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## Community Solar Gardens Create Viable Energy Alternatives

[CleanTechnica.com](#) | April 19th, 2011 at 6:11 pm |



El Jebel, CO solar garden

A Colorado law allowing for the [creation](#) of solar gardens represents another step in the effort to feed solar electricity to the grid from smaller players. It sets an [example](#) for other states and communities that are interested in supporting renewable energy from an expanded variety of suppliers.

Last year, Colorado passed the first state law to create community solar gardens (CSGs). A recent [release](#) of the draft rules for CSGs "...may open the floodgates, turning distributed solar power into democratic solar power," wrote [Renewable Energy World](#).

Not long after, [Solar World announced the first solar garden in the city of El Jebel](#), on land that was considered otherwise unusable, "making it the perfect site for solar panels."

"Clean Energy Collective (CEC) sold the parcels of solar to residents for as little as \$725," Solar World reports. "CEC predicts a 67% increase of community solar energy in the next five years." That's significant.

"Year-round and seasonal residents of the Roaring Fork Valley have bought individual portions of the array for as little as \$725 per panel, or \$3.15/kW," wrote [Colorado Energy News](#) about the attractive pricing. "Local utility coop Holy Cross Energy will then credit members' utility bills directly each month at \$0.11/kWh based on how much solar each member owns in the array."

A community solar garden is a 2-megawatt (MW) or smaller solar PV project that has 10 or more subscribers living in the same county. The solar garden can be built by businesses, non-profits, or utilities. However, CSG operations must be handled by an organization that is solely devoted to the solar garden and its subscribers, much in the way special taxing districts are structured.

By the end of 2013, Colorado utilities will be required to purchase 6 MW of output from CSGs that are operating. But the road to building the required supply infrastructure has not been easy to construct.

“Community solar power can offer unique benefits in the expansion of solar power, from greater participation and ownership of solar to a greater dispersion of the economic benefits of harnessing the sun’s energy. But community solar faces significant barriers in a market where the ‘old rules’ favor corporate, large-scale development. New rules – better community solar policy and regulations – are needed to remove these barriers,” [John Farrell wrote last September, in reviewing the draft rules for Energy Self Reliant States.](#)

[The Solar Gardens Institute](#), in partnership with the Colorado Renewable Energy Society, will hold the inaugural SOLAR GARDEN SYMPOSIUM on May 6, 2011. SGI welcomes installers and [industry](#) professionals to come and learn more about off-site solar.

SGI writes it is the “industry-leading Subscriber Management Organization, and we are proud to be supporting community and low-income renewable energy projects.”

Related Stories:

- [U.S. Sen. Mark Udall Unveils Community Solar Gardens Bill](#)
- [Nation’s Most Effective Solar Community Purchasing Program Descends Upon Los Angeles](#)
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