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Officials laud billion-dollar Curtis Bay energy project

New plant to create 780 jobs statewide

by Chris Huntemann | Staff Writer

Maryland continued its embrace of "green" energy this week with an event commemorating the establishment of the Fairfield Renewable Energy Project in the Curtis Bay neighborhood of Baltimore.

The project is the first step in the development of an eco-industrial park by Energy Answers International of Albany, N.Y., which now has an office in Baltimore. The project features a power plant that will return a "brownfield" site to productive reuse and generate heat and electricity from renewable sources for the region while recovering valuable materials for commercial reuse, company officials said in a statement.

Construction of the 17-acre power plant is expected to begin in December, with completion and the beginning of commercial operations by December 2013.

"We think of the Fairfield Renewable Energy Power Plant and Eco-Industrial Park that we will be building as part of an industrial metamorphosis," said Patrick Mahoney, president of Energy Answers International, in a statement. "In 90 days, hundreds of people will be industriously building this clean and renewable combined heat and power plant."

Mahoney could not be reached for further comment.

The estimated cost of the project is a little less than \$1 billion, and it will be built on a 90-acre site that will house other businesses, said Kurt Krammer, spokesman for Energy Answers. Krammer said construction is expected to create 400 jobs, and once complete, the plant will provide 180 permanent jobs.

In addition, the project is to create an additional 600 indirect positions statewide, Energy Answers officials said in a statement, adding a letter of intent has been signed with the United Steel Workers for the representation of the power plant's operators.

The 140-megawatt combined heat and power plant "is expected to pump millions of dollars into the local economy through salaries and spin-off businesses," Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger (D-Dist. 2) of Cockeysville said in the statement.

"This is great news in this struggling economy," he said.

The plant will burn "processed refuse fuel" that will be produced at multiple off-site recycling facilities from source-separated municipal, commercial and light industrial waste streams, according to company information. The fuel might be supplemented by materials such as urban wood waste, auto shredder residue and chipped tires.

Ruppertsberger attended the kickoff ceremony for the project, along with business leaders and other officials including Gov. Martin O'Malley (D), Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake (D) and

representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The plant is designed to provide wholesale energy to help meet regional demands and reduced-price retail energy in an effort to entice energy-intensive industries to relocate to the park where the plant will be built, according to Energy Answers information.

The power plant will generate its own power for internal use and will not require any electricity from the local grid.

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