

5-2017

Compiled Research & Materials, Appendix M: McPherson Town Interview

Andrew Tarutani
University of Dayton

Laura Kunas
University of Dayton

Madalyn Beban
University of Dayton

Conor McGrail
University of Dayton

Colin Joern
University of Dayton

Follow this and additional works at: http://ecommons.udayton.edu/localsustain_energy

 Part of the [Engineering Commons](#), [Sustainability Commons](#), and the [Urban, Community and Regional Planning Commons](#)

eCommons Citation

Tarutani, Andrew; Kunas, Laura; Beban, Madalyn; McGrail, Conor; and Joern, Colin, "Compiled Research & Materials, Appendix M: McPherson Town Interview" (2017). *Sustainability and Energy*. 13.
http://ecommons.udayton.edu/localsustain_energy/13

This Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Local Sustainability with Abundance at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sustainability and Energy by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.

Solar Co-op

<http://www.ohsun.org/front-page/about-solar-co-ops/start-a-co-op/>

We need 30-40 to get things rolling. The other solar co-ops that OH SUN has set up typically have around 100 houses involved, but the largest has approx. 200 in Cuyahoga County.

What is a solar co-op?

A solar co-op is a group of homeowners in a defined geographic area who use their combined bulk buying power to save on the total cost of going solar. Solar installers face significant costs finding solar customers. By forming a group of interested buyers, co-op members can receive a significant discount because the group has done some of the work for the installer. Co-op members also have the benefit of working with a group and with OH SUN to help educate and guide them through the installation process.

How does the co-op purchase work?

OH SUN helps groups of neighbors form co-ops to get discounts on members' individual purchase of solar systems for their homes. Once the group reaches a critical mass of members (roughly 30 good roofs), it puts out a request for proposals from area installers. Each bid contains a set price per the amount of solar the installer would install on co-op member homes. This allows installers to make individualized proposals to each co-op member. The co-op reviews all bids with the technical support of OH SUN. It then selects an installer to install systems on co-op member homes. Each participant owns or leases their own system and has their own contract with the installer.

What is the benefit of participating in a co-op to go solar?

Solar is a smart investment that lowers your energy bills and increases the value of your home. Going solar with a co-op will help you save money (typically up to 20%) on the initial investment. Most importantly, you will have the support of the co-op and OH SUN throughout the entire process.

Additional information from Luke Sulfridge, Program Director at OH SUN:

- Mr. Sulfridge says that they like to start by having an informational meeting/presentation to explain how things work and gauge interest.
 - Like to have 30-40 interested households at the first meeting.
 - Usually held at a community center/library/church and lasts 1 1/2 hours.
- To get the co-op started, they need what they refer to as a “critical mass”, which is 30-40 sufficient roofs to place panels on.
- To determine if a roof and it's positioning is right for solar panels, they do initial testing/assessments, which often simply can be done via satellite imagery, similar to what

they do on Google Project Sunroof - <https://www.google.com/get/sunroof#p=0>

- They look for a minimum of 2.7-3 kW and shoot for 200 sq. ft. of roof.
- The panels need to go on a roof facing preferably south, but can also face west or east.
 - The new panels only lose approx. 10% of energy capacity if facing east or west.
- Recent studies show solar panels elevate property values. Typically, \$1 in = \$1 to value
- Typical number in their previous co-ops has reached 100 households, with a co-op in the Cleveland area being the largest at around 200.
 - This number is possible because they do these co-ops county wide, rather than neighborhood or city specific.
 - The more participants in the co-op, the lower the cost of the hardware (panels) and installation.
- People that are not actually purchasing solar panels are encouraged to get involved as much as possible too, but they are not likely able to be involved financially.
 - However, their involvement helps move the project forward.
- There are currently good federal tax credits (30%) associated with solar and additional credits through Heritage Ohio and rebates through DP&L.
 - <http://www.ohsun.org/federal-tax-credit/>
 - Mr. Sulfridge stated that they've found you can actually double dip on tax credits using historic tax credits through Heritage Ohio.
- A medium sized solar system costs approximately \$11,000, but that number is then reduced via tax credits, etc.
 - A medium sized system produces approx. 7 kW, which is sufficient for many homes.
- Ohio also currently offers what is called the Eco-Link program through the Treasurer's Office.
 - <http://www.tos.ohio.gov/ECOLINK>
 - This can lower your interest rate by 3% on solar.
 - Each individual signs a direct contract with the installer, so each person obtains their own financing from their chosen provider
 - Key Bank apparently has been most active with Eco-Link
 - There is a blog post about this on OH SUN's website (apparently their website is about to get a facelift, and they will provide further articles on a daily basis)
- With the solar panels, you can also install batteries if you choose, such as Tesla's Powerwall 2
 - actually can allow you to go "off the grid"
 - Majority of homeowners in their co-ops have not chosen to use batteries though

- Battery prices are dropping quickly apparently
 - Buying batteries upfront has tax advantages as well since you can use the federal tax credits.
-
- I talked to Mr. Sulfridge further about the larger buildings around our neighborhood, such as White Allen, ReStore, and the Hawthorne, which have large roof space, so he suggested that I reach out to each to gauge interest too.