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GRID Installs No-cost Solar Systems in Perris



Perris Mayor Michael Vargas at a solar panel installation in Downtown Perris: "I see solar panels going up everywhere. Perris is going green."

Media Contact

Joe Vargo
Public Information Officer
951-943-6100
jvargo@cityofperris.org

Perris Mayor Michael Vargas dropped by a residence Thursday to observe a solar panel grid installation and urged residents to consider installing similar no-cost systems on their homes and take advantage of free job training opportunities in the solar industry.

Vargas met with homeowner Beatrice Pacheco at her West 8th Street home, where the retired restaurant worker and her husband, Jose, a retired warehouseman, have lived for 35 years.

A crew from the non-profit agency GRID Alternatives installed a 14-panel solar collection system at the Pacheco residence. The crew included a Navy veteran seeking on-the-job training so he can become a full-time system installer and supplement his pension.

GRID Alternatives has installed 100 solar systems in Perris since 2010, 30 in the last year. Perris is one of the most active cities in Riverside County in promoting solar through GRID Alternatives and recently was named the agency's 2017 Public Partner of the Year.

"This is a great program," Vargas said. "I see solar panels going up everywhere. Perris is going green. The word is getting around and that is a good thing."

GRID Alternatives specializes in installing solar systems to low-income residents.

In addition to no-cost installation, the agency provides free on-the-job training to volunteers working at job sites. The hope is that one day those volunteers will use those skills to become paid system installers. The solar industry is growing by more than 20 percent a year across the U.S.



Perris Mayor Michael Vargas (right) chats with homeowner Beatrice Pacheco and Lisa Castilone, Inland Empire Outreach Coordinator for GRID Alternatives, which specializes in installing solar panels for low-income residents.

The City of Perris is helping spread the word about GRID Alternatives by inserting flyers in municipal utility bills, through its websites and Facebook pages, by making available the community library and senior center for solar presentations and through the support of elected officials and Perris City staff volunteering at home installations.

The Pachecos learned about GRID Alternatives from the insert in their utility bill.

"We are greatly appreciative of all the help the City of Perris provides to us," said Lisa Castilone, the agency's Inland Empire Outreach Coordinator. "This is a win-win situation."

Upon completion of the solar system, homeowners like the Pachecos can expect to reduce their monthly electric bills by 80 to 85 percent a month. For the couple, that means an extra \$85 each month in their pocketbooks—more than \$1,000 a year.

"That will free up more money for us, and that's a big deal as we are living on a very limited income," Beatrice Pacheco said. "It's good for us, it's good for the City and it's good for the planet."

Additional information about GRID Alternatives is available at www.gridsolar.org.



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

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