

Customer Success Case Study

Spire and The Chicago Solar Partnership

Mayor Richard M. Daley envisioned Chicago as “the most environmentally friendly city in the nation.” Created in 1999, the Chicago Solar Partnership helped turn his vision into reality. Through a first-ever collaboration between a U.S. municipality, public utility, and solar energy firm, the Chicago Solar Partnership was born. As a result, Chicago now boasts 1.2 MW of distributed solar power, providing unrivaled environmental and economic benefits citywide.

The Chicago Solar Partnership was led by the city’s privately held electricity provider, Commonwealth Edison (ComEd), and a team from Spire Solar System. No other U.S. municipality ever attempted such a massive project before - a challenge compounded by the city’s density. “My goal,” Mayor Daley said, “is to make Chicago an example of how a densely populated city can live in harmony with the environment.”

Leading by example, Chicago began an extraordinary program that involved everything from Clean Air Partnerships to rooftop gardens. The Solar Partnership set out to produce 750kW of solar power within the city’s 228 jam-packed square miles. The first installation was the Frank W. Reilly Elementary School, which generates energy and knowledge through an onsite kiosk that educates students, teachers, and parents about solar power.

Services for Everything Under the Sun

Key to the project was a solar initiative that united organized labor, local government, and the private sector. ComEd is a unit of Chicago-based Exelon Corp., one of the nation’s largest electric utilities with more than \$15 billion in annual revenues. Yet to ensure quality throughout the Chicago Solar implementation,

ComEd relied upon Spire’s 40 years of experience in photovoltaic (PV) manufacturing and services.

“Working closely with ComEd, we identified the sites with the greatest potential for PV applications,” explained Steve Hogan, CEO of Spire Solar Systems. “We provided a wide range of services throughout the project. Engineering, installation, assistance with regulatory issues - we even set up a Chicago-based manufacturing facility for PV panels.”

Within five years, Chicago became the largest distributed solar generation installation in America, encompassing 28 diverse sites and generating 1.2MW of solar energy - 500kW more than planned.

A Shining Example

The united commitment of a PV leader, a visionary municipality, and a pioneering national utility has proven that large-scale solar power can work in a major metropolis with a cold climate. The Chicago Solar Partnership today represents over half of Illinois’ total solar power, eliminating the generation of over 700 tons of greenhouse gases each year and providing sustainable natural power for schools, museums, businesses, park structures, public utility sites, and other sites throughout Chicago.

“It is through partnerships like the one with Spire that we are able to continue our efforts in making Chicago the most environmentally friendly city in the nation,” said Mayor Daley. Proving Daley’s words to be true, the results of the Chicago Solar Partnership led Business Facilities Magazine to name Chicago the #1 Green City, based on Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification - and that’s certain to have other cities green with envy.



Hadley Jr. High School



Millennium Park Bike Shelter



Bethel Commercial Center



The Field Museum



spire

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