



CONTACT:
Lesley Ford (Lesley@theprboutique.com)
O: 512-363-5160



Sames Automotive Becomes First Dealership in Laredo to Go Solar with Installation by Freedom Solar Power

The Oldest Car Dealership in Texas, Sames Automotive, Partners with Freedom Solar to Install Solar-Powered Carport, Joining the Growing Solar Trend in South Texas

Austin, Texas—October 17, 2019. Austin-based Freedom Solar today announced it has signed a contract with Sames Automotive Group, the oldest automotive dealer in the state of Texas, for a major installation of solar panels at its Laredo dealership—the first solar energy installation at an automotive dealership in Laredo.

“The Sames family is one of the most highly respected families in Laredo, and now they are proving to be the city’s most forward-thinking automotive dealers,” said Freedom Solar CEO Bret Biggart. “We’re thrilled that they chose us to make their Laredo dealership more sustainable and energy-efficient.”

The Sames project will encompass a huge space—a 28,000-square-foot carport with spaces for 110 cars, allowing customers to shop in shaded comfort. Freedom Solar will install 1,260 high-performance SunPower P19 Series 395-watt solar modules on the carport roof that will produce 765,000 kWh annually. That’s enough energy to power 60 single family homes for a full year. Slated for completion November 1, it is estimated the project will save Sames Automotive \$1.5M over the 25-year lifetime of the panels.

“We are always conscious of trying to do things as efficiently and sustainably as possible, and energy is one of our biggest costs,” said Harry Sames III, CEO of Sames Automotive Group. “Ultimately, we see this investment as not only a smart, responsible business move, but also a way to enhance our customers’ shopping experience by keeping them out of the oppressive Laredo heat.”

Laredo and the Rio Grande Valley are a rapidly expanding market for solar energy because of its extreme heat and high suitability for the product. According to *Solar Electricity Handbook*, Laredo has on average 6% more solar irradiation, a measure of solar output or production relative to the region, than San Antonio and 12% more than Houston, both established solar markets. Laredo is

also a major transport town with numerous massive warehouses and expansive rooftops that could easily and efficiently incorporate solar energy into their business plans.

Freedom's installations across the Rio Grande Valley total over 1.1 megawatts (MW) of solar capacity. This year, Freedom Solar is on track to surpass its 2018 sales of \$26 million in residential and commercial projects across Texas.

Another factor in the Sames' decision to go solar now was the federal solar tax credit, also known as the investment tax credit (ITC), which has been a major driver of the rapid increase in solar installations. It allows homeowners and businesses to deduct 30% of the cost of installing a new solar energy system from their 2019 federal taxes. This results in an average \$6,000 savings on an average-sized \$20,000 residential solar installation and \$30,000 in savings for a business that purchases a \$100,000 installation. The ITC applies to both residential and commercial systems, and there is no cap on its value. The tax credit will drop to 26% in 2020, 22% in 2021, and 10% in 2022 and beyond.

Because Laredo and the Rio Grande Valley is a deregulated electricity market solar clients may also benefit from a rebate from AEP Texas, which has allocated \$180,000 each for commercial and residential rebates for 2019. The tiered commercial rebate is \$0.70 per watt for 0-25 kW systems or \$0.25 per watt for 25-200 kW systems. The residential rebate is \$0.60 per watt.

"Going forward, we expect solar to grow exponentially in the Valley, and we are going to be there to provide the best solar solutions, products, and service," said Biggart. "This year, for the first time, almost two-thirds of our revenue came from Texas markets beyond our Austin center of operations. We expect that trend to continue, and the Valley will be a major factor in future solar growth.

###

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 the residential and commercial markets. Also a Tesla Powerwall Certified installer, Freedom Solar has installed more than 55 megawatts of solar panels since 2007 and ranks number 338 on *Inc.* magazine's 500 fastest-growing private companies in America. The company has been recognized by Austin Energy as the number-one supplier of residential solar systems in Austin, by GreenTechMedia as the largest residential solar installer in Texas for three years running, and by the *Austin Business Journal* as the fourth-fastest-growing company in Central Texas. Freedom Solar was recently named by the *Austin Business Journal* as a Best Place to Work in 2019 and was ranked 129th on the 2019 Top Solar Contracts List by *Solar Power World* magazine, up from 220th last year. Freedom Solar has completed projects for numerous corporate clients including Whole Foods, Office Depot, Lake Flato Architects, and The University of Texas, among others. For more information, visit <https://www.freedomsolarpower.com>.

About Sames Automotive Group

Established in 1910 as Laredo Auto Sales Company, Sames Automotive is the oldest automobile dealership in Texas and one of the oldest in the nation. Owned and operated by the Sames family, the business spans five generations and remains true to its core values of “family, integrity, community responsibility and maintaining a team that cares.” In today’s digital marketplace, the Sames family strives to maintain a human touch with its customers, providing an exceptionally high level of personalized service with each vehicle it sells. The 434,280-square-foot Laredo dealership encompasses Sames Ford, Sames Ford Service Department, Sames Quick Lane, Sames Super Center, and Sames Kia. The Sames Automotive Group has 14 dealerships across the state of Texas.