

Daily briefing

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St. Paul

Solar-thermal project starts at RiverCentre

By January, St. Paul will have undertaken the Midwest's largest solar-thermal project to date.

"In the next few months, a sea of solar panels will be installed on the roof of the RiverCentre, embodying St. Paul's status as a model for sustainability," Mayor Chris Coleman said in a news release Tuesday. Construction has already begun.

Not to be mistaken for solar-electric, 150 new thermal panels will use energy from the sun to heat water — a process

that is about 65 percent more energy-efficient than panels that produce electricity.

The heated water will supply the RiverCentre convention complex and other downtown buildings with 1 megawatt of energy, reducing carbon-dioxide emissions by about 900,000 pounds annually — roughly the equivalent of taking 90 cars off the street.

As part of the U.S. Department of Energy's "Solar America Cities," the

project will be funded by \$1 million in grants from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, with matching funds from District Energy St. Paul.

St. Paul residents can expect to see 10 more solar projects along the Central Corridor light-rail line in the future. With the help of \$1.5 million in federal stimulus funds, solar panels are planned for the St. Anthony Park Recreation Center and Rondo Library, among other locations.

— Greta Kaul