



There's talk about the 17,000 acres set aside years ago for an intercontinental jetport in Palmdale being utilized for a solar power facility that would be capable of generating up to 100 megawatts of clean energy. Two hundred and twenty miles above the earth, astronauts recently installed the last set of solar wings on the 10-year old orbiting International Space Station, bringing it to full power. With four panels on either side, the new wings will boost the amount of research accomplished. California law is requiring investor-owned utilities to generate 20% of their electricity from renewable sources by 2010, a figure bound to increase beyond

ownership are carefully considered. Ordinarily, their collective motivation is to reduce electricity costs, which they fear will continue to rise. Discount incentives, tax credits, and the increase in home value are other incentives. Too many, however, there is also an ethical consideration. To use the sun as power is helping to clean and sustain the environment. They become proud members of the Green Movement.

Here are a few examples of what's happening in the solar arena in San Clemente:

In 2002, local residents Dan and Racheal Feinberg had tired of the "gray outs," the shutting down of electrical power by large companies as well as the high rates they were charging. As victims of planned blackouts, the Feinbergs installed solar panels.

"We're still profiting from tax credits, and state and federal benefits," Feinberg related. Our electric bill, which ran between \$375 and \$400 each month dropped to less than \$100. When we refinanced the house, the appraiser told us its value had increased \$50,000 because of our solar system."

The Feinbergs experienced three additional blackouts due to infrastructure problems of their electrical company. "They lasted a couple of hours, but our solar system continued to supply us power as a battery backup," said Feinberg. "We highly encourage people to go solar. There's no maintenance. We've had two checkups since the panels were installed. No problema."

Community activist and nuclear power critic, Lynn Harris Hicks, and her husband, K.C., who was in the roofing business, purchased their solar system nine years ago. Mrs. Hicks is still concerned the transition to such natural resources as solar, wind, and moving water is taking far too long.

"We're able to provide all the electricity we need and more. Our electricity goes back on the grid, and we save the same cost on taxes as we would give the electric company for power. The cost of

that time. This has encouraged Semptra Generation to complete a 10-megawatt solar farm in Nevada, aimed at providing electricity to 6,400 homes. The facility can produce power at a cost of 7.5 cents a kilowatt-hour, 2.5 cents less than conventional electricity.

In Orange County, solar panels are even being used to provide interior lighting for Jewish temples. More Californians, according to the California Public Utilities Commission, are warming to the idea of turning their roofs into energy production. A record 1,215 applications seeking solar subsidies were filed in December, 2008. During the year, more than 18,000 Californians applied for rebates to credit solar installations, a high of 133 megawatts of solar photovoltaics. The California Solar Initiative predicts solar panels will cover the roofs of over one million homes within a decade.

Why are such large numbers of people going solar? Most are not impulsive followers. Most conduct their research. In weighing the cost of leasing or purchasing solar panels, their expected years of home

by Bill Thomas

Saving by solar and protecting our environment is catching on everywhere. Mission Viejo is the first "going green" mall in the nation with the December completion of the largest solar roof installation ever attempted in a multi-store complex. The 1,020 panels can provide 15% of the mall's 4.2 million-kilowatt

annual consumption. In Los Angeles, Measure B, a plan to install 400 megawatts of Department of Water and Power-owned solar panels throughout the city by 2014 lost by a small percentage, but proponents are still aggressively pursuing actions to implement a similar environmental initiative.

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our system replaces the money we would have spent with the utility as it amortizes. In 12 to 15 years, all the profits the utility would have made are yours, she suggested."

San Clemente Green's founders, Gary and Laurie Headrick, also set a recent example for us, installing a leased solar system provided by SolarCity.

"In the couple of months that we've had our panels up and running, our energy bills have dropped below our typical average bill, including the amount we pay on our solar lease program," Gary indicated. "With the sunny days ahead of us, we'll be doing even better. We still have more we can do to reduce our energy needs. We plan to replace our old appliances and light fixtures. We're also anxious to explore solar hot water and skylights, he added. Once you get solar panels, saving energy becomes more like a game. We are even more conscientious about turning out the lights, and other phantom energy users. Our solar lease includes some very user friendly web-based charts and graphs that show us how we're doing. I think if everyone could actually see the results of their energy consumption in real time, they would make better choices."

Councilman Joe and Mary Anna Anderson are also happy with their solar panel lease arrangement and their recently installed system.

"The logic's pretty simple, Anderson, opined, "One, environmentally speaking, it's the thing to do. Two, over time and performance, the system has economical advantages, and, three, it's fun to generate your own electricity. We generated 15 kilowatts the other day, and our average consumption is 20 kilowatts. Our last electric bill was only \$30."

Joe Anderson loves going outside to watch the dials on his SDGE meter go backwards after their new energy system was installed. He also has a solar panel on his RV.

Not to be outdone, my wife, Diane, and I have joined the "solar goers." Thirteen dark panels cover the southwestern roof

exposure; they don't look the least bit intrusive. Within three weeks after installation, our electrical bill had dropped markedly. We started our energy conserva-



Home Solar System.

tion effort in September, reviewing the services of various solar companies, learning as much as we could about the process itself, and pondering the negatives and positives of buying a system versus leasing one. After discussing the alternatives with SolarCity's knowledgeable sales representative, Shawn Maez, a home solar system user himself, we decided on ownership. Discussions with solar systems sales experts are extremely useful and certainly help with wise decision-making. We gave the "go ahead" in December and filed our solar installation application with our homeowner's association, after obtaining the approval signatures of the neighbors to the right and left of us. In January, we received the association's approval. In February, in three days, the solar installers changed our roofline, provided us with an inverter, and instructed us how to turn on our new toy once approval by the City of San Clemente and SDGE were obtained. Solar City took care of these arrangements, and, on March 11, we turned on our very own energy system. No, there were no marching bands, speeches, or bal-

loons, but I felt good anyway.

Gary Headrick and San Clemente Green are attempting to make solar power more available and affordable to fellow cit-

izens. They're gathering the names of individuals interested in buying or leasing solar photovoltaics, to gain buying leverage with companies that want our business. They're exploring approval and purchasing plans with officials of the City and banks. Additionally, they're investigated programs in Palm Springs and Berkeley, California, which provide homeowners

with "green lending programs," added to their property tax payments for energy-saving improvements to their homes. For additional information, email gary@san-clemenegreen.org.

Another helpful source of information is local electrical contractor, Marc Candelaria, an outdoors person, surfer, and solar advocate. "If I'm involved, Marc indicated, I can bring about considerable savings to San Clemente residents. I want to build my solar business locally and think I can match or best any other bid. I've been in business 20 years; I'm smaller than the 'big guys' organizations with project managers, sales forces, and several installation crews. "I want to help the entire City of San Clemente go solar," Candelaria said.

He advocates high efficiency solar panels, inverters, and wiring. Visit his website, candelariaelectric.com.

According to Lyndon Rive, CEO of SolarCity, "Solar electricity has never been more affordable than it is today. An investment in solar power is a 10 percent or better annual return over its lifetime, making it an excellent financial decision for many families in uncertain economic times. We believe solar power will become the largest single source of energy in the U.S. in the next 20 years."

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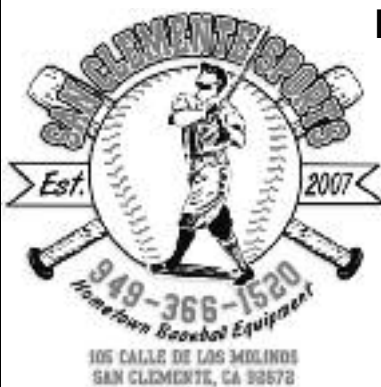
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