

Mt. Pleasant Solar Coop

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Mt. Pleasant Solar Cooperative?

In 2006, two young friends in Mt. Pleasant, Walter Lynn and Diego Arene-Morley, started talking about their feeling that maybe grownups should stop talking about doing something about global warming and start doing it. Walter and Diego, and two of their parents Jeff Morley and Anya Schoolman, decided to create the Mt. Pleasant Solar Cooperative.

Since then more than 50 Mt. Pleasant households have joined the Solar Coop. We have held regular meetings, sponsored energy audits, supplied compact fluorescent light bulbs to members, and collected essential data about neighborhood energy use. Our ranks include students, accountants, lawyers, environmentalists, journalists, realtors, and retirees.

The coop is open to any Mt. Pleasant resident.

What is your goal?

Our goal is to make Mt Pleasant into a showcase solar neighborhood. We want to cut Mt. Pleasant's carbon energy consumption dramatically in the years to come and we want to show other neighborhoods that they can do the same. We advocate aggressive energy conservation coupled with collective action to bring solar power easily and cheaply to everybody in the neighborhood.

Our vision: by working together, purchasing, and negotiating as a group we can cut costs of adopting solar power systems for our members. As a group, we can also make faster progress toward reducing our carbon emissions.

Do you have a plan?

Yes. Since November 2007 we have been negotiating with Pepco to establish a partnership that would allow any Mt Pleasant homeowner or landlord to buy a solar array for their roof with below market financing. Under the proposed partnership, you would pay off the cost of your solar panels via your monthly Pepco bill.

We have also partnered with an Arlington-based renewable energy company called Switch. This locally owned firm, run by energy consultant Chris Graves, will oversee and manage the solar installations.

How much would it cost me to install solar power on my house?

Not much more than you are currently paying on your Pepco bill.

Of course, the cost of adopting solar power - and the resulting savings - depends on your energy usage.

How do I figure the savings for me?

Look at the bar graph on your Pepco bill to see your annual usage.

The solar power system we will use generates 2,983 kilowatt hours annually. (A kilowatt-hour is the standard unit to measure the consumption of electricity.) If you use an average of 600 kilowatt hours per month, or 7,200 kilowatt hours per year, the system will supply up to 40 percent of your energy needs:

Find your annual energy consumption in KW hours. Divide that figure by 2,983 to learn how much solar power will reduce your carbon energy consumption.

We anticipate that the typical Mt. Pleasant households who go solar will wind up paying approximately \$23 more per month for electricity than they currently pay. By paying this small premium, you will reduce your family's carbon energy consumption by 30-50 percent.

Does it make economic sense to go solar?

Yes. This investment in your property will be paid off in 15 years or less. At that point, your electric bill will be permanently lower and the value of your home will be higher.

We have a detailed spreadsheet available to anyone who wants to know how we arrived at these estimates.

What kind of construction is necessary?

Our partner company Switch will install four rows of solar panels on your roof. (These are also called photovoltaic, or PV, cells). Each row has three modules. Each row is approximately 9.8 feet long and 5.2 feet wide. CHECK

The total weight on your roof will be 480 pounds, which our engineers say can be easily supported. A structural engineer will be retained to review the installation plans for proper loading on every home.

Does solar power work at night?

No. The solar panels generate electricity that goes straight into you current wiring. When the sun is shining, the panels will supply your house with energy. At night, the electricity comes from Pepco. You won't notice any difference in your house—only on your bill.

How can I help?

By joining us in taking action. We need help spreading the message that Mt. Pleasant can “go solar” soon.

- We need people with all kinds of backgrounds who want to do something about climate change.
- We need help distributing flyers around Mt. Pleasant.
- We need people who can analyze a spreadsheet to insure that suppliers, contractors and energy companies give us the best possible deals for our members.
- We need folks to host “house parties” to spread the word—and detailed information--among our neighbors about how Mt. Pleasant is going solar.
- We need each of you to tell one person about the Mt Pleasant Solar Coop. Tell them to write Anya Schoolman at SolarCoop@yahoo.com or call her at 202-256-4327.

THANKS/GRACIAS!
Walter, Diego, Jeff & Anya