



Matthias Herzog installed this Battery Backup System at a home on Marine Street. Now there's a way to power the home off the grid for weeks.

BIG PICTURE

A PLACE IN THE SUN

DESIGNING SOLAR SYSTEMS FOR HOMES AND BUSINESSES IN ORDER TO HARNESS THE SUN'S ENERGY MOTIVATES THIS LOCAL BUSINESSMAN.

By Marisella Veiga | Photography by Brian Miller

The sun being an infinite source of energy is a draw for Matthias Herzog, CEO of **AltWays, LLC**. But so is providing customers with the benefits he enjoys – his home and office on Marine Street are 85% solar powered. Once solar panels are paid for, the owner has free electricity. With an added battery storage system, an owner is independent from the utility grid. And, with the latest solar technology and financing options, says Matthias, a solar system is within almost anyone's reach.

"We see it as a bit of insurance," says local

homeowner Mark Torko. The Torkos moved into their house on Marine Street a week before Hurricane Matthew arrived. They chose to have AltWays install a whole house Battery Backup System (BBS). Now, their home can be off the grid for weeks and have electricity. The BBS is completely automated – a generator starts up when there is a need for battery change; the solar provides power while the sun shines.

When the Herzog-Herrick family moved more than 10 years ago, they sought a coastal, sunny place – for many reasons. Quality of life, good schools for their two children, a college where Ms. Herrick could teach art. Yet a desire to use the sun's energy to meet their electrical needs was also key. "I like renewable energy. I was fascinated by it as a child," says Matthias, who is originally from Switzerland. Having worked for SunPower Corp, a world-renowned company, Matthias knew he could create a business that provided quality service to customers.

In 2013, he co-founded AltWays to design and create solar energy systems. Matthias is a certified installation professional and system inspector with more than a decade of experience. His partner Craig Barzo is a successful entrepreneur. Most of Matthias's work requires visits to residential and commercial sites and computer-based system simulations. Craig explains financing options, as common as financing a car.

A solar panel ideally placed on a south-facing roof may be less costly to own than a monthly utility bill. Lack of moving parts ensures they remain intact (Matthias's rooftop panels did during recent storms). Maintenance is practically nil because panels are under warranty for 25 years. Solar systems also increase home resale value.

As hurricane season approaches, Matthias knows the Battery Backup System – with or without a solar panel system – is a smart choice. "If designed correctly," he says, "having a Battery Backup System in place during a power outage, especially after a storm, is comforting."

More and more residents and businesses see the benefits of using solar power. And as a result, the system is becoming easier to implement. Over the past decade, solar system prices have dropped 70%. It might be time to let a little sunshine in.

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