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## innovation & development Rifle all fueled up for change

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GJSentinel.com <<http://www.gjsentinel.com> <javascript:void(printArticle()); Rifle all fueled up for change By DENNIS WEBB/The Grand Junction Daily Sentinel Wednesday, December 30, 2009 A community that long has had one foot planted in traditional energy development now is working to plant the other just as firmly in the emerging alternative-energy industry. The city of Rifle is planning an Energy Innovation Center with the goal of providing an example of how to bridge the gap between conventional and alternative fuels. The city also hopes to diversify its economy, so it's less vulnerable to the booms and busts associated with development of fossil fuels. Being at the epicenter of these resources, and understanding there are finite supplies, we believed there was an opportunity to use our physical location and history to tell a compelling story, said Matt Sturgeon, Rifle's assistant city manager. The center is intended to showcase solar, biofuel, geothermal and other alternative-energy projects. The city started the undertaking with the installation of solar panels that will help power a new wastewater-treatment facility. It already had installed another solar array on the city's east side to help supply electricity to the city's pump station for raw water. Rifle has ridden the rises and falls of the oil shale industry, including its bust in the early 1980s. More recently, the city reaped the economic rewards but also coped with the impacts of rampant natural gas development, and then suffered the economic contractions of the drilling slowdown. In a report about its project earlier this year, the city said it welcomes the opportunity to partner with businesses that have an interest in Rifle's rich natural resources, but it also is interested in exploring long-term energy solutions, not merely continued extraction. The city hopes the center will attract creative entrepreneurs to town and provide local career opportunities for young people who have grown up in Rifle. The location of the center on the city's west side serves as another reminder of its traditional energy history. It's a uranium mill tailings reclamation site. Rifle city officials initially referred to the Energy Innovation Center as the Energy Village. But Sturgeon said the community so embraced that concept that people began referring to the whole town as an Energy Village, thus necessitating a new name for the center. One aspect envisioned for the center is for it to attract companies that use seeds, municipal waste sludge, forest cuttings and other renewable biofuels to generate power. Groups looking at the site have shown interest in algae production as a feedstock for biodiesel. The city expects the center also will be used to create ethanol, methanol and other liquids, and it will generate excess heat and energy that can be put to use. The center is expected to include a mix of public and private enterprises and provide an educational component, involving cooperation with area colleges and other entities. The center's plans include an expo grounds and Energy Innovation Education Center. Sturgeon said the city's first success at the center

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