



**Sustainable  
Libraries  
Initiative**

The latest news and updates from the [Sustainable Libraries Initiative](#)

# NEWSLETTER



## NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

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## BREAKING NEWS

The 'Community Gardening at Your Library' [webinar recording](#) is now accessible on the SLI website. It is available on the 'Resources' page for a limited time after which it will be in our 'Members Only Resources' section.



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## CLIMATE ACTION NOW

SLI co-founder, Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, is once again contributing a Sustainability column to [Library Journal](#). In the [December 2021 article](#), practical strategies are presented for libraries to identify and plan for climate risks. The time is now for libraries to step forward and position their organizations as a source of vital resources and support for their communities. Read this article and check out the entire [Sustainability Column archive](#) on the [Library Journal](#) site.

## COMMUNITY SOLAR

This month we have a guest contributor to our newsletter, Joe Montouri. Joe is a library board member at [Mahopac Public Library](#) in Putnam County. He also volunteers for [Sustainable Putnam](#), an organization that advocates for communities in Putnam County to adopt principles of triple bottom line sustainability in their practices and actions. He is sharing his experience in navigating the Mahopac Public Library's switch to renewable energy.



**Mahopac Public Library considered a roof and ground-mounted solar installation**

## MEMBER NEWS



This month we welcome two new Certification Program member libraries. [Copiate Memorial Public Library](#) and [Sayville Library](#) both join us from Suffolk County, NY and are part of Suffolk Cooperative Library System.



## CALL FOR ITEMS

Have you created a library policy or program with Sustainability in mind? Share your ideas with our community! Contact [sliadmin@suffolknet.org](mailto:sliadmin@suffolknet.org) to be featured in our newsletter or on the [SLI Website](#).

## GO SOLAR FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE LIBRARY

Contributed by Joe Montouri

Can you imagine anything that suggests “sustainability” more than solar panels covering your library’s roof? What a wonderful message that would send to the community. “Hey, check it out! We’re walking the walk!”

If only. Installing solar photovoltaic (PV) panels is an expensive proposition even for a well-funded library. And it’s a complicated project. Is your roof large, well-oriented, and generally unobstructed by shade? If yes, how many years are left on that roof before major repairs or replacement are needed? If your roof is in good shape, your next step is obtaining estimates from several reputable solar installers and choosing the one you’ll work with. Then there’s financing.

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Graphic courtesy of [Groundswell.org](http://Groundswell.org)

## COMMUNITY SOLAR, CONTINUED

As a Board Trustee of [Mahopac Public Library](#) in Putnam County, I'm always looking for ways to reduce expenses in our budget without diminishing our library's excellent services. As the President of [Sustainable Putnam](#), a local sustainability organization, I'm always looking for ways to decrease our community's carbon footprint. My attempt to install solar PV at the library combined both these aspirations.

Unfortunately, going solar is more often an aspiration than a reality. In the Mid-Hudson region's Putnam County, more than one library has seriously considered a PV installation, and decided that it just wasn't practical at this time. In Garrison, for example, some local residents objected to an artfully-designed, ground-mounted "solar ribbon" on the Desmond Fish Library grounds. And in Mahopac, the 3-story library building has a deceptively small roof area. So, a solar contractor recommended both roof and ground-mounted systems.

But the 14' tall solar canopy they proposed for our parking lot would have obscured the street view of the building, creating an eyesore on the hamlet's main street.

Even so, both of these libraries still managed to go solar, using community solar, a much-misunderstood alternative. Community solar requires no installation and no upfront costs. Instead, it allows residents, businesses and other institutions to sign up and "subscribe" to a portion of a large solar project offsite, on a solar farm.

Subscribers on the project receive a 10% discount off their utility's regular rate on the community solar credits they earn every month. Electricity is still provided and billed by your utility. There are no other costs or fees, the discount rate cannot be lowered, and cancellation is free with 90 days notice.

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## COMMUNITY SOLAR, CONTINUED

Here's how it works. Your community solar provider allocates a portion of its solar farm to your account, basing their estimate on your average annual usage. (You'll share your utility account number so they can check.) But since the solar electricity generated, and your electrical consumption vary from month to month, they don't always match up. During the summer months, you accumulate and bank more solar credits than the electricity you consume. During winter months, you earn fewer solar credits than electricity consumed; so those summer solar credits get applied to your winter bills — kind of like “rollover minutes” on a cellphone plan.

Overall, the goal is to provide 10% in savings over the course of the year. Your library saves money while it encourages the construction of new solar farms, and creates green economy jobs in New York.

When Mahopac Public Library realized that a solar installation wasn't practical, they signed up for community solar. And they're not alone. In fact, six of eight Putnam County libraries are participating in community solar, and the other two are now considering it.

While there are many excellent solar providers out there, it can be tedious to weed through all the offers. Local sustainability organizations such as Sustainable Putnam have vetted one or more solar providers to cut back on the research needed to choose a provider. Get in touch with your local sustainability organization, or visit Sustainable Putnam online to learn more.

*Joe Montuori is a third-year trustee at Mahopac Public Library, where he also volunteers as President of Sustainable Putnam. Feel free to contact Joe at [joe@sustainableputnam.org](mailto:joe@sustainableputnam.org).*

**Don't miss our important news:** Please add [sli-newsletter@lists.suffolknet.org](mailto:sli-newsletter@lists.suffolknet.org) to your address book to keep our newsletter out of your junk or spam folders!

## COMMUNITY SOLAR & RENEWABLE ENERGY RESOURCES

### **NYSERDA Resources:**

[Before You Get Started](#)  
[How Does Community Solar work?](#)  
[Find a Community Solar Project](#)  
[Community Solar for Businesses](#)  
[Solarize Your Community](#)

### **Complete list of US State Energy Offices**

### **EBSCO:**

[Solar Grant Program](#)

### **Solar to the People:**

[Libraries Going Solar Article](#)

### **News Articles:**

[More Than Ever, New York Libraries Are Going Green](#)  
[Coney Island Library Goes Solar](#)  
[Scarborough Public Library](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**SLCP Online MeetUp:** January 6th, 2022  
11:00am EST

**School Librarian Certification MeetUp:**  
February 10, 2022 3:30pm EST

### **LibLearnX: Live Learning Lab:**

Sustainable Thinking Builds Strong and Resilient Communities. Sunday, January 23, 2022 1:30pm-2:30pm EST

**ALA Core Webinar:** Sustainable Thinking Builds Strong Libraries and Resilient Communities Tuesday, March 15th, 2pm EST



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