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First-of-its-Kind Organizational Solar “Group Buy” Program Established

New approach brings lower-cost solar systems and low interest rates for solar loans to City of San José employees and retirees

San José, Calif. --- Members of the San José Credit Union, who are also City of San José employees and retirees, can now go solar more efficiently and cost effectively thanks to an innovative group buy program that is the first of its kind in the U.S. The San José Employee Solar Group Buy program is the result of a partnership between the San José Credit Union and San José’s Solar America City Program. A group of 130 City employees and retirees negotiated the group buy, which allows them to purchase residential solar electric and solar thermal systems at a reduced cost.

The San José Credit Union, which serves the banking needs of many of the City’s 6,000+ employees and retirees, teamed up with the San José Solar America City Program to establish this innovative and replicable organizational model. Both organizations will provide technical and strategic expertise to help group members, no matter where they live, reap the benefits of volume purchasing and low interest loans. The group buy model lowers solar system cost for a large group of homeowners and encourages community participation in achieving San José’s Green Vision goals, as well as neighboring cities’ environmental goals.

“We’re already the city with the most solar power in California,” San José Mayor Chuck Reed commented. “These innovative approaches are what continue to set San José apart as a leader in sustainable energy. I encourage more organizations to follow their lead to help us achieve our Green Vision goals.”

The San José Employee Solar Group Buy program builds upon the success of similar community group solar purchases in Portland, Ore., and other cities across the country, and takes the model from the neighborhood and city-specific level to the organizational level. Through this type of program, large groups

of organizational employees that are members of a well-respected local credit union can utilize familiar financing tools to go solar no matter what city they live in.

“We are excited to help our members participate in the San José Employee Solar Group Buy with a low interest loan,” said Andrea Brewer, CEO of San José Credit Union. “We are looking forward to the success of this program, which will help our members save money, and also contribute to the City’s environmental goals.”

This first-of-its-kind model of group solar purchases has achieved one of the lowest group buy pricing schedules for the value of the product to date for both photovoltaic and solar thermal systems. The group discount, in addition to currently available federal tax credits and California Solar Initiative incentives, offers San José Employee Solar Group Buy participants substantial cost savings.

SunPower Corporation and SunWater Solar, the solar providers chosen for the project, were selected through a competitive bid process. An independent, seven-member volunteer evaluation committee selected the vendors. SunWater Solar and SunPower, through its dealer network, will work with participating homeowners to perform site assessments to determine the correct size and design of the photovoltaic and/or solar thermal system. Installations will take place between September of 2010 and February of 2011. The San José Employee Solar Group Buy program aims to install solar electric and solar thermal systems on more than 130 homes, adding over 300 kilowatts of new solar electric capacity throughout the Bay Area.

“San José-based SunPower, which was founded in Silicon Valley 25 years ago, is proud to participate in a program that enables San Jose City employees and retirees the opportunity to install solar on their rooftops at affordable prices,” said SunPower President Jim Pape. “Our proven, high-efficiency solar technology coupled with our experience in delivering the planet’s most powerful solar, will help to lower their electricity bills over the long term and provide a significant return on their investment.”

“Solar thermal can significantly reduce utility bills today while insulating system owners from the high energy costs of tomorrow,” said Justin Weil, President of SunWater Solar. “Hopefully more organizations in California and beyond will embrace the technology and follow San José’s lead by offering members these valuable benefits.”

Data from the California Solar Initiative (CSI), the state's aggressive program to encourage homeowners, businesses, local governments and non-profit organizations to install solar, indicates that San José has seen a significant increase in solar installations. According to the CSI data, San José has installed more solar power than any other California city. The most recent California Public Utilities Commission annual report shows that from Jan. 1, 2007 to July 7, 2010, San José installed 14.9 megawatts of solar power on residential and commercial roofs across 1,737 sites.

About the San José Solar America City Program

Through the U.S. Department of Energy's Solar America Cities partnership, San José is one of 25 U.S. cities working to accelerate the adoption of solar energy technologies. San José's Solar America City Program is committed to developing a sustainable solar infrastructure that removes market barriers such as the upfront cost of going solar and that encourages the adoption of solar energy by residents and businesses. San José is taking a comprehensive, city-wide approach that lays the foundation for a viable solar market and provides a model for other cities to follow. http://www.solaramericacities.energy.gov/cities/san_José/

About San José Credit Union

San José Credit Union began serving employees of the City of San José in 1932. Today, San José Credit Union serves over 12,000 members and maintains assets of \$125 million. In addition to active and retired City employees as well as elected and appointed City officials, the Credit Union is open to anyone who lives, works, attends school or worships within the City of San José. The Credit Union serves its members with personalized service and competitive financial products. More information can be obtained at www.sjcu.org.

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