



Greenfire really digs saving energy

By Monica Chen : The Herald-Sun

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DURHAM -- Greenfire Development is digging Earth Day in a big way.

The downtown developer begins drilling for a geothermal heat pump system at Rogers Alley today and has hired an out-of-state contractor to dig 1,500 feet for each of three planned wells.

While typical HVAC systems draw warmth and coldness from the air, geothermal pumps draw them from groundwater and circulate water through pipes in a closed system to reduce evaporation. The system could reduce energy consumption by 25 percent to 50 percent, according to the company.

The water will cool the buildings in the summer and heat them in the winter because the groundwater maintains a constant temperature of about 55 degrees. The centralized system will serve three, possibly four, of the surrounding buildings, according to spokeswoman Anna Branly.

Branly said that since Greenfire is developing four buildings at Rogers Alley together, it made sense to install the system there.

"We looked for every possible green building technique that we could use over there. That's one we've been talking about since the beginning," she said.

Greenfire also is moving forward with redeveloping Rogers Alley, formerly a trio of historic buildings near City Hall that includes Fire Station No. 1. On March 13, the company added another property to the mix -- Exchange Building at 104 City Hall Plaza, which formerly housed Verizon.

Greenfire has already removed the building's metal facade. Its 17,000 square feet will be for office use.

The company is notifying tenants about the noise from the drilling. Installation should be completed in 90 days, Branly said.

Greenfire's not the only business launching programs and deals on Earth Day. Here's a look at who else is helping to green Durham:

-- Shoeboxed, an online start-up in Brightleaf Square, is lending its efforts to recycling that most ubiquitous document of business transactions -- the receipt.

According to the company, 220,000 tons of receipt paper are produced each year in the U.S. alone.

Starting today, anyone can mail in receipts to Shoeboxed.com or bring them by the company's office for shredding and recycling. And if enough receipts are received by April 29 to save an entire tree (about 58 kilograms), then the company will scan each user's receipts into an account where they can access them online for free. The service is usually \$9.95 per month.

Since each receipt weighs less than an ounce, and 58 kilograms is about 127 pounds, could enough receipts be collected in a week's time to save a tree? Yes, said spokesman Dan Englander. The company usually receive more than that in a week, he said.

The company's mailing address is Shoeboxed.com, 905 W. Main St., Suite 23D, Durham, NC 27701.

-- Cree Inc., the maker of light-emitting diodes, or LEDs, had previously launched an "LED Cities" campaign wherein the company has teamed up with Raleigh and Austin, Texas, for their new public construction to use the energy-saving lights.

Today, the company is launching the LED University program and has already signed N.C. State University along with

higher-education institutions in California, Arkansas and China.

Each university is testing LED lights in various settings. At N.C. State, LED lighting have been installed in the chancellor's office and a dormitory. The company is also installing lights in parking garages.

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