

Solar is a no-brainer, let's do it now

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 Latest in a series of posts on the environment 

Second meeting on Bethlehem's Climate Action Plan, October 7

*Emely Rodriquez is a student at Liberty High School. Eli Zemsky read Emely's essay at the "Speak out!" Sustainability Forum, part of Touchstone Theatre's **Festival UnBound 2020**, September 19. You can view Eli reading Emely's work [here](#) at min. 27:50.*

Solar Energy

Emely Rodriquez

The Lehigh Valley has already made changes to create a cleaner, more sustainable future for our community. For example, Allentown in 2010 installed solar panels on their courthouses, and in 2014 public transportation buses became hybrid electric buses. Yet there is so much, much more our community can do. Becoming a more sustainable community starts with small changes that we make to create a cleaner brighter future.

My proposal is to install solar panels on public government buildings around the Lehigh Valley. We can expand on what has already been done by installing solar panels on the post office, the library, and public schools. Solar power provides a cleaner renewable energy source; it's a brighter way of bringing a more sustainable electrical source for our community. The cost of solar panels has lowered significantly in the last four decades by 99%. Doesn't this mean that they are only 1% of what they used to cost? Solar power has become cheaper than coal, natural gas, and any other fossil fuels.

The U.S Department of Energy has always encouraged using solar energy, even recently announcing that they are going to provide 20 million dollars in funding to advance perovskite solar photovoltaic technologies. This technology has shown to have great potential for high performance and low production costs when used to create solar cells.

Currently the most effective technology for creating solar cells is monocrystalline; it is very efficient, durable, and has higher costs than polycrystalline and Thin-film. According to statistics from the Department of Energy, the overall annual return on investing in solar panels is more than 20%. In a decade this investment would benefit the community economically, and help the planet with global warming.

Homeowners in the community who have solar panels understand what solar can do and how it works firsthand. It's a really great way to encourage cleaner energy; It is also a great way to give back to the community. The more solar energy we bring into our community, the less we would be putting harmful emissions into our air. Investing in solar power that is renewable creates surplus income, and the money that will be returned annually could be used to repair old roads, historical buildings, city parks, and plant trees.

We know at first the system would be costly. The solar investment tax (ITC) only benefits homeowners and businesses, which means the city would have to pay full price. And solar energy seems like dependence on the government. But the main reason my proposal is specifically for public buildings is because it benefits everyone in the community. It sets an example and shows the individual homeowner that it is ok to take advantage of those tax incentives. And in that initiative the city government could help support the poorer homeowners by very low-cost loans. But that's another speech.

To create a cleaner, healthier environment for our community, solar is, as they say, a no-brainer, a win-win.

Let's do it now.

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