

This wind power farm in Fenner, east of Syracuse, supplies energy to city residents who request the Community Energy product through National Grid.

PHOTO BY BOB MESSING

Emerald City

Having the foresight to “go green” pays off for businesses and the community.

by Virginia Citrano

A rendering of the proposed 'retail city'



Even in the dead of winter, Syracuse is a pretty green place.

Its baronial city hall, built more than 100 years ago, now gets all its power from renewable energy, not fossil fuels. Traffic signals at 354 intersections use energy-sipping LED lights. The city is renovating each of its 37 K-12 public schools to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification, improving indoor air quality and lessening the schools' dependence on fossil fuels while updating the infrastructure. The city's Centro public transportation system includes more than 125 clean-air buses.

You might expect such environmental consciousness in a city that is home to the Syracuse Center of Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems and the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. The center is a collaborative effort by more than 70 companies, research and economic development organizations, and colleges and universities to create new jobs for the city and region — Mayor Matthew Driscoll calls them "green-collar" jobs — in renewable energy, improving indoor environments, and assuring water quality. The innovations of many of its partners will be showcased in a new headquarters being built.

At the College of Environmental Science and Forestry, which educates 1,500 undergrads and 600 graduate students, leaders participate in Campus Commitment to Climate Neutrality, a program focused on creating a zero-carbon footprint by 2015. "If you are going to teach green, you have to be green," says Neil Murphy, the college's president.

Teaching green is particularly apt at a school with majors ranging from aquatic and fisheries science to bioprocess engineering, environmental biology, and wood products engineering. The college's Department of Paper and

GRAND PLANS

Looming large over the southeast corner of Syracuse's Onondaga Lake is a seven-story, 1.5 million-square-foot shopping and entertainment complex. Developer Robert Congel and his Pyramid Companies built Carousel Center on land once dotted by rusting oil storage tanks on seemingly irreclaimable land known to locals as Oil City.

Opened in 1990, Carousel Center is Syracuse's top tourist attraction, drawing more than 17 million annual visitors. But that number could be just a drop in the bucket. Pyramid Companies has proposed expanding the complex to create Destiny USA, a "retail city" by the lake that will include additional shopping, dining, hotel accommodations, an indoor aquarium, water park, stadium, performing arts center, golf courses, indoor park, artificial lake, and more. Nearby would sit a technology park for companies whose work focuses on renewable energy.

The entire complex would be "green" — deriving its power completely from renewable energy sources.

"Five years ago, we made a commitment to operate a world-class consumer destination as a living laboratory, free of fossil fuels," says Congel, founder and chairman of Destiny USA. "Today, I am proud that we are building the first phase on a brownfield site with renewable energy sources, and we look forward to attracting millions of visitors to our facilities."

CEO Mike Lorenz sees Destiny USA generating significant new business in the state. "We anticipate creating jobs across upstate New York as we look to purchase many of the needs and requirements of the project from New York State-based companies," he has said. "That sense of creating an entrepreneurial environment and attracting new companies into the region, into New York State, is one of the aspects of Destiny that we feel most proud of." — JAC

Developers want to expand the mega-mall Carousel Center into Destiny USA, a mammoth, environmentally green one-stop attraction.

Bioprocess Engineering is developing technology to produce cellulosic ethanol, bioplastics, and renewable chemicals from woody biomass produced by fast-growing shrub willow.

"We have a dream to build an integrated biorefinery," says Murphy.

"Most of the world's platform chemicals are petro-carbon-based. We want to use carbon derived from cellulose instead to produce biofuels, bioplastics, platform chemicals, and new composite materials with a cellulosic base."

In 2004, the school's work in detect-



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