

Building's solar panels to cut costs, benefit nonprofit



John F. Lee, managing member of Lee Capital Advisors LLC, had solar panels installed on the roof of Dowling on Main, LLC. (Irena Pastorello/Journal Inquirer)

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MANCHESTER — The 114-year-old Marlow's building on Main Street will soon get some of its energy from solar panels — part of a \$2.2 million renovation project that also will create a dozen new apartments on its upper floors.

Owner and developer John Lee said the renovations were done with an eye toward the environment and energy conservation.

“We made it as green as we could,” Lee said.

With their activation this week, the solar panels on the old department store building's roof form the first commercial solar panel array in Manchester, Lee said.

The power that the panels provide will save money, he added, and the savings will be directed to one of the building's tenants: the March of Dimes' Connecticut office.

Lee said he expects the solar panels to save the nonprofit about 45 percent on its electric bill.

Other tenants of the building include Northeast Brokerage and the Landmark Café, and about 11,500 square feet will soon be occupied by New Seasons, a day-care program for disabled adults, Lee said.

About \$850,000 is being spent on the renovations for that space, which will be done around November or December, he said.

A dozen loft-style luxury apartments will be on the third and fourth floors, he said.

Energy-efficient lights, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning also have been installed, according to Lee. He said the cost of installing the solar panels was about \$55,000 after the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund covered almost \$100,000 worth of the project.

The 15.8-kilowatt array was installed by Sunlight Solar of Milford, he said.

Lee said if a state grant comes through and the budget allows, he will install thermal solar panels for heating the apartments.

His Newtown-based Lee Capital Advisors is focusing on energy efficiency in other projects as well, he said.

One of those is a building in Danbury, where he's hoping thermal solar panels will make this winter's heating bills half of the \$15,000 they were last year.

Energy efficiency is the new theme for his company, he said.