

# Largest Solar Power System Put In



JARRETT BAKER/Special to The Sun

Pure Energy Solar field managers Travis Tooke, left, and Tom Doughty run wiring to 126 solar panels Wednesday morning on the roof of Akira Wood on Main Street in Gainesville. The 25-kilowatt grid-tie system will provide electricity for the facility; any excess power will be sold to Gainesville Regional Utilities, said Wayne Irwin, president of Pure Energy Solar.

**By ANTHONY CLARK**

Sun business editor

By installing the largest solar power system in Gainesville, Hoch Shitama was thinking green - and not just the environmental kind.

With rebates, tax credits and energy savings, Shitama said his architectural woodworking company should recoup the costs of the 25-kilowatt system and start saving money in four years or less.

Pure Energy Solar, a 2-year-old solar electrical company in Gainesville, installed the last of 126 solar panels Wednesday at Akira Wood in the Baird Center at Main Street and Depot Avenue, covering a 92-by-36-foot section of roof.

The photovoltaic system will capture energy from the sun and convert it to electricity for the shop's use. Any electricity the shop does not use will go into the city electrical grid, with GRU crediting the company 6 cents per kilowatt on its utility bill.

"Akira Wood will become a power generation facility," said Wayne Irwin, co-owner of Pure Energy Solar.

Based on a conservative estimate of five hours of light a day, the system will provide 125 kilowatts a day, or enough to power five average homes.

At six hours of light, Shitama figures he'll save 20 percent to 25 percent on his energy costs.

That's on top of a state rebate of \$4 a kilowatt hour, a GRU rebate of \$1.50 a kilowatt hour and a 30 percent federal tax credit, adding up to about \$200,000 in incentives, nearly the cost of the system.

"There are companies in Orlando and thereabouts doing a lot of marketing that appear to be a little bit cheaper, but we prefer to keep the business in town," Shitama said.

GRU officials confirmed Akira has the largest solar project in Gainesville to date. Most local solar systems are for homes in the 2- to 5-kilowatt range.

The project brings Shitama full circle. He was in the solar business in Gainesville in the 1980s with Eagle Sun Systems and Pulstar Systems. At the time, a 40 percent residential tax credit fueled the solar industry, he said. But in 1985, the credit was not renewed.

"That whole industry just kind of disappeared," he said. Now that tax credits and rebates are back, so is the industry.

*Anthony Clark can be reached at 352-374-5094 or [anthony.clark@gvillesun.com](mailto:anthony.clark@gvillesun.com).*