

For Immediate Release

February 8, 2021

Solar Co-op Launched for Plano Residents

City offers rebates, loans to assist transition to solar

Nonprofit group Solar United Neighbors (SUN) announced today the launch of the Plano Solar Co-op to help area residents go solar. Partnering on the co-op are non-profits including Habitat for Humanity of Collin County, Plano Solar Advocates, and Rocky Mountain Institute.

“The co-op will enable homeowners and business owners in and around the city of Plano to join the growing community of people saving money by harnessing solar power,” said Hanna Mitchell, Texas program director for SUN. “Together, we’re building a movement to transform our electricity system into one that is cleaner, fairer, and shares its benefits more broadly.”

The co-op is free to join and open to homeowners and business owners in and around Plano. Together, co-op members will learn about solar energy and leverage their numbers to purchase individual solar systems at a competitive price and top quality.

“We are pleased to support this non-profit and community-driven effort to increase access to solar for Plano residents,” said Yarcus Lewis, sustainability projects supervisor at the City of Plano. This program is in line with our clean air goals and we hope residents from all of Plano’s neighborhoods will take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about solar energy and see if it’s right for them.”

The City of Plano has two programs to help homeowners go solar and make energy saving home improvements. It offers rebates of up to \$5,000 for residents whose homes are more than 35 years old through the Great Update Rebate program. The city also partners with BTH Bank to provide financing for homeowners who invest in energy upgrades through the Smart Energy Loan Program. Loan amounts range from \$2,500 to \$25,000. After a competitive bidding process facilitated by SUN, which remains vendor neutral, co-op members will select a single solar company to complete the installations. Joining the co-op does not obligate members to purchase solar. Instead, members will have the option to individually purchase panels and electric vehicle chargers based on the installer’s group rate.

“We’re proud to partner on the solar co-op because solar energy is good for all of us,” said Larry Howe of Plano Solar Advocates, the grassroots group that hosted similar “Solarize” programs in Plano in 2013 and 2014. Howe continued, “An investment in solar panels will help to boost the local economy, revitalize neighborhoods by increasing property values, and save families hard-earned money on their electric bills.”

Plano is one of 20 U.S. cities selected to participate in the Renewables Accelerator Residential Solar learning Cohort facilitated by Rocky Mountain Institute and World Resources Institute. SUN is the operational partner for the solar co-ops in seven of these cities, including Plano.

SUN has hosted nine other solar co-ops in Texas since 2018. According to the group's estimates, the homes and businesses that now have solar panels because of co-ops represent: 534 kW of solar power, \$1.4 million in local solar spending, and more than 17.2 million lbs. of lifetime carbon offsets.

"The residents of Plano can be leaders on the path toward a cleaner and more equitable energy future," said Ryan Shea at Rocky Mountain Institute. "When individuals make better energy choices for themselves and their communities, the market shifts and change happen at a massive scale."

"We hope this initiative will make a positive impact in the lives our community members by locking in long-term electric bill savings for participants and spurring investment in local, clean energy jobs," said Celeste Cox, chief executive officer of Habitat for Humanity of Collin County.

SUN will host several online information sessions to educate community members about solar energy and the co-op. Individuals interested in going solar can sign up for the co-op or one of the upcoming information sessions at the co-op web page.

Information meetings are planned for:

Tuesday, February 9, at 12:00 pm CT RSVP:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZtCkNyynQ8qFL7ZXAiRgjQ

Tuesday, February 23, at 6:30 pm CT RSVP:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_1yngAzT1Q-GzRvH3lY_QCQ

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Editor's Note: For more City of Plano information, go to our website at www.plano.gov

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About Plano

Plano, Texas, is the largest city in Collin County with a population of 285,190 as of January 2020. Incorporated in 1873, the city is located 20 miles north of Dallas. Niche and AreaVibes recently named Plano as one of the Best Cities to Live in America. Forbes designated Plano one of America's safest cities. The City offers a high quality of life that includes nationally recognized schools, award-winning parks, and sustainability initiatives and a wide variety of multi-cultural neighborhoods appealing to families, young singles and retirees. Plano is home to the headquarters or regional operations of major corporations such as Toyota, Liberty Mutual, JPMorgan Chase, Boeing Global Services, Fannie Mae, FedEx Office, JC Penney, Rent-A-Center, Cinemark Holdings, Peloton, Denbury Resources and Samsung. Our dynamic community features excellent restaurants, vibrant shopping and entertainment venues, a lively historic downtown district and active local arts scene. Easy access to DART light rail and major highways makes Plano a convenient place to live, work and visit. To learn more about Plano, go to our website at plano.gov.