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Clean energy from the sun is being harvested on a rooftop in downtown Lenoir City, out of view from the pedestrians walking the sidewalk below.

Ben Turner, owner of Lock Medic, has been in the process in recent months of remodeling his building on the corner of B Street and Broadway so his business can move down the block in the coming weeks.

As part of the renovations, Turner accessed grant money on federal and state levels to become a green energy provider for the local power grid.

"I've always been into solar," Turner said. "For me it was more about being able to provide green power."

The \$81,000 project was cut to about \$25,000 for Turner after applying the government grant money. He estimates a payback of about 8 years through money saved by taking in solar energy.

The green power will not feed into his business directly. It is sold to TVA through a partner program.

"TVA actually pays a premium for green power," Turner said. It is at a rate of 12 cents above the retail price.

Along with other energy saving efforts in the design of his new location, Turner said the amount of power generated by his solar panels should more than cover the amount expended by the store. The 60 panels installed on his roof are set to generate 10 kilowatts of power. Turner said if he had more roof space available he would have installed an even larger system.

Turner was aided in his efforts to obtain grants, purchased the equipment and install it by Knoxville-based Sustainable Future, which is the same group currently helping Wamplers Farm Sausage with a similar project.

Harvey Abouelata, director of marketing and sales for Sustainable Future, said the company typically does commercial projects in the 10 - 30 kilowatt range and smaller systems for homes in the 2.5 to 10 kilowatt range.

"We've got an unbelievable grant program with the state," Abouelata said. A combination of Tennessee-based industries and support from the governor and others in Nashville has created a situation where solar energy is becoming more prominent in Tennessee and more accepted by residents and business owners.

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