

Choosing Green Energy

By ANNA CHANG-YEN | Green Shoot Media

For those who care deeply about the environment, the thought of electricity taking the quickest route from the nearest wind turbine or solar panel into your home sounds downright dreamy.

The reality of how power is harnessed and consumed is much more complicated, but the good news is that with a little research, you can make a major difference in helping turn the tide toward green energy and energy independence in the U.S.

You may have gotten emails or seen advertisements online containing promises that you can “switch” to green energy.

The reality is that energy created from all sources — renewable, such as wind and solar, and non-renewable, such as coal and nuclear — all flow into the same grid and thus become mixed into one vast pool of energy from which homes and businesses all over the country draw their power. That means there’s really no way to know if your toaster oven or air conditioner is technically running on clean energy.

The good news is that you can make purchasing decisions that tell power producers that you want green energy, and by signing up for a properly certified program, you can be sure that an amount of power that

comes into the grid, equal to your consumption, comes from sustainable sources.

WHAT IS A REC?

A renewable energy certificate, or REC, is issued by a power provider to show that one megawatt hour, or roughly enough energy to power a home for a month, has been produced from a renewable source.

Essentially, a REC guarantees that an amount of clean energy equivalent to your usage is produced on your behalf. According to Grist.org, “It lets

you financially support green energy projects even if you don’t have them in your neck of the woods. It helps make the overall energy mix in the grid cleaner. And it allows you to completely offset your personal electricity footprint by replacing any carbon-emitting power you suck from the grid with new electricity derived from renewable sources.”

Of course, producing energy in an environmentally friendly way is more expensive than traditional energy production methods, so expect to pay a premium on your utility rates

when purchasing RECs.

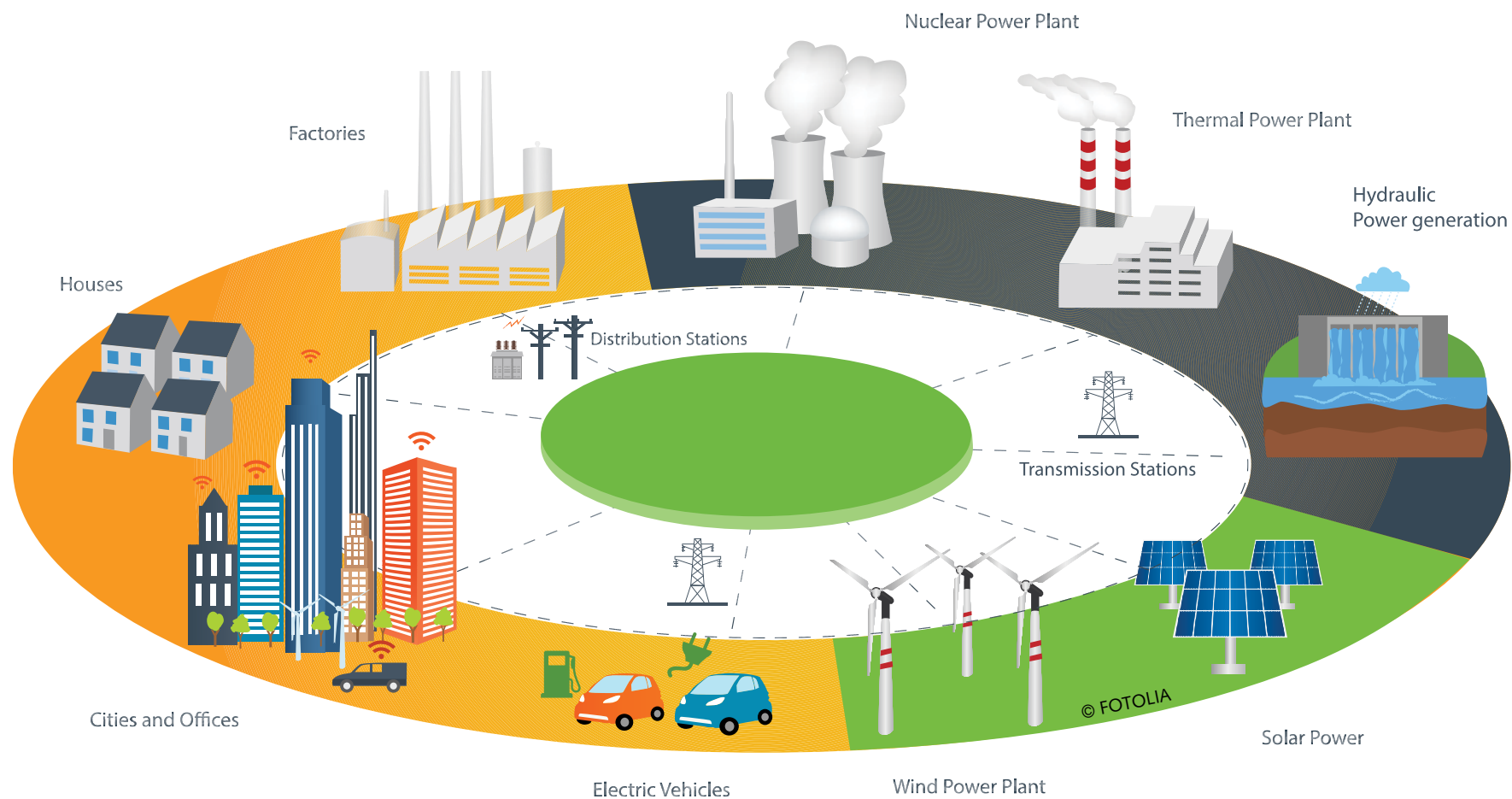
CHOOSE GREEN ENERGY

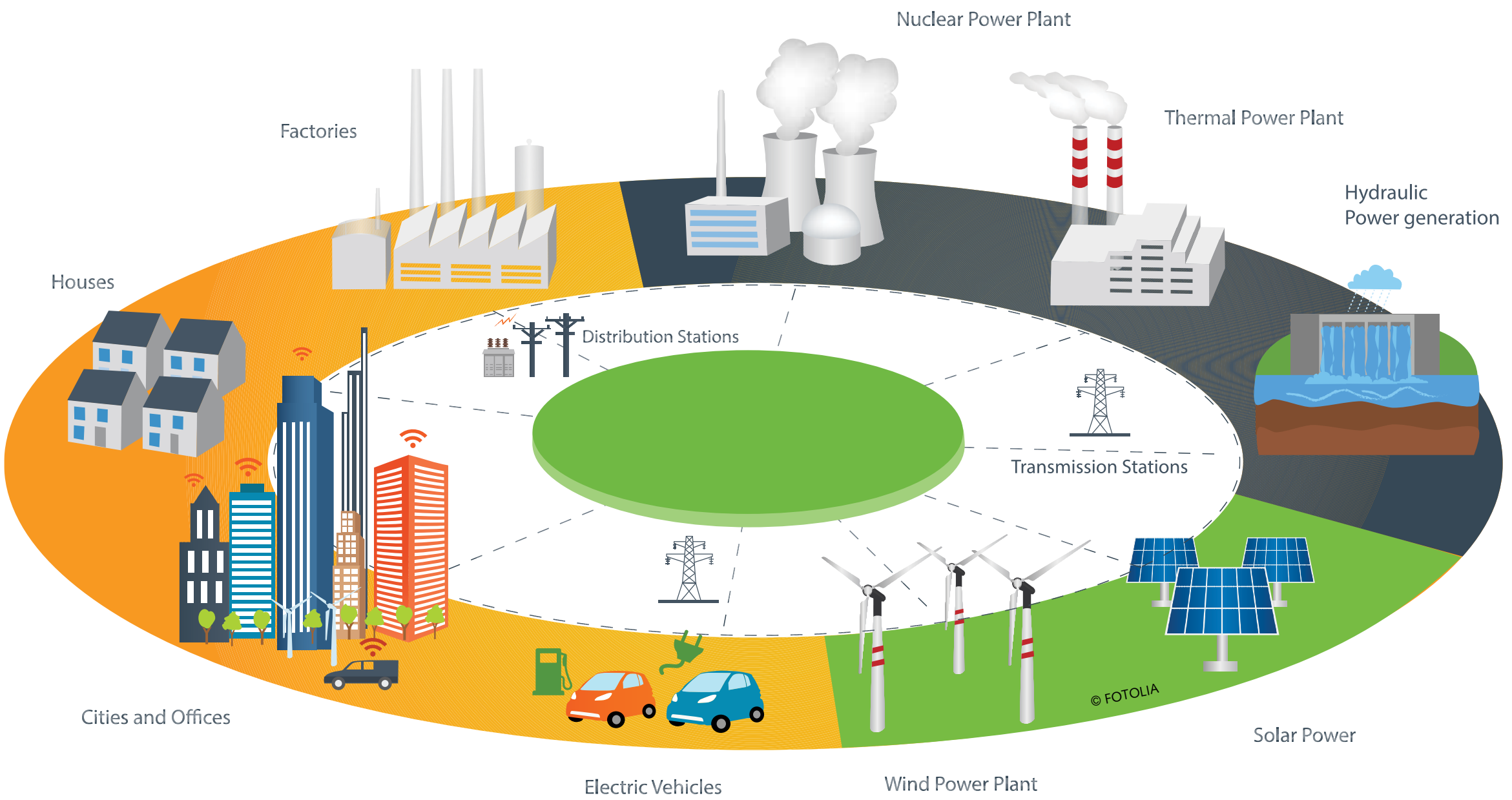
The first step is to check into whether your state allows energy choice. Visit the American Coalition of Competitive Energy Suppliers’ map of the U.S. at <http://bit.ly/1IpCYeJ> to find out if your state allows you to choose your energy provider.

If so, choose wisely. Don’t simply go with the first provider whose ad you see or who knocks on your door. Choose a supplier who has its claims of green energy production veri-

fied by a third party, such as Green-e, a nationwide certifier of green energy production. Green e’s Energy National Standard certifies wind, solar, geothermal, biomass or low-impact hydropower energy, being sure that the energy is indeed produced from the stated renewable source and isn’t double counted, and that the supplier honestly and fairly markets its product.

Find a list of suppliers and check for certification on the Environmental Protection Agency’s website at <https://http://bit.ly/2lk3JuI>.





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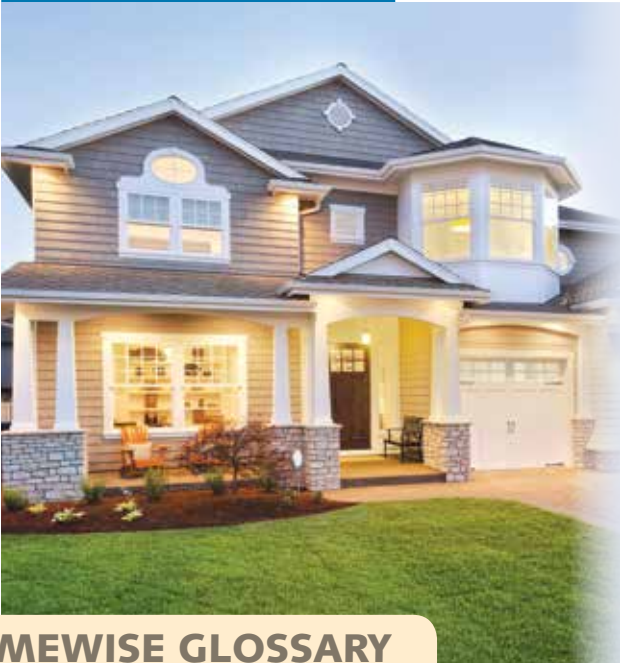
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REAL ESTATE 101



Green Energy by the Numbers

33.5 million megawatt-hours (MWh): Green-e Energy certified retail sales in 2013, enough to power over a quarter of U.S. households for a month.

1%: Green-e certified percentage of the total U.S. electricity mix in 2013, with over half of the installed wind capacity in the U.S. participating in Green-e Energy certified transactions.

Nearly 47,000: more retail customers purchased Green-e certified renewable energy in 2013 than 2012, with almost 717,000 total retail customers, including 69,000 businesses.

HOMESWISE GLOSSARY

Draw: Usually applies to construction loans when disbursement of a portion of the mortgage is made in advance, as improvements to the property are made.

Take-out loan: The loan arranged by the owner or builder developer for a buyer. The construction loan made for construction of the improvements is usually paid in full from the proceeds of this more permanent mortgage loan.

SOURCE: California Bureau of Real Estate

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