

## Affordable Solar for La Grange Park Residents

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, the La Grange Park Library and La Grange Park Sustainability Commission co-hosted an event to shine some light to Village residents interested in learning more about residential solar panels. Two local residents, Jonathan Almer and Eric Fouliard, talked about their personal experiences installing solar panels at their respective homes on the 600 block of Edgewood and the 400 block of Stone (see photos below). In addition, Jonathan serves as a Solar Ambassador to the Illinois Solar Energy Association (ISEA) and he explained the technology, cost / benefits and installation process associated with residential solar panels.



604 N. Edgewood (Almer)



401 N. Stone (Fouliard)

Some of the highlights from the discussion:

- Both Jonathan and Eric expressed their #1 objective in installing solar panels is because they believe it the right thing to do for the environment. Solar represents an environmentally-friendly source of energy and a reduction in fossil fuel usage. Less than 6% of power supplied in Illinois comes from renewable energy sources – each new solar panel helps!
- Jonathan debunked a few myths about solar panels in Illinois. In particular, he confirmed there is enough sun in Illinois for solar to be effective. In fact, Illinois has greater solar resources than Germany, which is a world leader in solar energy.
- There are two types of residential solar energy technologies – solar thermal and solar electricity (PV). Solar thermal converts sunlight into electricity and heats water and living spaces. PV only generates electricity. Most homes, including the Almer's and the Fouliard's, utilize PV technology.
- The amount of electricity that can be generated by the solar panel system depends upon the number of panels, the orientation of the home and, of course, the weather! The Almer's have a larger system than the Fouliard's and are able to generate 90% of their electricity demand. The Fouliard's are able to generate ~ 50% of their electricity demand. When a solar system generates more electricity than needed, the owner can "sell" the excess back to the grid in the form of a credit on their electric bill.

- The Almer's and Fouliard's spent ~ \$27K and \$14K on their solar panel systems, respectively. Financing is available for these systems. Costs for these types of systems continue to come down. In addition, a 30% federal tax credit is currently available and Illinois has an incentive that pays solar panel owners for each megawatt hour (MWH) produced over 5 years. It is estimated the Illinois incentive is worth ~ 20-30% of the total cost of the project. Considering tax credits, state incentives and reduction in energy costs, both residents expect to recoup their initial investment in between 9 to 12 years. Additionally, the Fouliard's estimate their out-of-pocket expenses will total only ~ 1/3 of the total cost of the system. The installation of solar panels also increases the value of the home at resale – a [recent study](#) found this 'solar premium' to be approximately equal to the installed price of the panels.
- If interested in installing solar panels, both residents recommend you seek quotes from multiple installers. Installers will evaluate the feasibility of solar panels at your home. Installers should also be able to provide assistance with the financial aspects of the project, including obtaining the state incentives. Projects typically require 3-4 months to complete.

The Village of La Grange Park encourages environmentally beneficial projects and, as a result, is considering establishing a rebate program for a portion of permit fees associated with solar panel projects.

Additional information regarding residential solar panels can be found at the ISEA's website ([www.illinoissolar.org](http://www.illinoissolar.org)) or by contacting Jonathan Almer at [solaraloha@gmail.com](mailto:solaraloha@gmail.com).