

CITY BOOSTS PUBLIC WATERFRONT ACCESS WITH SOLAR LIGHTING

A former mill town, Port Alberni is reclaiming its waterfront for public recreation and enjoyment. Solar lights are guiding the way.

Life in Port Alberni, a small city off the west coast of Canada, has always centered on the water. From its history as a fishing village for the Tseshat and Hupacasath First Nations to its century-plus as a bustling mill town to its present as an outdoor recreation hub, the inlet and surrounding lands have long held economic, cultural, and environmental value.

Now, a new chapter for Port Alberni's waterfront is unfolding—one that promises increased public access and recreational opportunities. In September 2024, a new multi-use pathway connecting two waterfront attractions and running nearly the entire length of the city was opened to the public. Sol's UP2 solar lights were chosen for their cost-effectiveness, ease of installation, and contribution to climate objectives.

It wasn't the City's first experience with solar lighting. When the Somass Sawmill shut down six years ago, leaving vacant a 43-acre waterfront site in the



LOCATION

Port Alberni, Canada



APPLICATION

Pathway



PRODUCT

56 x UP2



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City's heart, the City purchased the land, planning to repurpose it into a mixed-use neighborhood. The first project was creating a 250-meter walkway along the water's edge (which would later connect to other existing and planned active transportation routes).

Lighting the pathway was a must—it gets dark as early as 4 p.m. in Port Alberni in winter—but extending power service to the new lights would be difficult. A contractor suggested solar lights as an alternative because they don't require a grid connection and can be placed virtually anywhere. The City eventually installed eight UP2 systems at the Somass Lands as a trial for possible use in larger projects.



Over the next year—including a Canadian winter—staff monitored the lights and found they were not only affordable and easy to install but also durable, reliable, and low-maintenance. A year later, when the City was awarded a government grant for the 4 km (2.5 mile) Quay to Quay pathway, selecting lights was easy: They ordered 56 UP2 systems for the Quay to Quay project and an additional 10 to continue work on the Somass Lands.

Like all Sol solutions, Port Alberni's lights are customized to their location and requirements. The systems feature nickel-metal hydride (NiMH) batteries because they can tolerate colder temperatures than other chemistries. They have dual solar panels that maximize collection. And they're equipped with a motion detection sensor that optimizes energy use by increasing output when activity is detected (and dialing it down when it's not).

Since opening to the public in September 2023, the pathway has been enthusiastically embraced by Port Alberni residents, who are excited to have a safe, family-friendly place to walk, run, and bike in their own backyard. Sol's lights provide increased usability and safety for users while helping to elevate the city's waterfront as a place for community connection, recreation, and enjoyment.

