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## Palm Desert releases details of energy loan program

City Council will hold public hearing on AB 811 program Thursday

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The Desert Sun*

The details of Palm Desert's ground-breaking energy loan program have been made public in advance of Thursday's City Council meeting.

The Energy Independence Program will be the first in the state to be established under Assembly Bill 811, which Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law last month.

The Palm Desert-sponsored bill allows cities to set up low-interest loan programs to help residents pay for big-ticket energy-efficient home improvements, such as high-efficiency air conditioners and solar panels, with a long term payback linked to property taxes.

The council will hold a public hearing and is expected to vote on the program at its meeting at 4 p.m. Thursday in the Civic Center Council Chamber, 73-510 Fred Waring Drive.

Loan program details include:

The city will advance the program \$2.5 million to start, with \$1.25 million reserved for residential loans.

Loans from the program will be available at 7 percent for a 20-year term. City officials had initially targeted a 6 percent interest rate for the loans, but said the lower rate would not be possible in the current down market.

"It's what the whole housing market has created — a lot of turmoil in other areas," City Manager Carlos Ortega said today.

To be eligible, applicants must be the title owners of their properties and current with property tax payments.

Improvements covered by the program will be Energy Star-rated efficiency measures that stay with the property. In addition to air conditioners and solar panels, double-glazed windows, skylights, insulation, pool pumps, and reflective roofs and coatings are included.

The minimum loan will be \$5,000, with loans over \$60,000 to be approved by the city manager and loans over \$200,000 approved by the City Council.

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