

## **Boulder County's ClimateSmart™ Loan Program Helps Create a Clean Energy District**

By Eric VanOrden, Standard Renewable Energy

If you're a Boulder County resident who's been thinking about installing solar or other energy efficiency upgrades, there's never been a better time than now. Thanks to the new ClimateSmart™ Loan Program, homeowners can now finance renewable energy and energy efficiency solutions through a special loan.

**But you have to act fast! You must attend a workshop and receive a quote by MARCH 31st to be eligible to receive funds.**

### **What is the ClimateSmart Loan Program?**

On November 4, 2008, Boulder County voters passed Ballot Initiative 1A with a 65 percent majority vote. This initiative gave the County authority to issue up to \$40 million in bonds to finance what is now referred to as the Boulder County ClimateSmart Loan Program.

The ClimateSmart Loan Program was developed to help make Boulder County a "Clean Energy District" by providing a low-interest loan to homeowners and businesses for specific renewable energy and energy-efficiency improvements, such as solar power or increased insulation. These improvements will help Boulder County residents reduce their monthly energy bills while helping the County meet local goals for lessening its environmental impact while lowering its carbon footprint.

### **What does it mean for Boulder residents?**

For Boulder County residents who have been hesitant or unable to make renewable energy or energy-efficiency improvements to their home because of the large up-front financial commitment, this is exactly what you have been waiting for. This program was developed as a voluntary mechanism for Boulder County property owners, and therefore it will not increase the taxes of those who do not wish to participate. But for those who do wish to participate, the County will provide a low-interest loan to the property owners who apply, and this loan will be paid back through a special assessment on their property taxes.

That means that these loans will stay with the property. Since the average homeowner moves every seven to nine years, they may be less likely to invest in an improvement that will last for 20 to 25 years (or more.) This encourages homeowners to make these improvements, and then pass on the benefits to those who purchase the home in the future. The new homeowners will take over the payments for the improvements, and reap the benefits of lower electricity bills every month.

### **Which Home Improvements make the most sense?**

Since the ClimateSmart Loan Program was created for renewable energy *and* energy-efficiency improvements, it is important to find out what home-improvements would reap the biggest benefits and the lowest energy bills. Prior to committing to the program, homeowners can find out exactly which areas of their homes can benefit from more energy-efficient offerings through a home energy audit.

Additionally, homeowners who receive an energy audit with a blower door test will be given priority in the case that demand for the loan program exceeds the supply.

An energy audit takes the guesswork out of home energy improvements by showing a homeowner the many different options for reducing energy bills and increasing the home's comfort. Companies such as Standard Renewable Energy not only are able to perform the energy audit, but also can help the homeowner implement the recommended solutions such as high-efficiency heating and cooling systems, proper insulation upgrades and solar electric installations.

### **What are the program's requirements and timelines?**

- 1) You must attend a mandatory workshop during the month of March. For registration and information about the workshops, visit or call the Center for Resource Conservation.
- 2) Decide which energy efficiency or renewable energy measure you wish to apply for. A list of eligible measures can be found at Boulder County's ClimateSmart website.
- 3) Be sure to contact contractor(s) and obtain all written estimates before the application period begins.
- 4) The application period is only open from April 1 through April 10, 2009.

### **Where can I find out more?**

The following organizations offer more information and registration details:

Boulder County ClimateSmart: For a list of eligible measures, property owner checklists and loan details)  
[www.bouldercounty.org/bocc/climatesmartloanprogram](http://www.bouldercounty.org/bocc/climatesmartloanprogram)

Center for Resource Conservation: For workshop details and registration  
[www.conservacioncenter.org/e\\_climatesmart.php](http://www.conservacioncenter.org/e_climatesmart.php)  
303-999-3820 x216

Standard Renewable Energy: For ClimateSmart Value Packages and to schedule an Energy Audit  
[www.sre3.com/climatesmart](http://www.sre3.com/climatesmart)  
(303) 562-2752

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