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More Solar Panels Sprout in Perris

Perris officials joined with state representatives and a non-profit agency to cheer the installation of a solar-panel grid atop a family residence that doubles as a day-care center, reducing electricity costs and continuing the City's commitment to go green.

Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke watched as solar panels were installed by volunteers at the home of Salvador and Alicia Jimenez.

The couple become the first Perris residents to benefit from California's landmark AB 32, the state's "cap and trade" legislation aimed at reducing pollutants that contribute to climate change.



Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke (second from left) attended the recent solar-panel installation at the home of Salvador and Alicia Jimenez, part of the City's ongoing commitment to support green technologies and sustainability.

Also attending the July 23 solar-panel installation were Assemblyman Jose Medina, D-Riverside, and Bambi Tran, regional director of GRID Alternatives, the agency responsible for upgrading the Jimenez home in south Perris. Burke said the City of Perris is committed to maintaining an eco-friendly profile.

The City installed solar panels throughout its campus nearly a decade ago, substituted more efficient and lower-priced LED lights throughout the community and has incorporated cleaner fueled vehicles into its municipal fleet. In addition, the City has planted drought-resistant landscaping in parks and along major roadways and has installed an artificial turf field at its nearly completed soccer complex.

Partnering with non-profits like GRID Alternatives benefits the City of Perris in several ways—shrinking residents' power bills, reducing their carbon footprints and providing jobs to local men and women in need of work, Burke said. Many volunteers who install solar panels as part of the state's efforts move on to full-time employment in that growing field.

"Sacramento is taking action on climate change and delivering real funding that is making a difference in our communities, bringing energy upgrades to local homeowners and creating job-training opportunities for our local workers," Burke said. "This form of public-private partnership only creates a win-win situation for the organization, the state, our City and our residents."

Medina offered similar sentiments.

"California's climate change policies are delivering results for communities right here in Riverside County," Medina said. "It's vital that we continue to press forward on clean-energy policies that save consumers money, combat climate change and create good jobs for Californians."

Jimenez said he and his family are always concerned about electricity costs and do all they can to save money. But he was skeptical about installing solar panels, wondering if they could cover the cost, which usually runs from \$15,000 to \$18,000. Once he learned about funding to complete the project as a result of the state's climate-change legislation, his decision was easy. The Jimenez family benefitted from a provision in AB 32 that mandates at least 25 percent of funding be targeted for disadvantaged communities.

"Even though it makes sense to get free energy from the sun, we wouldn't have been able to install these solar panels without financial support," Jimenez said. "We're grateful for this program and the money we save on electric bills will make a big difference for our family. This is a great program and it helps people!"

Clifford Le Blanc, development coordinator of GRID Alternatives Inland Empire, said the organization plans on returning to Perris often in the coming months to install other solar-panel arrays. He praised the efforts of Perris and state representatives for supporting the program. He singled out Mayor Pro-Tem Burke for donning a hard hat and encouraging the workers as they installed the solar panels.

"It gives our program credibility," he said. "People trust their locally elected officials. If those representatives show their support, the community will believe in us."

Additional information about the solar panels program is available on the GRID Alternatives website, gridalternatives.org.

Media Contact

Joe Vargo
Public Information Officer
951-956-2120
jvargo@cityofperris.org



Perris City Hall
101 N. D Street
Perris, CA 92570

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