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GOING GREEN

A real sun city

The green dream of a solar city is approaching reality near Fort Myers.

Developer Sydney Kitson is proposing a town of about 17,000 acres east of Fort Myers that would include 20,000 homes, shops, workplaces and more — all powered by the largest solar photovoltaic system in the world, the St. Petersburg Times reports.

It sounds like science fiction, but here's a fact that brings the idea down to Earth: Florida Power & Light is gearing up to begin construction on the solar power system later this year or early next year.

It will take about a year to build it, and the power company's 4.5 million customers will pay about 20 cents a month to cover the cost, the newspaper reports.

The system is expected to generate more power than the solar city would need. That means the city would send the unused solar power to other power company customers.

At night, the city would run on power from other utility plants that generate power from more traditional fuels.

Kitson envisions all the homes and businesses being equipped with the latest energy-saving devices.

Offices within the city would offer the option for people to work

FAST FACT

Solar city. At least 61,000 tons of carbon dioxide normally generated each year through conventional power sources will be prevented.

Source: St. Petersburg Times

within the city. Street lamps would be solar-powered too, of course, and community-shared recharging stations for electric vehicles would be available throughout the city.

Even the surroundings of the city would be steeped in green.

The city would be near a portion of the Babcock Ranch, conservation land of wood storks and panthers that the city and Lee County bought for \$350 million in 2005. That, according to the Times, was the largest conservation buy in Florida history.

In exchange for selling that property, Kitson got clearance to use the remaining acreage for his solar city — one he hopes will be a shining star for inspiring similar developments elsewhere.

It's a promising potential new twist for a state that has seen practically every kind of development under the sun.

And it's good to see one being envisioned that would actually take advantage of the sun for a change.