

The Salt Lake Tribune

Solar power: Logan offers incentive for home systems

Tribune Editorial

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Free pollution-free electricity, compliments of the sun! It sounds like an offer you can't refuse. But who can afford it?

While residential solar-energy systems eventually pay for themselves, it takes years, make that decades.

A 1-kilowatt solar-powered system utilizing silicon panels and connected directly to the electrical grid will cost \$8,000-\$10,000 installed. And despite the hefty investment, it will only reduce your electric bill. A 5-kilowatt system, enough to power the average home, can cost \$35,000 or more, a prohibitive sum for most households.

But the price of soaking up the sun and converting it to electricity just got a lot cheaper for the 17,000 customers of Logan City Light & Power, thanks to a progressive City Council that approved the program last month.

Logan is offering residents a rebate of

\$2,000 per kilowatt, with a maximum of \$6,000 for a 3-kilowatt system, for installing residential solar-energy systems. When added to federal and state tax credit programs, which can provide a combined tax break of up to \$4,000, the owner of a 1-kilowatt system can expect to recoup the costs in about 20 years. And if you sell your home, solar-energy systems tend to increase the value.

But don't look at the program as a government handout. Everybody - not just the homeowners who tap into the \$100,000 incentive fund - wins.

The city can reduce the amount of high-cost electricity it purchases on the spot market during peak summer demand, City Light & Power Director Jay Larsen said.

And the environment will benefit - think of it as a little less carbon-dioxide spewing, mercury-emitting coal on the fire at a commercial power plant. Concern about global warming and pollution from fossil-fuel power plants was the driving force behind the idea, Larsen explained.

The plan is drawing rave reviews from alternative-energy supporters, including Utah Clean Energy, a volunteer public-interest group that promotes energy efficiency and clean energy in the state.

"Logan is leading the way with energy

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efficiencies," said Sarah Wright, executive director at UCE.

It's an awesome idea, one that cities should mimic anywhere the sun shines.

Home solar-power systems can light up your life economically, and serve as a beacon for others who want to pursue clean-and-green energy strategies, and reduce their carbon footprint on the Earth.

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