



## New England's Largest Solar PV System Online

June 24, 2005

**Fitchburg, Massachusetts [RenewableEnergyAccess.com]** It may not be a multi-million dollar system at a California winery, and nowhere near the multi-megawatt monsters in Germany, but a 140kW solar photovoltaic (PV) project installed in Massachusetts is now the largest commercial solar PV project in New England.

A dedication ceremony was held this week for the commissioning of the project at the headquarters of MassInnovation, located at the former Anwelt Shoe factory in the Cleghorn neighborhood of Fitchburg, Massachusetts.

"This project is truly a living, breathing demonstration site for smart growth."

- Robert D. Ansin

The system includes 530 photovoltaic (PV) panels on the roof of the 330,000-sq.ft. mill and seven trellises in the courtyard of the 125-year old mill complex, and produces 140 kW of clean power. At peak power, this represents enough electricity to run 80 homes and will eliminate the emission of 134 tons of carbon dioxide associated with combusting conventional fossil fuels.

This \$1 million endeavor was funded with a \$500,000 grant from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative and its Renewable Energy Trust, along with \$255,000 in grant funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Program. This infusion of public monies has spurred the direct private investment of over \$4 million at the mill to date.

At the event marking the dedication of the installation, Robert D. Ansin, President/CEO and Founder of MassInnovation announced that his company will donate the solar electricity produced by the roof-top system to power the mill's largest tenant, the North Central Charter Essential School, for the next ten years. The value of this donation is estimated at over \$100,000.

In addition, all of the public and private investments in the building, coupled with additional grant monies for upcoming installations of geothermal heating and cooling systems in the complex will now spur the development of 84 units of affordable rental units for seniors aged 62 and over. These units will start construction in the late fall, and are expected to be completed by the fall of 2006.

"This project is truly a living, breathing demonstration site for smart growth," Ansin said. "While many people are talking about ways to incorporate smart growth into their vision, we are actively employing such sustainable principles as adaptive reuse, recycling of historic building materials, and utilizing alternative and renewable energy sources."

In a move to support the solar industry in the state, MassInnovation hired Massachusetts-based companies to do all of the work. RWE Schott Solar of Billerica manufactured the solar electric modules for the mill project. The 530 panels on the historic structure are broken up into two major arrays with 430 panels on the roof and 70 panels on shade structures in the mill's courtyard.

Solectria of Lawrence provided inverters for the system, while the overall project was designed by Solar Design Associates of Harvard, the same firm that recent installed a PV system and two solar thermal systems on the White House in Washington D.C.

"This installation is a major milestone for solar energy in New England," said Steven Strong, President of Solar Design Associates. "We are privileged to support MassInnovation on this landmark project."

Slabich Electric of Paxton, a full-service electrical contracting firm took the lead in installation of the system.

The funding from the state's renewable energy trust is often targeted at improving the energy footprints of buildings throughout the state. This represents one of their largest investments in a green building project.

"This is a tremendous example of clean on-site generation of electricity that benefits our environment as well as our economy," said Jim Christo, Director of Green Buildings and Infrastructure for the state's Renewable Energy Trust. "We are working with our partners in industry and government to transform the way buildings, schools and homes are constructed to make them healthier, more energy efficient places to work and live."

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