

Ameren Illinois, City of East St. Louis celebrate energizing of second solar energy facility

Ameren Illinois leaders, alongside local public officials and stakeholders, gathered on Nov. 19 to celebrate the energizing of the utility's second solar energy center in East St. Louis.

This milestone supports a \$6.9 million diverse contractor spend and marks the completion of \$20 million in clean energy solar investments. Overall, the company has invested \$80 million in energy and reliability improvements in the community in the last eight years.

Located near the Jackie Joyner-Kersey Center on N. 18th Street, the East St. Louis Solar Energy Center II features over 3,000 solar panels and batteries designed to store energy for use during peak demand periods and can power 650 homes.

"Thanks to the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, today we are producing clean, reliable, and equitable energy right here in the community, for the community," said Lenny Singh, chairman and president of Ameren Illinois. "We are creating opportunities by turning vacant land into economic engines, investing in local diverse contractors, and showing local schoolchildren what the clean energy transition should look like. We are proving that creativity and innovation can deliver benefits in parts of Illinois that too often get left behind."

The construction of the energy centers created approximately 121 local jobs and a \$20 million investment with diverse contractors and workers, including Azimuth Energy (Fenton, Mo.), Mason Landscaping (East St. Louis), Terra 5 Construction (St. Jacob) and Guarantee Electrical (Granite City).

"This is just the start of many investments in clean energy in St. Clair County. I am thrilled to support this project to deliver a stronger and safer neighborhood and access to economic opportunity," said Mark Kern, chairman, St. Clair County Board.

In September 2021, Governor JB Pritzker signed the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA), setting Illinois on the path to a clean energy goal of 100% by 2050 and a renewable energy goal of 50% by 2040. CEJA enabled Ameren Illinois to develop, own, and operate two utility-scale solar facilities in East St. Louis.

The site also hosts a demonstration charging station that utilizes clean energy produced on-site and stored in batteries to power Ameren Illinois electric vehicles. It also serves as a learning tool for deploying customer-facing charging stations in equity-eligible investment communities.

"In construction, it is easy to get lost in

the day-to-day operations and forget why we are doing it. Days like today give us a chance to pause, step back, and remember why. This partnership is an example of what we can achieve when we are intentional about our impact and when we pursue perfect energy. Ameren has shown that through local partnerships, they can successfully deploy equitable, affordable, distribution-scale solar energy projects in local communities. As we transition to clean, renewable energy, we can either be bystanders and watch it happen, or we can be the designers and the workers that carve the future we want to see. This project is an example of the opportunity ahead of us," said Deko Devins, president, Azimuth Energy.

With this project, Ameren is also providing opportunity and hope for the future.

Over the next year, Ameren will be developing an educational plan and curriculum where visitors can learn more about solar generation and the renewable industry. Ameren is forging a partnership with East St. Louis School District #189 and other districts in the area to provide students a practical learning experience and help them prepare for clean energy opportunities of the future.

"As a local black owned contractor and having grown up in this area and knowing what this site looked like before, this project is special far beyond adding clean energy to the community. It creates hope and opportunities for the people who live here. Not only did we put local people to work, but this shows we are investing in communities far beyond the completion of construction. We had at least 20 local people working on this project, and it allows us to show other organizations or agencies what we can do, said Bill Mason, president, Mason's Landscaping and Construction Services.

Ameren is committed to evaluating and delivering innovative advancements that facilitate the adoption and development of clean energy resources. This includes enabling customers to transition to electric energy for transportation needs and promoting the equitable long-term growth of renewable energy.

The site's 500KW Lithium Ion battery system will help Ameren field test battery energy storage system (BESS) deployment to manage electric distribution system capacity conditions. These systems can also reduce peak load conditions on the electric distribution system infrastructure and provide solar smoothing functionality to address intermittency issues associated with renewable energy generation.



Ameren Illinois Chairman and President Lenny Singh discusses the diverse contractor spend of the East St. Louis Solar Energy Center II. The opening of the solar energy center supports a \$6.9 million diverse contractor spend with local businesses. (Courtesy Ameren Illinois)



Rod Hilburn, manager of Technology Applications Center for Ameren Illinois, conducts a tour for local dignitaries, local contractors, media and local residents of the second solar energy center facility in East St. Louis. To Hilburn's right is Deko Devins, president of Azimuth Energy, and Ameren Illinois Chairman and President Lenny Singh. (Courtesy Ameren Illinois)

Village of Dupo awarded \$1.4M grant for infrastructure improvement

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has awarded the Village of Dupo \$1,427,700 in Rebuild Illinois Public Infrastructure grant funds. This funding will be used to widen, resurface, and install culverts along 11,200 linear feet of Industrial Drive, extending from east of South Main Street to its intersection with Falling Springs Road.

The Southwestern Illinois Planning Commission is administering the grant. Established by statute in 1963 by the Illinois legislature, the Commission is a governmental entity empowered to enter intergovernmental agreements for grant administration, ensuring that projects like this effectively benefit the local community. In addition, the Village Board has approved \$343,664 of TIF funds to supplement the project's cost.

This project is set to enhance economic transport and stimulate economic activity

in the industrial sector. Construction officially began on Oct. 16, 2024, with work scheduled to commence in late November. These improvements will facilitate better access for businesses and support the overall growth and development of the community.

"We are grateful for this significant investment in our infrastructure," said Dawn Keys, mayor of Dupo. "These enhancements will improve transportation efficiency and strengthen our local economy, making Dupo an even more attractive location for businesses."

The Village of Dupo is committed to using this funding to create a robust infrastructure to support the community's future.

For more information about the project and ongoing developments, contact Assistant Chief Utility Man Randy Bolle at randyb@villageofdupo.org.

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