

Oak Park, Illinois Community

Established in 1902, the Village of Oak Park, Illinois sits 10 miles west of downtown Chicago and is home to more than 50,000 residents. The hometown of architect Frank Lloyd Wright and author Ernest Hemingway, Oak Park is recognized as a regional leader in green power use both for its Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) program and for installing the third largest municipal solar array in Illinois. In 2011, Oak Park set a national precedent with its CCA program by aggregating the community electricity load and purchasing green power from an alternate electricity supplier while still receiving transmission and distribution service from its existing provider.

Oak Park is the first municipality in Illinois to choose a 100 percent green power portfolio standard for its residents and small business operators who participate in the community's CCA program. The program boasts an impressive participation rate of 95 percent among local residents and businesses. Through the CCA program, Oak Park purchases wind renewable energy certificates (RECs) that will reduce local emissions by approximately 171,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year by adding more than 191 million kilowatt-hours (kWh) of wind energy to the local grid. The wind RECs are offered to aggregation members at a rate 25 percent less expensive than the cost of the conventional utility product. The CCA program supports Oak Park's sustainability plan, created with its neighbor, the Village of Forest River, after signing the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement in 2007.

The success of the Oak Park CCA program has generated interest from across Illinois and the country. More than 200 Illinois municipalities have created aggregation programs for their residents, some of whom also have chosen renewable energy portfolios. Oak Park also began offsetting its own electric use with a 99-kilowatt solar panel array on its municipal parking garage, installed in March 2012 and providing approximately 30 percent of the garage's electricity needs. In addition, the Village of Oak Park is working with several state, federal and international entities to create electric smart grid demonstrations on residential and commercial buildings.

With its groundbreaking CCA program, expansion of on-site renewable generation and unprecedented level of resident and business participation in the use of green power, the Village of Oak Park is a community to emulate.