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## Two downtown Longview buildings receive rooftop solar panels

Workmen assembled bundles of 400-pound solar panels and, with the help of a large crane, lifted them onto the roof of the Stratford Arms building Wednesday morning.

By Amy M.E. Fischer / The Daily News | Posted: Thursday, November 17, 2011 8:45 pm

When residents of Community House and the Stratford Arms building turn on the taps, they can thank a federal stimulus grant for the hot water.

Lower Columbia Community Action Program received a \$101,000 Sustainable Energy Resources for Consumers grant to buy and install solar panels for heating the two downtown Longview buildings' water. Simple Solar Solutions LLC of Vancouver Longview installed the panels on the roof of the homeless shelter this summer and on the Stratford Arms building this week.

Joel Haymes, CAP's weatherization technician, said the solar panels will reduce the agencies' gas and electricity bills by at least 20 percent to 30 percent. The solar panel manufacturer predicts a 70 percent cost savings, but in this region, the ultraviolet rays that power the panels are weaker during the winter and won't produce as much energy, Haymes said.

The Longview Housing Authority is renovating the Stratford Arms building at 1312 Hemlock St. into 20 apartments for low-income veterans at risk of homelessness. The Stratford Arms was built in 1925.

"Longview Housing Authority was delighted to work with CAP on this water heater conversion. The system sorely needed an upgrade, and CAP came through. They made it possible," said Dan Freedman, LAH housing development manager.

Initially, the Longview Historic Preservation Commission was concerned about how solar panels would look on the roof of the Stratford Arms, which was one of downtown's original buildings and is listed on the local historic register. But after the contractor installed a plywood mock-up in September on the rooftop of the four-story building, the commission approved the project.

"You'd be hard pressed to find it unless you know it was there," Freedman said.

The \$1 million building renovation includes fire safety improvements, adding a lobby and an elevator, remodeling some of the apartments, making the building more wheelchair accessible and reinforcing the roof to withstand earthquakes. Throughout the process, the housing authority has worked with the preservation commission to preserve the building's historic features, according to city documents.

The city of Longview allocated about \$190,000 in federal HOME funds toward the project, which will be completed between March and June 2012, Freedman said.