

Nation's largest solar installer to open Florida facility

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The largest U.S. solar panel installer is moving into Florida's residential market after the state's voters last month rejected a utility-backed ballot measure that critics said would make going solar more expensive.

SolarCity, a San Mateo, Calif.-based subsidiary of electric car maker Tesla Motors, said Thursday it is opening an [operations center](#) in the Orlando area and plans to expand into other areas of Florida.

The company's decision to enter the Florida market was helped by voters' rejection of Amendment 1 on Nov. 8. If successful, the utility-funded Amendment 1 would have opened the door to new laws that could have hindered the growth of residential solar power.

Lyndon Rive, the company's CEO, said the vote strengthened the company's resolve to move into the state.

"It reinforces to any policymaker or regulator that when you're making the rules, consider that the voters voted for competition and energy choice," he said in a telephone interview.

A typical SolarCity operations center employs about 100 people, a company spokesman said, and the company is hiring for sales and installation jobs at its Orlando area facility in Clermont. Right now, that facility has about 40 employees.

SolarCity installs custom solar systems that it leases to homeowners. It also maintains and repairs them, a business model that allows property owners who want to go solar to do so without having to buy and maintain an entire system.

In some states, the company also sells the power directly to consumers from the panels it leases.

In Florida, however, the law allows only utility

companies to sell power directly to consumers, so SolarCity has been slow to enter the state's market even with its abundant sunshine.

The company said it will be serving customers of Duke Energy Florida and Orlando Utilities Commission.

SolarCity was recently acquired by Tesla, whose CEO Elon Musk is also chairman of the solar [company](#).

Musk has said that he wants to sell solar panels through Tesla's stores so that customers can use them to power their electric vehicles and homes.

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