

## Austin City Council OK's incentives for SunPower

*Solar panel company plans to start hiring immediately for local center.*

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**The Austin City Council approved a job incentives package Thursday for a California solar panel technology company that plans to start hiring right away for a new 450-employee operations center.**

The council voted unanimously to approve an incentive deal with SunPower Corp., which conducted a national search before naming Austin in November as its first choice for the center.

"I'm very proud to have SunPower become part of our community and look forward to seeing you around Austin often," Mayor Lee Leffingwell said.

The San Jose, Calif.-based company plans to employ 450 people at the center over the next four years in marketing, finance, sales and other areas. The average salary will be \$70,000, and the company said it expects to fill 80 percent of the jobs locally.

"We're ready to start hiring immediately," said Jim Pape, president of SunPower. "We're looking at every new 2011 hire and asking, 'Why not in Austin?'"

SunPower designs and manufactures solar technology for homes, businesses and utility companies. The company has 5,500 employees in offices in North America, Europe, Australia and Asia. It reported \$1.5 billion in revenue during its 2009 fiscal year.

The company plans to open temporary offices as soon as possible while it seeks a permanent home for its 80,000-square-foot center, Pape said.

SunPower has said it would invest about \$10 million in office space and improvements.

Under the incentives package, the city will pay SunPower \$233 for every job the company creates and retains from 2011 to 2020, with a maximum total payment of \$901,710.

In addition to the city incentives, the state has said it plans to provide SunPower with \$2.5 million from the Texas Enterprise Fund, which was contingent on City Council approval of the local package.

Considering the incentives and other costs, balanced against the sales taxes and other revenue SunPower would bring, the city calculates it will have a net benefit of \$807,326 over the life of the incentive package.

"We had a sense that Austin was going to be a victor early in the process," said Pape, who was born in Irving and is a graduate of the University of Texas at Arlington. "It has everything we're looking for, with its

strong high-tech base, the university and its skilled work force. We're excited to be in Texas because we believe it can become a significant solar market."

Pape said the company was surprised by the number of Bay Area employees who have expressed interest in moving to Austin.

"There's a great cultural fit between the San Francisco Bay culture and Austin, and our employees are excited about that," Pape said.

**Courtesy of JB Goodwin**