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Solar+Storage Technologies to Benefit Renters at Zero Energy Affordable Housing Development in Rural Vermont

An affordable modular housing development will include resilient solar and energy storage technologies to serve low-income renters

Montpelier, VT — Today, stakeholders from community development agencies, industry, philanthropy, Vermont government, and the nonprofit sector celebrated a milestone at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the McKnight Lane Affordable Housing Development in Waltham, Vermont. Clean Energy Group worked with Addison County Community Trust, Cathedral Square and others in a unique coalition to transform a defunct mobile home park into the first zero energy, low-income housing development in the country that includes resilient solar and energy storage systems in each modular rental home to provide benefits to the tenants.

“Solar paired with battery storage is a relatively new technology application for housing, so highlighting the many benefits of such projects for low-income, rural communities is very important,” said Clean Energy Group Project Director Todd Olinsky-Paul. “The McKnight Lane Housing Development is unique because it shows how low-income rural communities can access these technologies today, not years from now.”

Many of the McKnight Lane homes are completed, with several tenants already occupying the units. The remaining homes are expected to be occupied in November.

McKnight Lane Affordable Housing Development has set a new standard for energy-efficient affordable rental housing with the inclusion of smart solar energy storage systems. Each home is equipped with 6-kW rooftop solar panels and a 6kWh energy storage system that can provide up to six hours of emergency backup power to the McKnight Lane tenants when the electrical grid goes down, such as during a storm. These systems will supply power for lighting, heating and cooling, ventilation, and refrigeration, even when the sun goes down.

This innovative project showcases customized zero energy modular homes, constructed by VERMOD, a Vermont company, and demonstrates how energy efficiency, solar PV, and energy storage systems combined can bring economic benefits and energy resiliency to low-income tenants while enabling the local utility, Green Mountain Power, to manage peak energy demand and reduce costs for customers.

"Nearly half of Addison County renters are burdened by their housing costs, paying more than a third of their incomes in rent and utilities. Not only is McKnight Lane affordable to low-income Vermonters, the net-zero homes with resilient sonnen energy storage systems ensure residents won't have to choose between purchasing groceries or paying their fuel bill to stay warm this winter. In particular, the addition of the sonnen batteries through this important energy partnership means that McKnight Lane residents can rest assured knowing they are prepared to weather storms and outages for years to come," stated Elise Shanbacker, executive director of Addison County Community Trust (ACCT).

Funding for the site cleanup, the new infrastructure, and the 14 new VERMOD homes, totaling \$3.6 million, was secured by project developers ACCT and Cathedral Square from many sources, including: Vermont Housing Finance Agency, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Vermont Community Development Program, HOME Investment Partnership, People's United Bank, VLITE, Clean Energy Development Fund, Vermont Community Loan Fund, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Agency of Commerce and Community Development, City of Vergennes, National Association of Realtors, Efficiency Vermont, and in kind support from the Town of Waltham and the City of Vergennes.

"The one percent vacancy rate in this area makes it challenging for low-income residents to secure adequate housing. The transformation of a once blighted mobile home park into a net zero energy affordable housing community has created wonderful low-cost housing for 14 households now and into the future, as they are all permanently affordable." stated Cindy Reid, Cathedral Square Director of Development.

The addition of the solar+storage systems to the McKnight Lane homes came about thanks to a collaboration between Addison County Community Trust, Cathedral Square, Clean Energy Group, Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA), Efficiency Vermont, and Green Mountain Power. The High Meadows Fund and The Vermont Community Foundation Sustainable Future Fund provided financial support for the smart solar energy storage systems, which sonnen supplied at a discount. CESA will work with sonnen and Green Mountain Power to collect and analyze data from the battery systems and develop system optimization analysis; and Clean Energy Group, with foundation support for its Resilient Power Project, will share lessons learned to improve this and future, similar projects.

"Since Tropical Storm Irene, the High Meadows Fund has supported efforts to create cleanly powered and durable housing options for Vermonters who live in mobile home parks," said Gaye Symington, president of High Meadows Fund. "And we are very pleased that our work with Clean Energy Group, CESA, and the other stakeholders for the inclusion of the batteries for these zero energy modular homes will provide energy security to the tenants, while also demonstrating how the combination of solar with energy storage can economically benefit and enhance other low-income housing projects."

"New clean energy technologies will not trickle down to low-income communities fast enough to provide them with the cost savings and energy security they need now," added Clean Energy Group President Lew Milford. "We need to demonstrate, document, and replicate a solar+storage

project development model that will pay for solar+storage systems over time, provide resilient power to tenants immediately, and that contributes to greater clean energy equity.”

Read more about this project in a fact sheet available at www.cleanegroup.org/ceg-resources/resource/project-overview-mcknight-lane-redevelopment-project/

Photos available upon request.

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About Clean Energy Group

Clean Energy Group is a leading national, nonprofit advocacy organization working on innovative technology, finance, and policy programs in the areas of clean energy and climate change. Clean Energy Group also manages the Clean Energy States Alliance, a coalition of state and municipal clean energy funds. Clean Energy Group’s Resilient Power Project is designed to help states and municipalities with program and policy information, analysis, financial tools, technical assistance, and best practices to speed the deployment of clean, resilient power systems in their communities. For more information, visit www.cleanegroup.org and www.resilient-power.org.

About the Clean Energy States Alliance

The Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) is a national, nonprofit coalition of public agencies and organizations working together to advance clean energy. CESA members—mostly state agencies—include many of the most innovative, successful, and influential public funders of clean energy initiatives in the country. CESA’s Energy Storage Technology Advancement Partnership (ESTAP), supported by U.S. DOE Office of Electricity and Sandia National Laboratories, is a federal-state funding and information sharing project that aims to accelerate the deployment of electrical energy storage technologies in the U.S. Learn more at www.cesa.org.