

Grant helps fuel growth of first sustainability park

The Wayne County IDA owns the 40-acre industrial park

By Andrea Deckert – Reporter for the Rochester Business Journal (12/26/08)

A \$300,000 state grant has given the Wayne Industrial Sustainability Park a boost, pushing the project's timeline ahead and leading to more local jobs.

The first industrial park of its kind in the region, it will feature industries using by-products of each other's production processes as energy or as energy-saving measures, officials say.

In September, state Sen. Michael Nozzolio, R-Fayette, Seneca County, announced the funding to develop the 40-acre site owned by the Wayne County Industrial Development Agency. The funding is being used to build infrastructure at the site, including roads and utilities, making it shovel-ready for new businesses wanting to locate to the park.

The park has the potential to change the way local businesses receive power, and the new technology will lead to more local jobs, proponents say.

A few companies in the Ontario park – with a total of roughly 125 employees – already use renewable energy for power.

They are:

- Harbec Plastics, Inc. an injection molding company that employs 100;
- Sustainable Energy Developments Inc., a wind developer with 15 workers; and
- Northern BioDiesel Inc. a firm of roughly seven that produces biodiesel from restaurant oil waste and seed oil.

The WISP is located off Route 104 in Ontario, just past Webster.

Over the next 18 months, economic developers will begin a marketing push to bring tenants to

the park, and there is already some interest, officials said.

James Senall, managing director of business development at Greater Rochester Enterprise, Inc. said the agency is not directly involved with the WISP, but he has been following the project. "I think the concept is a great one and one that would be attractive to companies – especially those in renewable energy or energy efficiency sectors." Senall said. "For example, pitching a wind turbine manufacturer to locate within a park that is powered by on-site wind turbines is a pretty neat concept."

The goal of the WISP is to create an energy ecosystem where companies share renewable energy resources. It will have the potential to offer cogenerations and distribution of thermal and wind-generated power – a move some county leader say would lead to environmental and economic benefits, encouraging companies to locate there.

The idea of the park is modeled after what has been done at Harbec. The company is one of the first to implement successfully a hybrid micro-turbine, wind-powered cogeneration plan that can provide electricity, heat and air conditioning to the business.

"Over the past decade, Harbec has been able to implement an energy management strategy, which has proven to be an economic advantage to its operating cost control efforts." Said Robert Bechtold, Harbec's president. "The WISP project would take what methods and practices Harbec has realized as a company and apply them to an industrial park.

"This would amplify the positive results to many companies. It would help the industrial development agency do its job more successfully, which is to attract businesses to Wayne County in order to increase employment, provide additional tax revenues and demonstrate positive solutions for the future."

Bechtold said Harbec plans to add an additional 1.5 megawatt wind turbine at its facility. It will cost some \$4 million and generate nearly 2 megawatts of electricity annually, Bechtold said. The benefit Harbec has realized from green renewable energy is the ability to predict a portion of its energy costs 25 years into the future, he added.

"The reason for this is that renewable energy is not connected to any fossil or nuclear fuels, which we cannot predict the future cost of," Bechtold said. "We only know that they will continue to get more expensive as time goes on."

Multimillion-dollar project

The cost of creating the WISP would be roughly \$2.5 million, states a 2007 comprehensive economic development strategy update prepared by the Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council. The organization awarded the firm a \$200,000 working capital, low-interest loan in 2006.

The business park will focus on attracting companies looking to reduce their carbon footprint or firms developing green technology, said Margaret Churchill, executive director of the Wayne County Economic Development Corp. She noted the IDA purchased the property this year, and her office is working with the town of Ontario and Wayne County to use the latest round of funding on water, sewer and power infrastructure. A resolution related to industrial site development should go before the county board of supervisors in January, and the town is working on budget figures for the project, Churchill said.

Henrietta-based FRA Engineering P.C. has been working on the project from its inception, first on a feasibility study and then on site plan design and approval services for the Harbec wind turbine and redevelopment of the former 84 Lumber building that now houses Northern Biodiesel and SED, said Sarah Shoots, FRA's marketing coordinator.

Sustainable Energy has produced a study outlining the amount of wind energy that would be needed to power every company at the WISP and adjacent industrial parks, including the contiguous Beh Industrial Park. The study sets a baseline that can be used to

develop similar "pods" of sustainable industrial parks in the region.

Sustainable Energy Development assists clients, which include municipalities, businesses, schools, farms, and homeowners, with all aspects of constructing a wind turbine, from providing a wind resource assessment and a feasibility study for the site to financing and constructing the wind turbine.

First of Its Kind

Kevin Schulte, a co-founder and vice president of business development at Sustainable Energy, said being in an area such as the WISP with like-minded businesses is helpful. The firm moved its operations to the site in March. The park's goal is to provide long-term, low-cost energy for tenants by sharing natural resources, he said. The Wayne County site is the first in the region moving ahead with a full-blown green industrial park, Schulte said.

Green energy can provide long-term, fixed-price energy, which can be attractive to companies as the cost of traditional power increases, Schulte said. Due to the popularity of green business, the park's alternative-energy capabilities are also attractive.

While the park will target certain types of businesses – a solar power manufacturer, for example – it will be open to all kinds of business. "It's an economic solution for businesses to

control costs," he said. "The sustainability of the park becomes an economic development tool."

The expectation of the WISP is to have more wind turbines and methane digesters along with more involvement from the public and private sectors.

"They are all attainable goals," Schulte said. "It's a really cool project."

Michael Mandina, founder and president of Optimax Systems Inc., said his firm would be interested in using the green power generated by the WISP if it is available to them and makes financial sense. He does not believe the new industrial park would affect surrounding businesses, noting that the area, particularly Dean Parkway at the Beh Industrial Park where Optimax is located, is becoming a hotbed of advanced manufacturing firms.

"For me, a green-powered industrial park strengthens the technology branding for Wayne County, and I think that's great and appropriate," Mandina said. Harbec's Bechtold agreed. "After all is said and done, the biggest winner will be the environment," Bechtold said. "All these energy savings will be the result of petroleum, coal or nuclear fuels not being consumed and their related pollutions not being expanded. Those companies that care about things like the future of their children will be proud of what they are going to improve it instead of ignoring what damage they are doing to it."