

SF Solar-Powered Business Leaders

Yoga Garden



Yoga Garden's 3-kW solar array.

David Nelson and Marisa Toriggino's Victorian home was at one time a church, a language school, a radio station and a consulting firm. Now their building is the home of their solar-powered business, Yoga Garden (www.yogagardensf.com/), a community centered Iyengar yoga school. Nelson and Toriggino explain that when they bought the three-storey building, the solar system the previous owners installed was a positive selling point. "At the time of purchase the panels weren't shown as an added appraisal but it was definitely a bonus to us," says Nelson. "Since college I have always wanted solar power because it's sustainable," adds Toriggino.

The 3-kW solar system was installed by Occidental Power (www.oxypower.com) in 2002, and produces a yearly average output of 5,475 kWh, enough to meet almost all of a typical household's electricity needs. Nelson continues to pay roughly \$3000/yr on electricity consumed by Yoga Garden and his home. "The yoga studio in particular consumes a lot of energy. We have to heat the studio to at least 68°F and it has to be done 24/7 because classes start at 7 am and last class ends at 9 pm," says Nelson. "But due to solar power we come close to breaking even during the summer months. One summer month we even generated \$80 worth of surplus electricity."

Since purchasing the building, Nelson and Toriggino have invested in energy efficiency upgrades such as installing electric thermostat heating fans in the yoga studio. "Between home living and the yoga studio, we are using energy day and night so we had to work on reducing our consumption." Nelson and Toriggino looked into solar water heating, too, but had already maxed out their roof space.

Few Yoga Garden clients are aware that their school is solar powered. "We want to soon promote the fact that we have solar power. There is a big push in the yoga industry to go green. There are a lot of people doing yoga, and we don't need to leave a big carbon footprint in order to elevate our consciousness. Solar power is truly an important path to living within our earth's energy budget and goes far beyond buying environmentally friendly products."



David Nelson, co-owner, demonstrates the benefits of solar-powered yoga.



For more information please visit sf.solarmap.org or call (415) 355-3715.

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