



Department Source: City Utilities - Water and Light

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: August 19, 2024

Re: Water & Light Report: City's involvement in a Solarize campaign

Executive Summary

At the July 1, 2024, meeting, Council requested a report regarding staff looking into a solarize campaign.

Discussion

During the scheduled public comment period at the July 1, 2024, Council Meeting, Emily Piontek, a citizen and representative from Renew Missouri and the 2030 coalition, discussed the success of the solarize campaign that was done in Kansas City, Missouri, and suggested that Columbia should launch a solarize campaign. A solarize campaign is a local or regional coordinated effort to "go solar" by participants installing solar systems and receiving a group discount from the installer on the cost of the system.

Staff from the Office of Sustainability and Water & Light discussed the solarize campaign with Ms. Piontek. Additionally, staff participated on a call with Ms. Piontek and the Chief Environmental Officer of the City of Kansas City, Mr. Andy Savastino, to discuss the solarize campaign in Kansas City. That campaign was a public-led initiative, led by a steering committee made up of interested parties from the community. The steering committee selected a third-party organization, Solar Crowd Source, as the program administrator. This program administrator led the steering committee meetings, designed and hosted the website for the solar campaign, worked with the steering committee to release the request for proposal (RFP) for a solar contractor, worked directly with the solar contractor to implement the campaign, and was otherwise responsible for the administration of the campaign. The steering committee selected the solar contractor based on the RFP responses and helped promote the campaign across the Kansas City Metro area. The solarize campaign had approximately 100 solar systems (~0.75 MW) installed throughout the Kansas City Metro area in 2022 and 2023. During 2022 and 2023, there were a total of 214 solar systems (~1.926 MW) installed in the Columbia Water & Light service territory. The average system size was 9 kW and received an average rebate of \$4,177.

The City of Kansas City provided \$150,000 in one-time funding to supplement the installation of 12 solar systems for income-eligible residences. Since 2019, Water & Light has allocated \$120,000 in funding for the installation of solar for income-eligible housing: \$50,000 for solar at the Cullimore Cottages and \$70,000 to the Columbia Housing Authority.

The City of Kansas City's involvement with the solarize campaign was to help facilitate the steering committee. No City funds were used to compensate the third-party administrator,



and the RFP for the solar contractor was done through the third-party administrator and outside of the City's procurement process.

The electric utility in Kansas City is Evergy, an investor owned utility. Evergy did not have any involvement with the solarize campaign.

The City's current rebate and loan programs appear to be effective incentives for installation of solar. At this time, it is recommended the City continue these programs. Based on the example of Kansas City, Missouri's solarize program, community-based leadership with appropriate municipal and utility support is an effective structure. If community organizations desire to move forward with a publicly led solarize campaign, similar to what has been done in Kansas City, Utilities and Sustainability staff can help identify interested people and provide information to these interested persons.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None

Long-Term Impact: None

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

[Strategic Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Reliable Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Inclusive Community, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

[Comprehensive Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
n/a	n/a

Suggested Council Action

Report for information only.