

## Officials: Energy companies want closed Ford plant

By DAVID EGGERT, Associated Press Writer – Wednesday, August 26

LANSING, Mich. – Two alternative energy companies want to buy a shuttered Ford Motor Co. factory in southeast Michigan and convert it into a renewable energy park that could employ at least 2,800 workers within five years, officials told The Associated Press.

Several officials familiar with the \$725 million project said Xtreme Power of Kyle, Texas, and Clairvoyant Energy of Santa Barbara, Calif., are looking to purchase the sprawling Wixom Assembly Plant if state tax incentives and federal loans are approved.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because details of the project were not being made public until legislative hearings Wednesday. They said Xtreme could hire 2,500 workers between late 2011 and 2014, with the potential to create another 10,000 supplier-related jobs — 1,500 at or near the plant. Clairvoyant could hire 300 employees.

Xtreme makes energy storage systems for utilities, wind farms and large manufacturers. Clairvoyant builds rooftop solar power stations. The officials said the companies would refurbish the Wixom plant, which closed in 2007 after churning out cars for 50 years. Half the space would be used to make the companies' own products; the rest would be leased to suppliers and other renewable energy companies.

Xtreme spokeswoman Caroline Venza confirmed the company's interest in the park, but would not discuss details. She also cautioned more steps are ahead. "We're happy to be under consideration," Venza said Tuesday. A message seeking comment was left with Clairvoyant.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm, a strong advocate for making Michigan a player in the green economy, previously has mentioned the possibility of an energy project at Wixom.

Xtreme and Clairvoyant face a Sept. 14 deadline to apply for federal loans for renewable energy projects. But the officials said before the companies submit their applications, Michigan must approve \$100 million in refundable tax credits for advanced battery production and a \$25 million tax break for solar-based manufacturing — along with increasing the number of job-creation tax credits that can be handed out by the Michigan Economic Growth Authority.

Committee hearings on the tax incentives are to be held Wednesday in the House and Senate. Without confirming details of a possible deal, Ford spokesman Mark Truby acknowledged the automaker has been working for months to bring a renewable energy park to the Wixom site.

"While key steps remain to make this a reality, we are encouraged by the progress on a project that's very much in line with Ford's commitment to sustainability," Truby said.

Other projects, including an amusement park, have been proposed for the site. But officials called the energy park a better deal because jobs there could pay an average \$40,000 a year and the plant would not have to be leveled, bringing jobs and tax revenue sooner.