



Welcome to the Pearl Button Solar Newsletter. In this newsletter, we are excited to share project updates and information regarding utility-scale solar regularly. An important part of our job is to educate and provide information about solar projects and their benefits to Muscatine County.

SOLAR HISTORY

Humanity utilizes the sun as a resource for light, heat, and of course, electricity. From the Greeks and the Romans utilizing mirrors and sunlight to ignite torches¹, to the discovery of electricity being produced when certain elements are exposed to light, the sun has been a source of energy for all human history. Today, we have access to simple, clean, and affordable electric generation using photovoltaic cells. Here's a snapshot of how we got here:

- 1921** → The Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded to Albert Einstein “for his services to Theoretical Physics, and especially for his discovery of the law of the photoelectric effect”.¹
- 1954** → Daryl Chapin, Calvin Fuller, and Gerald Pearson developed the first silicon photovoltaic (PV) cell, capable of converting energy from the sun into power that could run every day electrical equipment.¹
- 1958** → The Vanguard I satellite used a small solar array to power its radios. Solar arrays continue to successfully power our satellites today.¹
- 1966** → Japan installed a **225-watt** photovoltaic array on a lighthouse, which was the largest array at that time.¹
- 1978** → NASA's Lewis Research Center installed a **3.5-kilowatt** photovoltaic (PV) system on the remote Papago Indian Reservation located in southern Arizona, which was used to pump water and provide electricity to 15 homes. Without a connection to a power line, this was the first solar electric village.¹
- 1980s** → The solar technology continued to advance as solar arrays began to power homes and businesses and were now being manufactured at a larger scale.¹
- 1982** → The first utility-scale solar power plant (**1.1-megawatt**) began operation in Hesperia, California.²
- 2002** → First Solar began producing photovoltaic solar panels from its factory in Perrysburg, Ohio.¹
- 2015** → Burlington, Vermont became the first US city to use 100% renewable energy, 19% of which came from solar power.²
- 2023** → Solar accounted for over 50% of new electricity capacity added to the grid.²

As of December 2024

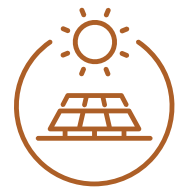
- There are over **700-megawatts** of installed solar capacity in the State of Iowa. Iowa is on track to exceed **2,500-megawatts** of solar in the next few years, with over 10 utility-scale solar projects being approved by the state recently, with an average size of **145-megawatts**.

HOW SOLAR WORKS

In just 90 minutes, enough sunlight strikes the earth’s surface to handle the entire world’s energy consumption for one year.³ By utilizing photovoltaic (PV) solar panels, we can capture a fraction of this energy to power our homes, businesses, and communities. This may raise a question, however – how does solar work and how do we use it?

Solar panels used for solar projects, such as the proposed Pearl Button Solar Project, are mounted on tilted single-axis tracking systems that follow the sun from east to west, capturing the sun’s energy throughout the day. As the sun shines onto a solar panel, the energy from sunlight is absorbed by the PV cells. “The energy absorbed by the panels then produces electricity which is delivered to users who are utilizing locally sourced renewable energy.”

The solar power produced by the array will supplement the power that’s supporting the grid today to power homes, businesses, and communities in the area. This energy flows similarly to water by utilizing the path of least resistance, meaning that if there is energy demand close to the solar array, then power from the array and other available energy resources will flow on the grid to fulfill that need. Once the need for energy at that source is fulfilled, energy will continue to flow down the line to meet additional energy demand. Adding power to the electric grid, sourced from a local array, allows the county and state to harness energy from our most abundant resource – the sun - and keep our energy independence.



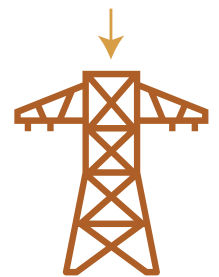
Solar Array



Inverter



Transformer



Transmission



Transformer



Your Home

Citations

- https://www1.eere.energy.gov/solar/pdfs/solar_timeline.pdf
- <https://www.seia.org/blog/solar-century-landmark-moments-history-solar-energy>
- <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/how-does-solar-work>

For More Information On The Pearl Button Solar Project:

EMAIL: info@pearlbuttonssolar.com

PHONE: 563-607-5010

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