
City of Valparaiso Looks to Solar Power for City Facilities

The City of Valparaiso is planning to install solar panels to assist powering several City facilities, saving the City more than \$130,000 annually in electrical costs and simultaneously creating clean energy, according to Valparaiso City Services Director Steve Poulos. “We have had our sights on solar for years. Now that wattage for solar panels has increased over time, and prices have stabilized, solar makes financial and environmental sense for the City,” said Poulos.

The plan calls for solar panels to be installed in five locations, including the city’s three treatment plants, the City Services building on Joliet Road and City Hall on Lincolnway. “Utility costs have long been some of the City of Valparaiso’s largest expenses, so we’re very pleased to find ways of offsetting these costs,” said Valparaiso Mayor Matt Murphy. “We’re pleased to find renewable energy options and reduce our dependence on non-renewable energy. We also appreciate that our City Hall may be more than 100 years old, but it will be powered with the latest in solar technology,” he said, noting that the solar panels will not be visible from the street view, preserving the historic appearance of the building.

Energy efficiency has long been a priority for Valparaiso City Services, which includes both the utilities and public works divisions. “Over the past 10 years, the city has been investing in energy efficient equipment and systems so that we could hold our electrical use steady while adding significant services for a growing customer base,” said Poulos. “While Valparaiso City Utilities has continued to pay more per kilowatt hour and expand services to more residents and businesses, our electrical cost per gallon of use has remained fairly stable due to our ongoing efforts in energy efficiency. The introduction of solar will further advance these energy efficiency goals.”

To ensure the most efficient placement of solar opportunities, the City is working with a design engineer, Telamon of Indianapolis. Based on recommendations, approximately 870 solar panels will be installed throughout the five City of Valparaiso locations, costing approximately \$740,000 in total. At that cost, with a savings of approximately \$130,000 annually, the panels will pay for themselves in 8.2 years. Further, the total savings over the life of the solar panels is estimated to be \$4.6 million, plus future net metering credits from NIPSCO.

Once design is complete for the solar panel project, Valparaiso City Services and the City of Valparaiso will seek bids for qualified contractors for construction in 2022. To learn more about the City of Valparaiso, visit Valpo.us.