, our combined improvement scenario) uses aggressive 2020 cost targets based on goals established by the U.S. Department of Energy. As these goals may be achieved in many different ways (e.g. new chemistries, supply-chain innovations, etc.) it was not possible to create a year-over-year representation of the improvement in technology

before 2020 that would yield these costs. For this reason, the results for our accelerated technology improvement and combined improvement begin in 2020, and extend as possible cost targets beyond 2020. Due to the high innovation rates for both solar PV and batteries, it is conceivable that even these aggressive cost estimates underestimate the potential decline in component costs.

The background of the image is a photograph of a tall, lattice-structured electrical pylon. The pylon is made of dark metal and has several insulators and wires attached to its top. The sky behind it is filled with white and grey clouds, with a bright sun visible in the upper left corner.

# RESULTS

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03

# RESULTS

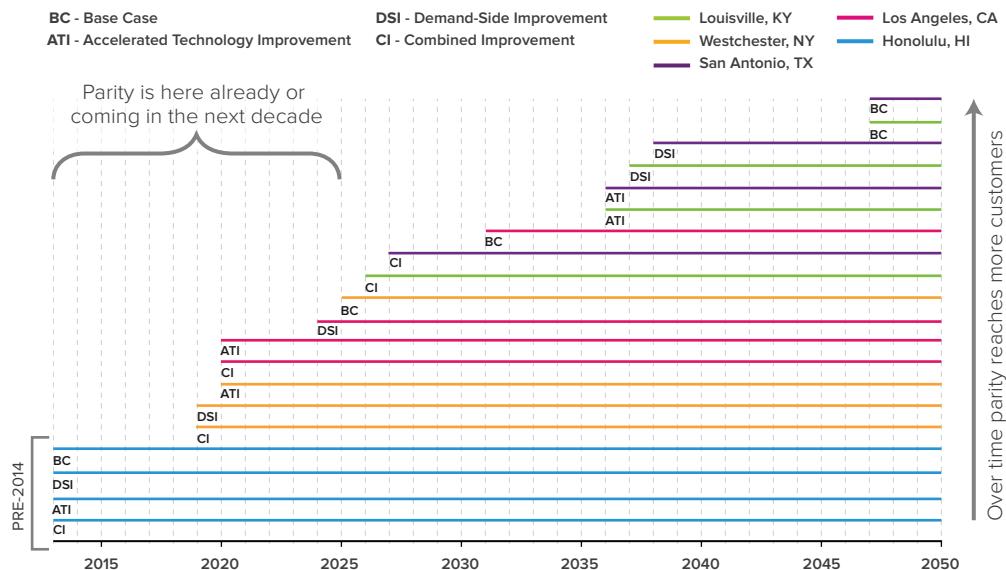
Our analysis for the base case found that solar-plus-battery grid parity is already here or imminent for certain customers in certain geographies, such as Hawaii. Grid parity will also arrive within the next 30 years (and in many cases much sooner) for a much wider set of customers in all but regions with the cheapest retail electricity prices. By 2050, we expect solar-plus-battery LCOEs to reach \$0.33–\$0.63 per kWh for residential systems and \$0.16–\$0.22 per kWh for commercial systems in our base case. These ranges were relatively narrow, so prevailing retail electricity prices in each geography proved the strongest influence on grid parity’s timing, which we pinpointed as the intersection of solar-plus-battery costs with the upper bound of our utility price projections; slower utility retail price increases would push parity further into the future. It is important to note that these results are based on average load profiles; we might expect some minority of customers in each geography to see favorable economics much sooner.

## COMMERCIAL APPLICATIONS

For commercial solar-plus-battery systems *with a* standby generator, grid parity is *already here* in Hawaii under all modeling scenarios. In other regions with high commercial retail electricity prices, such as the Northeast (Westchester County, NY, in our analysis), these systems will potentially become competitive with retail prices within the next ten years or so (as early as 2025). And in all regions, even those with the cheapest electricity—represented by Louisville, KY, and San Antonio, TX, in our analysis—parity will happen within the next 30 years under most modeling scenarios.

Commercial solar-plus-battery-only systems without a diesel genset will reach grid parity later—the 2030s for Westchester and Los Angeles, and even later for San Antonio and Louisville. However, in Hawaii these zero-emissions systems will reach grid parity by 2015. This shift in results underscores the large influence of battery costs. Adding a standby generator to a solar-plus-battery system dramatically reduces the capital required for the battery bank, bringing grid parity sooner.

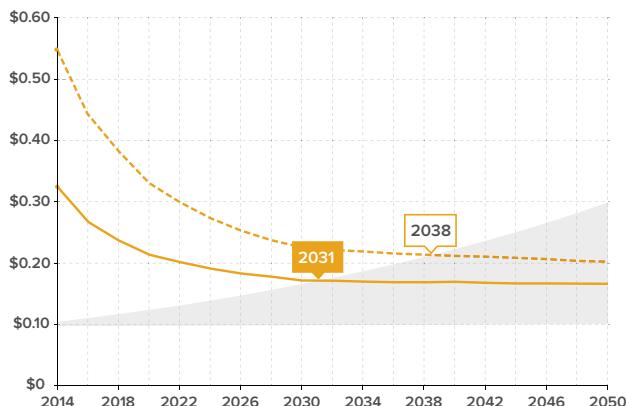
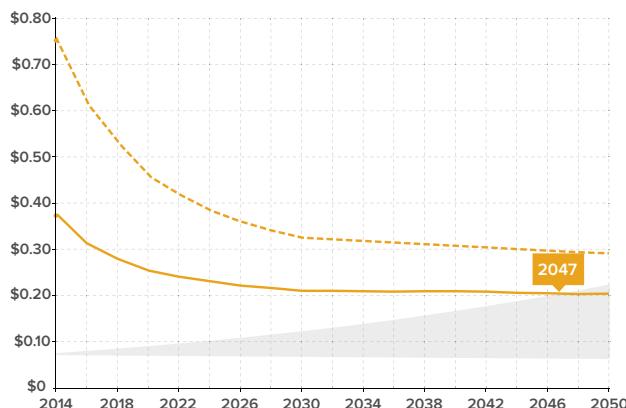
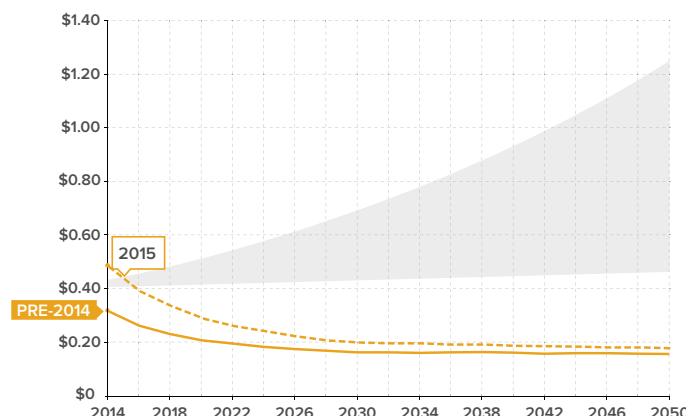
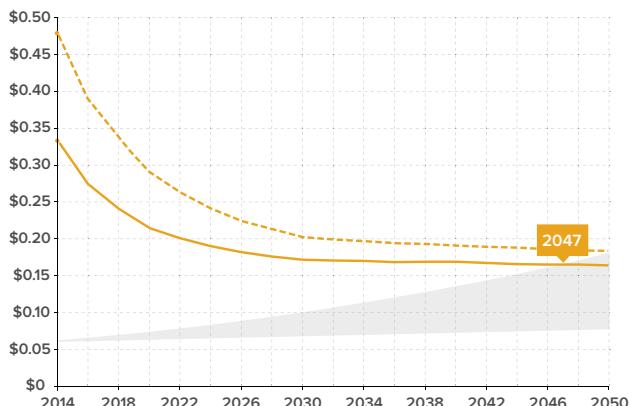
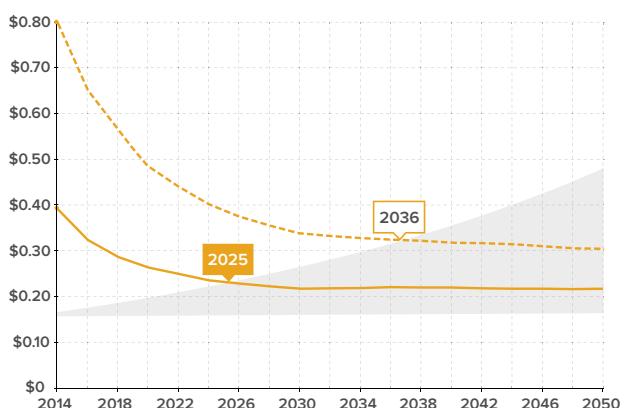
## COMMERCIAL PARITY TIMELINE



**FIGURE 21: COMMERCIAL BASE CASE SCENARIOS**

The following graphs show a wedge of utility electricity prices against the LCOE of solar-plus-battery systems for commercial customers with and without a diesel genset. All graphs in 2012\$/kWh.

-  Retail Electric Price Range
-  Levelized Cost of Energy
-  Levelized Cost of Energy (without Genset)

**LOS ANGELES, CA****LOUISVILLE, KY****HONOLULU, HI****SAN ANTONIO, TX****WESTCHESTER, NY**

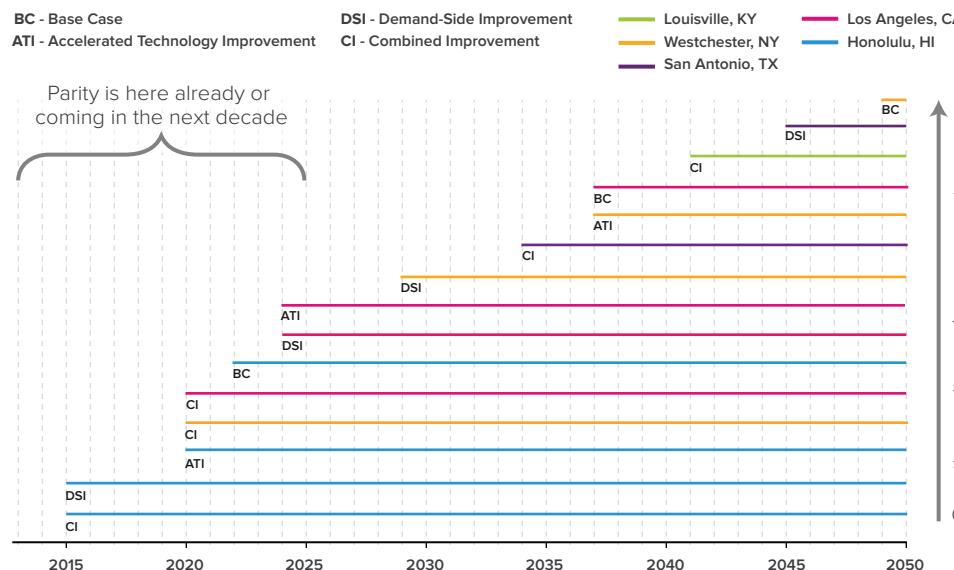
## RESIDENTIAL APPLICATIONS

Solar-plus-battery systems reach grid parity further into the future for residential applications, often by 5 to 10 years or more. Residential systems will reach grid parity as early as the early 2020s in Hawaii, late 2030s in Los Angeles, and late 2040s in Westchester in our base case. In Louisville and San Antonio, residential systems did not reach grid parity within the 2050 time horizon of our analysis.

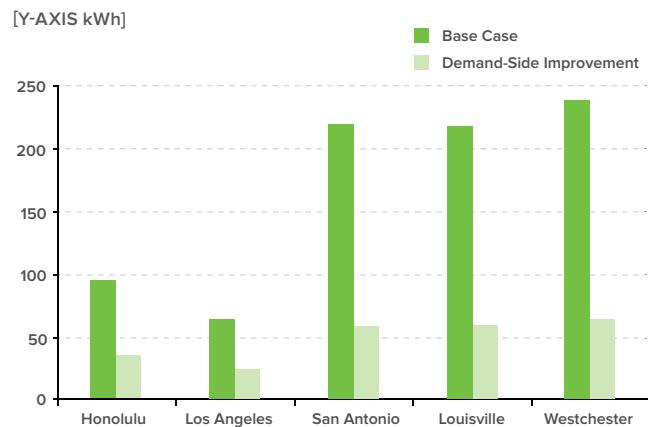
However, just as a diesel generator accelerated grid parity for commercial systems, integrating demand-side improvements similarly accelerated the timeline for reaching grid parity. In Hawaii it could arrive in the next 1 to 2 years, in Los Angeles by the early 2020s, and in Westchester by the late 2020s.

Since we constrained the size of residential solar arrays, the LCOE trajectories for residential applications proved far more dependent on battery prices (See Figure 22). This makes demand-side improvements much more valuable for residential systems (See Figure 23), since efficiency lowers both peak and total demand, allowing downsized battery banks.

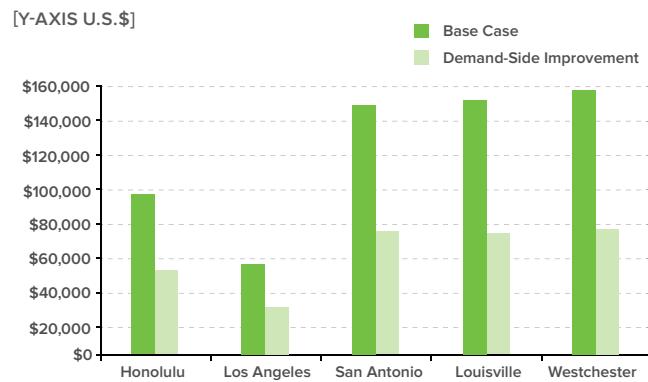
## RESIDENTIAL PARITY TIMELINE



**FIGURE 22: 2014 RESIDENTIAL BATTERY SIZES**



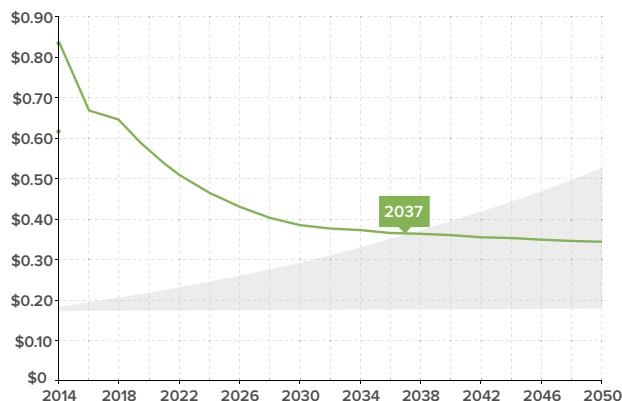
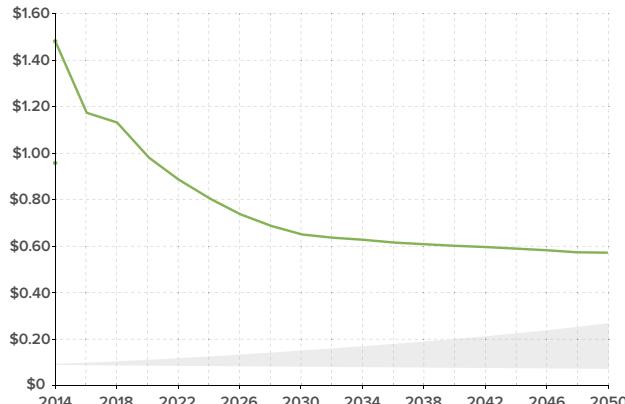
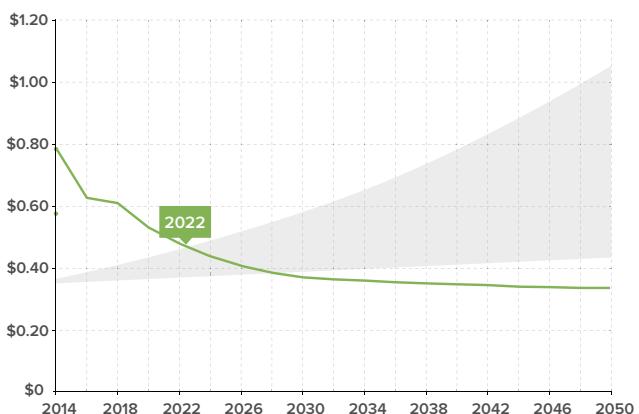
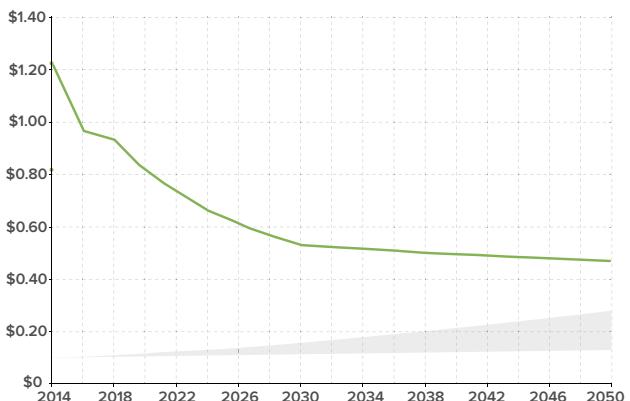
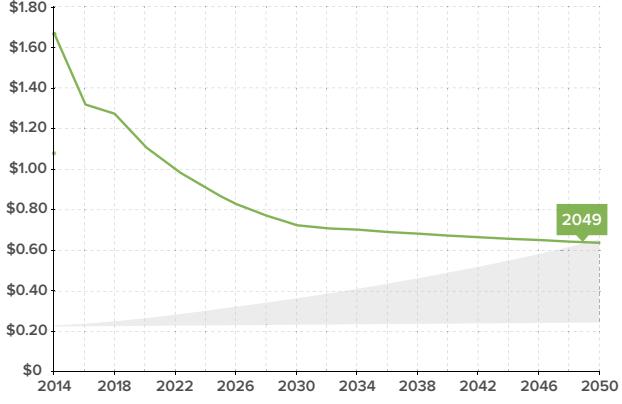
**FIGURE 23: 2014 RESIDENTIAL CAPITAL COSTS**



**FIGURE 24: RESIDENTIAL BASE CASE SCENARIOS**

The following graphs show a wedge of utility electricity prices against the LCOE of solar-plus-battery systems for residential customers. All graphs in 2012\$/kWh.

 Retail Electric Price Range  
 Levelized Cost of Energy

**LOS ANGELES, CA****LOUISVILLE, KY****HONOLULU, HI****SAN ANTONIO, TX****WESTCHESTER, NY**

## ACCELERATED TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS AND DEMAND-SIDE IMPROVEMENTS—A FOCUS ON LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Our analysis found that accelerated technology improvements and demand-side improvements, both individually and in combination, accelerated the timeline for solar-plus-battery systems to reach grid parity. Examining the commercial profile in Los Angeles County, CA, provides a useful illustration of this trend across all five geographies. Remember that under the base case and as measured by LCOE, commercial systems in Los Angeles could reach grid parity as early as 2031.

### *Accelerated Technology Improvement*

With accelerated technology improvements—based in part on reaching DOE cost targets for solar PV and battery technology by 2020—commercial systems in Los Angeles could reach grid parity as early as or even potentially before 2020, more than a decade ahead of the base case.

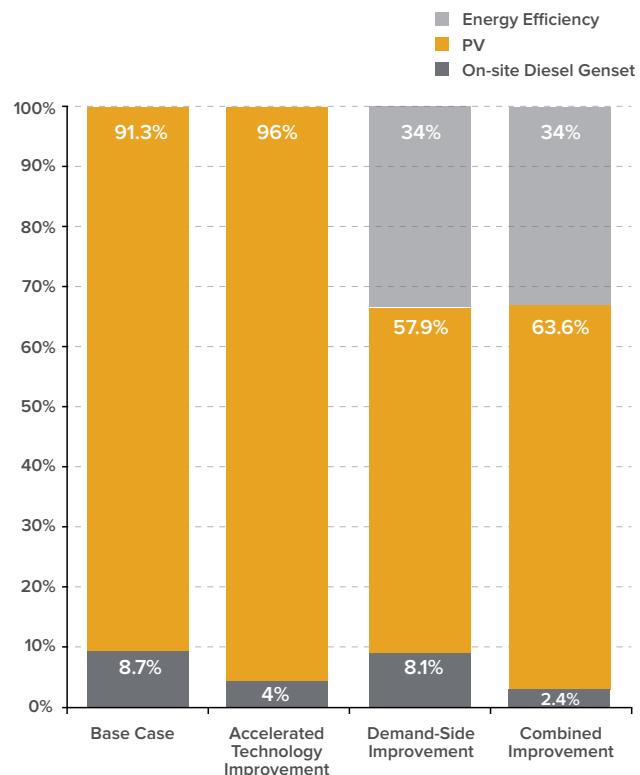
### *Demand-Side Improvement*

We analyzed grid parity for integrated investments in demand-side improvements (efficiency and load flexibility) with solar-plus-battery systems using an adapted LCOE where we included the “negawatts served” by efficiency as part of the annual load served by the system. The LCOE of efficiency was held constant at its current cost of 2.7 cents per kWh.<sup>41,xx</sup>

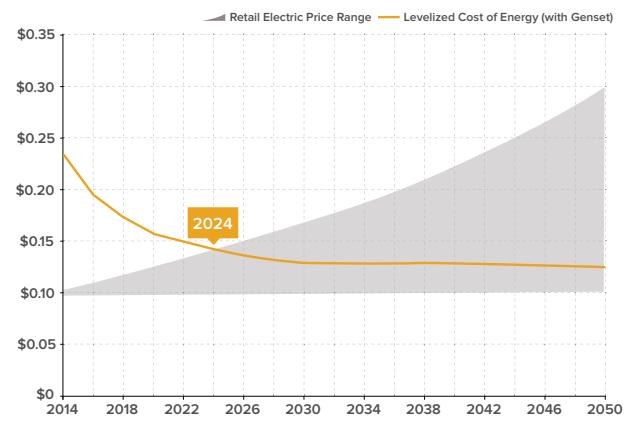
Reducing a customer’s load profile through demand-side improvements reduces the required system size and the number of kWh that system needs to generate. Relative to commercial retail prices in Los Angeles, demand-side improvements offer customers in the Los Angeles area favorable economics for solar-plus-battery systems as early as 2024, six years earlier than the base case.

<sup>xx</sup> See Appendix B for a detailed description of our methodology.

**FIGURE 25: GENERATION MIX 2024**  
LOS ANGELES - COMMERCIAL



**FIGURE 26: LOS ANGELES DEMAND-SIDE IMPROVEMENT**



### Combined Improvement

Our analysis shows that combined improvements could reduce the levelized cost of energy for commercial systems by nearly 50% compared to our base case. Demand-side improvements reduce the size of the system, while technology improvements reduce the upfront cost of that smaller system, thus compounding the reductions in system costs. A commercial system with combined improvements eventually reaches an LCOE as low as \$0.09/kWh. *This LCOE makes solar-plus-battery systems competitive with today's retail electricity prices in Los Angeles.*

### The Role of Financing: Cost of Capital Comparisons

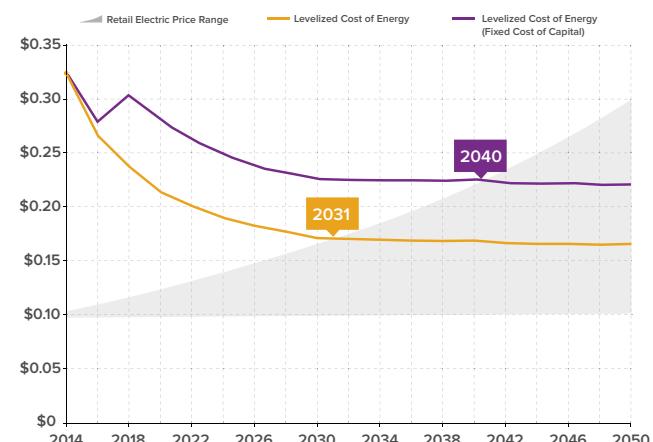
Solar-plus-battery systems are long-term assets, which means they have an upfront capital cost, are likely to be financed at some interest rate, and would be paid off in monthly installments like a car or mortgage. Therefore, any cost-competitiveness comparison to the regular, monthly payments a customer would otherwise make to a utility will be dependent on reasonably low interest rates (5–9%) for solar-plus-battery financing.

Today's market has created a variety of financing options for distributed generation (see box 'The Broader Finance Opportunities' page 33). While access to capital at low interest rates is essential to all of these options, we exclusively modeled host-owned systems (i.e., first-party owned).

We examined sensitivity to cost of capital by exploring two additional scenarios. The first assumed PV cost-of-capital improvements aligned with DOE's SunShot goals. The second assumed a fixed cost of capital over time, where solar-plus-battery systems are financed at similar rates to today's PV-only systems, even when the battery's percentage share of capital costs increases substantially.

The comparison of these two scenarios illustrate that a higher cost of capital (i.e., no improvements relative to today) for solar-plus-battery systems could postpone the date of grid parity by as much as ten years for commercial applications (See Figure 27).

**FIGURE 27: LOS ANGELES COMMERCIAL BASE CASE FIXED COST OF CAPITAL<sup>xxi</sup>**



<sup>xxi</sup> The dramatic uptick in LCOE for fixed cost of capital is due to the drop in the Investment Tax Credit from 30% to 10% in 2017. In the improving cost of capital alternative case, low-cost capital sources are engaged to continue the downward trend.

## THE BROADER FINANCE OPPORTUNITIES

Third-party financing accounted for the majority of residential and commercial systems in the U.S. in 2013. The cost of capital for these third-party financings in 2013 was close to the rate of return that regulated utilities are allowed to receive on their investments (a proxy for the interest rate a utility would pass on to a customer), which are often about 10.5% nominal (about 8.0% real).

Modeling a fixed cost of capital<sup>xxii</sup> is illustrative of two potential scenarios that could come to bear:

1. A scenario where third-party financing rates do not improve relative to current rates
2. A scenario where utilities invest in off-grid systems using the current rate of return they are permitted by regulatory statute.

Figure 27 (page 33) suggests that utilities would have to accept a lower rate of return (i.e., less profit) to compete with non-utility project developers should third-party financing rates improve at the expected rate. Improvements in lending rates require that solar-plus-battery systems prove to be robust systems in the long term and provide enduring value to the ultimate customer.

For PV, if not yet for batteries, the progress toward lower cost of capital appears to be occurring, as 2013 was a landmark year for the emergence of lower-interest financing vehicles. The first publicly known asset-backed securitization (ABS) of \$54 million of SolarCity residential and commercial assets was achieved at 4.8% nominal yield. Also, a \$431 million initial public offering was successfully achieved by NRG Yield, a steady yield- and dividend-oriented equity holding made up of a basket of power assets, including distributed solar systems with implied dividends of 7% by 2015.<sup>42</sup> These various and emerging finance vehicles allow renewables investments to tap a much wider investor pool; while a regulated utility would have trouble investing below its regulated rate, many public investors would be thrilled with a long-term, relatively stable return of 4.5–7%. Broader access to these public capital pools will be critical to hit DOE cost of capital targets.

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<sup>xxii</sup> The regulated return utilities can receive varies by state and by rate case. The percentages listed reflect typical historic returns allowed to utilities, but should be taken as approximations. Our analysis used a trajectory that was developed from a composite of capital costs reported via industry surveys in 2012, and are not a perfect reflection of current market rates. Our trajectory suggests that capital costs will drop below 8% by 2016 for residential systems and 2017 for commercial systems.

## BEYOND LOS ANGELES—A LOOK AT REGIONAL UTILITY DECILES

Though the Los Angeles commercial scenarios provide an insightful set of examples, looking more broadly at U.S. regions according to utility retail electricity sales deciles is revelatory as well.

### *Commercial Applications*

We used 2012 utility sales EIA data to identify the distribution between the most expensive and least expensive MWh sold by utilities in the Southwest and the Mid-Atlantic, the two most populated regions considered in our study. Our Southwest and Mid-Atlantic sample set covered more than 390 TWh and 180 TWh of annual sales, and 25 million and 17 million customer accounts (meters), respectively. Our five study locations were generally in higher-priced regional deciles,<sup>xxiii</sup> as they are in urban locations within high load pockets where the highest regional prices prevail.

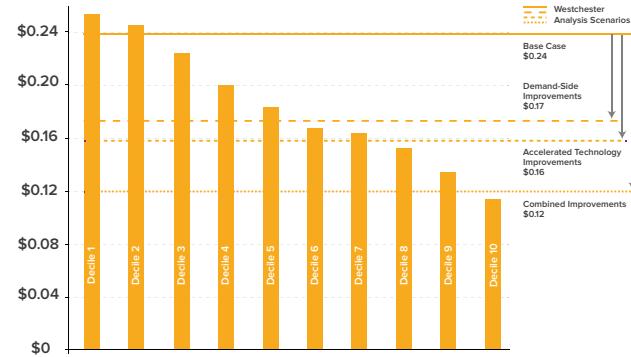
Looking ten years out to 2024, we found that solar-plus-battery systems in our base case will become cheaper than grid-sourced electricity from utilities for the most expensive one-fifth of load served. These two deciles represent nearly 800,000 commercial customers in the Southwest and over 450,000 customers in the Mid-Atlantic. With accelerated technology improvements, more than half of all commercial customers in these regions could “beat” retail utility electricity with solar-plus-battery systems. Between the two geographies, this represents over 3 million commercial customers and over \$22 billion in annual utility revenues.

One of the major economic advantages of commercial systems over residential systems, other than slightly improved economies of scale via reduction of soft costs for solar PV and unrestricted solar array size, is the assumption of on-site, low-level-use diesel generation. The call-out box “The Honolulu Commercial Case” (page 36) provides more information on diesel generator use.

**FIGURE 28: U.S. SOUTHWEST 2024 SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY COMMERCIAL SCENARIOS VS. ESTIMATED UTILITY DECILES [Y-AXIS - 2012\$/kWh]**



**FIGURE 29: U.S. MID-ATLANTIC 2024 SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY COMMERCIAL SCENARIOS VS. ESTIMATED UTILITY DECILES [Y-AXIS - 2012\$/kWh]**



<sup>xxiii</sup> Deciles determined by MWh sold. Average prices of utilities were used, not specific tariffs. Average prices represent the revenue per energy unit sold, and is more difficult for a utility to alter than any specific customer tariff.

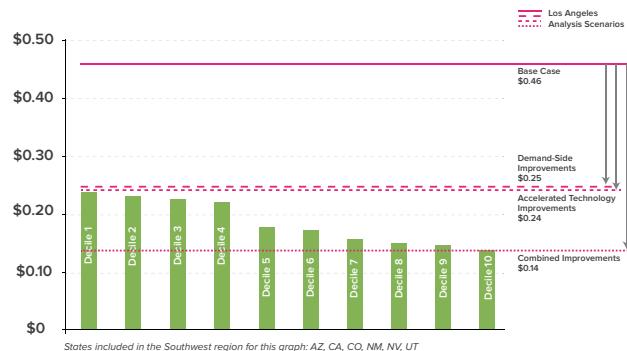
### Residential Applications

For residential applications the improvements are less dramatic, but still significant. Given that space constraints and the lack of a diesel standby generator make the costs for residential systems heavily dependent on battery prices, parity for most mainland residential systems will not occur before 2024 without technology or demand-side improvements. However, accelerated technology improvements coupled with demand-side improvements stand to make solar-plus-battery systems competitive with retail electricity in those regions of the U.S. with the highest retail prices. Combined improvements will put hybrid systems clearly in the black for residential customers with higher rates, and will also create competitive opportunities in locations with more moderate retail prices.

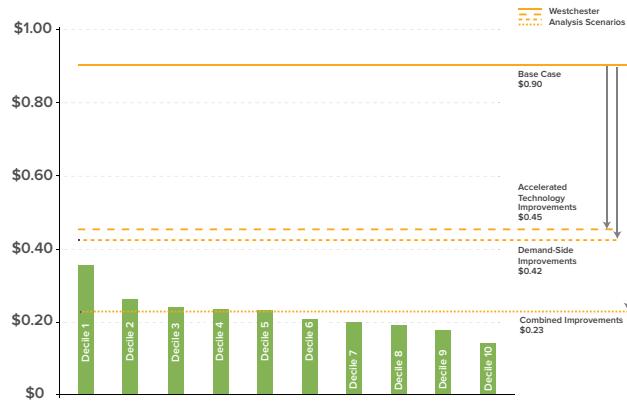
In the Southwest, as many as 20 million residential customers could find economic advantage by 2024 with solar-plus-battery systems under our combined improvement scenario. In the Mid-Atlantic, roughly 8 million customers will find favorable economics for solar-plus-battery hybrid systems by 2024 given the same combined improvements. Between the two geographies this represents over \$34 billion in annual utility revenues.



**FIGURE 30: U.S. SOUTHWEST 2024  
SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY RESIDENTIAL SCENARIOS  
VS. ESTIMATED UTILITY DECILES**  
[Y-AXIS - 2012\$/kWh]



**FIGURE 31: U.S. MID-ATLANTIC 2024  
SOLAR-PLUS-BATTERY RESIDENTIAL SCENARIOS  
VS. ESTIMATED UTILITY DECILES**  
[Y-AXIS - 2012\$/kWh]



## THE HONOLULU COMMERCIAL CASE

The Honolulu commercial base case presents a startling result—it is already cost effective for a commercial customer to go off-grid with a solar-plus-battery with a standby diesel generator system. Even more startling, it will be cost effective for commercial customers to go off-grid with a zero-emissions solar-plus-batteries-only system next year.

So why haven't businesses done this? Well, some have, though not many. That's because multiple real challenges exist to scalable off-grid solutions. Most importantly, the standard business offering inclusive of installation and financing has not yet evolved to meet the opportunity. Further optimization of battery controls best suited to off-grid applications and communication systems signaling issues requiring O&M are all part of this need. For Hawaii, the economics have arrived faster than the required turnkey, scalable business models that can make it widespread.

Our commercial analysis included low-level use of on-site diesel generators, which reduces the required size of the PV array and battery bank. In the 2013 simulation, the diesel generator runs about 1,000 hours (~11% of the year). As the cost of PV and batteries decreases over time, the optimal system reduces generator run time to about 250 hours (~3% of the year). While this run time is substantially lower, it still presents real issues related to environmental permitting and noise considerations.<sup>xxv</sup> In both instances (2013 and later years), fuel costs comprise 15–20% of total lifetime costs.

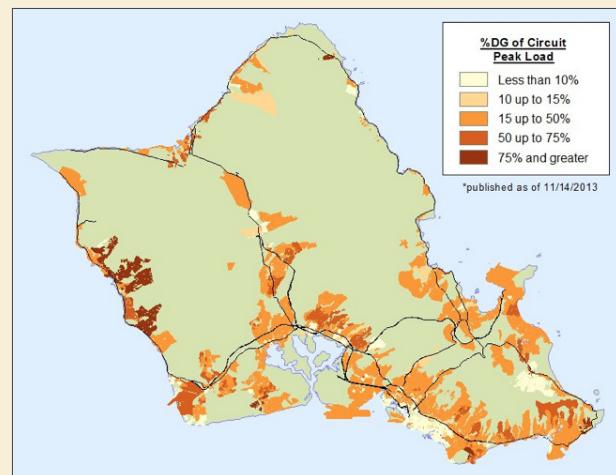


Figure 32: Oahu circuits with installed PV up to and greater than 100% of peak load (from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.).<sup>43, xxiv</sup> Map courtesy of Hawaiian Electric. Used with permission.

Removing the generator from the system does increase the cost for a commercial system that provides grid-equivalent reliability, but not as substantially as one might think, largely due to the solar resource in this particular location. Due to the high retail electricity prices in Hawaii, a solar-plus-battery-only system (i.e., without diesel generator) becomes competitive with retail electricity by 2015.

Most Hawaii businesses are likely just beginning to become aware of the drop in technology costs and the financial vehicles that can be used to support their purchase of combined solar-plus-battery systems.

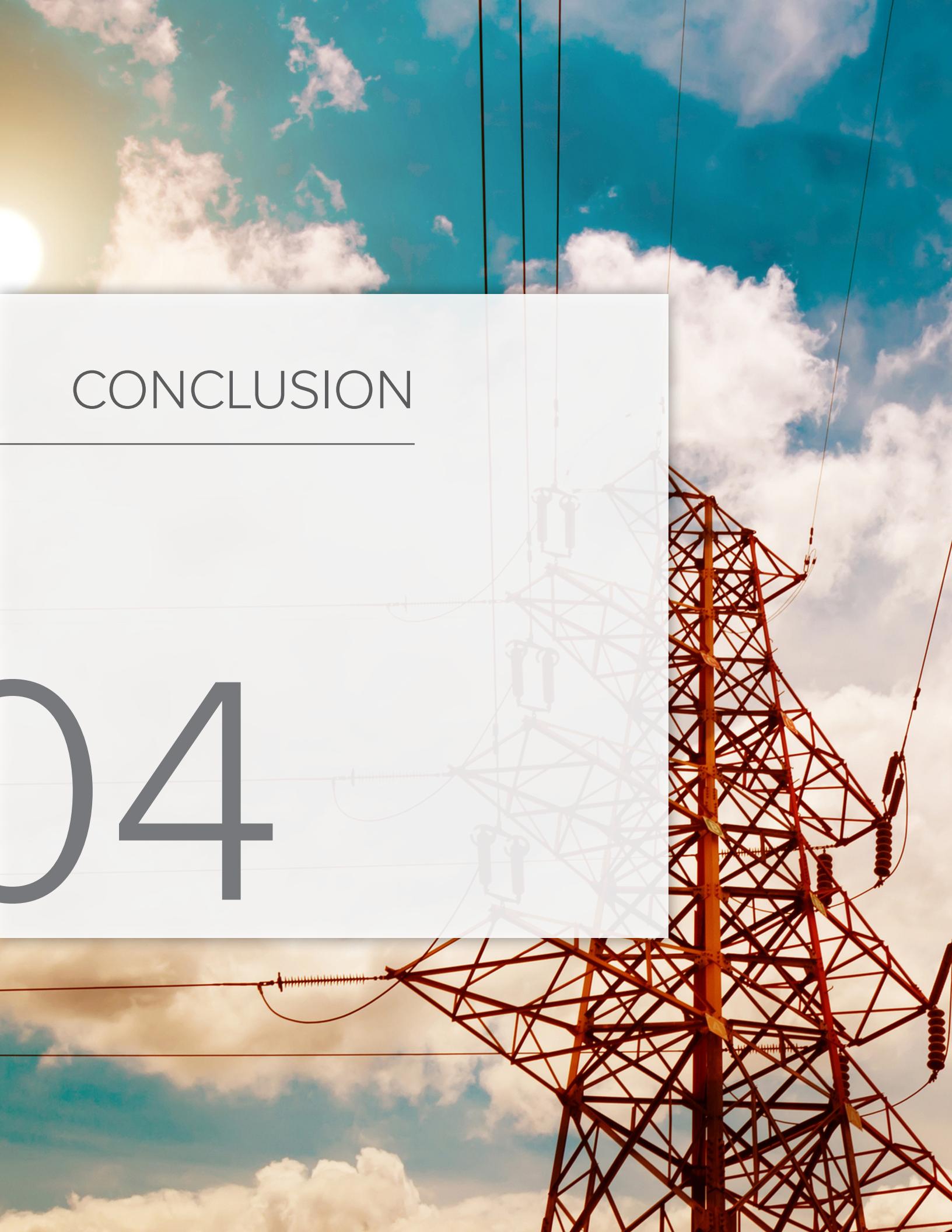
<sup>xxiv</sup> From RMI discussions with solar developers and the Hawaii PUC in Nov. 2013, interconnection evaluation wait times for proposed new systems on circuits at 100% or greater than minimum daytime load were extraordinary (a year or more).

<sup>xxv</sup> For a more detailed discussion of diesel standby generator permitting, emissions, and run time, see Appendix F.

# CONCLUSION

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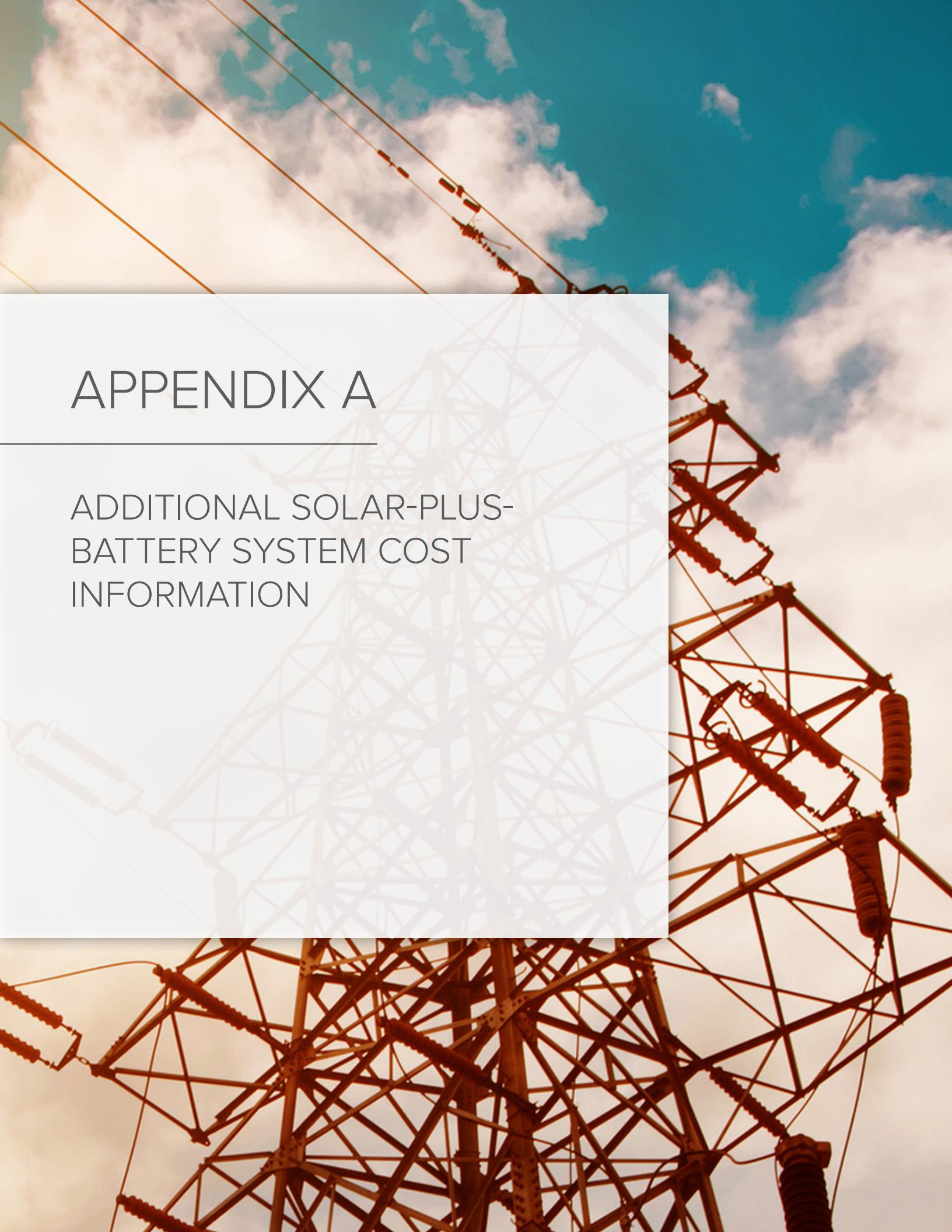
# CONCLUSION

Rising retail electricity prices (driven in part by rising utility costs), increasing energy efficiency, falling costs for distributed energy technologies such as solar-plus-battery systems, and increasing adoption of distributed energy options are fundamentally shifting the landscape of the electricity system. Our analysis shows that solar-plus-battery systems will reach grid parity—for growing numbers of customers in certain geographies, especially those with high retail electricity prices—well within the 30-year period by which utilities capitalize major power assets. Millions of customers, commercial earlier than residential, representing billions of dollars in utility revenues will find themselves in a position to cost effectively defect from the grid if they so choose.

The so-called utility death spiral is proving not just a hypothetical threat, but a real, near, and present one. The coming grid parity of solar-plus-battery systems in the foreseeable future, among other factors, signals the eventual demise of traditional utility business models. Furthermore, early adopters and kWh sales decay will make utilities feel the pinch even before the rapidly approaching day of grid parity is here, while more aggressive technology improvements and investments in demand-side improvements beyond our base case would accelerate grid parity. Though utilities could and should see this as a threat, especially if they cling to increasingly challenged

legacy business models, they can also see solar-plus-battery systems as an opportunity to add value to the grid and their business. When solar-plus-battery systems are integrated into a network, new opportunities open up that generate even greater value for customers and the network (e.g., potentially better customer-side economics, additional sizing options, ability of distributed systems to share excess generation or storage). The United States' electric grid is in the midst of transformation, but that shift need not be an either/or between central and distributed generation. Both forms of generation, connected by an evolving grid, have a role to play.

Having conducted an analysis of when and where grid parity will happen in this report, the important next question is how utilities, regulators, technology providers, and customers might work together to reshape the market—either within existing regulatory frameworks or under an evolved regulatory landscape—to tap into and maximize new sources of value offered by these disruptive opportunities to build the best electricity system of the future that delivers value and affordability to customers and society. The implications of these disruptive opportunities on business model design are the subject of ongoing work by the authors and their institutions, covered in a forthcoming report to follow soon.



# APPENDIX A

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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.

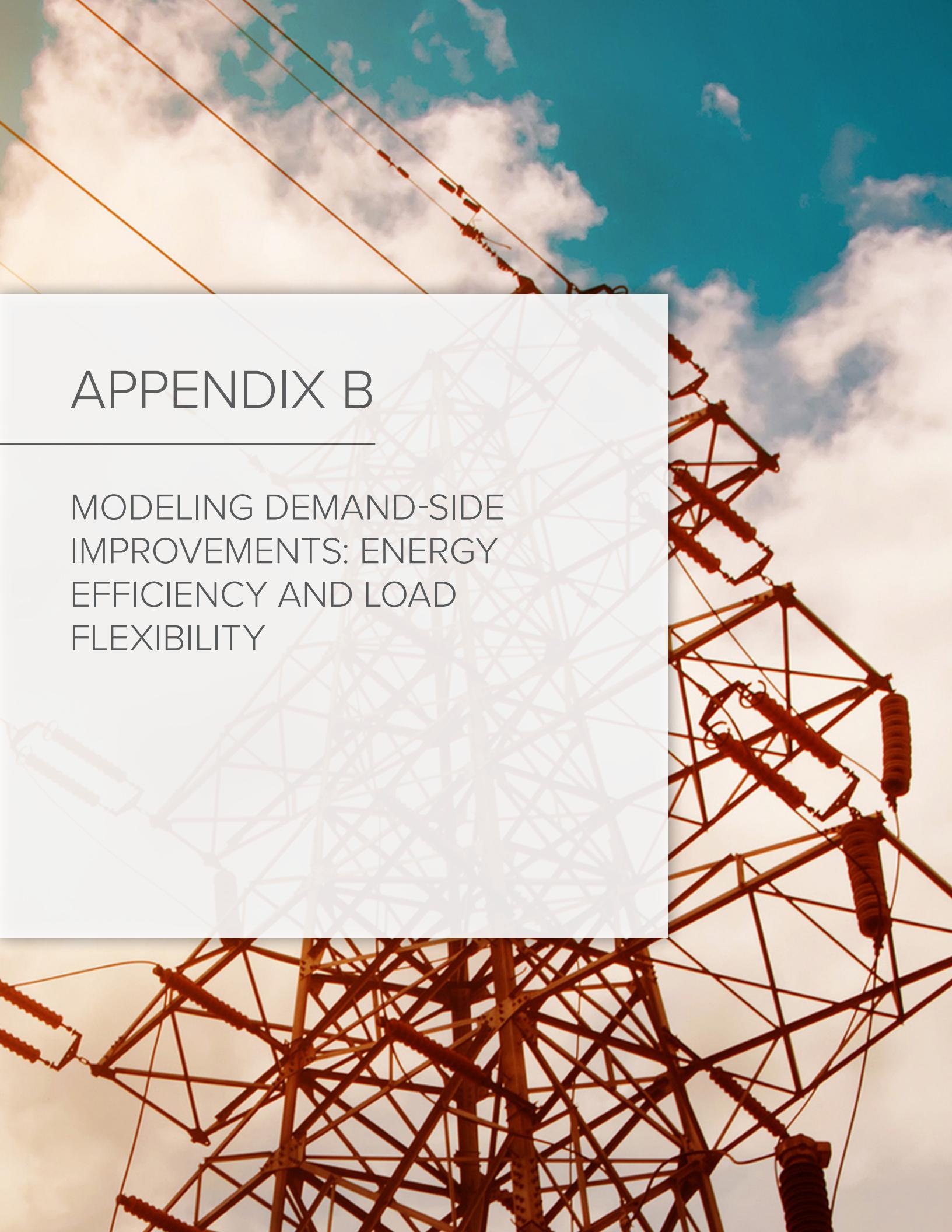
The inverter included in grid-connected PV systems is a grid-tied inverter. A grid-tied inverter is not capable of islanding or providing other off-grid capabilities. In contrast, an off-grid inverter can operate without a grid connection and includes a battery charging system, additional control capabilities, and additional hardware and wiring (but not batteries). An off-grid inverter is 25–30% more expensive than a grid-tied inverter.<sup>xxvi</sup> 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 (see Figure 19). 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.

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<sup>xxvi</sup> The 25–30% cost premium is based on confidential interviews with major inverter suppliers.



## APPENDIX B

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MODELING DEMAND-SIDE  
IMPROVEMENTS: ENERGY  
EFFICIENCY AND LOAD  
FLEXIBILITY

# APPENDIX B

## MODELING DEMAND-SIDE IMPROVEMENTS: ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND LOAD FLEXIBILITY

### *Energy efficiency*

Energy efficiency reduces overall energy consumption, such as through improved lighting (e.g., switching from incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescent bulbs or light emitting diodes), Energy-Star-rated appliances, and improved insulation to reduce heating and cooling demand for buildings.

Our team based the set of efficiency interventions and the cost of efficiency on a study by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory.<sup>44</sup> This study drew upon several prior efficiency-potential studies and compiled technical data to estimate savings percentages and costs of conserved energy. This report modeled that conserving energy costs \$0.027/kWh<sup>xxvii</sup> in 2007 U.S. dollars, with the total energy saved with energy efficiency measures 30% (residential scenarios) and 34% (commercial scenarios). These costs were converted to 2012 U.S. dollars<sup>45</sup> and the energy reduction applied to the load profiles.

### *Load flexibility*

In the residential systems, our demand-side improvement scenario allowed for about 170–200 hours of managed load flexibility during the year, representing a 2% capacity shortage from the full load. Our electrical

demand profile was, otherwise, a rigid electrical load profile requiring electricity on demand. Allowing a capacity shortage means that the owners of the system reduce or shift their energy use, either manually or automatically, predominantly during winter months.

Residential load management requires that residents either reduce or shift their loads in response to energy shortages. Much like an EV owner monitors the state of the battery charge on their vehicle and adapts their driving behavior accordingly, a homeowner with a solar-plus-battery system will have a similar ability to respond to the state of charge on their system. In winter months, when a period of cloudy weather is expected, homeowners will be able to respond by shifting when they use electricity or reducing their total consumption. This may mean waiting to wash clothes, washing dishes by hand, using lower settings on a dryer, programming appliances to run during the day, or foregoing certain energy-intensive activities like running a vacuum until the system can handle that demand.

User-controlled load flexibility was not included in the commercial systems.

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<sup>xxvii</sup> \$0.027/kWh is a national average; some regions and programs will have lower or higher costs.

COMMERCIAL	WESTCHESTER	LOUISVILLE	SAN ANTONIO	LOS ANGELES	HONOLULU
Energy Saved (kWh)	196,292	205,683	228,024	199,378	245,744
Yearly Cost of Conserved Energy (2012\$)	\$5,717	\$5,991	\$6,642	\$5,807	\$7,158

Table A1 – Commercial demand-side improvement inputs

RESIDENTIAL	WESTCHESTER	LOUISVILLE	SAN ANTONIO	LOS ANGELES	HONOLULU
Energy Saved (kWh)	3,584	3,854	4,576	2,379	4,342
Yearly Cost of Conserved Energy (2012\$)	\$104	\$112	\$133	\$69	\$126

Table A2 – Residential demand-side improvement inputs



# APPENDIX C

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ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL  
PERFORMANCE ASSUMPTIONS

# APPENDIX C

## 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 kWp	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 A3 – 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 LiFePO<sub>4</sub>) 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 <sub>4</sub> 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 <sub>4</sub> 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 <sub>4</sub> specification sheets
Maximum discharge power	3 kW	The maximum power that each battery can discharge	Professional experience validated with anecdotal review of LiFePO <sub>4</sub> 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 A4 – Battery technical assumptions

### *Genset technical assumptions*

Standby diesel gensets were included in commercial scenarios in recognition of the premium placed on reliable electricity for business and that many businesses already use a diesel genset for backup power.<sup>xxviii</sup>

PARAMETER	VALUE	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
Fuel	Diesel	The fuel is combusted to make electricity; diesel was chosen for its wide availability	
Applicable scenarios	Commercial only	The genset was only allowed to operate in commercial scenarios	
Operational limit	25% of total energy	The generator was allowed to contribute only 25% of the total energy	Author-imposed constraint
Sizing basis	110% of annual peak load	Gensets are typically sized slightly higher than the peak load to improve reliability for meeting high loads while keeping the generator operating as close to peak efficiency as possible.	Professional experience
Permitting compliance	Tier IV compliant	Tier IV emissions standards are mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to reduce harmful exhaust gases from diesel powered equipment. Tier IV compliance reduces particulate matter (PM) and nitrogen	Professional experience
Installed cost	\$500/kW	The installed cost per unit of capacity	Professional experience validated with SME interviews
Operation & maintenance cost	\$0.025/kW/hour of operation	The cost of operating and maintaining the generator per hour of operation	Professional experience validated with SME interviews
Peak fuel efficiency	~31%	The amount of input fuel energy converted into electricity at full genset output	Professional experience validated with SME interviews
Fuel efficiency @ 50% load	~25%	The amount of input fuel energy converted into electricity at 50% genset output	Professional experience validated with SME interviews

Table A5 – Genset technical assumptions

<sup>xxviii</sup> For more information on diesel generator permitting, emissions, and run time, also see Appendix F.

### Inverter technical assumptions

An inverter converts electricity from alternating current (AC) to direct current (DC) and vice versa. Grid-tied inverter costs were derived from the PV costs listed in Appendix A. We calculated the cost breakdown based on the BNEF PV Market Outlook report.<sup>46</sup> 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 hardwire and wiring (but not batteries). An off-grid inverter is 25–30% more expensive than a grid-tied inverter.<sup>xxix</sup> 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.

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<sup>xxix</sup> 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 hardwire 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 A6 – Inverter technical assumptions



# APPENDIX D

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## HOMER MODELING

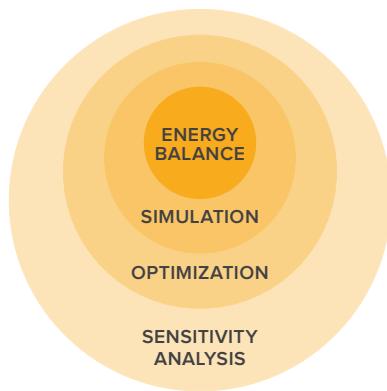
# APPENDIX D

## 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.

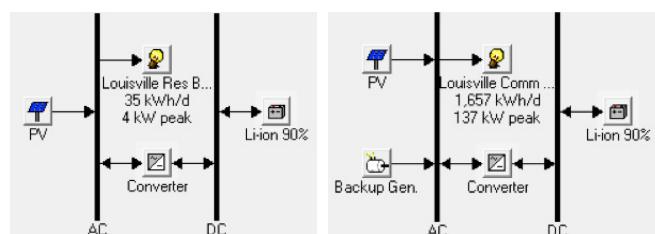
In addition to varying the capacity of the installed equipment, the user may also use HOMER's automated sensitivity analyses by varying the underlying assumptions for a location—for example, the cost of diesel fuel or the installed cost of equipment. Sensitivity analysis is different from optimization 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.<sup>47</sup> The HOMER model schematic for the Louisville residential and commercial models can be seen below.



# APPENDIX E

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## FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS



# APPENDIX E

## FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS

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)		
	Residential	Commercial
2012	9.5%	9.7%
2013	9.4%	9.6%
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		4.5%
2020		
2021		
2022		
2023		
2024		
2025		
2026		
2027		
2028		
2029		
2030		
2031		
2032		
2033		
2034		
2035	4.6%	4.4%
2036		
2037		
2038		
2039		
2040		
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2042		
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2045		
2046		
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2049		
2050		
SunShot		

# APPENDIX F

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DIESEL STANDBY GENERATOR  
PERMITTING, EMISSIONS, AND  
RUN TIME



# APPENDIX F

## DIESEL STANDBY GENERATOR PERMITTING, EMISSIONS, AND RUN TIME

### *Permitting*

In 2006, the EPA began regulating stationary non-road diesel engines (i.e., off-highway) to the same emissions standards as highway diesel engines (those used in trucks and other motor vehicles) and mobile non-road engines (those used in farm and construction equipment). The EPA had previously exempted all stationary diesel engines from emissions regulations, leaving the permitting of these engines largely to the discretion of local authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs).

The new EPA regulations require that stationary generators used for non-emergency applications (those operating >100 hours/year) meet Tier 4 or interim Tier 4 New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) by 2014. All non-emergency generators must be fully Tier 4 compliant by 2015. Tier 4 standards bring stationary generator emissions of NOx on par with those of natural-gas-powered equipment with the Best Available Control Technology (BACT).

While the new NSPS established the first uniform federal regulation for stationary diesel generators, local AHJs may still establish more restrictive standards based on local air quality conditions. Supplemental regulations generally require that BACT is employed to bring NO<sub>x</sub> and particulate emissions below certain thresholds, and do not necessarily restrict the hours of runtime permitted for a generator unit.

Given the shift in permitting from a run-time restriction largely driven by local regulation to one in which run time is unrestricted but emissions are controlled, we chose to allow diesel generators to provide up to 25% of total load in commercial simulations. This upper limit was selected based on the guidance of IRS PLR 201308005, which requires that 75% of the energy stored by a battery in a hybrid system come from the solar PV for full eligibility of the ITC. A system that requires the generator to run 250–1,000 hours would likely require an investment in a modern, non-emergency generator by companies wishing to pursue solar-plus-battery solutions in the early years of grid parity.

### *Emissions*

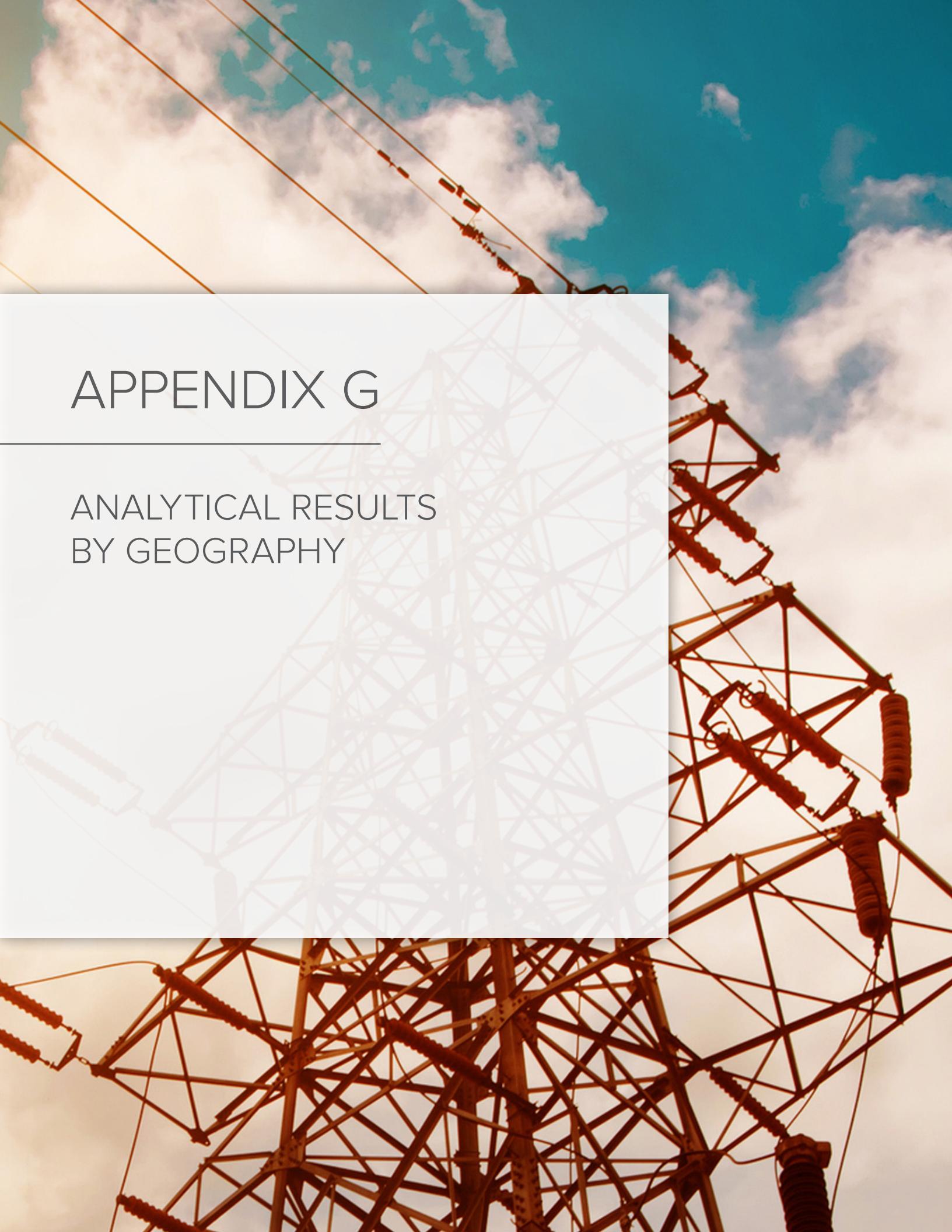
While our commercial scenarios do rely on a diesel generator, it never supplies more than 25% of the electric demand, and in most cases far less than that. Despite the fact that diesel generators in our commercial scenarios are run more often than a typical backup generator, emissions are much lower than electricity purchased from the grid today.

In Westchester in 2014, for example, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are 20% lower than the grid, in Los Angeles emissions are 43% lower, and remaining locations are all 73% lower. Since diesel generator use drops nearly in half (or more) by 2050, emissions experience similarly precipitous declines throughout the years.

# APPENDIX G

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ANALYTICAL RESULTS  
BY GEOGRAPHY





## **COMMERCIAL TABLES - LOUISVILLE, KY**

### Base Case - Louisville Commercial (with Genset)

### **Base Case - Louisville Commercial (without Genset)**

Base Case - Louisville Commercial (without Genset)																		Emissions								
Year	PV	1kWh Li-ion	Converter	Total Capital Cost	Total NPC	Total Annual Replacement Cost	Total O&M Cost	Total Fuel Cost	Total Annual Cost	Operating Cost	CO <sub>E</sub>	PV Production	Total Electrical Production	AC Primary Load Served	Renewable Fraction	Capacity Shortage	Unmet Load	Excess Electricity	CO <sub>2</sub>	CO	UHC	PM	SO <sub>2</sub>	NOx	Battery Autonomy	Battery Throughput
kW	Quantity	kW	\$	\$	\$/yr	\$/yr	\$/yr	\$/yr	\$/yr	\$/kWh	kWh/yr	kWh/yr	kWh/yr	kWh/yr	kWh/yr	kWh/yr	kWh/yr	kg/yr	kg/yr	kg/yr	kg/yr	kg/yr	kg/yr	kWh/yr		
2014	1,450	4,650	350	3,563,187	4,317,593	70,636	9,300	0	457,489	79,936	0.75	1,970,515	1,970,515	604,284	100%	605	524	1,275,460	0	0	0	0	53.89	342,268		
2016	1,450	4,650	350	3,051,798	3,747,805	59,843	9,300	0	372,316	9,143	0.61	1,970,515	1,970,515	604,284	100%	605	524	1,275,460	0	0	0	0	53.89	342,268		
2018	1,450	4,650	350	3,605,210	4,573,870	58,742	9,300	0	321,282	68,042	0.53	1,970,515	1,970,515	604,284	100%	605	524	1,275,460	0	0	0	0	53.89	342,268		
2020	1,450	4,650	350	3,229,504	4,153,169	52,351	9,300	0	277,210	61,651	0.45	1,970,515	1,970,515	604,284	100%	605	524	1,275,460	0	0	0	0	53.89	342,268		
2022	1,450	4,650	350	2,941,360	3,779,533	46,645	9,300	0	252,271	55,945	0.47	1,970,515	1,970,515	604,284	100%	605	524	1,275,460	0	0	0	0	53.89	342,268		
2024	1,450	4,650	350	2,697,760	3,458,657	41,487	9,300	0	230,854	50,787	0.38	1,970,515	1,970,515	604,284	100%	605	524	1,275,460	0	0	0	0	53.89	342,268		
2026	1,450	4,650	350	2,530,121	3,224,971	37,079	9,300	0	215,254	46,379	0.36	1,970,515	1,970,515	604,284	100%	605	524	1,275,460	0	0	0	0	53.89	342,268		
2028	1,450	4,650	350	2,424,814	3,067,827	33,619	9,300	0	204,767	42,919	0.39	1,970,515	1,970,515	604,284	100%	605	524	1,275,460	0	0	0	0	53.89	342,268		
2030	1,450	4,650	350	2,320,712	2,923,511	30,935	9,300	0	195,134	40,235	0.33	1,970,515	1,970,515	604,284	100%	605	524	1,275,460	0	0	0	0	53.89	342,268		
2032	1,450	4,650	350	2,301,043	2,890,499	30,044	9,300	0	192,931	39,344	0.31	1,970,515	1,970,515	604,284	100%	605	524	1,275,460	0	0	0	0	53.89	342,268		
2034	1,450	4,650	350	2,272,734	2,852,105	29,399	9,300	0	190,368	38,699	0.31	1,970,515	1,970,515	604,284	100%	605	524	1,275,460	0	0	0	0	53.89	342,268		
2036	1,000	6,600	450	2,008,338	2,816,425	40,737	13,200	0	198,377	53,937	0.31	1,358,977	1,358,977	604,318	100%	575	491	660,660	0	0	0	0	76.49	357,125		
2038	1,000	6,600	450	1,994,128	2,792,560	40,091	13,200	0	186,394	53,291	0.30	1,358,977	1,358,977	604,318	100%	575	491	660,660	0	0	0	0	76.49	357,125		
2040	1,000	6,600	450	1,970,816	2,760,204	39,489	13,200	0	184,234	52,689	0.30	1,358,977	1,358,977	604,318	100%	575	491	660,660	0	0	0	0	76.49	357,125		
2042	1,000	6,600	450	1,956,560	2,736,247	38,841	13,200	0	182,635	52,041	0.30	1,358,977	1,358,977	604,318	100%	575	491	660,660	0	0	0	0	76.49	357,125		
2044	1,000	6,600	450	1,932,700	2,703,010	38,216	13,200	0	180,417	51,164	0.29	1,358,977	1,358,977	604,318	100%	575	491	660,660	0	0	0	0	76.49	357,125		
2046	1,000	6,600	450	1,919,368	2,680,573	37,608	13,200	0	178,919	50,808	0.29	1,358,977	1,358,977	604,318	100%	575	491	660,660	0	0	0	0	76.49	357,125		
2048	1,000	6,600	450	1,898,366	2,646,943	36,898	13,200	0	176,674	50,098	0.29	1,358,977	1,358,977	604,318	100%	575	491	660,660	0	0	0	0	76.49	357,125		
2050	1,000	6,600	450	1,883,826	2,625,867	36,329	13,200	0	175,268	49,529	0.29	1,358,977	1,358,977	604,318	100%	575	491	660,660	0	0	0	0	76.49	357,125		
Sunshot	1,000	6,600	450	1,294,828	1,855,354	24,213	13,200	0	123,839	37,413	0.20	1,358,977	1,358,977	604,318	100%	575	491	660,660	0	0	0	0	76.49	357,125		

Accelerated Technology Improvement - Louisville Commercial (with Genset)

Demand-side Improvement - Louisville Commercial (with Geonet)

Combined Improvement - Louisville Commercial (with Genset)

Combined Improvement - Louisville Commercial (with GenSet)																							
Battery Projection Study	Pw	Diesel GenSet	1kWh Li-Ion	Converter	Efficiency Case	Emissions										Renewable							
						Total Capital Cost	Total NPC	Total Annual Revenue	Total O&M Cost	Total Fuel Cost	Total Annual Operating Cost	CO2	PV Production	GenSet Production	Total Electrical Load Served	Renewable Fraction	Capacity Shortage	Excess Electricity	CO2	CO	CH4	PM	SO2
Bloomberg New Energy Finance	500	150	1,150	350 Yes	9,000	3,120,917	18,370	40,169	16,779	39,042	0.222	769,488	62,545	742,030	399,174	0.84	0	281,805	55,555	137	10	12	1,224
US Bank	500	150	1,150	350 Yes	746,802	1,165,915	18,370	4,033	16,741	87,213	0.195	679,488	62,267	741,756	399,174	0.84	0	281,530	55,350	137	15	10	1,224
US Bank	500	150	1,150	350 Yes	746,802	1,165,915	18,370	4,033	16,741	87,213	0.195	679,488	62,267	741,756	399,174	0.84	0	281,530	55,350	137	15	10	1,211
Department of Energy	400	150	1,650	200 Yes	525,931	1,011,836	11,739	4,166	15,744	67,537	0.169	543,500	58,978	602,588	399,174	0.83	0	139,647	52,447	129	14	10	1,155
Battery DEM	400	150	2,000	200 Yes	559,931	966,154	11,175	5,099	10,686	64,488	0.162	615,540	60,613	625,153	399,174	0.9	0	189,101	35,096	89	10	7	721
Battery DEM	400	150	2,000	200 Yes	559,931	966,154	11,175	5,099	10,686	64,488	0.162	615,540	60,613	625,153	399,174	0.9	0	189,101	35,096	89	10	7	721







## COMMERCIAL TABLES - ALL LOCATIONS

Commercial (All Scenario and Geography) Financial Costs							
Year	Diesel Price \$/L	PV Capital Cost \$/Wdc	PV Replacement Cost \$/Wdc	Li-ion Battery Capital Cost \$/KWh	Li-ion Battery Replacement Cost \$/KWh	Inverter Capital Cost \$	Inverter Replacement Cost %
2014	0.912	1.49	3.18	289.61	619.88	0.16	0.35 9.5
2016	0.754	1.32	2.85	234.15	506.05	0.14	0.31 8.7
2018	0.758	1.58	2.6	269.83	443.47	0.17	0.28 4.9
2020	0.79	1.38	2.39	239.4	391.7	0.16	0.26 4.4
2022	0.83	1.32	2.19	210.4	347.96	0.14	0.24 4.4
2024	0.859	1.23	2.03	186.83	308.99	0.13	0.22 4.4
2026	0.886	1.18	1.95	166.37	275.15	0.13	0.21 4.4
2028	0.911	1.16	1.91	149.96	248	0.13	0.21 4.4
2030	0.931	1.14	1.88	139.9	229.6	0.12	0.2 4.4
2032	0.961	1.13	1.86	133.45	220.7	0.12	0.2 4.4
2034	0.998	1.12	1.85	130.39	215.64	0.12	0.2 4.4
2036	1.021	1.11	1.84	127.93	211.58	0.12	0.2 4.4
2038	1.044	1.11	1.83	125.78	208.5	0.12	0.2 4.4
2040	1.067	1.11	1.82	123.7	204.68	0.12	0.2 4.4
2042	1.091	1.1	1.82	121.6	201.1	0.12	0.2 4.4
2044	1.068	1.09	1.81	119.5	197.64	0.12	0.2 4.4
2046	1.086	1.09	1.8	117.48	194.28	0.12	0.2 4.4
2048	1.118	1.08	1.79	115.43	191.0	0.12	0.2 4.4
2050	1.121	1.08	1.78	113.63	187.89	0.12	0.19 4.4
Sunshot	0.793	0.76	1.25	75.58	125	0.08	0.13 4.4

Commercial (Accelerated Technology and Combine Improvement Scenario) All Geography Financial Costs						
Battery Projection Study	PV Capital Cost \$/Wdc	PV Replacement Cost \$/Wdc	Li-ion Battery Capital Cost \$/KWh	Li-ion Battery Replacement Cost \$/KWh	Inverter Capital Cost \$	Inverter Replacement Cost %
Bloomberg New Energy Finance	0.76	1.25	236.52	391.23	0.08	0.13
Deutsche Bank	0.76	1.25	151.14	250	0.08	0.13
McKinsey	0.76	1.25	120.91	200	0.08	0.13
Department of Energy	0.76	1.25	75.57	125	0.08	0.13
Battery OEM	0.76	1.25	60.47	100	0.08	0.13

Diesel Prices <sup>30</sup>		
1 gallon = 3.78541 liters	[2012\$/gallon]	[2012\$/liter]
2012	\$3.70	\$0.98
2013	\$3.66	\$0.97
2014	\$3.45	\$0.91
2015	\$2.93	\$0.77
2016	\$2.85	\$0.75
2017	\$2.84	\$0.75
2018	\$2.87	\$0.76
2019	\$2.94	\$0.78
2020	\$3.00	\$0.79
2021	\$3.07	\$0.81
2022	\$3.14	\$0.83
2023	\$3.20	\$0.84
2024	\$3.25	\$0.86
2025	\$3.31	\$0.87
2026	\$3.35	\$0.89
2027	\$3.41	\$0.90
2028	\$3.45	\$0.91
2029	\$3.50	\$0.92
2030	\$3.54	\$0.93
2031	\$3.58	\$0.95
2032	\$3.64	\$0.96
2033	\$3.69	\$0.97
2034	\$3.78	\$1.00
2035	\$3.82	\$1.01
2036	\$3.86	\$1.02
2037	\$3.91	\$1.03
2038	\$3.95	\$1.04
2039	\$4.02	\$1.06
2040	\$4.10	\$1.08
2041	\$3.94	\$1.04
2042	\$3.98	\$1.05
2043	\$4.01	\$1.06
2044	\$4.04	\$1.07
2045	\$4.08	\$1.08
2046	\$4.11	\$1.09
2047	\$4.14	\$1.09
2048	\$4.18	\$1.10
2049	\$4.21	\$1.11
2050	\$4.24	\$1.12
SunShot	\$3.00	\$0.79











## RESIDENTIAL TABLES - ALL LOCATIONS

Residential (All Scenario and Geography) Financial Costs						
Year	PV Capital Cost \$/Wdc	PV Replacement Cost \$/Wdc	Li-ion Battery Capital Cost \$/kWh	Li-ion Battery Replacement Cost \$/kWh	Inverter Capital Cost \$	Inverter Replacement Cost \$
						Interest Rate %
2014	2.67	3.82	433.92	619.88	0.34	0.49
2016	2.35	3.35	354.23	506.05	0.3	0.43
2018	3.03	3.03	443.47	443.47	0.39	0.39
2020	2.75	2.75	391.23	391.23	0.35	0.35
2022	2.51	2.51	347.96	347.96	0.32	0.32
2024	2.33	2.33	308.99	308.99	0.3	0.3
2026	2.23	2.23	275.15	275.15	0.29	0.29
2028	2.18	2.18	248	248	0.28	0.28
2030	2.14	2.14	227.69	227.69	0.28	0.28
2032	2.12	2.12	220.7	220.7	0.27	0.27
2034	2.11	2.11	215.64	215.64	0.27	0.27
2036	2.09	2.09	211.58	211.58	0.27	0.27
2038	2.08	2.08	208.01	208.01	0.27	0.27
2040	2.07	2.07	204.68	204.68	0.27	0.27
2042	2.06	2.06	201.1	201.1	0.26	0.26
2044	2.05	2.05	197.64	197.64	0.26	0.26
2046	2.04	2.04	194.28	194.28	0.26	0.26
2048	2.02	2.02	191.04	191.04	0.26	0.26
2050	2.02	2.02	187.89	187.89	0.26	0.26
Sunshot	1.5	1.5	125	125	0.18	4.6

Residential (Accelerated Technology and Combined Improvement Scenario) All Geography Financial Costs						
Battery Projection Study	PV Capital Cost \$/Wdc	PV Replacement Cost \$/Wdc	Li-ion Battery Capital Cost \$/kWh	Li-ion Battery Replacement Cost \$/kWh	Inverter Capital Cost \$	Inverter Replacement Cost \$
Bloomberg New Energy Finance	1.5	1.5	391.23	391.23	0.18	0.18
Deutsche Bank	1.5	1.5	250	250	0.18	0.18
McKinsey	1.5	1.5	200	200	0.18	0.18
Department of Energy	1.5	1.5	125	125	0.18	0.18
Battery OEM	1.5	1.5	100	100	0.18	0.18

# ENDNOTES

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# ENDNOTES

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