



## Solar power doesn't make sense...Oh, really?

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I hear the statement in this article's title at least once a week. It has come to the point where it almost doesn't register in my consciousness anymore. Almost. Actually, in many ways it's ok. I get it. People are busy with things other than solving the world's energy problems. Most folks don't work in a field where the implications of getting it right are such that political structures could change drastically, huge economic forces could be reversed, and enormous amounts of natural resources preserved. This may sound a little over the top but students of history know that this is exactly what happened with the industrial shift from whale oil to crude oil as an energy source. Most folks don't drive to work past an alternative energy source like, say, a solar array and see a reduction of 1,300 barrels of oil, or 110 fewer cars on the road, or 119 acres of newly planted pine forest. But I do. Moreover, I get to say, "I had a part in that." So when people casually dismiss the solar industry as something that doesn't make sense, I give a big sigh, then set their car on fire.

The plain and simple truth is that it not only makes sense, it makes brilliant sense. Some of the arguments against going solar are reliability, cost, value for invested dollar, and aesthetics. One at a time now, let's start with reliability. The fact is that this technology has been around since the 1950s. It is robust enough to not only be deployed in outer space (see Mir space station, International space station, and every satellite known to man), but on another planet. The inter-planetary vehicle Mars Spirit was rolling around for six months on battery power with no charging stations in sight. The only way to recharge those batteries is with the solar panels NASA installed and shot 60,000,000 miles away through sub- zero temperatures and a high impact landing. Believe me, they can stand up to some snow, wind, and rain.

Next is cost. This one will enlighten you (get it?). A typical 50kW roof mounted solar array costs somewhere in the neighborhood of \$230,000. There are about \$150,000 in state and federal incentives as well as another \$60,000 in depreciation benefits. So, if this is a 'for profit' business that can take advantage of those tax credits, then by the time you're done with all of the incentives from the state, and federal governments as well as attractive financing options, you can obtain that \$230,000 asset for about \$20,000 out of pocket. Yes you can and I can prove it, but not here. Add in that it generates on average approximately \$9,000 per year in electric savings. Over 25 years, which is the panel guarantee term, this equates to \$225,000 in cash you don't send to your utility, you send to your bank account.

Now value. Let's review, shall we? \$20,000 out of pocket and you get \$9,000 per year, every year as long as the sun comes up. That's 45% cash on cash return from free electricity that is literally falling from the sky. That's not value, that's super size.

And finally, aesthetics. This one is a bit tougher to quantify. But TM Montante Development's many years specializing in distinctive properties has taught us that beauty is most definitely in the eye of

the beholder. Therefore, as we have learned, solar panels generate clean electricity, keep the environment very clean, are incredibly durable, provide superior internal rates of return, and throw off enough cash to make the payments on a hybrid Lexus let alone a Prius, and provides this nation with the opportunity to gain a lot more energy independence. Behold, that's beautiful! And sensible.

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