



Chris Prevolos/Staff photo

Jared Haines, president of Mercury Solar Systems, stands with a solar panel on the roof of iPark Norwalk. Mercury will be installing 54 panels on the building, and the project will receive about \$45,000 in state funds.

Going green, and going to Greenwich

Mercury Solar Systems opens area office, adds its panels to iPark Norwalk

By Richard Lee
Assistant Business Editor

Mercury Solar Systems has opened an office at, appropriately enough, 10 Green Lane in Greenwich, seeing the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund's solar rebate program as a vehicle to build its client base.

New Rochelle, N.Y.-based Mercury arrived with a bang, snagging National RE/Sources, the Greenwich-based developer of iPark Norwalk, as its first corporate client.

Mercury's installation of a 54-panel, 11-kilowatt solar panel system atop a portion of the sprawling 400,000-square-foot former Perkin-Elmer headquarters should start this year and take 1½ weeks to complete, said Mercury President Jared Haines.

"This is our first (corporate project) in

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Connecticut. We're looking at advertising the iPark project once it's installed," said Haines, who proposed a solar installation to Joseph Cotter, National RE/Sources president and chief executive officer, at a reception at the Norwalk facility.

He suggested combining solar panels with the environmentally friendly roof that National RE/Sources plans to install.

"This is the first time I've seen this, a combination green roof and solar, done anywhere — definitely the first time in Connecticut," said Haines, estimating the solar panel project at \$100,000. "It's a

smaller-scale system because they want to measure the results."

The state Clean Energy Fund will pay about \$45,000 toward the cost, and National RE/Sources will be eligible for a 30 percent federal tax rebate, he said. Solar panels normally last 25 years.

"The conversion to solar electricity is a viable option for all businesses in the Northeast and in Fairfield County where electricity rates are among the highest in the country," Haines said. "The combination of federal tax credits, cash incentives offered by the state and savings on electricity costs outweigh the investment."

Some companies are adopting solar technology because they want to improve the environment, said David Ljungquist, project manager at the Clean Energy

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Solar

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Fund, but others are seeing it as a hedge against utility price increases.

"Companies want some degree of control over rising energy rates. When you put in photovoltaic, you know what your cost will be for the next 25 years," he said.

Commercial property owners also see solar installations as another way to increase the value of their holdings.

"Bigger companies with a lot of shareholders like to include it in financial reports for their investors," said Rosemarie Hughes, leasing administrator for iPark Norwalk.

The iPark this spring signed Norwalk Hospital as its first tenant for the main building, taking 100,000 square feet for its pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology and Soundview Medical services.

"Solar electricity fits our goal of having Class A energy-efficient office space that's a commercial role model for conservation," said Lynn Ward, vice president of leasing.

Haines plans to use the iPark project as a model for Mercury's other corporate customers. Based on the negotiations go-

"Companies want some degree of control over rising energy rates."

David Ljungquist

Project manager, state Clean Energy Fund

ing on between Mercury several area businesses, iPark will see some visitors.

"In Connecticut, we've got about \$3.5 million in estimates right now, and about 80 percent is commercial," Haines said, with the remainder being possible residential projects. "People are learning more and more about the benefits on the commercial side. We're talking with real estate developers, car dealerships, car washes, a pet store and a Fortune 500 company."

Mercury Solar, affiliated with ECNY Electric, a New York state-based electrical contractor, employs 15, including eight installers.

Within the next five years, they will be busy as companies learn more about the state and federal programs and become more sensitive to the environment, Haines said.

"It's going to take the same road as hybrid cars," he said.