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officials. No longer just a fringe arena for environmentalists and “green” advocates, solar power has grown into a \$5 billion-a-year global industry and is expanding at an annual rate of 40 percent. Experts forecast that the solar PV market will quadruple by 2010.

In 2004 the world’s 24 publicly traded solar companies as a group saw their shares jump almost 185 percent. Manufacturing costs are falling five percent a year, resulting in a healthy profit margins for these companies.

Companies such as General Electric, Shell, Kyocera, Sharp, Sanyo and British Petroleum are heavily invested and represent the scale and investment involved.

Connecticut has also built momentum behind a new campaign led by SmartPower, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting clean and renewable energy, whereby local municipalities have agreed to generate 20 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by the year 2010.

Westport, Fairfield, New Haven, Stamford and others have signed on to this 20 by 2010 campaign.

When asked to comment on Connecticut’s acceptance of solar PV, Vail said, “I took a good look at solar on an international level and I see the strides that have been made by leading countries such as Germany and Japan. It’s inspiring, and it’s also educational. I am amazed that Germany has set a goal of using only renewable energy in its near future. I do feel strongly that the potential is here to advance this all-important technology. It is definitely time for Fairfield County, Connecticut to invest and to innovate.”

Solar photovoltaics is the direct conversion of sunlight into electricity. The basic building block of PV technology is the solar “cell”. PV systems produce electricity directly from the electrons freed by the interaction of sunlight (photons) with semiconductor materials in the PV cells.

Multiple PV cells are connected to produce a PV module, the smallest

PV component sold commercially. These modules range in power output anywhere from two watts to 300 watts. A PV system connected or “tied” to the grid consists of the solar “array” (a group of PV modules wired together), and “inverter” (which converts the system’s direct-current, DC, electricity to utility compatible alternating-current, AC), and batteries (an option, that can provide backup power in case of a power interruption). The system also involves disconnects, grounding, and metering equipment.

Westport Solar Consultants took shape around the individual contributions its founders have made to the solar arena in Connecticut. Its principals were founding members of Solar Connecticut, a regional industry organization, and have helped energize public awareness for solar in the state.

Rountree serves on the board of Solar Connecticut. Vail and Pizzi also represent Connecticut as on of two partnerships in the Department of Energy’s (DOE) Million Solar

Roofs (MSR) program. The pair received a phase I federal grant to work on planning and strategizing for the development of a market platform upon which solar could gain momentum. Their commitment is to fuel the installation of 500 solar systems by the year 2010.

Their very recent efforts have also been directed towards several public presentations on solar PV across Fairfield County. With a matching grant award from the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund, Vail and Pizzi have built an outreach and education initiative to promote solar power throughout the state.

The firm’s leadership represents a strong combination of solar industry experience, technical skill, and business acumen, say firm officials.

Rountree’s architecture practice, Rountree Architects, has specialized in solar design and consulting. Rountree has been a part of the solar arena in Connecticut for the past 14 years and is considered a leading solar expert. Rountree is the founder of the AIA/Connecticut Committee on the Environment (COTE) and in

1995 was appointed to serve on the national COTE steering committee.

Vail has been a resident of Fairfield County for almost 40 years. He recently returned to his hometown of Westport after working for two years for Independent Power Systems in Bozeman, Mon. At Independent Power Systems, Vail worked as a designer, fabricator and installer of wind and solar PV systems throughout Montana.

Pizzi became involved with the solar arena as a business consultant. An assignment to research the marketplace for solar and to help develop a market strategy for an upstart New York City-based firm allowed him to uncover the market dynamics and business drivers that will fuel the larger-scale acceptance of solar as a main-stream energy source.

Westport Solar Consultants will operate from its offices at 130 Compo Road S.

**To contact Westport Solar Consultants, the office number is 227-1766. The firm’s web address is [westportsolar.com](http://westportsolar.com)**