



MEDIA RELEASE
Suncatcher Solar introduces Suncastle Park,
Saskatchewan's First Grid-tied Solar Development

For immediate release
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Saskatoon, SK – Suncatcher Solar is introducing Saskatchewan's first grid-tied solar development - Suncastle Park. This small eco-friendly community of seven acreages will be unique because electricity will be supplied both by SaskPower and by solar panels on each home. On a sunny day, the solar panels will produce more than enough electricity to operate household appliances so the extra power will be used against future power bills – the electrical meter will run backwards. At night SaskPower will supply the electrical needs of the home. The homeowner will pay only for the difference between the power supplied by SaskPower and the power produced by the solar panels. This is called “net metering”, because you only pay for the “net” amount used.

This “grid-tied system”, so called because the house is tied to the utility grid, operates differently from an off-grid system that is not connected to the utility grid. An off-grid system uses a battery bank to store energy for overnight and a backup generator for occasional times during the winter when there is not enough sunlight to produce the amount of electricity needed. A grid-tied system is more convenient for the homeowner because there are no batteries or backup generator to maintain. The grid becomes your battery and your backup.

The residents of Suncastle Park will also benefit from a 25% rebate provided by the Saskatchewan government for grid-tied renewable power systems. After the home is complete and the solar power system installed, the homeowner will receive a rebate cheque of approximately \$6000, which represents 25% of the value of the system.

“Solar energy will be a core part of the development,” says Angie Ortlepp, the community's planner. “With the introduction of net metering and a government rebate last year, integrating solar with grid utility is very practical for homeowners.”

The development will also feature passive solar home design and optional solar assisted hot water and heating. Most windows will face the south to maximize solar heating in the winter, while extended eaves provide shade from the high summer sun. This dramatically reduces the energy needed for heating and air conditioning. Solar thermal collectors can be used to heat water for washing and provide comfortable in-floor radiant heat.

Lot sizes vary from just over one acre to just shy of 2 acres. All lots are serviced by Sask Power and an installed 2 kW solar power system. SaskEnergy and SaskTel services run adjacent to the development. All homes will incorporate a passive solar design by Suncatcher Solar and will be

built by Jaylin Homes Ltd. Suncastle Park is a development on unbroken prairie and natural brush land that is habitat to many species of wildlife. Designs will work with the natural landscape and construction will minimize the disturbance of the environment.

There are over 80 passive solar home designs to choose from or Suncatcher Solar will custom design. There are no size restrictions and very few architectural limitations on the designs. “We want people to have lots of choices and options for their homes. Our major goal is that all homes use solar design principles and renewable energy,” says Ortlepp. Solar hot water and heating systems are encouraged, and the solar power system that is included with the lot can also be expanded to include a wind turbine, more solar panels or a small battery backup. The covenants set out at Suncastle Park are intended to ensure a respect for the environment, the conservation of fossil fuels and the highest possible construction standards.

The development is adjacent to Suncatcher Solar’s original solar home, where Ortlepp literally lives what she sells. Her home, an off-grid wind and solar powered living lab, was designed by Ortlepp and built by her family in 2004. In 2007, she used her home to satisfy the requirements of her Masters degree in electrical engineering. Her experience inspired the concept for the Suncastle Park Solar Community – a place for people who believe that there is a better way to build and power our homes.

“Grid-tied solar and wind power systems benefit everyone,” says Ortlepp. “They benefit you because you are saving on your energy bills and they benefit others because you are making clean renewable power available to everyone who is connected to the grid. If everyone had solar panels on their roof we would need fewer central power stations. Suncastle Park is our contribution – our first step - towards making Saskatchewan a cleaner, brighter place to live.”

More information is available at **www.suncatchersolar.com**.

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About Suncatcher Solar:

Suncatcher Solar is a leading Saskatchewan solar engineering company providing renewable energy solutions for commercial and residential customers. Suncatcher Solar has completed an extensive list of wind and solar projects ranging from custom solar home design to renewable energy system retrofits. Their showcase project so far is Saskatchewan's largest solar water heating system, installed at the Confederation Inn in Saskatoon.

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