

November 2010

[Back to Current Issue](#)

[Home](#) >> [November 2010](#) >> [Here Comes the Sun](#)

DEPARTMENTS

- ▶ [Community Spotlight](#)
- ▶ [Economic Outlook](#)
- ▶ [Going Green](#)
- ▶ [Legally Speaking](#)
- ▶ [Onsite Safety](#)
- ▶ [Risk Management](#)
- ▶ [Tech Trends](#)
- ▶ [Washington Update](#)

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A 30 percent federal tax credit is in effect through 2016 for residential and commercial solar installations, and many states and localities have additional incentives in place. But the availability of financing is only part of the reason solar is taking off right now. Investors are putting big bucks into photovoltaic technology, resulting in solar panel price declines of up to 30 percent in the last year. Solar film—a more efficient, cost-effective technology compared to traditional solar panels—is coming to market, helping increase the amount of power that can be captured from the sun's energy.

Getting a Piece of the Pie

Maryland has implemented strong incentives during the past few years, including Solar Renewable Energy Credits and local property tax breaks in various counties. Seeing these changes come down the pike, construction business owner Colette Hayward decided it was time to shift her career path.



"After 15 years running a very successful construction company specializing in finishes, I was ready to pursue my passion and start promoting renewable energy," Hayward says. "The incentives that began to develop proved solar was about to become a wise investment and an affordable choice for home and business owners."

In 2009, she opened the doors of [Maryland Solar Solutions, Inc.](#), in Reisterstown, Md. The two-employee firm calls on a group of dedicated subcontractors to perform installations. To date, most jobs have been for residential clients, but the company is working to attract corporate and government customers as well. This spring, Maryland Solar Solutions earned Women's Business Enterprise Certification from the city of Baltimore, which should provide greater access to government contracts and large-scale projects.

As owners warm up to the idea of incorporating solar into their new and existing facilities, Maryland Solar Solutions is committed to serving as an information resource.

"We give presentations to interested homeowners, business owners and civic groups," Hayward says. "We know that many of the people who approach us for information about solar are not going to make an immediate purchase, but we want to plant the seeds that will allow us to reach customers six months or a year from now."

Client outreach led [Baker Roofing Co.](#), Raleigh, N.C., into the solar market as well. Not only was the company encountering maintenance inquiries (regarding solar roof components that weren't living up to their warranties), but it also was getting requests for details on the viability of brand new installations.



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