

## **\$1M DOE Grant to Launch Solar-Thermal Project on Saint Paul RiverCentre**

*Recovery Act money helping Saint Paul, Minneapolis  
demonstrate potential for large projects*

SAINT PAUL – Downtown Saint Paul will become a demonstration for how diversified energy sources can power large-scale buildings, complexes and district systems, thanks to money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

District Energy St. Paul will install solar thermal or hybrid solar thermal/photovoltaic systems using the \$1 million grant administered through the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and its own matching funds. Together with the two cities through the Minneapolis Saint Paul Solar America Cities partnership, District Energy will study both how solar energy can be integrated into existing district energy systems and the value such diversified energy generation brings as a business model and as a stand-alone solar district system. With their sights set on the rooftop of the Saint Paul RiverCentre and an estimated project price tag of over \$2 million, this DOE selection was integral to project success.

“These Recovery Act awards will enable Solar America Cities to tackle emerging challenges involving solar energy use in urban environments. The solutions that emerge will accelerate solar energy adoption across the nation,” said JoAnn Milliken, Solar Program Manager, U.S. Department of Energy.

“In recent years, mayors and cities have taken the lead to improve our environment and find innovative solutions to our energy challenges. Now with a partner in the White House who understands the significant role cities play in our nation’s economy, we can move forward with projects that create jobs and solutions to our energy needs,” Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman said.

The project with District Energy is one of 40 projects that were selected nationwide to help speed adoption of solar energy while supporting development of a skilled workforce and continuing to pursue new scientific breakthroughs to increase the efficiency and lower the cost of solar technologies. U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu announced the grant in early October as part of \$87 million awarded to universities, electric power utilities, the DOE’s national laboratories, and local governments to support use of solar technologies in U.S. cities. This project was selected to receive \$1 million of the \$10 million in grants dedicated to Solar America Cities’ Special Projects.

“Finding solutions to our energy needs will lead to job growth and lift our economy. Innovation has driven our state and national economy in the past, and the challenges of today demand we reignite that innovative spirit,” Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak said.

“Meeting the energy needs of our cities requires the integration of multiple, sustainable energy sources, and solar will play a key role,” said District Energy CEO Anders Rydaker. “District Energy is committed to integrating solar into our energy generation portfolio and demonstrating how solar can be used to transform the future of cities throughout the United States.”

In addition to the \$1million grant, the Department of Energy also awarded an additional \$30,000 to NRG Thermal to conduct a feasibility study on integrating solar into their Minneapolis system.

District Energy St. Paul, a 501(c)(3) non-profit utility, heats and cools more than 80 percent of the buildings in downtown Saint Paul as well as 300 single-family homes. Already, District Energy has made substantial investments in “green” energy, utilizing a combined heat and power (CHP) plant primarily powered by local wood residues. The utility also installed six solar panels near its downtown plant in 2008 for testing. Since its creation in 1979, District Energy has become a model in North America demonstrating the viability of a district heating and cooling system in a major urban setting.

NRG Thermal LLC is a wholly owned subsidiary of NRG Energy Inc. which has a global portfolio of projects including wind and solar generation and which provides district and cooling services to over 100 buildings in downtown Minneapolis.

In 2008, Saint Paul and Minneapolis were named Solar America Cities by the U.S. Department of Energy to develop a strategic plan to make solar energy more accessible for homes and businesses by the year 2015. The two cities are partnering with local organizations and businesses including District Energy, NRG Thermal LLC, Xcel Energy, Center for Energy and Environment, freEner-g, Fresh Energy, Green Institute, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Minnesota Department of Commerce, Minnesota Renewable Energy Society and Neighborhood Energy Connection to develop mainstream solar in the coming decade and implement dozens of projects during the next two years.