The Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission and the National Sports Center Foundation have installed a solar array, solar Strackers, and a carport to generate electricity and help reduce energy costs at the National Sports Center's 600-plus-acre campus. Funding from Minnesota's Renewable Development Account supported these energy-efficiency upgrades.

"The campus uses a lot of energy," says Jerry Newton, a former Minnesota state senator and representative and a current board member of the National Sports Center Foundation. "Solar was a necessary addition to shore up sustainability efforts while helping to reduce energy costs."

The $4.2 million solar project went live on November 1, with anticipated annual production of approximately 1MWh of energy. The Super Rink, which uses much of the campus's energy, houses the solar array on its roof and the trackers in its southern parking lot. The project is expected to offset 30% of the Super Rink's energy usage. The carport is in the Campus Operations Center yard. B32 Engineering Group and CMTA worked together to design the solar project. The National Sports Center Foundation oversaw the plan and, through a public bidding process, hired the local team of BlueSky Electric and Solar to finalize the project. The solar modules were procured from Heliene, a local Minnesota manufacturer.

Additionally, the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission and the National Sports Center Foundation consulted with their power provider, Connexus Energy, to maximize the energy efficiency of the solar project.

"Connexus Energy is proud to support the National Sports Center's investment in solar. As a member-owned cooperative, we want our members to have the flexibility to pursue energy solutions that make sense for their operations. This project is a great example of a member using on-site generation to manage its energy needs while advancing its long-term sustainability goals," said Justin Partee, Manager of Sales, Marketing, and Economic Development.

Sustainability continues to be a priority for the National Sports Center. The campus has converted its golf cart fleet to electric, is in the process of converting the Zamboni fleet to electric, and will capture rainwater runoff from the solar arrays, treat it, and use it in its irrigation system to water the golf course and fields. Additionally, the campus has space for future solar expansion.

About the National Sports Center:

The National Sports Center is one of the world's largest amateur sports facilities. The NSC operates more than 100 unique programs and events in a variety of sports and hosts numerous national and international competitions. The facility welcomes more than 4.2 million visitors each year. The NSC is a priceless, innovative, and unique asset to Minnesota's sports facilities and the local economy.

The campus covers 600+ acres and includes 33 grass multiuse athletic fields, 17 turf fields, the eight-sheet Super Rink, the 18-hole Victory Links golf course, a 5,500-seat stadium, the indoor Sports Hall with an artificial turf field, the Sport Expo Center featuring basketball and volleyball courts, and a 180-bed residence hall.

In addition to being the home of Minnesota United FC, the NSC houses the offices of Twin Cities Rush Soccer. The NSC is a State of Minnesota campus but is operated by the National Sports Center Foundation, a self-sustaining 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that receives no annual operating funding from the state.

FUN FACTS

- Minnesota Made Project! The solar contractor was BlueSky Electric and Solar from Brooklyn Park, MN. The roofing contractor was Commercial Roofing and Sheet Metal from Little Canada, MN and the solar modules were manufactured by HELIENE out of Rogers, MN.

- Six Stracker Solar panels installed in the Super Rink parking lot will deliver up to 70% more solar energy with zero loss of parking capacity.

- The roof and carport systems are made up of 1,957 solar modules.

- The life expectancy of solar project materials is 30 years.