

Pflugerville sees green technology as economic engine

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A triangular-shaped piece of land off the Texas 130 toll road could become Pflugerville's economic jewel.

The 167 acres are covered with cedar trees now, but officials are envisioning a mixed-use industrial park meant to lure green technology companies to Pflugerville.

The Renewable Energy Park, which will be close to Northeast Metropolitan Park and the Austin Executive Airport, will include offices, retail shops, restaurants, a hotel, offices, an electric vehicle charging station and townhouses or apartments. The company that will be the park's first tenant is scheduled to move there next spring.

The land was purchased in 2008 by the Pflugerville Community Development Corp.

"Renewable energy has been our focus. That's our target," said Floyd Akers, executive director of the development corporation, a taxpayer-funded organization created by voters in 2003 to bring business to the city. "To be quite frank with you, renewable energy jobs pay really well. These manufacturing and assembly jobs will help our families grow. With good jobs comes stable families."

The renewable energy park will offer companies another incentive: an option to use treated wastewater for manufacturing processes and landscaping, offered at a reduced rate as low as 25 cents per 1,000 gallons. Austin Water Utility, by comparison, offers reclaimed water at \$1.30 per 1,000 gallons.

Construction on the industrial park is scheduled to begin in two weeks. Last month, council members approved a \$633,780 contract for Buda-based Kiva Inc. to construct wastewater infrastructure for the property.

The park's first tenant will be Complete Energy Systems Inc., which is moving from Boca Raton, Fla. The company has two divisions: Atlantic Solar, which will make solar panels, and Green World Systems, which creates "mobile renewable power stations" that are powered by wind turbines and solar panels.

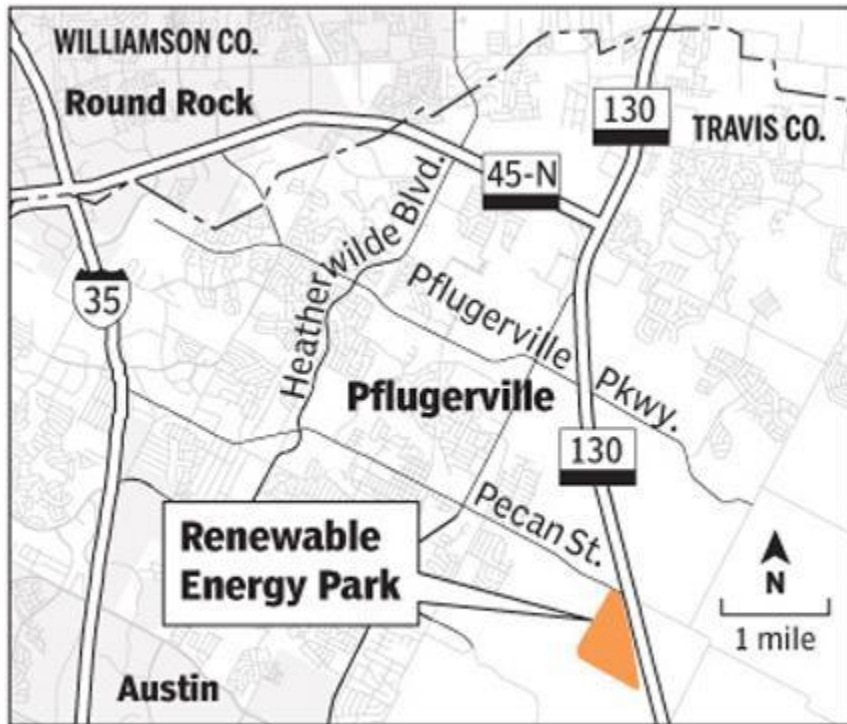
Last month, the Pflugerville City Council approved an incentives deal for Complete Energy Systems. It will receive a 50 percent property tax rebate from the city for five years, up to \$375,000, and the company agreed to hire at least 100 full-time employees by 2013 and at least 100 more by 2014 in a separate incentive agreement with the Pflugerville Community Development Corp.

The economic development corporation has agreed to pay the company \$3,000 per job created, up to \$750,000, as well as \$75,000 in moving expenses. Akers said Complete Energy Systems also is receiving \$1,400 per employee from the state's Skills Development Fund.

Complete Energy Systems, which has eight employees, is planning to move to Pflugerville in coming weeks to a temporary location and later to a 120,000-square-foot facility in the new industrial park.

"The city and the (development corporation) have just been phenomenal," said Harvey Katz, chief executive officer of Complete Energy Systems. Florida "has been cold in welcoming green technology."

Katz said he and company officials initially explored moving elsewhere in Florida, as well as Louisiana, Maryland and Kansas, but found the workforce and incentives in Texas, as well as the location, to be more attractive. "We said that was a golden opportunity for us to go into the energy park," Katz said.



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Courtesy of JB Goodwin