

Brewery's solar plan to be tops in Texas

Pearl project would unseat Fort Sam's as the state's largest

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The redeveloped Pearl Brewery soon will sport enhanced green credentials: the biggest solar energy project in Texas.

Silver Ventures, the developer of the landmark former brewery, plans to install solar panels atop an old warehouse that's being renovated for offices, retail space and residential apartments.

The panels, to be installed by year's end, will supplant what is now the state's biggest solar project, at Fort Sam Houston.

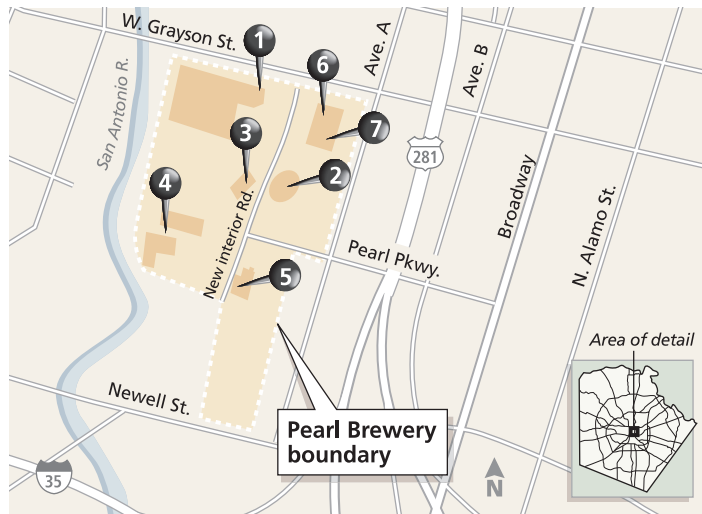
The brewery's \$1.35 million solar project will be paid for with \$950,000 from Silver Ventures and \$400,000 from CPS Energy, the city-owned utility. They announced their plans Monday.

The 758 photovoltaic panels will be installed atop a former warehouse, known as the Full Goods Building, which once stored finished beer.

The panels will be capable of generating 200 kilowatts, or about one-fourth of the

Pearl Brewery site

These are structures that are included in the first phase of the Pearl Brewery redevelopment:



- 1. Office, retail, living space, with solar power, at old warehouse
- 2. Pearl Stable
- 3. Center for Foods of the Americas
- 4. Brew house
- 5. Administration building
- 6. Aveda Institute
- 7. Texas Farm-to-Table Cafe

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power needed in the building, an L-shaped structure of 67,000 square feet. The solar power will supplement electricity from CPS Energy.

The building's heating and air conditioning will be handled by the most up-to-

date system available, said Bob Sohn, a lawyer and former Design San Antonio leader advising Silver Ventures on the Pearl Brewery development.

The brewery's 200-kilowatt system "is a substantial

installation for a midsized to large commercial facility," said Noah Kaye, a spokesman for the Solar Energy Industries Association in Washington, D.C.

A 3- to 4-kilowatt system can power a 2,200-square-foot house that uses 10,000 kilowatt-hours a year, Kaye said. The brewery's system is the equivalent of 50 solar-powered homes.

The solar project has been almost two years in the making, Sohn said.

The solar installation is part of Silver Ventures' efforts to ensure that the brewery is a good steward of resources. Already, the project's roofs collect rainwater, which is stored in cisterns that once held beer.

Xeriscaping continues at the site, using drought-tolerant native plants, Sohn said.

CPS Energy hopes the Silver Ventures agreement will serve as a model for other commercial uses of solar power. The utility wants to launch an economically viable solar installation and measure its benefits.

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Pearl's solar energy project could be model for others

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"We've had a goal of testing solar energy technology in a real-world setting," said Paula Miles, CPS Energy director of energy research and technology initiatives. "Public-private partnerships are going to become the way to get things done. And this, for us, is one of our first forays into that brave new world."

The brewery's renovated warehouse would include 40,000 square feet of office space, 12,500 square feet of retail and restaurant space, and 10,864 square feet of residential space.

"It was a massive warehouse where finished beer was taken," said Bill Shown, Silver Ventures' managing director of real estate.

Only the metal building's skeleton, concrete foundation and roof deck now remain.

"All else will be new," Shown said. "It will have a sleek, modern design."

The residential component includes eight two-story live/work studio apartments, ranging from 650 to 1,300 square feet.

Each apartment's ground floor is designed for use as an artist's studio, and the second floor for living space.

The development also includes one second-floor apartment, which would sit atop a planned coffee shop or tavern.

Cambridge Realty Group Inc. is handling the building's leasing.

The rents are expected to run between \$1.40 and \$1.50 per square foot. That's a first-class rate, compared with the average rental rate for new apartments in San Antonio, which is about 99 cents per square foot, according to O'Connor & Associates, which tracks the San Antonio rental market.

At about \$21.50 to \$24 per square foot, the yearly office rents also will be pricey, compared with those downtown. The average downtown office rent is \$18.23 per square foot, according to NAI REOC Partners, which tracks the San Antonio office market.

The rates at Pearl are more comparable to new office space on the North Side.

But it's an ideal space for AIA San Antonio.

"Our organization is really excited about the prospects of being at Pearl," said Chris Schulz, president of the professional organization for architects. "We think there's a great synergy between what we do and the vision that Silver Ventures has for Pearl as a kind of working laboratory for living and work environments."

AIA plans to lease 5,000 square feet. That would include space for its offices, plus room to sublease to the Architecture Foundation of San

Antonio.

The foundation would provide a studio for public education in architecture, design and neighborhood planning, which might include a partnership with the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Taylor-West Advertising also plans to lease office space at the renovated structure, known as the Full Goods Warehouse.

The offices and apartments will help make the solar installation a real-world learning lab, Silver Ventures and CPS Energy say.

Visitors will be able to learn more about how solar power works, including seeing real-time information about the amount of solar energy the rooftop panels are generating, Sohn said.

That aspect will set it apart from the city's other big solar installation.

"The problem with the military's installation at Fort Sam is that it's not as open and available to the public as the one at Pearl will be," said Bill Barker, executive director of Solar San Antonio, a nonprofit organization that seeks to increase use of solar power.

"Pearl Brewery's solar will become a bit of a tourist stop in its own right," Barker said. "There will be visitors to the site who'll want to see the largest solar installation in the state. It's pretty smart on Pearl's part to realize that this adds value to what they're doing there."