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We wanted 'green'; now we've got it

Green is hot.

As Tallahassee looks beyond state government in seeking a solid economic future, a major focus has been on so-called "green technology," or technology that will help humans put a lighter burden on the environment. Gov. Charlie Crist created the Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change to help fight global warming. And our local Knight Creative Communities Initiative has launched Greenovation, with the goal of making the Tallahassee region a capital for green technology.

This week's announcement by the governor that Tallahassee will be the site of a \$182 million waste-to-energy plant makes it clear that this effort has quickly become more than just talk.

Using plasma arc technology, the 200,000-square-foot plant will vaporize 1,000 tons of garbage a day - nearly twice as much as Tallahassee and Leon County now generate - and use that garbage to create 42 megawatts of electricity, enough to power 22,000 homes.

Green Power Systems of Jacksonville will build the plant, with overseas financing.

But that's not the only project in the works.

Biomass Gas & Electric of Norcross, Ga., plans to build a 38-megawatt plant on 21 acres near Innovation Park. The facility will burn plant matter to generate power, and it could be online within three years.

The same company also is considering Liberty County for a 75-megawatt plan to convert wood into energy. Mr. Crist said the plant represents the growing use "of clean, sustainable energy."

Kim Williams and his company, Marpan Recycling, are planning a 25,000-square-foot, environmentally friendly waste recycling plant on Woodville Highway. The plant eventually could process 1,500 tons per day of fiber that comes from sources ranging from construction sites to cardboard. Mr. Williams says the project fits his "green vision."

This is good economic news for our region. The plasma plant is expected to create 45 jobs, the recycling plant 15 to 20. And it establishes us as a player in green technology.

But as with most endeavors, there are words of caution.

We need to ensure that we are on our way to becoming a green capital and not a trash-disposal capital. Florida State has talked of creating an energy research center, and we need to look beyond just garbage.

Also, with trash comes trash trucks, and the stench, and the extra wear on roads. One need look only as far as the transfer station on Gum Road to see how the thrill of a new project can be muted when you find it's moving near your neighborhood.

Still, we are thinking green. That's a giant step forward.

Susan Glickman, a lobbyist for the Natural Resources Defense Council, told the *Democrat*: "The move to new technologies is just extraordinary these days. It's promising to see all of this new activity."

We agree.