



CHICAGO MANUFACTURING
RENAISSANCE COUNCIL

Proposal: Austin Renewable Energy Innovation Park

The Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Council (www.chicagomanufacturing.org) proposes the creation of the Austin Renewable Energy Innovation Park, which will focus on commercial-scale wind and other renewable energy sectors, such as solar and geothermal. The utility-grade wind turbine industry is currently exploding through the world, and commercial-scale wind power represents the next major trend in the wind energy industry. However, commercial wind energy is still in its infancy and requires significant research before it can be economically viable.

The Innovation Park will be based on a “cluster” research and development (R&D) center model. “Cluster” R&D centers are rooted in a local region, tied to a specific industry, and guided by a vision for local development while pursuing technological leadership and promoting innovation to strengthen local businesses. The Park will provide an anchor for a renewable energy cluster that would attract new business and investment, helping to build a green economy in Chicago from top to bottom.

Public investment in the Innovation Park can bring longer lasting and more strategic competitive advantages to Chicago businesses, in contrast to traditional methods like tax credits and subsidies. The Innovation Park can help build a critical mass of companies, skilled engineers, designers, and researchers with the knowledge and expertise to continually develop new products and innovations to attract new business and new investment. The Park will be a springboard for the redevelopment of Chicago’s West Side, creating the economic infrastructure for stable careers. It will be a national symbol for the new era of holistic sustainable development, which encompasses environmental, economic, and social factors.

The Innovation Park’s mission will be to advance the competitiveness of local companies engaged in the wind sector by capturing and internalizing emerging technologies; conducting research into the design of wind turbines and components; and perfecting the manufacturing processes related to wind turbines and infrastructure. The Park will be linked to Austin Polytechnical Academy, a new high school educating the next generation of leaders in advanced manufacturing. Austin Polytech has been recognized by President Obama as an innovative national model for education.

While the Park’s work will not be limited to the Chicago area, it will emphasize local creation of new companies in order to build a regional cluster with sufficient critical mass. Furthermore, the Park’s mission will be grounded in the pursuit of technological innovation to promote sustainable development in Chicagoland companies and the regional economy. Ultimately, the Austin Renewable Energy Innovation Park will help establish Chicago as a world-class center for advanced design and manufacturing in renewable energy.