

New Bedford's Superfund Site Turned into Solar Park



A look at the solar facility at the Superfund Site in New Bedford. Photo by Josh Souza.

With help from U.S. EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy, New Bedford's nationally-recognized Renewable Energy Initiative took a major step forward today as the Sullivan's Ledge Solar Project was officially commissioned on the site of one of the country's most high-profile "Superfund" hazardous waste sites.

The City's Renewable Energy Initiative is designed to dramatically reduce city government electricity costs—saving taxpayers millions in the coming years—help create local construction jobs, re-develop contaminated properties, and help fight climate change.

The City's recent achievements in implementing its comprehensive renewable energy strategy have cemented its place as a state and national leader. *According to a recent report, New Bedford has now installed more solar power per person than any other U.S. city besides Honolulu. On the East Coast only New York City has installed more solar power.*

The featured speaker at the Friday, September 19th, 2014 commissioning ceremony, United States EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy cited New Bedford's effort to redevelop contaminated sites at Sullivan's Ledge and other city properties as an example to the nation.



New Bedford Hosts U.S. EPA Head Gina McCarthy at Superfund Site Turned Solar Park. Photo by Josh Souza.

"Today, thanks to the Sullivan's Ledge Superfund cleanup and our partnership with state and local governments, and the private sector, we're entering the next chapter in the city's history," said Administrator McCarthy.

"I applaud the city of New Bedford for using the property to make clean, sustainable power— Sullivan's Ledge will now add 2 megawatts of clean power to the grid— and for heeding our moral obligation to act on climate change and invest in renewable, local energy. This is the kind of leadership that we need in cities and towns across the country."



Photo by Josh Souza.

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell highlighted the City's recent progress, "Just a few years ago this site was regarded as a problem with no good solution. Just a few years ago New Bedford began testing solar on a few school roofs and city buildings. Today, what we once thought of here as a problem is now a source of pride. And what was once a modest local effort has turned into one of the nation's most ambitious moves to adopt solar. New Bedford's leadership position has other communities asking how we managed to achieve so much so quickly."

"As we speak, the Sullivan's Ledge Solar Project is quietly generating power, cutting City utility bills and saving taxpayer dollars. Our renewable power program is also strengthening our City's economy and our environment in a big way. I could not be prouder of the creativity, commitment, and teamwork of all those here who helped us reach our goals," added Mayor Mitchell.

At 1.8 megawatts, and with more than 5,000 solar panels spread across ten acres, the Sullivan's Ledge solar project annually produces enough electricity for 226 homes.

It is projected to save New Bedford approximately \$2.7 million

over the next twenty years through the purchase of solar net metering credits. Even so, it represents just one of ten solar projects installed as part of the City's Renewable Energy Initiative.

Original Energy Goals Being Surpassed



The Sullivan's Ledge solar project is one of several sizable solar power contracts the Mitchell Administration has inked since taking office, including a 4.2 megawatt project on City-owned land in Rochester which broke ground last spring. In all 16.25 megawatts of projects are now installed or under construction. The City has one project remaining under construction, a 3.7 MW system in the New Bedford Business Park.

When all 16 megawatts of projects are completed New Bedford will have exceeded the City's 2011 goal of purchasing ten megawatts of power from renewable sources within five years. No other Massachusetts municipality has achieved comparable progress toward the ten megawatt benchmark. (Ten megawatts represents enough energy to power approximately 1,500 homes.) The Mitchell Administration has also adopted a long-term goal of purchasing two-thirds of its energy needs from solar

sources. Now at 50%, it is on track to achieve its goal by year's end.

"The Patrick Administration is committed to securing our clean energy future and reclaiming economic opportunity for the Commonwealth's cities and towns through investments in renewable energy," said Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources Deputy Commissioner Dan Burgess.

"In collaboration with federal and local partners we are reinforcing the Commonwealth's national leadership in clean energy with projects like this in New Bedford. With 643 megawatts of solar installed, we are well on our way to meeting our goal of 1,600 megawatts by 2020," he continued.

Taxpayer Savings

The City of New Bedford is a major purchaser of electricity from the grid, with nearly one hundred city buildings including wastewater and water treatment plants, so the combined projected energy savings from all solar projects are substantial, generating \$500,000 in budget savings this year and nearly \$22 million over the next twenty years.

Environmental Benefits

"Our approach has been simple: Find ways to turn our environmental liabilities into environmental assets," said the Mayor. "These solar projects are not just about cutting local government's utility bills and saving taxpayer dollars, but are part of a larger environmental strategy to both clean up contaminated properties and reduce fossil fuel consumption."

Sullivan's Ledge operated as a granite quarry until about 1932. Between the 1940s and the 1970s, local industries used the quarry pits and adjacent areas for disposal of hazardous material and other wastes. Beginning in the 1980s until 2000, the site was cleaned up in three stages which included excavation and capping among other remedies. It continues to

be closely monitored. The cleanup solution meets all U.S. EPA and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) standards and ensures the health and safety of residents.

“EPA partners with the City of New Bedford on many projects, and today we are very proud to see the City prioritize renewable energy solutions, and develop them by putting a Superfund site property back to good use providing clean, renewable energy,” said Curt Spalding, regional administrator of EPA’s New England office. “Thanks to EPA and all the partners here for cleaning up the site, it is now being used in an innovative way by becoming part of the City’s Energy Initiative.”

“MassDEP is delighted to have worked with the City of New Bedford and EPA to turn Sullivan’s Ledge into a solar energy success story,” said MassDEP Commissioner David W. Cash. “As part of our Clean Energy Results Program, MassDEP has made it a priority to support the siting of renewable energy installations on contaminated lands and landfills, and this project demonstrates the energy, environmental and economic benefits to be gained from this strategy.”

Local Jobs

The City undertook the Sullivan’s Project in cooperation with several private-sector partners, including Boston-based BlueWave Capital, SunEdison, and Beaumont Solar. All partners committed to maximizing the hiring of local workers.

BlueWave, led by Managing Partner John Devillars, has served as the City’s development partner on the Sullivan’s Project and others, since the inception of the City’s Initiative. SunEdison, as owner and operator, entered into a long-term power purchase agreement with the City, and assumed responsibility for financing, installation, ongoing operations, and maintenance. Beaumont Solar Company of New

Bedford, led by President and CEO Phil Cavallo, installed the solar panels for SunEdison.

“As a company dedicated to employing New Bedford-area residents, we thrive on win-win projects like Sullivan’s Ledge. In all, Beaumont Solar employed twelve New Bedford residents on this job site. This project is a direct reflection of their professionalism and talent,” said Beaumont Solar President and CEO Phil Cavallo.

“This project exemplifies why our company was ranked as one of the most influential solar companies in Massachusetts and the country. We believe our entire region prospers when we act as responsibly minded members of the community. These are the ideals on which Beaumont Solar was founded,” Cavallo continued.

“We are proud to have been selected by the City to help them make energy history. When it comes to embracing renewable energy, New Bedford stands as a model to other municipalities,” said Matthew Dickey, Managing Director of Sales for SunEdison.

“Sullivan’s Ledge marks the latest chapter in the New Bedford solar success story,” said John DeVillars, Managing Partner of BlueWave Capital LLC, which developed the Sullivan’s Ledge project with SunEdison. “We are proud to have been a part of an exceptional team of professionals from the City, EPA, MA DEP and SunEdison,” said DeVillars, a former regional administrator with the Environmental Protection Agency. “This team has done a masterful job on an extraordinarily challenging project.”