SUNPOWER®

CASE STUDY

Exelon, SunPower Build New Landmark on Chicago's South Side With 8MWac Solar PV Plant

The West Pullman section of Chicago's 34th Ward was once a flourishing manufacturing center. But the decline and exodus of several industrial companies over the last few decades rendered the area environmentally and economically blighted. Today, the blocks along the once-active 120th Street on Chicago's Far South Side are again one of the city's most vibrant locales, thanks to the construction of Exelon City Solar. The 41-acre solar plant – which features SunPower Trackers – is the largest urban solar installation in the country. With hundreds of jobs created during its construction and key materials sourced locally, Exelon City Solar is demonstrating how the generation of solar power in urban environments can directly benefit local communities.

BENEFITS AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

- Will reduce carbon emissions by 31.2 million pounds of greenhouse gas emissions annually, equivalent to planting 3,200 acres of trees or removing 2,500 cars from the road
- Plant will generate more than 14,000 megawatt-hours of electricity annually; enough to power 1,500 homes
- Over 200 jobs created during construction phase, materials sourced locally
- Property taxes now being generated on site that had been vacant for 30+ years
- School programming implemented in partnership with the SunPower Foundation, including the installation of multiple solar arrays for educational purposes
- Exelon Generation owns and operates the plant, allowing them to market the electricity and Solar Renewable Energy Certificates (SRECs) it generates

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Location: Chicago, IL, USA
Completed: July 2010
Installation Type: Ground-mount system
System Size: 8 MWac
Array Area: 41 acres
Number of PV Modules: 32,292
Products: SunPower® T0 Tracker

"Our solar plant has created a 'tourist effect' that is stimulating the local economy, and has been enthusiastically welcomed and supported by the community."

John Murphy
Project Manager
Exelon Corporation

BROWNFIELD YIELDS GREEN TECHNOLOGY

On an abandoned property in West Pullman, old concrete and parts of a former basement were choked with weeds, and toxic chemicals saturated the ragged brownfield. But in this space Exelon Corporation glimpsed the potential to expand its renewable energy portfolio. "We wanted to demonstrate that a solar plant could be built at that latitude, and in our own backyard," said John Murphy, Exelon's project manager for the solar plant. Added Tom O'Neil, senior vice-president of regional and energy policy at Exelon, "We felt the project was the perfect fit for Mayor Daley's Chicago Climate Action Plan, and our 'Exelon 2020' initiative, in which we're introducing low-carbon generation into the marketplace."

SUNPOWER STAYS SUSTAINABLE

In line with Exelon's focus on sustainability, SunPower® was selected as the solar PV provider. "SunPower really understood what it means to be part of a community," O'Neil said. "They demonstrated an understanding of local needs that was very skilled." As a part of that awareness, SunPower hired local residents for many of the 200 jobs created during the construction phase of the project. Additionally, SunPower chose a welding shop located a mile from the site to create 7,300 steel piers on which the SunPower Trackers were placed. "This wasn't just about putting some solar panels up; this project served as an economic engine for the area," O'Neil said.

CREATING A COMMUNITY LEGACY

Exelon's new solar plant includes a visitors' center which regularly hosts field-trips from local schools, as well as an international audience of those interested in renewable energy sources. In partnership with local community colleges, SunPower also has created classes that are teaching residents to become solar technicians. Celebrating the revitalization of West Pullman at the plant's dedication, Mayor Richard Daley called the project "a great example of the good things that happen when government and the private sector work together." O'Neil believes that the "experiment" has been a major success, saying, "We have definitely proved that solar can come to Chicago, and that we can generate zero-carbon energy."

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