

Morgantown Market Place to install solar advancements

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Morgantown hopes its newest effort to promote sustainable practices will shine on the community in a new way with its plans to install solar panels on the roof of the Morgantown Market Place pavilion.

The solar panels will be donated by The Mountain Institute, a nonprofit organization that works to conserve mountain ecosystems throughout the world.

Downstream Strategies, an eco-friendly consulting group, and Mountain View Solar, a company that installs solar panels, helped the Mountain Institute plan the project.

"We wanted to place a solar array in Morgantown, because it would serve as a project that would spawn other projects and hopefully lead to more community involvement," said Aaron Sutch, energy program manager of the Appalachia Program of the Mountain Institute.

There will be a total of 12 solar panels installed with 260 watts of power per panel.

The size of the array is fairly small; however, it will be sure to save the city money. The solar panels will generate energy that Morgantown won't have to pay a utility bill for.

"Having a solar array in Morgantown would benefit the community and will display a lot of potential for sustainable energy growth," Sutch said. "A lot of people have misconceptions about solar technology. They don't think it's reliable, but this will demonstrate that solar energy is a reliable option for West Virginia."



Katie Flowers/The Daily Athenaeum

"We are excited that the panels are being installed, because it will bring more attention to the pavilion. More sustainable energy is always a plus to have at a farmers market," said Lisa Lagana, market manager of the Morgantown Farmers Market.

"The farmers market uses electricity, so it will benefit us, especially the people that bring in anything that needed to be cooled or kept in a freezer. They can just plug in their freezer and follow health regulations."

Aside from the solar array, the project includes a new vehicle charging station.

Eco-friendly drivers will be able to charge their electric or hybrid cars at the pavilion.

Sutch said this installment sets Morgantown apart from many mountainous regions.

"This pavilion will actually be one of the few places in this Appalachian region that people can refuel their cars with renewable energy," Sutch said.

The project's completion is projected for later this month.

However, the grand opening will be taking place in early April.

Sutch said the Mountain Institute is looking for community involvement after the installment.

"We are looking for other community models for either direct investments or some sort of donation model where people would be able to donate to the West Virginia solar energy array," he said.