

# OLEAN TIMES HERALD

## Ribbon cutting held for third solar farm in Olean, 17-acre Homeridae

By RICK MILLER Olean Times Herald / July 18, 2019 (3 hrs ago)



Olean Mayor Bill Aiello cuts a ribbon for the Homeridae Solar Farm project in Olean under a tent Wednesday morning as other city, county, state and project officials look on. The 17-acre solar farm has 11,800 solar panels generating electricity and energy credits for the city.

Rick Miller/Olean Times Herald

OLEAN — The city's third solar farm was celebrated with a ribbon cutting Wednesday morning at Homeridae, a 17-acre former brownfield between Homer Street and Interstate 86.

The site is generating enough electricity to supply 652 typical New York homes with power for a year and helping Olean

taxpayers with about \$100,000 in annual energy credits, Olean Mayor Bill Aiello said before cutting the ribbon in front of dozens of invited guests.

Aiello noted they were standing on the site of an old tank farm for a local oil refinery. Oil was the energy of the day in the 1880s and Olean, with six different railroads and several pipelines, was a hub of energy activity.

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It was also the time of Thomas Edison, who invented the lightbulb and started marketing it in New York City. Olean investors formed the Olean Electric Light and Power Co. in 1888, and threw the switch to power 30 light poles along North Union and West State streets, Aiello said.

“Meet our newest power source, the sun,” the mayor said.

Aiello noted that, coincidentally, one of the descendants of the original Olean Light and Power Co., investor F.W. Higgins, was in attendance at the ribbon cutting ceremony: Cattaraugus County Legislator Frank Higgins, R-Olean.

City officials and BQ Energy of Wappingers Falls are reviewing the first month of operation of Homeridae, which has 11,800 solar panels. BQ Energy will receive a portion of the city’s credits in addition to the electricity they send to National Grid power lines.

“We’ll see significantly reduced electric bills,” Aiello said.

The agreement with BQ Energy is for 25 years. The net metering credits should save the city at least \$90,000 annually, he said. It could be as much as \$125,000. Over the 25 years, it could be worth more than \$3 million in reduced costs.

Two other solar farms on the south side of I-86 behind Dresser-Rand are benefiting St. Bonaventure University and Olean General Hospital with long-term significant savings on their energy bills as well.

St. Bonaventure expects to tap into more than \$280,000 a year in energy credits, or \$7.3 million over 25 years, and Olean General is looking at \$40,000 a year in energy credits, or \$1 million over 20 years.

BQ Energy president Paul Curran told those assembled for the ribbon cutting that the company only deals with brownfield sites.

“This is about making energy,” he said, noting Olean is part of the state’s plan to generate 70 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2030.

“It was land that didn’t have a purpose,” Curran said. Like a new solar farm planned at **the West Valley Demonstration Project site**, Curran said, “That’s where renewable energy belongs.”

Davetta Thatcher of the **New York State Energy Research and Development Authority** said the Olean solar farms generated 4 megawatts of electricity last month, making it number 6 in the state for output out of 102 solar facilities in New York.