

Alachua County No. One In Solar

March 4, 2017



The rooftop of a Publix-anchored shopping center in Gainesville, FL., is transformed into a 350 KW solar system populated with nearly 1,500 panels. The 46,000 square-foot installation, atop The Exchange shopping center, is among the five largest rooftop solar systems in Florida and one of the largest to use the regional utility's "feed-in tariff" renewable energy program.

When it comes to the environment, we in Columbia County usually have to look up to Alachua as a role model. With solar it is no exception. The following article appeared in the March 4, 2017 [Gainesville Sun](#), and can be seen at this [link](#).

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

SHINE ON

Alachua County leads the way in solar power

By Levi Bradford

Correspondent

Solar now employs more people than coal, according to a report from the Department of Energy. It also says that in 2016, the number of people working in solar increased by 25 percent.

With more people getting into the solar industry, trends in solar are evolving.

Wayne Irwin, president of Pure Energy Solar, said his company has been hiring more, keeping up with a steady increase in demand. While solar is usually something people get for their homes, Irwin said there's been more demand from businesses.

One trend in solar that Irwin is interested in is the rise in solar scams. He said, as demand increases, more people have fallen victim to scare-tactic gimmicks.

"People have bought solar panels because they were told ISIS is going to attack our energy grid," Irwin said. What people end up buying in these cases is poorly built and uncertified solar

equipment. Then they come to him to get it fixed.

Management Company owns much of downtown, including the Sun City Center, home to Maude's Café, and Union Street Station, the bottom corner of which is taken up by Dragonfly. Every property the company manages is equipped with solar if it can be.

"Contrary to what some folks believe, we believe in climate change," McGurn said. "We need to do everything we can to reduce the use of carbon."

His favorite trend in solar right now, besides prices going down, is the production of solar batteries.

"The game-changer is going to be batteries," he said. "When more people, like Tesla, produce batteries, they get cheaper: economies of scale. You can get solar energy during the day and store it for use at night."

Paul Williams, a salesman for The Solar Guys in Gainesville, said he's seen home builders begin producing net zero energy homes. These homes produce as much renewable energy as they consume.

The Solar Guys will be at the Home & Garden Show this weekend at booths 230 and 231. They, along with other solar companies, will be able to answer questions about the solar industry and its future.

Irwin hopes to provide everyone in Gainesville with solar power. His company has been in talks with the city to deploy portable solar charging stations all over the city, and the program should roll out next month.

"People can charge their cellphones and laptops, maybe an electric wheelchair: whatever people need," Irwin said.

So far, it's a pilot program. Pure Energy Solar is sponsoring it so the city can "take it for a test drive."

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