

## Solar Powers Life at the Flower Market

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*Dan Marnien, left, Jim Mellano and Maryellen Blyzka, against a backdrop of the Los Angeles skyline, the newly installed solar panels front and center.*

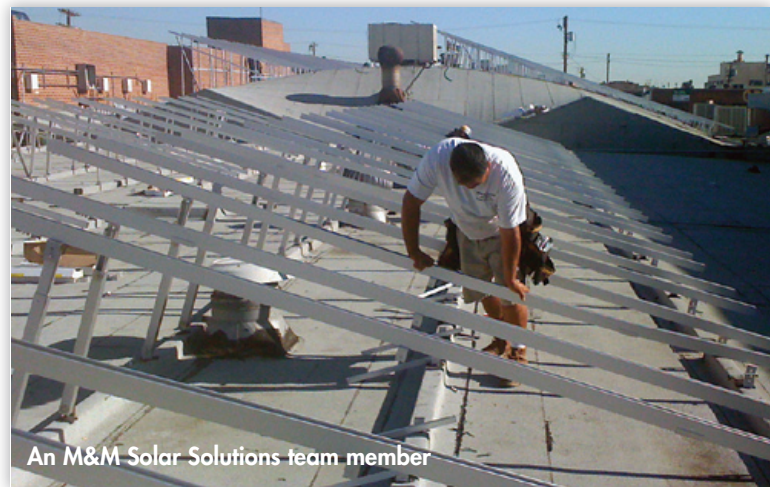
# Solar Powers Life at the

Cultures around the world embrace myths about the sun, all of them recognizing the sun's importance and value. Our lives as we know them would not be possible without the sun. The flower fields that once blanketed the Los Angeles area and helped California evolve into the flower basket of the nation, would not have existed without the brightest star in our universe, the sun.

In recent years, advancing technology has catapulted our respect for the sun to energy-efficient, green systems friendly to the environment, that help reduce our carbon footprint while reducing our energy costs. We've taken giant steps with solar panels, which help us employ those life-giving rays to powering our facilities and activities.

Several years ago, a long-time director of the American Florists' Exchange dba Los Angeles Flower Market suggested that the AFE take advantage of federal investment tax credits available for photovoltaic solar installations using the sun, the sustainable green source of energy. It would be a tremendous undertaking for a wholesale market that included multiple buildings, but the proactive idea enjoyed the full support of all the directors. When federal subsidies became available again, the directors got the ball rolling.

Construction started on the solar installation at the Original Los Angeles Flower Market on November 29, 2010. It would be eight or nine months before the system could be turned on, due to what Jim Mellano, a member of the Market's management



An M&M Solar Solutions team member

team, describes as “redtape and changes the city and DWP required.” Those months hosted inspections and meetings with various city, state and federal agencies. It also included more permits and work, such as roofing and the upgrading of an electrical panel, to bring all aspects of the solar project into compliance and readiness.



Jim Mellano

Working with M&M Solar Solutions (based in Orange, California and owned by Dan Marnien and his sister Maryellen Blyzka), the 280 kilowatt solar system was installed across six different addresses and eight rooftops, with each rooftop solar array individually designed for that structure and roof type. In terms of area used, it is the largest in all of Los Angeles.

## The Original Los Angeles Flower Market Solar System:

# Flower Market

by Peggi  
Ridgway

“Every install is unique, but the Flower Market even more so,” says Marnien. “(The installation) is the equivalent of approximately 55 average size residential systems. The total of all the arrays is 22,500 square feet, or a little more than one-half acre. The largest single array is slightly larger than half a football field.”

The Flower Market’s 280kw solar system with its 1,246 Schuco USA panels is second in size only to the Staples Center’s 345kw system and it is the largest privately owned solar installation in downtown

Los Angeles. The modern, highly efficient system helps transport the historic facility into the 21st century. M&M’s crew, led by the company’s owner Dan Marnien, spent many hours assembling and testing their equip-

ment to make the system a reality. Dan Marnien spent so much time at the project overseeing the various phases that Jim Mellano jokingly says, “Dan was here so much I think I saw him more in the last year than I saw my wife.”

Marnien’s take on the system, and his pride in it, lend insight to unique aspects: “It is the first ‘line side tap’ allowed by Los Angeles Department of Water and Power . . . And the first to be allowed to utilize multiple (lot tied) buildings of solar arrays to be connected to a single meter, some of which are three quarters of a block away on an adjacent street.”

Because the room housing the Market’s main meter was too small, M&M installed the SMA America 250U inverter on the first level of the parking structure, boring through twelve-inch brick walls to run conduit. (During installation of the inverter and new meter in June 2011, the Flower Market’s power was delivered by generator for 24 hours, seamlessly.)

The Flower Market’s new solar system was finally turned on in August, 2011 and a ribbon-cutting grand opening, sponsored by manufacturer Schuco USA on September, 20, 2011, celebrates a job well done, a milestone reached and much satisfaction to the board of directors of the American Florists’ Exchange.

“I think it is important for AFE to do what it can to reduce its carbon footprint and save money, as it is important for all companies to do their part,” says Lizbeth Ecke, AFE board of directors president. “This is one of many projects that the AFE Board is and has been working on in the ongoing effort to keep our customers happy and our tenants profitable.”



Mellano & Company solar installation, representing one of eight rooftops



During the early phase of the solar installation

- Will reduce 8,724 tons of CO2 over 25 years
- Will provide estimated savings of \$748,276 over 25 years
- Savings is the equivalent of 28,389,080 miles not driven; or 149.5 acres of trees planted

Photovoltaic cell, or solar cell, collects sunshine (or photons from the sun’s rays) and converts its energy into electrical power. It is usually made from a silicon-based alloy.