

# Consumers Energy, Grand Valley State University Break Ground on State's Largest Community Solar Project

Michigan-First Approach to Renewable Energy; Expected Completion by Spring

ALLENDALE, Mich., Oct. 2, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- Officials from Consumers Energy and Grand Valley State University celebrated their collaboration to expand renewable energy in Michigan, breaking ground on a new, 17-acre community solar project.

"We thank Grand Valley State University for helping us take a Michigan-first approach to a sustainable future for our state," said Dan Malone, Consumers Energy's senior vice president of energy resources. "This project represents a cornerstone for our new Solar Gardens program, providing an avenue for customers to support the development of renewable energy that helps us continue to power homes and businesses across our state."

"Our university has been a Michigan leader in supporting renewable energy and developing the next generation of students to live and work in our state," said Grand Valley State University President Thomas J. Haas. "We are pleased to see Solar Gardens on our campus and the opportunity the project will give our students to learn about renewables, while making a real difference in our energy future."

Consumers Energy will place solar panels on 17 acres near 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Luce Street on university property. The project could be complete and generating 3 megawatts of electricity by next spring.

Solar Gardens is the first program of its kind for Consumers Energy, and the Grand Valley location will be the largest community solar project in Michigan. The university will participate in the Solar Gardens program as a customer. A recent independent study confirmed that utility-scale solar projects are twice as cost-efficient, and result in fewer carbon emissions than, rooftop solar installations.

Customers will be able to support the development of solar energy, and can start enrolling later this year. They can express interest and learn more about Solar Gardens online at [www.ConsumersEnergy.com/solargardens](http://www.ConsumersEnergy.com/solargardens).

"Michigan is the ideal location to continue our growth, and is core to our U.S. manufacturing strategy," said Matt Card, vice president of global sales and marketing for Suniva Inc., the Saginaw manufacturer of the solar panels being used for the Solar Gardens project.

"The state has a well-deserved reputation for a high-caliber work force," Card said. "The transportation infrastructure is fantastic, and the leadership in both the government and the business community, as reflected in these significant projects by Consumers Energy, continually demonstrate their commitment to developing clean tech solutions – and equally important, jobs."

Consumers Energy has been active in developing renewable energy sources in Michigan. Last year, the company reached its target of generating 10 percent of its electricity from renewable sources a year ahead of schedule. That includes two wind farms, one near Lake Michigan and one in the Thumb, and contracts to buy electricity generated by wind, landfill gas, anaerobic digestion and hydroelectric generation.

This week, an independent national survey from Cogent Reports, a division of Market Strategies International, ranked Consumers Energy as an "environmental champion" among providers of electricity and natural gas for the second consecutive year.

"Solar Gardens is part of our commitment to ensure that future generations in Michigan have affordable, reliable and increasingly clean energy," Malone said.

Consumers Energy, Michigan's largest utility, is the principal subsidiary of CMS Energy (NYSE: [CMS](#)), providing natural gas and electricity to 6.6 million of the state's 10 million residents in all 68 Lower Peninsula counties.

**Media toolkit**

**SOLAR GARDENS:**

Learn about Consumers Energy's community solar program:  
[www.ConsumersEnergy.com/solargardens](http://www.ConsumersEnergy.com/solargardens)

For more information about Consumers Energy, go to [www.ConsumersEnergy.com](http://www.ConsumersEnergy.com).

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