

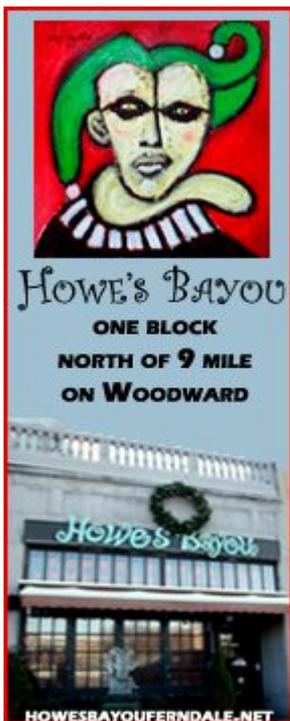
ng Community Solar in Oakland County



(Andrew Sarpolis, Dec. 27, 2015)

Novi, MI – In the past decade, Oakland County has seen tremendous growth in renewable energy and energy efficiency jobs. Although many people may not think they come into contact with these new industries, the truth is that the renewable energy industry in Oakland County contributes to our community every day.

The great thing about renewable energy – and particularly residential and small commercial installations – is the benefits to consumers throughout the stages of implementation. Manufacturing brings jobs to our area. When you choose



companies like Power Panel, you support jobs are right here in Metro Detroit. Likewise, installing the panels and turbines creates jobs right here in our community. And, finally, using renewable energy puts money back in the pockets of the people who purchase them.

A particularly interesting arrangement that has experienced recent growth across the state is community solar. If you don't own a home, or don't feel like installing renewable energy directly on your property, community solar is an alternative way to receive the benefits of solar energy. A utility sets up an array of panels and people purchase those panels for a

credit on their bills.

The arrays have been very successful and return money to homeowners' pockets each month while stimulating business growth. Several arrays have already been installed in Michigan with high participation rates.

The Lansing Board of Water and Light announced a few weeks ago

that it would build two community solar facilities. Consumers Energy, the second largest utility, also announced it would be offering a program to its customers about a month ago. However, there was a notable absence from the big community solar announcements this year. While many have surged ahead, DTE Energy has noticeably been quite slow in implementing its program.

While the company says it's working on a program, there is currently no way for many people to access renewable energy. If your house doesn't exist in a spot with direct sunlight, you don't want to invest directly in a system, or you are a renter, then there is virtually no option for you to generate your own energy. With nearly a twenty-five percent owning rental units here, hundreds of thousands of people are being denied access to cheap, clean energy.

At a time when climate change threatens the future of our society, and our cities are still getting seventy percent of their electricity from coal, we need to try harder to bring clean energy options to millions of people in Metro Detroit.

The future of energy distribution doesn't depend on padding shareholder's wallets, and we are increasingly at risk of losing an environmental battle, as well as an economic one.

The lack of interest from large utilities like DTE Energy has created a bottleneck, despite the fact customers exist, in the demand for clean energy that is driving jobs to other states where the atmosphere is more favorable. It's time that we protect our businesses and our communities. These industries create jobs and their sources of energy are far less toxic to human health than the outdated alternatives.



Community solar is a way to stimulate business growth and give people alternatives to their energy supply. DTE Energy needs to work quickly to announce a community solar program and needs to be a leader in renewable energy technologies.

*Andrew Sarpolis is an environmental activist from Novi, MI.*

