Thermal solar project to heat water for condo complex

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That is exactly what Mark Stearns with Mech Tech Incorporated is doing at an open house at the Longbranch condominiums in Breckenridge.

He is taking people through the basement, showing off a massive thermal solar project his company recently built to heat the hot water tanks here.

"The hot water system; that's where solar thermal shines," Stearns said.

The system, with its pipes and panels, now supplies 75 percent of the hot water to 60 condo units with the excess heating an indoor pool, hot tub and sauna.

William Frew with Sunshine Solar who helped install all the piping says it's the largest thermal solar project in Summit County, and unlike anything done in the state.

"No one is adding the pool, sauna, hot tub and domestic all together; it just hasn't been done," Frew said.

The hope now is it will become a role model for what other complexes can do.

Homeowner didn't have to pay anything for the $100,000 system, which was paid for with loans and grants. It is expected to save $20,000 a year in naturalgas expenses, giving it a rate of return of just 5 years.

"After 5 years, all of the sudden the homeowners association will be pocketing $20,000 a year, and that's the impressive part and with a life expediency of 20 years. It's some significant money we are talking about," Stearns said.

It's why Sterns says solar thermal is the way to go, saving money at a faster rate. It's

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why he's so excited to lead tours through a maze of basement piping, hoping to show more people the light when it comes to thermal solar power.

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