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### **Solar Power coming to Morgantown Market Place**

The City of Morgantown, West Virginia will soon host the state's first solar-powered farmers market. The Mountain Institute, a non-profit organization dedicated to education and sustainable development in mountain regions around the world, is donating a solar array to be constructed on the new Morgantown Market Place Pavilion, which also serves as a covered parking lot in downtown Morgantown. The solar system is slated to be complete in March and will include an electric vehicle charging station.

The Mountain Institute developed the project with two West Virginia companies: Downstream Strategies, an environmental consulting group based in Morgantown, and Mountain View Solar, a solar installer headquartered in Berkeley Springs. The project uses funds allocated for alternative energy development in the Monongahela River watershed to purchase the solar equipment.

According to Aaron Sutch, Energy Program Manager with the Mountain Institute, "The project is a win-win as it will save the City of Morgantown on electricity costs, provide an opportunity for the public to recharge electric vehicles, and demonstrate the potential of solar power to generate clean, locally-produced energy."

On weekends, the pavilion provides a shaded, permanent location for the Morgantown Farmers Market. On weekdays, it serves as a covered parking lot operated by the Morgantown Parking Authority. The pavilion was designed by the Mills Group, a Morgantown-based architecture firm, with solar specifically in mind. The solar array will consist of 12 panels with a capacity of over 3 kilowatts and generate nearly half the electricity used to power the lights, electric vehicle charger, and other electricity demands.

Tom Arnold, Executive Director of the Parking Authority, says: "We are interested in the bottom line. If solar can save the City money and enhance our services to the public, then it fits within our mission." In fact, the system is expected to save the Authority approximately \$4,000 in its first ten years of operation.

A unique feature of the project is its electric vehicle charging station, which will be made available to the public. It will be the first of its kind in downtown Morgantown and one of the few places in the region to fuel vehicles with renewable energy. According to Evan Hansen, President of Downstream Strategies, "It is exciting to think that we will be able to use the sun to power vehicles right here in Morgantown. This will put the city on the map as a destination for the growing number of electric vehicle owners."

The project is a first step in which The Mountain Institute intends to expand the reach of community-supported solar projects in West Virginia. Aaron Sutch states: "Our project team is creating innovative approaches that will enable residents, businesses, municipalities, and non-profits to mitigate rising energy costs, create economic opportunity, and protect natural resources with solar power."