

ESD 12-04 Community Solar Program

Lead Department Environmental Services

History **1 year ago** None **2 years ago** None

1. What are the key elements of the issue? What precipitated it?

This study issue was initiated by the Sustainability Commission to examine whether there is any benefit for the City to sponsor a community solar program for Sunnyvale residents.

While there are multiple options for such a program, the study would examine the following two options: A) A volume buying program open to community members who choose to join a pool to take advantage of volume buying discounts for solar technology. Volume discounts and savings are generally based on the size of the pool of participants, the more participants in the pool, the greater the discount; or B) The City would construct a large solar array and sell shares in the project to community members.

Many communities have adopted Community Solar Programs at various different levels. Some provide a financing mechanism, like the City of Berkeley's Berkeley First Program, while others have provided different resources including education, outreach and non-monetary support to encourage solar energy use in the community.

2. How does this relate to the General Plan or existing City Policy?

Policy 1.1.9 Sustainable Development and Green Buildings

This policy is designed to encourage sustainable development throughout the City of Sunnyvale, to provide education and information to the community, and to serve as an acknowledgement by the City Council of the importance of sustainable development concepts and practices.

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the City to encourage new and remodeled development within the City to incorporate sustainable design principles in the following disciplines:

- Sustainable Sites
- Water Efficiency
- Energy and Atmosphere Materials and Resources
- Indoor Environmental Quality

The City of Sunnyvale adopts the following policy statements in recognition of the importance of sustainable development:

Private Development

1. Provide education and outreach to residents, businesses, and development community.
2. New residential construction shall be encouraged to use the Alameda County Waste Management Authority's Home Remodeling: Green Building Guidelines for green building design and construction techniques.
3. Provide incentives for industrial/office development to incorporate green building design practices.

Policy 2.3.1 Housing and Community Revitalization – Goals and Policies

Neighborhood Quality

Goal F- Maintain sustainable neighborhoods with quality housing, infrastructure and open space that fosters neighborhood character and the health of residents.

- Policy F.6 Encourage use of sustainable and green building design in new and existing housing.

3. Origin of issue

Board or Commission Sustainability Commission

4. Staff effort required to conduct study Moderate

Briefly explain the level of staff effort required

The level of staff support would be moderate. A consultant will be necessary to study the options and feasibility of a volume buying program or the sale of shares in a City owned and operated solar array. The study will address the costs and logistics associated with these program options, including the legal, financial, regulatory and implementation issues that may result from the City's sponsorship of either option.

5. Multiple Year Project? No **Planned Completion Year** 2013

6. Expected participation involved in the study issue process?

Does Council need to approve a work plan? No

Does this issue require review by a Board/Commission? Yes

If so, which? Sustainability Commission

Is a Council Study Session anticipated? No

7. Briefly explain if a budget modification will be required to study this issue

Amount of budget modification required 20000

Explanation

Financing is required for consultant resources to complete the study. Staff will explore grant funding opportunities. \$20,000 to be appropriated from grant funds received.

8. Briefly explain potential costs of implementing study results, note estimated capital and operating costs, as well as estimated revenue/savings, include dollar amounts

Are there costs of implementation? Yes

Explanation

The cost of implementation will vary based on the selected option. Volume buying programs for residents currently exist in the marketplace. Costs associated with the City sponsoring a program may include the cost of outreach and education, level of agency sponsorship and whether the City would coordinate a RFP process and facilitate recruitment of participants. The actual costs would be identified by the study. The cost for the City to construct a solar array and sell shares to community members would require a large capital outlay. Costs could be recovered based on the buy-in share price offered to community member. A result of the study would be a cost recovery analysis for this type of program. An option that will also be explored is opportunities to offset the cost of implementing either program through external funding, including grants and public/private/nonprofit funding opportunities.

9. Staff Recommendation (Subject to Grant Funding)

Staff Recommendation Support

If 'Support', 'Drop' or 'Defer', explain

Staff supports this study contingent on grant funding. Community Solar Programs are becoming popular in many communities and there is an increased interest in solar power from commercial and residential interests. The City has made an effort to attract green businesses of which solar is a major component. This study is consistent with the City's goals and has the potential to positively impact the community environmentally, socially and economically. Grant funding in the solar industry is becoming increasingly available.

Reviewed by

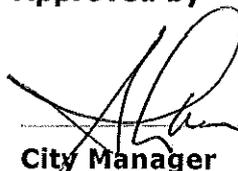


Department Director

11-8-11

Date

Approved by



City Manager

11-11-11

Date