

First SOMAH Solar Project in Liberty Utilities Territory Celebrated at Pine Ridge Apartments

New solar and battery system will lower electricity costs for residents and provide backup power at the affordable housing community

Residents of Pine Ridge Apartments in Portola, Calif., are celebrating a new solar and battery energy system that is expected to offset a significant portion of the property's electricity use, lower utility costs and provide backup power during outages.

The project is the first in Liberty Utilities territory to receive funding through California's [Solar on Multifamily Affordable Housing](https://www.somah.org/) (SOMAH) Program, extending the program's benefits to an affordable housing community in one of California's smaller and more rural utility service areas and providing a window to what SOMAH offers in these communities. Pine Ridge will be the first SOMAH photovoltaic (PV) and storage project that is configured for resilience, demonstrating how the program can support both clean energy generation and emergency backup resources for multifamily communities.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held Oct. 9, at Pine Ridge Apartments with city and state officials, utility and SOMAH representatives, residents, and project partners to celebrate the installation. The project received a \$448,030.36 incentive from the SOMAH Program.

"Pine Ridge is an important example of how solar and battery storage can lower energy costs and strengthen resilience for residents in rural and less densely populated areas of California," said Rocky Fernandez, senior director of policy at the Center for Sustainable Energy. "Through SOMAH, California continues to lead on energy equity by ensuring that low-income families in every part of the state can share in the benefits of solar. This, in turn, reduces all ratepayer bills."

The 25-unit affordable housing community now features a 110-kilowatt solar system expected to offset approximately 92% of the property's current electricity use, along with a 233 kilowatt-hour (kWh) battery energy storage system designed to provide backup power during outages.

The solar system is projected to provide electricity credits valued at more than \$140 per month, on average for each household, helping lower residents' utility bills. Solar energy will also serve common areas at the property, reducing operating costs, while the battery system will provide added resilience during power outages.

The SOMAH Program is an initiative of the California Public Utilities Commission that provides financial incentives for solar energy systems at multifamily affordable housing properties, helping lower electricity costs for low-income tenants. The program has a goal of reaching 300 megawatts of solar capacity by 2032 and expanding the benefits of solar energy to low-income households across California.

SOMAH is administered by a team of nonprofit organizations that includes the Center for Sustainable Energy, GRID Alternatives, the Association for Energy Affordability and California Housing Partnership.
