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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **LARGE-SCALE UTILITY SOLAR PROJECT PLANNED FOR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF PALO ALTO**

### **Project will be first to participate in “Palo Alto CLEAN” feed-in tariff program**

On Sunday, December 6, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Palo Alto (UUCPA) unanimously approved a 129 kilowatt (kW) solar canopy project to be installed over its parking lot. Developed by local solar developer Komuna Energy, the project will be the first to tap into the City of Palo Alto’s pilot feed-in tariff program, known as Palo Alto CLEAN (Clean Local Energy Accessible Now).

UUCPA’s solar canopy project will be part of the local congregation’s ongoing effort to reduce its carbon footprint and increase local renewable power generation at the church campus, located at 505 E. Charleston Road in Palo Alto. The congregation installed a 17 kW solar array on its roof in 2011, a public electric vehicle charger in 2013, and drought-tolerant landscaping in 2014. UUCPA’s Board also recently voted to install an additional 24 kW rooftop solar array, which is expected to make the campus a net-zero electricity consumer in 2016.

Craig Lewis is a UUCPA member and Executive Director of the non-profit Clean Coalition, which worked closely with the City of Palo Alto to develop the Palo Alto CLEAN program. “I’m incredibly proud of UUCPA for taking this step,” he said. “Projects like the UUCPA solar parking canopy provide a model for how to scale clean local energy. We need to make local renewables a significant part of the energy mix, like in Germany where there is 25 times more local solar deployed than in California.”

While other non-profit groups in the area, such as St. Thomas Aquinas Parish and the Oshman Family Jewish Community Center, have also installed rooftop solar projects, the new UUCPA parking canopy project will be the first operating exclusively as a municipal power plant, tied directly into the grid. “In April of this year, our congregation adopted a resolution to work to reverse climate change,” said Sally Ahnger, President of the UUCPA Board of Trustees. “This project directly reflects our values by providing clean, locally-generated electricity.”

Lewis added, “Local renewables also provide the added benefit of community resilience.” The Clean Coalition is currently advising the City of Palo Alto on solar installations for the City-owned parking garages, and designing the City’s first solar-driven Solar Emergency Microgrid to provide ongoing indefinite power backup for the

City's Office of Emergency Services. "Larger solar projects like the UUCPA solar parking canopy can be enhanced with energy storage to create Microgrids," said Lewis. "They can provide emergency power either to specific sites, or provide benefits to larger communities in the form of Community Microgrids."

Gil Friend, Chief Sustainability Officer for the City of Palo Alto, said "It is great to see UUCPA take the initiative to deploy a local community-scale solar project, the first in Palo Alto. We hope that many more will follow through the Palo Alto CLEAN program. The City itself is looking to utilize its own properties in a similar fashion, starting with solar parking canopies atop the City-owned parking structures. In addition to advancing obvious environmental benefits and reducing the need for new transmission infrastructure, local renewables set the stage for added community resilience and self-reliance. The UUCPA project demonstrates a commitment to stewardship that sets a great example for all Palo Altans."

Construction of the UUCPA project is expected to begin in June 2016, pending approval by the City of Palo Alto of a 25-year power purchase agreement with Komuna Energy. Komuna plans to bring the project online by the fall of 2016. Over the project's 25-year lifetime, the solar canopy will generate approximately 4.7 million kWh of electricity - enough to power 585 homes for a year, or 26 homes over the 25 years.

"It's an important drop in the bucket," said Sven Thesen, Chair of UUCPA's Solar Task Force. "Our project will provide a blueprint for non-profits and commercial property owners alike. I see this as a big win, both environmentally and economically, plus we'll enjoy the added benefit of shaded parking for our members and guests."

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Palo Alto is a welcoming, supportive community for all ages, with Sunday services at 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., and religious education classes for the whole family. UUCPA affirms the integrity of each person's spiritual journey and the importance of working towards a fair and just society. More information is available at [uucpa.org](http://uucpa.org).

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For additional information, please contact Vanessa Warheit at 415-225-4435.

Information about the Palo Alto CLEAN program is at:

<http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/depts/utl/business/sustainability/clean.asp>

Photos of the Dec. 6 UUCPA vote (taken by Jack Owicki) are at:

<https://symbiote.smugmug.com/UUChurchofPaloAlto/Congregational-Meeting/>

More information on Community Microgrids is at:

<http://www.clean-coalition.org/our-work/community-microgrids/>