

Ribbon Cutting Marks Launch of LPEA's Sunnyside Community Solar Program

Providing Clean, Local Energy to Members

Durango, CO - Today, La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) proudly announces the launch of Sunnyside Community Solar, a cooperative-owned program aimed at providing clean, local energy to its members. The program's unveiling coincides with a ribbon-cutting ceremony held to celebrate this monumental step towards community energy independence.

Sunnyside Community Solar, built by Durango-based [Konisto Companies, LLC](#), features a state-of-the-art array consisting of 3,623 solar panels. This innovative project is designed to power 600 homes and businesses annually, underscoring LPEA's commitment to sustainable energy solutions.

Community solar projects generate electricity from sunlight, which flows through a meter to the utility grid. Community solar subscribers, including households, businesses, or any other electricity customer, pay for a share of the electricity generated by the community solar project. For renters, low-to-moderate-income (LMI) households, and many local businesses, community solar allows customers to realize the financial benefits of clean energy without owning a property or the upfront costs for solar.

Graham Smith, Interim CEO of LPEA, expressed his excitement, stating, "Sunnyside Community Solar embodies our cooperative spirit, providing tangible benefits to our community and showcasing our dedication to clean, local energy. This is a key example of how LPEA is ramping up its energy transformation by investing in projects that focus on making clean energy accessible."

The Sunnyside array utilizes bifacial solar panels mounted on single-axis trackers, optimizing energy production by tracking the sun's path throughout the day. Half of the available subscriptions are for income-qualified members, who will be verified by a local partner, [4CORE](#), ensuring equitable access to the program. Residential and commercial members can apply for income-qualified or general subscriptions, with income-qualified individuals receiving a 20% reduction on monthly energy charges. These savings will be administered through LPEA but funded through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and not the cooperative.

Ted Compton, Board President of LPEA, underscored the significance of the partnership with La Plata County (LPC) and Fort Lewis College (FLC), emphasizing the program's focus on local energy and community empowerment. He remarked, "This partnership embodies our members' desire for locally sourced, affordable clean energy. Sunnyside stands as a testament to the power

of collaboration within our community, advancing energy independence, fostering job growth, and ensuring inclusivity for all."

The project showcases the power of local partnerships, with LPC and FLC playing pivotal roles. LPC, a prominent anchor tenant, has invested \$2 million in subscriptions to support clean energy objectives across county buildings over the next two decades. FLC has emerged as a strategic partner, with Steve Schwartz, FLC Interim President, leading collaborative efforts. The Sunnyside array will provide FLC students with the opportunity for hands-on experience in renewable power production.

"La Plata County is thrilled to partner with La Plata Electric on the Sunnyside Community Solar project," said Matt Salka, La Plata County Commissioner. "This initiative not only highlights our commitment to sustainable energy but also brings tangible benefits to our residents. By embracing solar power, we are taking significant steps towards a greener future and setting a positive example for other communities. We look forward to seeing the lasting impact this project will have on our environment and our local economy."

La Plata County Commissioner Marsha Porter-Norton added, "This project is very important for the future of clean energy in La Plata County and I applaud LPEA for initiating it. The taxpayers of La Plata County get an excellent return on investment and the \$2M eventually comes back to the County's coffers. This is a win-win-win if ever there was one."

Program Details:

- Eligibility requirements must be met for membership.
- The application period opens on July 1 and will be accepted through August 29. If demand exceeds subscription supply, applications will move to a lottery system.
- Enrolled income-qualified members will receive a 20% discount on their energy charge.
- Enrolled members will receive credits on their electric bills based on the number of kilowatt-hours (kWh) produced by their subscription each month, starting in October 2024.

LPEA invites all members to a webinar on June 25 at 6pm to learn about the Sunnyside Community Solar program before the application period opens. This webinar provides an opportunity for comprehensive insights into the program and to address any queries members may have. To attend the webinar, visit [Zoom](#).

For more information, visit LPEA.coop.

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High-Resolution Photos Available for Media Use

Media Tours of the Solar Array Available Upon Request. *Note: The Sunnyside Solar array is a secure facility, and members of the public are prohibited from accessing it.*

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