

## The Leopold adds solar panels on roof of historic building



David Johnston, majority owner of The Leopold, on the building's roof with the new solar panels installed in March. Photo courtesy of The Leopold.

by BBJ Staff

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One of downtown Bellingham's most historic buildings has made a modern move by installing a solar panel system.

The Leopold Retirement Residence, 1224 Cornwall Ave., installed 36 solar panels on its roof in March. The solar panels are expected to produce between 8,000 and 9,000 kilowatt hours of annual electricity, which is about 10 percent of The Leopold's power consumption.

"This continues our commitment to a triple bottom-line philosophy, implementing practices that create social, economic and environmental benefits," said David Johnston, majority owner of The Leopold, in a March 30 press release.

The Leopold was built in 1929 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It offers both independent-retirement and assisted-living rooms among its 91 apartments.

Before installing solar panels, improvements were made to the building's boiler system and lighting to save energy.

Johnston said the solar-panel project became possible with the support of the Community Energy Challenge, a joint program administered by Sustainable Connections and The Opportunity Council.

A federal grant covered 30 percent of the cost, and The Leopold will receive an annual cash rebate from Puget Sound Energy for using solar panels made in Washington by Itek Energy of Bellingham.

"A commercial business can get a 100 percent return on their investment in around 5-6 years," said Josh Miller of Western Solar, the Bellingham-based company that installed the system.

Johnston said the solar-panel project was possible with the support of the Community Energy Challenge, a joint program administered by Sustainable Connections and The Opportunity Council.

The North Fork Brewery, Mountain Veterinary Clinic, Favinger Plumbing, Schacht Law Office and more than 10 residences are other Community Energy Challenge participants in Whatcom County that have installed solar panels, according to Alex Ramel, energy and policy manager for Sustainable Connections.

More information about the program is at <a href="www.communityenergychallenge.org">www.communityenergychallenge.org</a>. The Leopold is online at <a href="www.leopoldretirement.com">www.leopoldretirement.com</a>.

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