

Dane County Exec Parisi: First solar panels installed at Dane County, Alliant Energy & SunVest Solar Project

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Today, County Executive Joe Parisi joined Alliant Energy and SunVest Solar executives to celebrate the installation of the first solar panels at the [90-acre solar farm site](#) on county-owned land in the Town of Cottage Grove. Construction of the Yahara Solar Project is projected to be completed later this year, resulting in Dane County reaching its goal of using 100% renewable electricity at all county facilities.

The construction of the solar farm relies on the skilled work and craftsmanship of local union operating engineers, carpenters, laborers, and electricians increasing the project's positive economic impact. The solar project is creating approximately 70 jobs during peak construction this fall.

"Achieving our goal of powering our buildings with 100% renewable electricity is a win-win in our climate change fight and work to deliver local family-sustaining wage jobs," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "Very soon, 33,000 solar panels will be reducing greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those produced by more than 5,000 cars. Dane County will be the first county government in the state to achieve 100% renewable electricity status."

The 17-megawatt (MW) solar project will produce more than 36 million kilowatt-hours of renewable electricity per year — enough to power more than 3,000 Dane County homes. The 33,000 solar panel array utilizes the latest bifacial panel technology that produces energy from both sides of the panel, which increases energy production as sunlight reflects off the ground, especially when snow-

covered, and as they track the sun throughout the day.

“Solar energy is one way we’re acting for tomorrow to reduce carbon emissions while generating environmentally friendly energy long into the future,” said JP Brummond, Vice President of Customer and Community Engagement at Alliant Energy. “As we add more clean energy sources to our generation portfolio, we’re proud to develop customized solar energy solutions with partners like Dane County to meet their sustainability goals and build stronger communities.”

Alliant Energy selected SunVest Solar, headquartered in Pewaukee, Wisconsin to build, operate, and initially own the project. Construction of the Yahara Solar Project began in June. Pieper Electric, with headquarters in New Berlin, is the installation contractor working with multiple local unions.

“SunVest Solar is excited to see the Yahara Solar Project contribute towards Dane County’s climate and energy goals. The partnership between SunVest, Dane County, and Alliant Energy has created a tremendous opportunity for local energy generation through the utilization of local unionized labor,” said Kirk Kindred, President of SunVest Solar. “We are proud to work with New Berlin based Pieper Electric, who has been instrumental in helping us tackle supply chain issues and site challenges, while ensuring this project remains on schedule. Together, this collaboration results in more than just another solar project; it creates opportunity for economic and environmental sustainability.”

Alliant Energy will deliver the power generated to its customers, and Dane County, in return for leasing the land to the project, will receive the renewable energy credits (RECs). Under an innovative deal structure, the County continues to own the land, and the project company leases the land, with payment made in RECs. This allows the County to reach its renewable energy goals for decades to come without any increase in energy costs.

The RECs will offset the County’s greenhouse gas emissions without any increase in energy costs, helping the County to achieve its goal of 100% renewable electricity by 2025, two years ahead of schedule. The project also contributes to the County’s broader goal of cutting countywide emissions in half by 2030 under its Climate Action Plan.

On October 3, County Executive Parisi announced his 2023 proposed budget that funds the significant climate goal of having all County facilities and fleet be carbon

neutral by 2030. Achieving the initial 100% renewable electricity goal will reduce the county's emissions by 63% or 24,500 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents annually compared to 2020.

Land conservation efforts and the natural carbon sequestration that results from that work will help achieve the net-zero goal. To further increase the energy efficiency of county buildings, \$900,000 is proposed to start work on campus-wide geothermal systems for the East District Campus (Medical Examiner and Highway Garage) along with the Badger Prairie campus in Verona.

Additionally, County Executive Parisi's 2023 budget aims to expand the County's efforts to reduce carbon emissions at the landfill's renewable natural gas facility, where \$4.5 million is budgeted for the development and installation of innovative carbon capture technology.