

Greensboro congregation adds rooftop solar panels

By: [Gary Silverstein](#)

Special to the News & Record

Friday, September 30, 2011

An exciting project that has been in the making for more than two years will come to fruition this fall as Temple Emanuel of Greensboro hosts the dedication of their solar panel project at 3:30 p.m. on Oct. 16.

The dedication will coincide with their semi-annual Jewish Festival that features traditional food, music, tours of the Temple Emanuel (TE) facility, educational seminars and plenty of fun and games. The 5kW photovoltaic project has been the brain child of the temple's Teva committee. Teva, the Hebrew word for nature, defines this committee's dedication to environmental stewardship by encouraging their congregation to be more eco-conscious and directing their facility toward being more environmentally sustainable.

Teva's accomplishments include implementing a comprehensive facility recycling program, establishing a garden whose harvests bring fresh vegetables to local food banks, a campaign to reduce the temple's reliance on disposables in their kitchen and dining area in favor of reusable options, and now, their most ambitious endeavor to date, solar electricity.

A photovoltaic solar panel system is designed to absorb and convert some of the sun's infinite supply of energy into electricity for consumption in residences and public facilities.

The temple's 24 panels installed on its roof will generate electricity and offset the facility's utility expenses by approximately \$1,000 each year.

More importantly, this electricity will, according to Travis Simpson, president of Extend Energy and the temple's solar panel installer, "equates to planting approximately 725 trees (due to the absorption of CO₂) and will save nearly 300,000 pounds of coal from being burned to generate the electricity over its 35-year expected life."

This project, unanimously approved by the temple Board of Trustees, was funded by nearly 60 of TE's congregants plus a handful of generous environmentally conscious donors from the greater community. Because the temple is a tax-exempt entity, tax credits were able to be passed on to the individual donors. This added a supplemental motivation and benefit to the temple's fundraising efforts.

Temple Emanuel is one of only three congregations in North Carolina that has a solar photovoltaic system in operation. Annette Green, chairperson of the Teva committee, says TE is happy to serve as a resource to other faith groups to let them know how doable a project like this is.

"Our hope is that the panels on our temple roof will not only benefit our own congregation, but will inspire other faith groups in our community to take on similar projects. We know that our array may only make a small environmental dent, but that many congregations achieving the same thing can make a substantial difference," Green says.

A monitoring screen will be mounted at the religious school entrance displaying the panels' electric output in real time. This will not only identify that the system is operating to expected levels but will also serve as a learning tool for the temple's teachers and their students, tying together the values of the Jewish faith with the real world practices of its congregation.

This Temple Emanuel model demonstrates that a robust, positive and forward-thinking congregation can bring together financial and environmental sustainability and establish an enduring legacy for all of our children. "Mazel tov" — congratulations to Temple Emanuel.