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Cinco Solar is helping to keep retirement community green

San Antonio Business Journal - by [Catherine Dominguez](#)

A San Antonio military retirement community is moving forward with efforts to become more environmentally conscious by installing energy saving systems on its new and existing facilities.

San Antonio-based Cinco Solar Inc. is working with the Army Residence Community (ARC) to install solar hot water systems in the retirement community's 180 cottages and is also helping ARC obtain an Energy Star rating for its planned 16,408-square-foot Wellness Center.

Energy Star is a joint program between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy designed to help save money and protect the environment through energy-efficient products and practices.

Cinco Solar is also wrapping up a study to determine the feasibility of installing a solar hot water system in the community's multi-story apartment building.

Bruce Chittenden, director of finance and personnel at the ARC, says he makes a strong effort to find the best way to serve the 600 residents of the community. Part of that effort, he says, includes keeping costs low while saving energy.

"I look for ways to save money and to keep their fees on a level playing field," he says. "I look for ways to save energy because I know it's good corporate stewardship."

Hollis Fitch III, CEO of Cinco Solar, says his company is a perfect fit to help the retirement community move to the cutting-edge in green technology.

Cinco Solar was founded in 2007 in response to the growing interest in renewable energy. The company designs and installs high-quality renewable energy systems for both commercial, industrial and residential customers. The projects with the ARC will be the company's first commercial project since its inception.

Fitch says the ARC is a ideal candidate for using solar energy.

"The guys at the ARC are really keen on (using renewable energy) and are doing a great job implementing it," Fitch says. "They are very good stewards of the environment."

Becoming a star



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(L to R) Hollis Fitch III, CEO of Cinco Solar Inc., along with Bruce Furbish and Bruce Chittenden, representatives of the Army Residence Community, are teaming up to help save money and energy for residents of the military retirement community.

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The Army Residence Community, near Randolph Air Force Base, is a self-contained retirement community founded in 1987 and is home to 600 retired career military officers representing all branches of service, their spouses, widows and widowers.

Chittenden says he is focused on ways to save residents money while protecting the environment. Along with the solar hot water systems, Chittenden says the ARC is looking at the possibility of using solar panels for electricity in the future and more ways to conserve water, such as planting drought-tolerant grass on the 50-acre campus to reduce the amount of watering needed during summer months.

Chittenden says the new \$4 million Wellness Center will be two stories high with an outpatient therapy center on the second floor, and office space, a bistro and sports lounge on the first floor. The project, which recently broke ground, is slated for completion early in 2009.

He says the ARC has negotiated a \$15,000 contract with Cinco Solar to act as a consultant on the project to ensure the new facility is energy efficient based on the Energy Star program requirements.

"It's not so much about projects; it's a philosophy," Chittenden says. "We are hitting on all fronts to save energy."

Fitch says his company will help identify different areas where the construction of the new center can be made more energy efficient, such as utilizing more insulation, energy-saving roofing materials and windows.

According to Chittenden, the Energy Star program will make the Wellness Center 33 percent to 50 percent more energy efficient than similar buildings without the Energy Star rating.

Here comes the sun

The ARC is also saving money and promoting a green environment by installing solar hot water systems in its 180 cottages. The cottages average about 1,200 square feet and the system will supply about 75 percent of the power to heat the water for the community.

Solar hot water systems are made up of solar thermal collectors, a fluid system to move the heat from the collector to its point of usage, and a reservoir or tank for heat storage and subsequent use.

Chittenden says the cost to install the system in each of the cottages will be about \$6,000 per unit. However, he says through rebate programs with CPS Energy, the ARC could get back between \$500 and \$800 on each unit.

According to CPS Energy's Web site, the utility offers rebates to businesses that install energy-saving systems to help defer the cost of solar equipment.

In addition, the ARC is in the midst of a feasibility study to determine if the community's existing 13-story apartment building is a candidate for a solar hot water system. The study is examining if the apartment building's roof can accommodate the solar hot water system and water storage unit needed. Fitch says his company will complete the study within the next few weeks.

If the study shows the costs for installing the system can be recouped within eight years, Chittenden says the ARC will move forward with the project. The estimated cost to install the system that will provide hot water for the high rise will be about \$200,000.

Once the project is approved, Chittenden says Fitch will apply for rebate programs through CPS Energy on behalf of the ARC.

"Energy is on the forefront of everyone's mind," Chittenden says. "We are trying to take the lead on this and get ahead of the ball game."

The Army Residence Community

What: A self-contained retirement community for all branches of military personnel, their spouses, widows or widowers.

Founded: 1987

Minimum age: 60

Residencies: 199 apartments, 180 cottages, 30 assisted-living units and 101 skilled nursing beds.

Facilities: Dining room, swimming pool, fitness center, chapel, library, beauty salon and health care facilities.

Location: 7400 Crestway, San Antonio, 78239

Tel.: 210-646-5316

Web site: www.armyresidence.com

Energy Star

What: A joint program between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy

When: Created in 1992

Purpose: To save money and protect the environment through energy-efficient products and practices; more than 100 products are listed as Energy Star qualified products, from appliances, to home electronics to building materials.

More: For more information visit www.energystar.gov