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Freedom Solar steers Austin Subaru dealership into fast lane of sustainability

241-kilowatt solar array now powers local Subaru dealership

AUSTIN— Freedom Solar Power recently installed a massive 241.2-kilowatt rooftop solar array at Austin Subaru that will drive down its operating costs and put the pedal to the metal on the dealership's sustainability and energy efficiency. No puns intended.

The new solar array will offset 75 percent of the dealership's energy needs, reduce the cost of its average monthly utility bill from roughly \$3,000 to roughly \$1,000, pay for itself within five years, and save the company more than \$857,000 over the next 25 years.

"In a highly competitive market, automotive dealers are uniquely positioned to benefit from solar because of the way they are designed and their above average energy consumption," says Kyle Frazier, director of sales at [Freedom Solar](#).

Electricity is one of the largest overhead expenses of automotive dealers, which use roughly 18 percent more energy per square foot than the average office building [according to Energy Star](#).

"Auto dealerships are ideal candidates for solar energy because it helps alleviate their high electricity costs, which are a direct result of the large energy-intensive, air-conditioned showrooms and highly-lit car lots accompanied by long operating hours. In addition, most auto dealerships have large flat roofs that are perfect for mounting solar panels, and solar carports have the added benefit of protecting a dealership's precious inventory from natural elements such as rain, hail, and sun damage," says Frazier.

[Austin Subaru](#), located at 8100 Burnet Road, has 670 rooftop solar panels on its new solar array designed and installed by Freedom Solar, and the project also includes an in-lobby monitoring system that shows energy savings in real time.

The dealership received a 30 percent federal tax credit of \$164,492 for its solar project, and an estimated \$200,000 will be paid back to Austin Subaru through an Austin Energy utility incentive over the next 10 years.

After 2019, the current federal tax credit of 30 percent begins to decrease. By 2022, it will be down to just 10 percent. “That should be an incentive to get dealers to act quickly,” says Frazier.

Will Hardeman, owner of [Continental Auto Group](#), the local automotive corporation that owns and operates four area car dealerships including Austin Subaru, says: “Solar power could boost any dealership’s income and would be equivalent to adding two to three more cars a month to each store’s bottom line. In choosing Freedom, it came down to the fact that they were highly ranked and rated, had excellent customer satisfaction, and a great product. They were extremely willing to work with us on our needs, and they don’t outsource any of their work.”

Throughout the years, Continental Auto group has been a generous supporter of a [numerous local charitable causes](#) such as Animal Trustees of Austin of March of Dimes.

Genny Hardeman Hill, Will’s sister and the executive vice president of Continental Auto Group, says: “We care about the community we serve because they are what keep us going. Solar was a smart financial decision because it will save our company a significant amount of money that will allow us to give back even more to the charitable causes we support, and it was also a smart environmental decision because we’re reducing our carbon footprint and helping build a more sustainable future for Austin.”

The Austin Subaru dealership’s solar panels are 360-watt high-efficiency modules from SunPower, which are the most efficient available today and unmatched in reliability with an expected useful life of more than 40 years. Freedom Solar is a SunPower Master Dealer, the only company with that distinction in Texas.

Annually, Austin Subaru’s solar arrays will produce 349,740 kilowatt-hours of electricity. According to estimates by the Environmental Protection Agency, this is comparable to eliminating the greenhouse gas emissions from 56 passenger vehicles annually, recycling 91 metric tons of waste instead of taking that amount to the landfill, or powering 39 homes with electricity for an entire year.

Subaru Austin is the third car dealership project Freedom Solar has designed and installed Central Texas. Freedom Solar also completed solar projects on [Covert Ford and Covert Chevrolet of Hutto](#).

Bret Biggart, CEO of Freedom Solar, says: “Austin Subaru is an outstanding example of how any business can slash energy use and boost the bottom line through innovative thinking and careful planning. We’re confident more Texas dealerships will begin to follow suit once they realize the urgency caused by the decreasing tax incentives and the amount of money they stand to save.”

Freedom Solar installs turnkey residential and commercial solar projects across Texas, in cities and towns located in both regulated and non-regulated markets. In 2017, Freedom Solar installed more than 4 megawatts of solar capacity in the state, including more than 435 residential projects and 22 commercial projects ranging from 20 kilowatts to 245 kilowatts.

Since it was founded, Freedom Solar has completed thousands of Texas residential and commercial projects for clients including Office Depot, Whole Foods, Lake Flato Architects, Ballroom Marfa, The University of Texas at Austin, Tejas Rodeo, and CubeSmart, among others.

For more information, please visit <http://www.freedomsolarpower.com/>.

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About Freedom Solar Power

Freedom Solar Power is the leader in turnkey solar installations in Texas, providing high quality, cost-effective, reliable solar solutions for residential and commercial markets. Freedom Solar has installed more than 45 megawatts of solar panels since it was founded in 2007 and grown 307 percent from 2013-15. Recognized as the number one supplier of residential solar systems in Austin by Austin Energy, the fourth-fastest growing company in Central Texas by the Austin Business Journal, and number 338 on Inc. Magazine's top 500 fastest-growing private companies in America, Freedom Solar has completed projects for corporate clients including Whole Foods, Office Depot, Lake Flato Architects, and the University of Texas, among others.

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