

Roth: OKC in top 10 U.S. cities for solar potential

By [Jim Roth](#), Director and Chair of the Firm's Clean Energy Practice Group. This column was [originally published in The Journal Record](#) on March 27, 2017.



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Google's "Project Sunroof" program just expanded into every state in America to ascertain which areas are most suitable for solar power and not surprisingly sunny Oklahoma, and specifically sunny Oklahoma City, came out in the top 10 cities across this great country. While Houston was ranked No. 1, Oklahoma City achieved the eighth-best spot, besting Dallas and Albuquerque to round out the top 10.

Overall, the expanded analysis concluded that 80 percent of all American rooftops assessed are suitable and can technically benefit from the installation of solar panels for energy generation. That is an astounding reality and speaks to the coming enormity of solar energy for our country's future, especially as technology is improving fast and prices are dropping precipitously.

Curious about your own home's potential? Please check out the project website and simply put in your ZIP code at: www.google.com/get/sunroof#p=0.

My own home was analyzed and shows the potential for at least \$3,000 in estimated savings over 20 years due to:

- 1,695 hours of usable sunlight per year, based on day-to-day analysis of weather patterns.
- 352 square feet available for solar panels, based on 3-D modeling of my roof and nearby trees.
- Recommended solar installation size of a 4.75-kilowatt system that could provide more than 21 percent of my electricity consumption (in reality I would probably size it even larger to live freer from dirtier electricity).

All of this great analysis is free and provided using Google Earth and Google Maps technology to build specific 3-D models by assessing weather, trees and other factors that affect your roof's potential to the sun's exposure. It was fascinating to see it actually illustrate my own home's roofs and the analysis specifics, based upon my electricity consumption.

And while it doesn't yet speak to the local policy issues impacting these equations, such as the fact Oklahoma utilities aren't yet required to pay homeowners "fair value" price for the energy that your rooftop system may "export" back to the grid for use by others, it does illuminate many of the basics that can get your analysis started. The website even lists

solar providers in your area so you can take the next step to have industry experts visit your home and help calculate your system options, payback timelines and any local, state or federal incentives that might help.

In addition, as an aside, please know that the future is looking bright for Oklahomans to adopt more solar energy, as just last week the Oklahoma Corporation Commission voted to block a utility's request to raise charges on rooftop solar customers. The case centered on the reality that when you study the economics, neighbors with rooftop solar energy are actually providing greater benefit to their neighbors through exported energy than those customers themselves cost the system to tie into the grid. That helps Oklahoma move from its current ranking of 48th in solar adoption toward the enormous potential we have as Oklahoma City ranked eighth suggests.

What are you waiting for? Chances are really good the sun will come up again tomorrow.

Jim Roth, a former Oklahoma corporation commissioner, is an attorney with [Phillips Murrah P.C.](#) in Oklahoma City, where his practice focuses on clean, green energy for Oklahoma.