

## Community Food Co-op installs Whatcom County's largest solar array at Cordata store



Jon Edholm, the Community Food Co-op's finance manager, observes the solar panel array on the roof of the Cordata Co-op store. Photo courtesy of Community Food Co-op

by [BBJ Staff](#)

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Community Food Co-op has installed Whatcom County's largest solar-energy array installation at its Cordata location.

Currently the Cordata store consumes about 740,000 kilwatt-hours of power.

The new solar installation will generate about 30,000 kwh annually, resulting in an estimated annual net savings of \$8,000, according to a press release.

The installation will generate enough electricity annually to run about three average homes, which is estimated to take between 10,000 to 12,000 kwh by the U.S. Department of Energy.

In the fall, a flat-screen panel will be installed on the main floor of the Cordata store that will show results of the solar energy production. Shoppers will be able to view online numbers displaying the amount of energy output from each panel on the roof at various times of the day.

For several years, the Co-op's board of directors explored ways to serve as a model for sustainability in the community.

In February 2011, Beau Hilty-Jones, a Co-op board director employee, began researching the possibilities and benefits of placing solar panels on the Cordata Co-op. He learned that the original plans for the store included the potential for solar panels on the roof and also found the store site was conducive to the use of solar.

When he approached general manager Jim Ashby with the proposal, Ashby gave him the go-ahead to continue exploring the options.

In March 2012, locally owned and operated solar contractor Ecotech Energy Systems was awarded the bid and began planning the installation of the system

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