



Solar Home Tour And Fair
Saturday, Oct. 16
Lutheran Church Of The Reformation
212 East Capitol St. NE
Fair--10 to 2 p.m.
Home Tours--noon to 4 p.m.
www.capitolhillenergycoop.org

Max and Jeff Johnson are shown on their solar roof. Photo: Jeff Johnson

Solar Power

Easy, Saves Money, Helps the Environment

By JEFF JOHNSON

Standing on the flat, hot, and shiny roof of my Capitol Hill row house, I can see a vision of a solar energy future. Spread before me are row after row of empty roofs, unobstructed by trees or buildings. As the sun blasts down, this block-long line of roofs looks ripe for solar panels.

That is what a small group of Hill residents thought a year-and-a-half ago when we began looking into how we could install photovoltaic solar panels on our roofs. We were among some 350 members of the Capitol Hill Energy Co-op, founded in 2008 to address energy and environmental issues, particularly climate change and green-

house gas emissions.

Our utility, Pepco, gets nearly half of its electricity by burning coal, and nationally, coal-fired utilities produce about one-third of the U.S.'s greenhouse gases. They are the largest single source of carbon dioxide emissions, the most abundant greenhouse gas. When you toss in environmental and health damage from coal mining, coal ash pits, and air pollution, it is clear now is time to move away from coal.

A little more than one month ago, the solar group's investigation into solar energy came to fruition for me when I had 12 photovoltaic panels installed on the roof of my house, about

a block from Stanton Park. The panels can generate 2.8 kilowatts of electricity, enough to cover about half of my Pepco electricity bill. The system cost \$20,000 and was installed in just two days. And most important, with a little luck, I can get all my money back in three years.

Solar Pioneering

When we began looking into solar, our group realized we didn't know exactly where to start. We were sort of solar pioneers.

We began searching for solar installers and found a dozen or so in the DC area. We pared the vendors down

to about eight, interviewed them, and chose four that seemed most willing and able to do the job. We offered to give them preference if they would give us a deal.

We did and they did.

I got bids from the installers and eventually selected the small company Solar Solutions to do the job. The installer stood in line and got the District building permits, cleared the project with the Historic Preservation Office, and helped me figure out how many panels I needed and how they should be attached to my roof.

I wanted to go simple and wound up selecting a design in which the

Dedicated to helping you put buyers into homes



Your goal is to turn buyers into homeowners. That's our goal too. And, as the nation's #1 residential¹ mortgage lender, we provide a wide array of products and programs. So no matter what your client's home buying goals, we can help find a program to meet nearly any homebuyer need.

- Purchase loans including FHA and VA programs
- Mortgages for high-end purchases
- Investment property financing
- New construction and renovation loans
- Reverse mortgages²

No other lender is as dedicated to delivering quality products and services to you and your clients as Wells Fargo Home Mortgage.

We're ready to help you put buyers into homes. Contact your Wells Fargo Home Mortgage consultant today.

Wells Fargo Home Mortgage
 1225 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 350
 Washington, DC 20005
 202-216-5700
www.wfhm.com/loans/wellsfargohomemortgagebranchdc



1. Based on 2009 yearend statistics by *Inside Mortgage Finance* 1/29/10.
 2. Borrower must be 62 years of age or older. Call for more detailed program information.
 Wells Fargo Home Mortgage is a division of Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.
 © 2010 Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. All rights reserved. AS377382 8/10-11/10



Remember clean? We do.
MAID TO CLEAN
maidtoclean.com
 Virginia • DC
 703.299.0101
 Maryland
 301.656.7171

RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL GREEN CLEANING

See our ratings on Angie's list!

I expect to have my own bedroom.

Whether BUYING or SELLING a home in DC or VA, let my expert REAL ESTATE knowledge work for you.

K **BRIANKLOTZ**
 703.980.8218
www.BrianKlotz.net

**RIGHT NOW, GET INCREDIBLE SUMMER PRICES ON
PAVERS, FLAGSTONE & CONCRETE**

CALL NOW FOR THE LOWEST PRICES OF THE YEAR!



P. MULLINS CONCRETE
202-270-8973



**CONCRETE • PAVERS • FLAGSTONE • BRICK • DRIVEWAYS
WALKWAYS • STEPS • RETAINING WALLS • PATIOS • POOL SURROUNDS**

**\$100 OFF
ANY SMALL CONCRETE
REPAIRS**

**15'x10' Concrete Paver Patio
NOW \$2,695**
P. Mullins Concrete
202-360-4092
Expires 9/15/10

**Masonry Special
\$200 OFF**
Any Masonry Job Over \$2,000
P. Mullins Concrete
202-360-4092
Expires 9/15/10

**25'x5' Flagstone Walkway
NOW \$2,250**
P. Mullins Concrete
202-360-4092
Expires 9/15/10

**KITCHENS, BATHS
& MORE**

As a design & build firm, we will create to your needs and budget well designed & beautiful spaces: from cabinets by Kraftmaid or Merillat (They have 3 cost levels.) or made in our shop, counter tops, floors, appliances, lights, plumbing fixtures to tile and whatever is needed. We buy wholesale and pass on the savings.

Windows & Doors replaced or restored -- historic ones made in our shop, refinishing and painting.

Additions and porches: third floors, side or rear additions and basements.

Visit our office / show room.

10% Discount to Village members

Joel Truitt Builders, Inc.

**734 7th Street, SE
202-547-2707
Quality since 1972**

Keith Roofing

EXPERT WORKMANSHIP AT REASONABLE PRICES!

Residential/Commercial • Over 40 years of Experience
Chimney Repairs • Storm & Wind Damage Repair



- New or Re-Roofing
- Tear-Off & Replacement
- Flat Roof Specialist
- Copper, Tin, Sheet Metal & Rolled
- Seamless & Flat Roofs
- Re-Sealing
- Tar, Asphalt, Gravel, Hot Coats
- Modified Bitumen

Insurance Claims • Free Estimates • 24Hr. Service

**Fully Insured • Licensed • Bonded
"No Job Too Large or Small"
Senior & Military Discounts Available!**

202-486-7359

*All Work Inspected by Owner...Deals Directly with Customers!
All Work Fully Guaranteed*

platform that supports the solar panels rests on the "party" walls between my house and my neighbors. The supports are similar to a deck, and significant for our aged house, there is no weight on the roof.

Such "solar options" will be presented Oct. 16 at the Hill Co-op Solar Fair and Homes Tour, Lutheran Church of the Reformation, 212 E. Capitol St. NE, starting at 10 a.m.

Covering the Cost

Most important in all this discussion is the money. We have a modest house and wanted a modest bill.

Under a three-year-old U.S. law, residents can get a 30% federal tax rebate for the cost of a solar installation. So next year, I can get \$6,000 deducted from my federal tax bill. And through a recently passed District law, pushed by Council Member Mary Cheh and strongly supported by Capitol Hill's Tommy Wells, DC residents and businesses can obtain an upfront payment to ease the cost burden and to encourage solar installations. Through the District law, I received \$8,400 to help pay for my panels. The District has set aside \$2 million a year through 2012 for this program. It pays \$3 a watt for the first 3,000 of installed solar watts and \$2 for the next 7,000 watts and \$1 a watt for the next 10,000 watts.

Through these programs, I will cover nearly three-quarters of the installation cost. To help with the rest, another District incentive program requires Pepco to purchase electricity generated by renewable sources, a small amount of which is solar. These so-called Renewable Energy Credits will amount to more than \$1,000 a year for my 2.8 KW system.

Consequently, I should be able to pay off the system within three to five years. Some in the coop are even getting a quicker payoff. The panels are designed to last 25 years so this is an investment for the future.

Pepco won't buy our electric-

ity, but we do get a credit when our system generates more electricity than our household uses. On sunny days, I have the pleasant sight of watching my meter move backwards. This should cut my electricity bills in half.

So far, about 13 Capitol Hill residents have installed solar units through the co-op and another 16 are planning on moving ahead later this year, says solar co-op founder and Hill resident Michael Barrette.

The Hill group was modeled on a similar co-op in Mount Pleasant, which began about three years ago. Its creator, Anya Schoolman, estimates about 45 solar units were installed through the co-op last year and another 25 residents have put solar on their roofs so far this year.

The path has not always been smooth, however. District officials who administer the program fell behind in releasing the money and appeared to have misplaced \$1.4 million of the \$2 million allocation for the first year. But now things are back on track and Schoolman notes right now may be an important time to apply for DC grants before the fiscal year comes to an end Sept. 30.

There have also been a few issues with Pepco over meters but that too seems to be working toward resolution. Nevertheless this remains a work in progress.

We are trying to create a new world for clean, non-fossil-fuel electricity generation as well as jobs and a new U.S. market for renewable energy. While my panels were design in German, they were assembled in New Mexico.

Through my lifetime, I have watched energy tax breaks pour out for oil, coal and nuclear power companies. It seems about time for energy tax breaks to come to regular people trying to make a difference in the world.

Jeff Johnson is a Capitol Hill resident who often writes on energy. Reach him at jjohnsondc@earthlink.net. To learn more about solar and the Hill Fair and Tour, go to www.capitol-hillenergycoop.org. ★

THE HILL'S ELECTRICIAN

Since 1990

www.wilcox-electric.com

202-546-1010



Residential & Commercial

New Work • Rewiring • Repairs • Interior/Exterior Lighting

Awarded the Super Service Award from Angie's List in 2007, 2008, and 2009.



Stephen D. Wilcox
Master Electrician

References Available
Licensed - Insured - Bonded

Lawlor
Architects

A FULL SERVICE ARCHITECTURAL FIRM
SPECIALIZING IN RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

202.543.4446 lawlorarchitects.com

