



Eau Claire County: Savings by the Bundle



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Matt Theisen,
Eau Claire County facilities director

There's no formal policy at Eau Claire County about building energy efficiency and sustainability measures into the county buildings, but it's something they're very interested in for a variety of reasons.

"You need to set an example for the community," says Matt Theisen, Eau Claire County facilities director. "You can't ask people to do what you're not doing."

Theisen says energy costs are his single biggest expense after personnel costs, making energy efficiency a big part of the bottom line.

So when they remodeled the government center and built the adjacent jail, their first order of business was to bring Focus on Energy and Xcel Energy on board to help them figure out the many ways to save.

Retrofits and savings

Theisen and his team are no strangers to energy efficiency and renewables. They've completed a number of conservation and load management measures in a variety of buildings in the county and use the ENERGY STAR® portfolio manager to benchmark their energy use.

"Meeting with Xcel Energy on a regular basis helps us figure out what to concentrate on," Theisen says. "And we're always looking at what the next step should be."

Eau Claire County was also one of the first Solar*Connect Community subscribers in the area. Like other Wisconsin Xcel Energy electricity customers who subscribe to the community solar gardens, they will receive a monthly solar energy credit on their bill.

For the courthouse, Theisen and his team retrofitted and recommissioned the entire building. They used variable frequency drives (VFDs), an energy recovery system, LED lighting and motion sensors on exterior lighting and parking areas and have participated in Xcel Energy's Saver's Switch program for several years.



Wisconsin Xcel Energy electricity customers can subscribe and receive a monthly solar energy credit on their bill.

“We reduced our usage by 31 percent at the courthouse alone,” Theisen says. “On average, we have saved 25 percent on energy bills for our buildings.”

Part of those savings came from moving to high efficiency LED lighting. They retrofitted the parking lot first, then moved to the courthouse exterior.

“We changed out 8,000 lights and got a 7-watt savings per bulb,” explains Theisen. “The lighting was a lot brighter even with the reduced wattage and we save \$15,000 each year.”

Next, they’ll remove the T-8s inside the courthouse and replace those with LEDs, too.

“Matt takes the initiative to investigate energy savings measures and implement the ones that make sense for Eau Claire County,” says Oscar Brandser, Xcel Energy account manager. “He’s clearly committed to saving energy and money for the county.”

Spreading the word

In addition to working on their own energy efficiency, they participate in Xcel Energy-hosted training events and are members of the local Association for Facilities Engineering Chapter that enables networking with other facility managers. The goal is to share best practices and get new ideas for other projects.

They don’t plan to slow down any time soon. They’ll keep working with Xcel Energy and Focus on Energy for ideas and incentives for years to come.



Project Snapshot: Energy conservation and renewable energy

Project	Estimated energy savings	Estimated annual savings
Electric conservation	881,498 kWh	\$75,368
Natural gas conservation	116,423 therms	\$52,972
Solar*Connect Community annual credit	61,440 kWh	\$4,547 credit
Annual load management program dollar savings		\$10,800 per year
Conservation incentives received		\$106,998

To learn more about Xcel Energy programs like Solar*Connect Community, please visit xcelenergy.com.