

Comments on Community Interest Survey

Answers provided by volunteers with Buena Vista Solar Share

Original comments are in black. Answers are in red.

1. Again, I was hoping that the solar power would somehow be supplied directly to our homes. But that would require energy/battery storage capacity. This is really just a way to increase power to the grid via photovoltaic cells and return credits to the participants.

Yes, you are correct. Batteries are not necessary for a home system. A home can be set up with solar just like the solar project is, where it is tied to the grid, storing credits to your personal meter in the same way. Batteries are only necessary when you want an “off grid” system, or a system tied to the grid with battery backup in case the grid should go down. 95% of all solar systems are exactly the same as this solar project would be (a grid tied system)

2. sounds like a great idea with all the sun hours we have

Yes, solar power is particularly popular in sunny Colorado, where we get an average of 320 days of sunshine per year.

3. You failed to mention potential tax credits passed to participants

There is a 30% Federal tax credit available on solar installation until the end of 2020. Then it will drop to 26% in 2021 and to 22% in 2022 and 10% from then on. There are no state tax incentives currently. The tax credit will be incorporated into the subscriptions to the solar garden: either it will help lower the subscription cost (meaning the developer will file for it) or it will be passed on to the participants to claim individually. If it is set up for participants to claim the tax credit, each subscriber will get an invoice from the developer with the stated tax credit on it so they can claim on their personal tax forms.

4. The only thing that makes sense is if the electricity bill actually goes down over time. We know that fossil fuel based electricity will go up in the future. This program must demonstrate level or decreasing costs. A slower rate of increase is not good enough.

Solar power, locally generated, provides a hedge against the rising costs of traditional energy sources and gives Sangre de Cristo Electric Association and its members some independence and control over their energy supply. There will be a ‘return on investment’ and ‘payback’ for participants, which will allow them to pay off their subscription price with the credits off their bill over a period of several years. Once that investment is paid off, participants will save the full credit for the energy their share produces.

From day one your cost for power that you receive from the solar farm will be zero. Yes, you may have paid an upfront cost for the panels but because you have purchased them, the power they generate is credited from your Sangre bill. If you are generating enough for your full house, you will only be charged the fixed fee from Sangre, or if you only produce a portion of your total need then they will bill you the net cost of what you use and what your panels made. Your cost for the power from solar never goes up since you are now your own producer of your power (up to the amount system total is generating).

5. I hope this is done.

6. Additionally, they are not as environmentally friendly as touted.

You are correct that there is an environmental impact to solar power. The manufacture of solar panels requires rare earth minerals, which means mining impacts. Technologies are being developed to recycle solar panels, which will come into their own once there are enough depleted solar panels to support the recycling business--within the next 20 years or so. But even with the mining of rare earth minerals, the impact of solar panel construction is far less than the impact of traditional energy sources, especially coal.

Once a solar panel is made and operating there is virtually no environmental impact. There is no gas, no coal and no other energy source being used to produce the energy from the sun, and no pollution being generated by the production of solar power. Beyond the rare earth minerals in them, solar panels are made of glass, aluminum, and silicon for the cells. Silicon is sand, a very plentiful earth product.

Also, local power generation from a solar project has less transmission loss, and requires less transmission line building than power brought in from elsewhere because of the shorter distance the power has to travel.

7. I'm excited to hear how and when this era underway!

We will keep you posted on this website. We hope to have the details about subscription rates worked out by April of this year.

8. Great idea! Hope it comes to fruition!

9. please let the community know more widely that this is in the works--I only saw about it on one friend's FB post.

We included fliers in Town of BV water bills and a small notice on Sangre de Cristo electric bills; there was an article in the Chaffee County Times; it was announced on the town Facebook page, the What's Happening in BV Facebook page, and on a wide network of individual Facebook pages; we sent out emails to many interested people asking them to promote the survey, and Sangre de Cristo sent out an email to over 3800 of its members. We also had a letter to the editor in the Chaffee County Times and the survey was listed in the What's Happening section of the newspaper for several weeks.

Once we get the project approved, sent out for bid, and a developer chosen, we will be soliciting participants to subscribe to the project, which will require a big promotional push. We welcome any promotional ideas you have to help us do a better job of getting the word out. Check back regularly to our website here at bvsolarshare.org for updates.

10. I like the idea of the program, but need to know a lot more details before making any decision

Absolutely. This survey is a general interest survey. The positive show of interest it has generated will help us define the size, parameters, and subscription rate of the project, as well as the payback and return on investment for participants. We understand that you can't make a

commitment until presented with a specific project. We hope to have those specifics by sometime this spring.

11. My home is 100% electric, in town, so my bill can get quite high. It would certainly be nice to have something to subsidize the monthly cost, even if it meant paying a bit up front.

Great. That is what we are going for. You are a classic solar user.

12. Future interest- my house is currently under construction on my lot- won't be finished for 6-8 months

You should be able to participate. The program will likely be open for years, as it grows.

13. Put the solar garden on the roof and/or property of the new high school

At this point, land near the rodeo grounds has been offered for the project, which will allow space for the project to grow as more people become interested. However, it is possible that panels on the high school could be incorporated, as well.

14. Great idea. Get it done!!

15. Great idea love it

16. I would like to know how successful other programs like this have been in the area? I know Leadville has a solar garden or two at CMC and out on land by Panark.

We have information on many utilities, and private solar projects (as ours will be), in our region that have developed successful community solar projects, including Lake County, Delta-Montrose Electric Association, San Miguel Power Association, Holy Cross Energy, Summit County, United Power in Brighton, Gunnison County Electric Association, Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association, Empire Electric, La Plata County, and Grand Valley Power.

Our region is the fastest area of solar power growth in our entire country. Community solar makes solar power accessible to everyone, whether you rent or own your home, and whether your home is a good candidate for solar or not.

17. Really excited that these various stake are coming together to support this project. Thanks

18. Personally I wouldn't mind having my own solar panels. I do not like having to depend on everyone else for my power. Example: she is using more power than me. There will always be the drama. How would this be handled?

Participants will be able to buy a small amount of power, say one panel or a half a panel) or a larger amount (multiple panels), depending on their wishes. They can also buy more over time. It is not a competition, it is a cooperative effort to provide power to people according to their wishes. No drama. There is always the option for you to put your own panels on your own property, too.

The fairness and value of a solar farm comes in that you can purchase as many panels as you want and if you own 10 panels and produce 2% of the total farm's energy, you get that 2% credited to your electric bill. There is absolutely no concern as to what anyone else uses, as they are being credited according to the portion of the solar farm they own. We share the system, but get credited according to each person's portion of subscription. (not equally)

19. How will the building of the "Solar Garden" effect the future cost of electricity provided non-participants if the garden is not fully funded by participants?

There should be no effect on the future costs of electricity of non-participants. Sangre buys their power from an independent power plant and that producer sets the price. We have nothing to do with that. The garden will be funded by participants. Sangre de Cristo will simply credit power produced by the community solar garden to the participants, instead of buying that power from the traditional grid. The garden will always be fully funded as it will be built proportionately as subscribers join over the years. Thus, there will be no effect on non-subscribers.

The service availability charge that Sangre puts on their bills is the same for all people, solar owners and non-solar owners. That fee might change in the future (no one knows) but has nothing to do with how many solar customers there are and will be applied the same to all.

20. Are there any estimates of what the cost may be based on different numbers of participants? i.e 500 participants \$xxx each. 1,000 \$xxx each etc.

There soon will be. This survey helps us determine the level of interest, which will help us choose a project size on which to figure such costs. Our goal is to have subscription price estimates, payback and return on investment numbers by this spring.

21. I think this is a tremendous idea. I look forward to hearing more about it and exploring if it's a good fit for me and my house!

Great! Stay tuned to this website as we go through the spring.

22. I would love to see this program move forward and I am willing to assist in getting it started. Please contact me if I can be of service.

Thanks! Keep checking back to this website for updates and ways you can help.

23. This is a very worthwhile undertaking to benefit subscribers and the environment. It is very important that we all- as owners of Sangre de Cristo apply our influence on the Sangre Board to cooperate and make this project a viable and economically successful endeavor that will make the community proud. Thank you for the hard work!

Thank you for your sentiments. Sangre de Cristo representatives will see your thoughts on this website, and we will pass them on, too.

24. I would be very interested to know the sign up fees as well as any maintenance fees associated with this.

Those figures will be coming soon. This survey has helped us determine the level of interest in the project, which will help us decide on a project size to go for. That will in turn help us

determine subscription rates. Maintenance fees will be folded into the subscription fee. We hope to have those fees figured out by late spring.

25. Time plan?

We hope to have subscription rates and return on investment numbers, as well as the other parameters of the project figured out by late spring of this year. We will present our recommendation to Sangre and to the Town of BV in April, and then hope to send the project out for bid after that. Once a developer is chosen, we will begin soliciting participants. There are many moving pieces in this process, but we hope to build this year.

26. I feel there should be options for individuals, town owned buildings and businesses to be able to have solar installed on their roofs. This would prevent vacant/forested land to be covered with a mirror surface. Compounded development instead of new land development.

You make a good point. Saving land is important. There are some new subdivisions being built around the country that incorporate solar panels on every roof.

Residents in BV can purchase their own solar panels to put on their roofs now. So can businesses. The idea of a community solar project is that it is a large array that residents can sign up to participate in. As more people sign up, the array can add panels to accommodate them, so adequate space is necessary for growth. It is ideal to use land that is not usable for other things, like land that is polluted or of low quality. But roof space on community buildings can also be used in some cases. We may be able to consider this down the road.

The biggest advantage of a community solar garden is for all of those who can't have solar on their land/roof, because they rent (appts) or have a house up in the trees where solar access is not good. A solar garden allows 100% of the community to get solar power with the same benefits of each home or business that may already have their own solar system.

27. Go for it!

28. We are retired, in our mid-60s. We need an ROI within our expected lifetime, i.e., 10-15 years

We understand your concerns. Community solar is a longer-term investment. Payback times could be between 9 and 15 years. We should be figuring those numbers out in the next few months. One thing to consider is that your investment could be passed on to your heirs or a new home owner with your house.

29. I have too many trees around my home to do solar on my property and am VERR interested in this project.

Yours is exactly the situation community solar was designed for. Tree removal to install solar is not a sustainable thing to do.

30. I live in Lake County but own property in Chaffee and am interested in solar power for both.

This community solar project will be open to people who get their energy from Sangre de Cristo Electric Association. If that describes your properties, then you would be eligible.

31. Thanks for doing this!!

32. Thank you

33. I can't really answer these questions without having ROI information. Something like would you be willing to spend x up front to save y monthly?

The purpose of this survey is to determine general interest level. We understand that you can't make a commitment without specific project information. The results of this survey will help us determine what size of project to go for, which in turn will help us determine subscription rates and return on investment. We hope to have that information figured out and available by late spring. When we have a finalized project, we will start promoting it and asking for commitments.

34. Very interested, and great that I don't have to install on my property.

Great! That is the beauty of community solar.

35. location & number of panels is important to share with community; information provided was incomplete & biased

The purpose of this survey was to determine general interest level in community solar. The results of the survey will help us determine what size of project to go for, which will in turn help us determine subscription rates, and other parameters. At this point, we are looking at a location near the rodeo grounds. We hope to have the specifics of the project worked out by late spring. Once the project plan is approved, it will be sent out for bid and a developer chosen. Then we will begin soliciting participants and asking for commitments. We do not expect any sort of commitment right now. Check back to this website for updates.

36. This sounds really appealing and exciting to me!

37. The initial fee - I would pay a bit more than \$100, but am not sure I could swing \$500.

Okay. We will see what we can do. There may be a way for you to finance your participation and make payments over time.

38. Very exciting!

39. Great idea if done right so that consumers save money - and hopefully savings increase dramatically over time as well.

Solar power, locally generated, provides a hedge against the rising costs of traditional energy sources and gives Sangre de Cristo Electric Association and its members some independence and control over their energy supply. There will be a 'return on investment' and 'payback' for participants which will allow them to pay off their subscription price with the credits off their bill over a period of several years. Once that investment is paid off, participants will save the full credit for the energy their share produces. Remember once you own your own power source like this, the price never goes up. As utility rates increase, yours does not, so savings greatly increase over time.

Additionally, community solar is less expensive than a personal solar system because the high cost of the net meter from Sangre is shared. Also, shared, and thus less expensive, is the cost of insurance in a community solar project.

40. Have been interested in solar to bring my bill down. Think it would be a worthwhile investment.

We think so, too. Stay tuned for more details this spring.

41. it would depend on start up costs whether I would be able to participate.

Absolutely. The purpose of this survey is to determine general interest in the concept. We understand that you can't make a commitment without specific details. We hope to be able to provide those details in a few months.

42. I am getting very tired of this stuff. How about instead of all these pie in the sky utopian ideas that the overpaid town staff comes up with, you for once try and support the taxpayer. We have CRUMBLING roads, a devastated historic basketball field house, sidewalks made of dust and dirt parking lots in the middle of town. This is absurdity. Community centers, solar farms and tenement housing!?! The next time you are sitting around dreaming up another terrible waste of taxpayers money, why don't you take a five minute walk and look at how poorly you take care of what we already have. Good day, Jim Williams

We are a volunteer citizen group, not the government. There are absolutely no taxpayer dollars being used and no government service people using their time to facilitate this. 100% volunteers. You can help make the community what you want it to be by participating in and supporting positive efforts for improvement, rather than by complaining.

43. We really like the idea of this program. We have talked with participants in the Leadville program and feel it is an excellent way for us to "have" solar without the high cost of a personal system.

We agree. Stay tuned to this website in the coming months as we develop more specific information.

44. If there will be corporate financial gain made from this, keep set-up fee low and people will have no reason not to opt in.

That is the goal.

45. I'm excited about the project for community, environmental & financial reasons

Excellent. We believe community solar has advantages in all these areas.

46. Very excited about the potential here in our community!

47. I'm excited this may happen

48. Keep it up!

49. More info needed

Yes. The purpose of this survey was to determine general interest in the concept. The results will help us set a project size, which will help us determine the specifics of the project including subscription rates and return on investment. We hope to have these specifics developed by late spring.

50. Please do not abuse my email with unwanted junk

Your participation in the survey is anonymous unless you provided your contact information on question 9. We will not send you extra emails or abuse your information.

51. This seems like a wonderful and exciting thing.

52. Go for it!

53. What are the distance limits of the program?

The community solar project will be available to anyone who gets their electricity from Sangre de Cristo Electric Assoc.

54. We need to pursue this for our childrens future.

Agreed.

55. I was born in 1927, so long term has little significance.

Understood. However, community solar can be a good investment in your children's future, and could potentially be passed on to your heirs, or a future homeowner.

56. Thanks for looking into solar!

57. Very interested but would have to make decision based on cost vs benefits.

Absolutely. The purpose of this survey is just to determine general interest level. More specifics will be forthcoming in the next few months.

58. I'm not sure what % of residents will complete this survey. Can Sangre de Cristo help?

Yes, Sangre de Cristo Electric Association did help promote this survey through a note on their bills and an email to over 3800 of their members. But Buena Vista Solar Share is the volunteer community group leading the project.

59. Leadville has had this for a while; I was hoping B-V would come into this forward-looking move. Thank you.

60. Take a look at the Solarize Portland model - the community could sign up for rooftop solar or solar garden and then the town puts it out to bid to drive down the costs. You might also talk to the colorado energy office, they may want to include share subscription for low income families

receiving weatherization assistance (there is a 5% low income component for solar gardens) - good luck!

Thank you for your suggestion. The Clean Energy Office subsidizes a low income community solar project that we may be able to incorporate in the future, called Grid Alternatives.

61. This could be another awesome reason to live and support BV!

Agreed.

62. I love this idea!!

63. Perfect resource for Chaffee County, clean power, shared by the community

Agreed.

64. look at contract carefully. look for fee/cost changes over term of contract.

Yes, we will be vigilant.

65. Two thumbs up for this project!

66. I'm excited about the possibility...but concerned not enough residents would be interested in participating.

We have had a very positive response to this survey: 244 interested people responded. Not only do we have enough interest, but we may be able to pursue a bigger project than originally expected.

67. I would like to know more

The details of the project will be coming later this spring.

68. Taking your survey today, it was unclear regarding your wording on subscription fee. Is the thought that participants would pay some type of fee to be included in the program and then also pay a dollar amount to offset the amount of kW they would like to receive from the program? Or, is there just a one time fee that you are trying to collect upfront to finance the program. Also, will you be trying to broaden your outreach efforts to include more of the area? I live near Salida, and I'm not sure much has been advertised in that area.

The subscription fee will be a one-time fee to purchase a share in the solar garden. Credits for the power your share generates will then be applied to lower your electric bill.

The community solar garden will be for residents who get their power from Sangre De Cristo Electric Association. If you get your power from Xel (as most in Salida do), you would not be eligible.

69. I would like to donate time to create this project - I have been in the electrical controls profession for 40 years.

You are welcome. We will send you an email concerning our next meeting time.

70. I didn't fill out the income cause its less then you have quoted.

We are working on a way for residents with lower incomes to participate in the project.

71. We bought panels with SunShare in Colorado Spgs and loved supporting solar energy development and enjoyed saving money & reducing fossil fuel use.

Excellent.

72. Prefer email for correspondence and information

Very good. We prefer that, too.

73. Thank you for looking

74. I think this is a great idea.

75. With regards to the one time fee for 20 years of service. Would that be transferable if you move or stay as part of the house, weather you sell it or rent it to someone else? I would be willing to pay a larger one-time fee, depending on how that works.

Your subscription can go with you when you move, as long as you stay within Sangre De Cristo Electric Association territory. If you move outside of Sangre territory, you would forfeit your subscription. It could be passed on to your heirs with your property, though.