

Ribbon cutting ceremony hosted for West Valley Solar Energy Center



Photo by Max Borsuk

Representatives from the partnering organizations who helped make the project happen cut the ribbon for the West Valley Solar Energy Center during a ceremony on Oct. 4

Max Borsuk Editor

Residents of the Town of Ashford can soon see some savings on their energy bill each month with the completion of the **West Valley Solar Energy Center**. To celebrate the completion, members of the town, partnering organizations who helped make the project happen and members of the community came out to a ribbon cutting ceremony on Oct. 4.

The West Valley Solar Energy Center is a 10 megawatt solar farm located on **NYSERDA** property at **the West Valley Demonstration Project** site. Homeowners, renters and businesses within the Town of Ashford can sign up with no installation or added costs, being able to save on bills every month. After enrolling, residents will be connected to a share of the **West Valley Solar Energy Center** that produces clean energy. The solar farm sends power to the utility and solar credits are applied to bills.

Representatives from a number of partnering organizations who made the project possible including BQ Energy, NextEra Energy Resources, **NYSERDA** and **Green Bank** were in attendance and spoke about the benefits of solar energy and the positive effects it can have on residents who can see savings from the solar farm.

“Solar energy is the ideal use for this land which offers us a brownfield project location. Brownfield projects are perhaps the most gratifying of all project types. They give otherwise unusable land a chance at producing something

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very good for the community,” Jaime Scarff, Executive Director at NextEra Energy Resources said. “West Valley is also a Community Solar Project, which makes solar energy accessible to local businesses and residents that may not otherwise be able to enjoy the benefits of clean, renewable and affordable energy.”

“The realization of this project is a reflection of the importance of private partnerships and the progress that could be made when industry, local and state governments come together to act on climate and decarbonizational electric sector,” Shyam Mehta, Assistant Director at NYSERDA said.

The Town of Ashford has also been one of the influential partnering organizations with the West Valley Solar Energy Center. Former Ashford Councilman and Supervisor Charlie Davis shared how the project came about, when around 15 years ago he had a conversation with the local NYSERDA office. After years of work from the town, with the help of partnering organizations, Davis is happy to see the project finally come to completion and be able to help the community.

“This is an opportunity to turn a bad story into a great story. I researched it so the community that has had to live with the disappointment of being treated less than for over 50 years. I challenged the county IDA, the Town of Ashford and NYSERDA to keep moving this forward,” Davis said. “This was a passion of mine. People told me you can’t do this. I don’t believe in no. Instead of saying no, let’s figure out how we can do it. One of the greatest joys of my life is the opportunity to serve my community. I wake up everyday looking at the town I live in and I say what can I do today to make it better and I challenge you to do the same.”

Current Town of Ashford Supervisor John Pfeffer shared how this project is a crucial step toward cleaner energy and thanked everyone who helped with the project, especially Davis who played a key role for the town.

“What you see here is a culmination of teamwork and a common goal to prove we can do something useful on this land. This certainly does celebrate the step forward toward cleaner energy for all,” Pfeffer said. “[Davis’] determination and grit got this done. When he left the town board, I said you are going to stay and finish this. This is Charlie’s day and this is Charlie’s project and I’m so proud of him for it to say that he pulled this off.”

For more information on how to sign up with the West Valley Solar Energy Center, visit www.communitypowerpartners.com or app.solstice.us/register/?p=westvalley?r=ASHFORD?utm_medium=partnership&utm_campaign=ashford&utm_term=2022.

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Solar panels at the new West Valley Solar Energy Center.