

Here comes the sun

Secaucus to explore solar energy options

By E. Assata Wright

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Some day soon there could be a canopy of silver solar arrays covering rooftops throughout Secaucus, and indeed the whole Meadowlands region.

Under New Jersey's Energy Master Plan, 30 percent of the state's electricity will come from sustainable energy sources, such as sun or wind, by 2020. With that deadline just a decade away, municipalities and businesses across the state are already exploring what green energy options are available.

Locally, towns like Secaucus are getting help from the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC), a state agency that has already become a leader in renewable energy planning.

Next month town officials will meet with the NJMC to learn more about what solar energy options are available and how Secaucus might get some of its energy from these options.

"From what I understand, they would help with the costs of installing the [solar] panels, and then the town would buy back the energy produced. Right now, I don't know a lot about it, so I'm interested in learning more and reporting back to the council," said Town Councilman Gary Jeffas last week. Jeffas will attend a meeting at the NJMC on April 13 at which the agency will offer specifics on how Secaucus can save money and improve the environment through solar energy.

The NJMC offers free assistance to Meadowlands District communities that are interested in developing renewable energy resources through its Municipal Solar Assistance Program, which was launched in 2008 and recently expanded to include every

town and school district under its jurisdiction. Specifically, through the Municipal Solar Assistance Program, the NJMC offers financial and technical help to communities that would like to install solar arrays on municipal buildings and schools. The agency also does assessments of which buildings in a municipality might be appropriate for solar panels. Such an assessment has already been done in Secaucus.

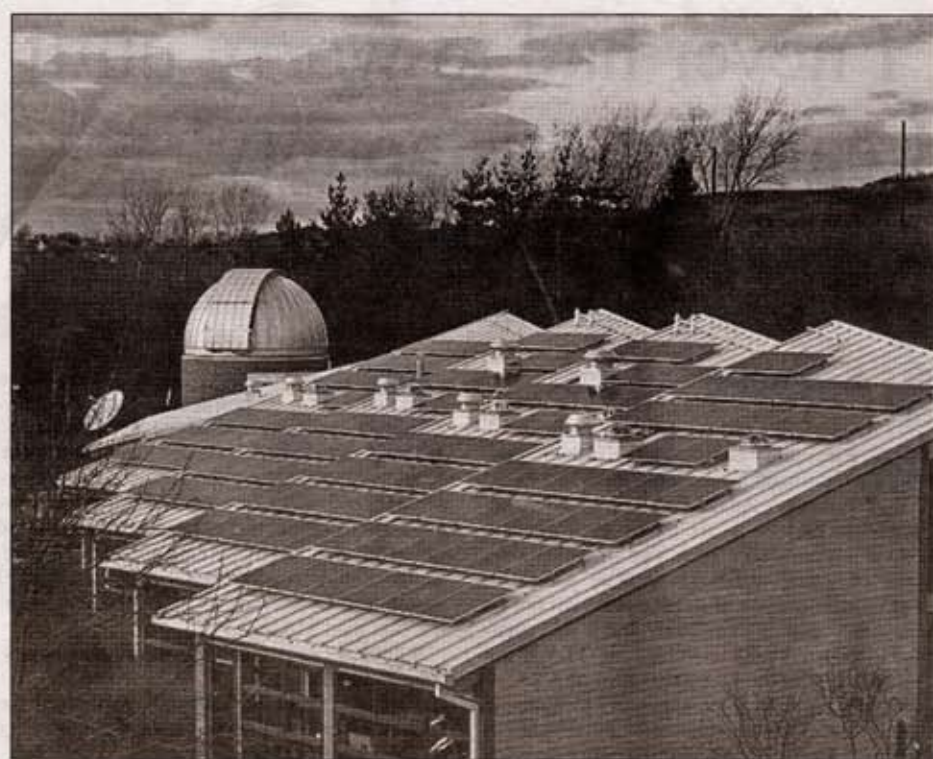
Renewable energy leader

The Meadowlands District is quickly becoming a leader in renewable energy development in New Jersey, due to the efforts of the NJMC and local businesses.

The agency has contracted SunDurance Energy to install a 150-kilowatt solar canopy at its campus in Lyndhurst, which is expected to provide up to 20 percent of the electricity needed for the NJMC's administration building. (The NJMC has set a goal of 20 megawatts of sustainable energy by 2020.) According to the agency, the solar panels, once installed, will save \$2.4 million in energy costs over the next 20 years and could remove as much as one million pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Last year the NJMC also recognized the efforts of Hartz Mountain Industries, a development and real estate management company located in Secaucus. The company has already installed a solar panel system on top of the Meadowlands Exposition Center, a Hartz property. The panels generate 117,000 kilowatts a year. The company plans to install additional solar panels on other buildings in Secaucus in the future.

The NJMC hopes that such efforts will demonstrate what's possible. The agency now



RAY OF HOPE – Rooftop solar panels atop the NJMC's science center. The energy-efficient building was the first public facility in the state to be awarded a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum ranking – the highest available – from the U.S. Green Building Council. Photo credit: NJMC

has several initiatives that could further encourage solar energy usage. In addition to the Municipal Solar Assistance Program and the installation of the solar arrays at its headquarters, the NJMC has also joined forces with PSE&G to create a multi-megawatt solar installation on a closed landfill.

"Through these creative and forward-thinking programs, the NJMC can better help Meadowlands District municipalities conserve energy and save taxpayer dollars," said Lori

Grifa, acting chairwoman of the NJMC and acting commissioner of the state Department of Community Affairs, in a statement last month. "As a driver of economic growth and environmental responsibility, renewable energy production is critical to our state's fiscal and environmental future." □

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