EXPANDING SOLAR POWER: HOW IDENTIFYING BARRIERS CAN FOSTER NEW GROWTH FOR GREEN ENERGY IN KING COUNTY

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Session B, Breakout Room #11

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As the threat of climate change continues to loom, environmental experts are looking toward climate mitigation strategies that limit human impact on the planet. One of the most significant impacts on the planet is greenhouse gasses and burning fossil fuels for energy, prompting experts to look into renewable energy sources with limited environmental impacts. King County's Department of Parks and Natural Resources has developed a Solar power expansion project to mitigate its climate effects and promote sustainable energy. However, their efforts are moving slower than necessary to meet King County's climate goals. Therefore, given the slow pace of solar expansion, my research aims to identify the barriers to solar power expansion in King County and how to overcome these barriers. To identify these barriers, I conducted a literature review on solar barriers in other markets, collected anecdotal evidence from my internship at King County, and conducted expert interviews with King County personnel with a background or connection to solar. My research indicates that current financial incentives are insufficient in stimulating solar growth, and jurisdictions' failure to adopt solar-ready policy hinders solar adoption and expansion. Tackling these barriers requires jurisdictions to work with utility companies and increase net-metering laws (a financial incentive that credits users for the solar they produce) and jurisdictions to update building codes to better suit future solar installations. By expanding its solar power policy, King County can expand its green energy efforts and work toward combating climate change.