

Energy Research, Green Technologies Key Elements of Knoxville-Oak Ridge Innovation Valley Economic Future

KNOXVILLE/OAK RIDGE, Tenn. – It's not hard to understand why energy research and development of green technologies are hot topics throughout the Knoxville-Oak Ridge Innovation Valley of Tennessee.

- The State is investing \$62.5 million in research and actual energy production, including construction of the Tennessee Solar Institute to be housed at the new research farm currently under construction on the University of Tennessee-Knoxville campus and managed by UT.
- In mid-March, the Department of Energy (DOE) unveiled Tennessee Valley Energy Enterprise, a concept to reuse federal sites at Oak Ridge and elsewhere in the Southeast for energy-related research in solar/photovoltaic, electrical grid enhancements, cleaner coal and work on hybrid vehicles. No dollar figure has been announced.
- As part of the Gov. Phil Bredesen's alternative fuels initiative, the University of Tennessee started just construction on a \$40 million pilot biomass ethanol facility here. Special attention is being paid to developing switchgrass as a feedstock. The perennial grows well on marginal land, requires few chemical fertilizers or herbicides and does not take acreage away from food production.
- Several providers of polycrystalline silicon have begun setting up shop in the area, positioning the Innovation Valley region to become a major solar hub. They include German chemical giant Wacker Chemie, which will build a \$1 billion plant in nearby Cleveland, Tennessee, and Hemlock, which is constructing a large plant in Clarksville. One of the principal producers of glass for solar modules, Asahi Glass, has a production facility in the area as well.
- The Obama administration's proposed budget is expected to bring \$3 billion to federal facilities in Oak Ridge.

Economic developers in the Innovation Valley are leveraging these projects to expand jobs and attract new businesses.

"We understand the enormous impact green research and marketable technologies can have nationally and regionally," said Jesse Smith, director of technology for the Innovation Valley.

"High tech is our future," he said. "We're in an extremely strong position because of Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the University of Tennessee, so many innovative young companies here, and a talent pool that's world class."

For more information, visit www.knoxvilleoakridge.com or contact Garrett Wagley at 865-246-2661 or at gwagley@knoxvillechamber.com.

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