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Yantis, KFW Engineers team up on solar energy project

San Antonio Business Journal - by [Tricia Lynn Silva](#)

Work has begun on the latest, and largest, solar-energy project in greater San Antonio.

Yantis Co. and **KFW Engineers** and Surveying, both based in San Antonio, recently started construction on what is known as the Blue Wing Solar project. The development calls for the installation of 214,000 solar photovoltaic modules, or solar panels.

These panels will be installed on a site of roughly 140 acres along the intersection of Interstate Highway 37 and U.S. Highway 181, just southeast of San Antonio, explains Cris Eugster, executive vice president and sustainability officer for CPS Energy — which is creating the solar farm in partnership with Boulder, Colo.-based juwi solar Inc., a developer of solar, wind and biomass power plants.

Yantis, a general contracting firm, is providing the site work for the project. KFW is the civil engineer.

The farm is slated to be up and generating solar power for the San Antonio area this year, Eugster says.

In the past, Eugster adds, CPS Energy has not invested heavily in solar energy. Prior to Blue Wing, the largest solar-power project was the 200-kilowatt system installed on the roof of the Full Goods Building at the Pearl Brewery site near downtown San Antonio — a joint development between CPS Energy and Silver Ventures.

The Blue Wing solar farm, Eugster says, is representative of CPS Energy's long-term investment in some newer technologies — like renewable energy sources — for the purpose of providing an affordable source of energy to the community.

Blue Wing is also a vast departure from the kinds of projects that Yantis and KFW have worked on in the past, say Paul Basaldua and George Weron of Yantis and KFW, respectively.

But this non-traditional project has also come with a unique set of challenges.

"There were no (building) codes to speak of on how to develop (the solar farm)," says Weron, a co-founder of KFW.

Weron gives credit to both City of San Antonio and Bexar County leaders for their help in coming up with the development codes for the solar farm. That work, he adds, will not only serve Blue Wing, but will be vital to future solar-power projects that could be created in San Antonio.

"We are serving as pioneers (for solar-power development,)" he adds.

"To be on the cutting edge of the development industry, we want to be a part of that," adds Basaldua, who is the director of business development for Yantis.

KFW Vice President Blaine Lopez adds that Blue Wing will be very visible to those traveling along Interstate Highway 37, from cities like Corpus Christi and Pleasanton.

"It's a nice introduction to San Antonio, (and how the city is) taking a step forward in renewable energy," he says.

Under the terms of the agreement between CPS and juwi, the latter will provide CPS with electricity on a wholesale basis for 30 years. The Blue Wing project is expected to generate 14 megawatts of power — about as much electricity as that produced by roughly 1,800 homes on an annual basis.

Sums up Eugster: "It's an exciting milestone for San Antonio."

Speaking of green

The Central Texas-Balcones Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) recently announced that as of March 31, 2010, Central Texas boasts 62 LEED-certified buildings — up from 24 as of first-quarter 2008.

"This number highlights the increasing move toward green building practices, particularly in the major centers of Austin, San Antonio and Waco," observes James Andrews, 2010 chairman of the board for the Central Texas Green Building Council.

Andrews' organization reports that, in San Antonio alone, there are presently 14 LEED-certified properties. Three major area businesses, for example, are now headquartered in LEED-certified buildings: **Rackspace Managed Hosting**, Tesoro and Port San Antonio.

Retail roundup

- New assignment: The San Antonio offices of **The Weitzman Group** and Cencor Realty Services have been hired to lease and manage, respectively, Bandera Oaks. The center spans 64,570 square feet along the east quadrant of Loop 1604 and Bandera Road.

Lex Lutto and Gene Williams of the Weitzman commercial retail division in San Antonio will head up the leasing for Bandera Oaks.

Karen Waring, director of property/asset management for the local Cencor office, will head up the management of the center.

Bandera Oaks is anchored by **Office Depot** and Petco. Other tenants include Pei Wei Asian Diner, Bright Now! Dental and **Wachovia**.

- New restaurant: The doors are open at La Gloria, the newest restaurant at Pearl and the latest culinary endeavor for local chef Johnny Hernandez. Pearl is an urban retail and residential complex that is being created on the site of the former Pearl Brewery.

- Mom rules! According to a recent report by Washington, D.C.-based the National Retail Federation (NRF), the average person will spend \$126.90 on Mother's Day gifts for momma — up from \$123.89 last year.

Total spending for Mother's Day 2010 is expected to reach \$14.6 billion — up from \$14.1 billion in 2009.

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