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| **ICMA 2010 PROGRAM EXCELLENCE SUBMISSION****COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY AWARD****AURORA CAMPUS FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY****Problem Assessment:**  To embrace economic and environmental sustainability the city created the Aurora Campus for Renewable Energy (ACRE). ACRE is located on a city-owned 1,762 acre parcel in the northeast plains of Aurora, representing the city’s commitment to the principles of sustainability, energy efficiency, renewable energy and promotion of green jobs.**Program Implementation & Costs:** The Aurora Campus for Renewable Energy is part of a master plan for the city of Aurora that targets research and development of alternative energy to generate power without producing greenhouse gasses, while at the same time expanding economic development opportunities for the city, and the region. The goal of ACRE is to become the premier U.S. site for research and development information pertaining to renewable energy, with an emphasis on solar energy. ACRE has provisions for manufacturing of equipment and materials that support renewable energy deployment within the region and provide accessibility for educating people about the important environmental, social and economic benefits of the energy campus. ACRE will help Aurora capitalize on the developing new energy economy by creating new, quality jobs in Aurora. ACRE demonstrates many innovative and sustainable features, including the following:* maintaining the land’s natural character by incorporating ecosystem values and surface water corridors into the design
* targeting research and development to fine tune cutting-edge renewable energy practices into technologies that can be implemented within utility service markets applying electric power generation that produces not greenhouse gases and reduces the city’s carbon footprint
* making provision for manufacturing of equipment and materials that will s upport renewable energy deployment within the region
* accessibility for educating people about the important environmental, social and economic benefits associated with the energy campus

 Aurora’s plan also requires that any project on the campus is designed, built and operated in a sustainable manner. By creating this renewable energy campus and designating natural corridor spaces this plan will preclude residential development in close proximity to Denver International Airport. The land was acquired in areas around the airport to assure compatible development. Aurora, paid approximately $10 million for the land about five years ago and has leased SolarTAC as the first tenant on the site. The SolarTac facilities will sponsor research in three areas: proprietary, in which the results are not shared; common, in which research is shared among participating or interested entities; and public research, which can be shared with anyone interested in following solar energy developments.**Tangible Results/Outcomes:** The first tenant on the site is the Solar Technology Acceleration Center (SolarTAC). When completed, the 74-acre SolarTAC, will become one of the biggest solar technology testing facilities in the United States, offering an inclusive and integrated means for testing the commercial viability of solar technologies ranging from simple photovoltaics to larger, utility-scale concentrating solar power options. With more than 300 days of sunshine a year, the site’s level terrain and accessibility to the Denver/Aurora area and Denver International Airport make it a win-win for solar, and the collaboration of seven partners – all involved in energy research and generation – proves that solar energy is ready and willing to join mainstream energy generation. Partners include the city of Aurora, Spain-based Abengoa Solar; Kansas City, Missouri-based Midwest Research Institute (SolarTAC’s manager); Beltsville, Maryland-based SunEdison; Minneapolis, Minnesota-based Xcel Energy (serving Minn., Wisconsin, Michigan, North and South Dakota, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas); Colorado School of Mines; the Colorado Renewable Energy Collaboratory (or CREW, affiliated with the University of Colorado, Boulder); Golden, Colorado-based National Renewable Energy Laboratory, one research arm of the Department of Energy with headquarters in Washington D.C., and – most recently – Palo Alto, California based Electric Power Research Institute, or EPRI. Energy companies and scientists will share the site to test, validate, and demonstrate new solar energy technologies, as well as fully integrated solar systems before commercial deployment. Solar energy companies also can use the facility to show customers how their systems work under real conditions. The testing and development conducted at the SolarTAC site at ACRE will contribute to the state’s solar industry, further enhancing Colorado’s position as a gateway for high performing solar products that lower energy costs while drawing more companies and clean energy jobs to the area. |
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