

## Barnard Goes Solar | by Melissa Bailey | [newhavenindependent.org](http://newhavenindependent.org) | August 15, 2006



In another spectacular, environmentally savvy addition to a once ordinary-looking elementary school, the roof at the Barnard School has been transformed into the second-largest solar panel project in the state.

Over the last week, workers have installed 272 solar panels on the roof of the school building, which will reopen in September as a K-8 environmental studies magnet school, packed with enviro-friendly features such as green roofs and waterless urinals.

The \$43 million rehab project already filled bleachers with onlookers when the school gained a pedestrian bridge to reach across the Ella T. Grasso Boulevard towards the bio-rich West River Park.

The school's solar panels, funded mostly by the state and the [CT Clean Energy Fund](#), lay in a glistening array on the rooftops Monday. The delicate photovoltaic system lies out of ball-throwing and foot-stomping range, atop the cafeteria, gym and west wing of the school. Panels will use the sun's rays to generate 16 percent of the school's electricity needs, said Project Manager Ram Joglekar of Gilbane Construction (pictured above at right).

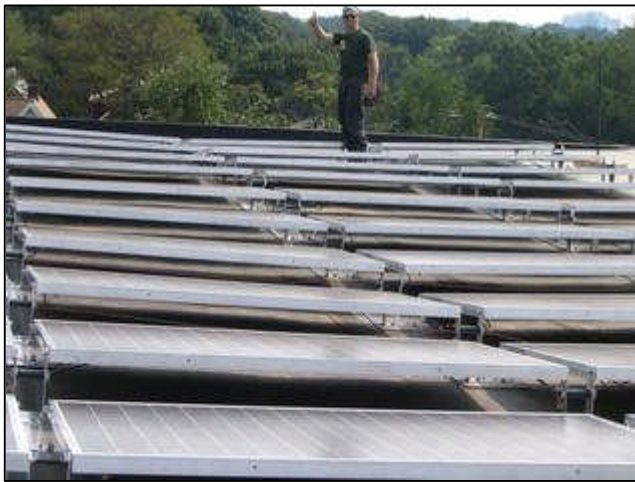


The solar panel project, designed and built by Solar Works, Inc., is almost the largest in the state — a project in Derby "beat us by less than 1 kilowatt hour," Joglekar found out last week — but it takes an impressive second. Workers Monday had finished laying down the panels and were busy connecting them to conduit that will run down to the school basement, where the DC power will be turned to AC power. When the school is not in use, extra power will be sent to the grid, to be compensated for in equal wattage later.

Barnard students won't be able to see the action, but they can peer into a computerized kiosk in the school lobby and track how much power the panels produce each day, said Joglekar. The energy consumption stats will be fed onto a website so the rest of the world can see, too.

The building, the city's only LEEDS-certified school, is stocked with environmentally friendly features, from its nature center with a "green roof," to the landscaping, where wildflowers will replace traditional prim lawns, requiring less water and gas-guzzling mowing. A trigger will alert the A/C system when someone has opened a window, turning the cooling system off in that room, said school construction chief Susan Weisselberg.

Another detail of the "green" facility: Waterless urinals, which use odor-absorbing oil to filter incoming streams.



Rick Ross (pictured at top at left).

Most of this comes thanks to the magnet school program, which enabled New Haven to turn a century-old school into a lavish, state-of-the-art educational facility using 95 percent state funds.

The \$700,000 solar project was also paid for by a \$361,000 grant from the CT Clean Energy Fund, which supports alternative energy statewide. So if state rebates come through, the city can break on its contribution in "less than a year," according to project energy consultant

Ross, who runs Westmount Management, Inc. in Branford, made his start in solar energy in California. He credited the Clean Energy Fund's "aggressive rebates" in making the alternative power source possible statewide.

Jonathan Edwards, the CEO of Smart Power, the marketing arm of the Energy Fund, applauded New Haven for jumping to the forefront of solar power. "The fact that New Haven is putting up these solar panels means that they value energy independence and they value mitigating the effects of climate change. ... I hope that every city and town across the state can follow New Haven's lead."