

Downtown Revitalization Initiative In Focus

Lake Tunnel Solar Village and Community Sustainability Geneva, NY



Downtown
Revitalization
Initiative
In Focus — A SERIES

Governor Kathy Hochul's Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) is transforming downtown neighborhoods into vibrant communities where New Yorkers want to live, work and raise families. Recognizing that companies are increasingly seeking to relocate and invest in vibrant, walkable downtowns in an effort to attract and retain a talented workforce, DRI is an investment to improve the vitality of urban centers across New York State.



Office of Planning
and Development

Downtown
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Solar Village is ideally located and designed to promote access to, and enjoyment of; downtown's many amenities as well as the lakefront.

Downtown revitalization and sustainability often work hand-in-glove. Indeed, downtown re-development is inherently sustainable.

Why? For starters, downtowns are generally more walkable, bikeable and transit-friendly, which translates into less greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles and more opportunities for healthy outdoor activities. The density and mix of land uses offers greater opportunities/markets for renewable energy and community energy systems, like micro-grids. And the concentration of people and restaurants creates a market for fresh, locally-sourced food—which is good for public health and the agricultural economy.

The City of Geneva DRI Plan takes sustainability to another level with one of its signature projects—Lake Tunnel Solar Village. Solar Village is a net-zero community on Seneca Lake that derives all its energy from clean, renewable sources. The project received \$1.25 million from the DRI, as well as support from New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA) solar installation program and the Department of Labor's on-the-job training initiative.

The land for Solar Village was once just a parking lot and vacant property owned by the city. Now, it's a thriving green community on the lake that is generating taxes for the city and jobs for the community... and reducing greenhouse gases to boot.

But this home-grown story gets even better. The developer, Solar Village Company, is a local, woman-owned business that is pre-manufacturing the solar modular homes for Lake Tunnel Solar Village at a facility right in the city of Geneva. And they developed a "SolarMod," which is a factory-built modular home-core system that integrates all the renewable energy to provide electric, heating, and cooling needs to each home in the Lake Tunnel Solar Village. The production of SolarMods alone has already

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Tracey Wallace, Co-Owner of the Solar Village Company:

“Our background and experience with residential and commercial solar installation drove our vision of creating sustainable energy efficient homes and communities from the start. The DRI grant and support of the City of Geneva provided the extra boost to prove there is a market for sustainable homes and communities. The Lake Tunnel Solar Village project is a great addition to Geneva and we are excited that our project is a small part of downtown revitalization.”

created 22 permanent manufacturing jobs in the City of Geneva. To top it all off, Solar Village will include solar car-ports that will provide electricity to vehicle charging stations.

They aptly call themselves a “Triple Bottom Line Company” for good reason—they are truly committed to the environment, people and profits.

In addition to the permanent jobs already created, more jobs are anticipated as the Solar Village Company expands and provides homes to Ithaca’s Solar Village over the next two years.

The vacation rentals at Solar Village will help bring more



A Solar Village home being produced in the manufacturing facility in Geneva. The Solar Village company currently employs 22 people; more jobs are expected as the company builds more homes for the proposed Ithaca Solar Village.

tourists to the area. Because it’s within walking distance of Geneva’s downtown, and connects to the downtown safely through the StreamPath, those tourists will support local businesses and events in the city—festivals, races, breweries, wine bar, fine dining and more...

The project is supporting clean energy, innovative green-tech technology, jobs, economic development and tourism—while reducing greenhouse gases at the same time. A true manifestation of the Triple Bottom Line of sustainable development.

Solar Village does not exist on an island. The DRI is also funding the “Stream Path”—a near-continuous linear path from the downtown, past several amenities (including a

Green Jobs in NY

New York State is a leader in nearly every green job sector:

- *ranking 3rd among states in jobs for solar*
- *3rd for energy efficiency*
- *9th for advanced transportation*
- *10th for wind*
- *and 4th overall*

The Solar Village Company – An Upstate Success Story

Tracey Wallace—Geneva native and partner of Lake Tunnel Solar Village—moved away from her hometown to pursue other career opportunities. But something inside her said she’d be back. And so, like a growing number of Upstate ex-pats, Tracey and her husband returned to Geneva to fulfill a dream—create a home-grown development company devoted to sustainable living and local economic development. With help from the DRI to propel the Lake Tunnel Solar Village project, the Wallaces formed the Solar Village Company and the Solar Home Factory to manufacture and sell solar modular homes. The company is now thriving, and it continues to grow—indeed, Solar Village Company just received a \$15 million contract to create a similar project in Ithaca, NY. Fairy tales can come true...

dog park—the “Bark Park”—and ice rink), leading right into a new courtyard at Solar Village. Streetscape and public space improvements have also been made to the “Lake Tunnel”—a pedestrian tunnel that passes under the highway and connects to the lakefront. And over \$2 million in DRI funding is being used for streetscape improvements along Routes 20 and 5 that will connect the downtown to the waterfront.

No one should be surprised that Geneva chose Solar Village as a DRI project; it fits perfectly with the city’s prior



The land on which Solar Village is built was primarily a vacant, city-owned parcel. All 18 owner-occupied homes have already been sold; 15 have been built. The Lake Tunnel in the background provides a safe pedestrian and bike connection to the lakefront.

commitment to sustainability and smart planning. Geneva achieved bronze certification from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s Climate Smart Communities program and completed a sustainability plan, which was funded by NYSERDA’s Cleaner, Greener Communities program. (Solar Village also received a Building of Excellence award from NYSERDA for their multi-family “solar pod” project at another site in Geneva.) Geneva also completed a Waterfront Infrastructure Feasibility Study through the DOS Local Waterfront Revitalization Program and a Brownfield Opportunity Area plan to redevelop another area of downtown.

Solar Village and other DRI projects were not selected in a vacuum; they emerged from a long-held commitment to smart, sustainable community planning.

Sage Gerling, Geneva City Manager:

“Geneva had a history of strategic, bottom-up planning that built the foundation for our DRI Strategic Plan and the projects we selected for DRI funding. Through a DOS BOA grant and a NYSERDA Cleaner, Greener Communities grant, we were able to set a course for the future based on the vision of our community members. Our commitment to sustainability and waterfront re-development is reflected in the magnificent Solar Village project, which represents economic development, sustainability and downtown revitalization. The DRI allowed Geneva to realize its vision for the city and to accomplish the Solar Village project.”

Solar Village is a complete package. Besides contributing to downtown revitalization, it helps the State meet the Governor’s bold standards for renewable and carbon-free energy, cementing New York’s position as a leader in this field. It has generated jobs and economic development in the region by supporting Solar Village Company’s production of the pre-fabricated homes and SolarMods.

The Solar Village Company and Lake Tunnel Solar Village are re-defining Smart Growth and sustainable community development in the age of climate change. □

New York State is a Leader in Fighting Climate Change and Promoting Clean Energy

The State’s bold climate and energy targets:

- **85 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050**
- **70% renewable energy by 2030**
- **100% clean electricity by 2040**
- **9,000 MW of offshore wind by 2035**
- **6,000 MW of distributed solar by 2025**
- **3,000 MW of energy storage by 2030**
- **185 Tbtu on-site energy savings by 2025**



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One Commerce Plaza, 10th Floor, 99 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12231 ■ Telephone: (518) 474-6000 ■ www.dos.ny.gov
E-mail: opd@dos.ny.gov