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For more information, contact:
Allison Baron, 682-551-7172
allison@brendathompson.com

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Historic funeral business leaps into 21st century with rooftop solar arrays on seven locations

Mission Park teams up with local contractor Freedom Solar to go green

SAN ANTONIO— Freedom Solar recently installed more than 530 kilowatts of solar power on seven locations of Mission Park Funeral Chapels and Cemeteries, the largest and oldest privately owned funeral company in San Antonio.

Powered by 1,634 high-efficiency solar panels, the new solar projects will offset more than 55 percent of Mission Park's electricity needs at the seven locations: two mortuaries (Oak Hill and Palm Heights), its corporate office, three funeral chapels and cemeteries (North, South, and Dominion), and its funeral home (Brookehill).

The entire system is expected to pay for itself in less than four and a half years.

A generous local utility rebate covered roughly 46 percent of total system costs. Mission Park will also receive the Federal Investment Tax Credit (ITC) for 30 percent of the project's total cost, saving the company a total of 76 percent.

Robert “Dick” Tips, chairman and CEO of Mission Park, is the fourth-generation owner and one of San Antonio's most prominent business leaders. While San Antonio's landmark funeral company is more than a century old, Mission Park has grown dramatically in the past quarter century, thanks to Tips' emphasis on pre-planning and his vision for development.

"For us, the best part of solar energy is that doing the right thing environmentally is also the right thing to do financially," Tips says. "Solar reduces our long-term operating costs and paves the way for Mission Park to be more environmentally friendly and responsible so we can continue serving the San Antonio community for many more generations to come."

Annually, Mission Park's solar arrays will produce 778,735 kilowatt-hours of electricity, which will offset more than 547 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents. This is comparable to eliminating the greenhouse gas emissions from 116 passenger vehicles driven for one year, recycling 174 tons of waste instead of taking that amount to the landfill, or powering 58 homes' worth of electricity for one year.

Besides being environmentally friendly, Tips says the solar panels were a smart financial investment, and that saving money is especially important to him as he prepares to eventually hand off his business to his children.

"We're innovating, we're taking the environment into account, and we're thinking of the long term of the company." Tips himself drives an electric vehicle, as do many of his employees.

Because funeral homes operate 24 hours a day seven days a week, electric bills are a large portion of their operating costs. Mission Park's project features SunPower 327-watt solar panels, which are the most efficient available today, with unmatched reliability and an expected life of more than 40 years. Freedom Solar Power is a SunPower Master Dealer, the only company with that distinction in Texas.

Once the first phase (the initial seven locations) of Mission Park's solar project has paid for itself, Tips will begin phase two and have Freedom Solar design and install solar arrays on another set of its locations.

"Freedom Solar took care of everything. They answered our questions, walked us through the process, and handled all permitting paperwork associated with our installation, including the utility interconnection agreement and rebate incentive documents. It was a complete turnkey solution. In the end they under-promised and over-delivered, making us very satisfied customers," Tips says.

Kyle Frazier, Freedom Solar's director of sales, says: "We have an unmatched level of experience and proficiency when it comes to helping businesses with multiple locations transition to solar power. It's our mission to meet the specific needs of every customer, and we understand that no two businesses are alike. We discuss the business owner's financial goals, budget, and unique circumstances; and work with them to create a customized plan that allows their business to transition to solar at a pace beneficial to their bottom line."

"More and more business owners like Dick Tips are looking at their energy needs from a

long-term perspective,” says Bret Biggart, CEO of Freedom Solar. “Mission Park is a great example of how any company can slash energy use and boost their bottom line with solar through innovative thinking and careful planning.”

In addition to the new solar installations at Mission Park, Freedom Solar has completed numerous projects in San Antonio including ABC Home and Commercial Services, Lake Flato Architects, Alamo Architects, Overland Partners, OCO Architects, and Northwest Vista college.

For more information, visit <http://www.freedomssolarpower.com/>.

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About Freedom Solar Power

Freedom Solar Power is the leader in turnkey solar installations in Texas, providing high quality, cost-effective, reliable solar solutions for residential and commercial markets. Freedom Solar has installed more than 15 megawatts of solar panels since it was founded in 2007, and the company grew 307 percent from 2013-15. Freedom is number 338 on Inc. Magazine’s list of the top 500 fastest-growing private companies in America, is recognized as the number one supplier of residential solar systems in Austin by Austin Energy, and as the fourth-fastest growing company in Central Texas by the Austin Business Journal. Freedom Solar has completed projects for corporate clients including Whole Foods, Office Depot, Lake Flato Architects, and the University of Texas, among others. <http://www.freedomssolarpower.com/>