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This village lowers utility bills Monthly costs under \$50 at Longmont's Solar Village Prospect

By [Todd Neff](#)

The January chill of what has been the toughest winter in years pushed Paul Mack's most recent gas bill to new heights. Thirty-four bucks.

Mack, an architect, lives in a 1,100-square-foot condominium at Solar Village Prospect, a solar-powered, energy-efficient development in Longmont's Prospect New Town neighborhood. Before the 16-unit complex opened in March, its builders claimed each would use about half the gas and electricity of an average condominium.

Mack's savings were a bit more extreme. Before moving into his two-bedroom unit last April, Mack said, "I lived in one of those cool Boulder bungalows. It was so cool, I was paying \$240 a month on gas bills to keep about the same square footage at 64 degrees."

Solar Village co-founder Mark Kostovny said the average resident's monthly gas bill was \$27 for the winter and fall heating season and \$18 year-round. Xcel Energy's Home Energy Analyzer says the average monthly gas bill for such a dwelling elsewhere is \$36.

Mack said his electricity bills have been between \$22 and \$28 a month even in the summer — and that the place was so well-insulated that the air conditioning ran only on eight to 10 of the hottest summer days. The average monthly electric bill is about \$38, Xcel Energy's estimating tool says.

Solar Village Prospect's residences are heated by a 21-panel solar hot-water system that feeds a 1,500-gallon tank and then provides both hot water and radiant heating, Kostovny said. The building's awnings have four kilowatts of solar panels spread among them, roughly that of two good-sized home systems.

There are efficient windows and thick, well-insulated walls, Energy Star appliances and compact-fluorescent lights. The heating system cost about \$9,000 per unit, \$3,000 more than a traditional system, Kostovny said. It cost about 5 percent more to get a building twice as efficient, he said.

"The Solar Village Prospect development demonstrates that it is practical to greatly reduce household energy consumption with off-the-shelf measures," said Howard Geller, executive director of the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project in Boulder.

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