

# The Washington Post

## Pareto Energy to build 'microgrid' for Howard Un

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Howard University has signed on with the District-based Pareto Energy to construct an independent power system, or microgrid, on the school's campus -- the firm's first such development in the area.

Microgrids generate and store energy on-site, working parallel to the traditional electrical grid to provide power as needed. The technology allows big energy users, such as office complexes, to tailor their power source to their specific needs.

"It's a self-governing district, so users can take more control of their energy resources and energy future," said Shalom Flank, chief technology officer at Pareto. Much of the power that is used, he added, is derived from clean or renewable sources, such as natural gas, helping consumers reduce their carbon footprint.

At Howard, Pareto will build a system to produce electric and thermal energy for heating and cooling the campus. The university will continue to link to Pepco's wider network.

The university's Center for Energy Systems and Control is participating in the design of the school's microgrid. "This project will provide an unique opportunity for our engineering students and faculty to take part in a living laboratory," said Hassan Minor, Howard's chief technology officer..

Pareto plans to spend between \$15 million and \$20 million upgrading the university's power plant, a project that could take two years, Flank said.

It is far from standard practice for microgrid developers to pay the tab for construction, explained Peter Asmus, a senior analyst with Pike Research. He suspects Pareto wants the project to serve as a case study for potential investors.

The energy firm has had a hand in a few other high-profile projects, most notably its agreement last year to develop a microgrid for the city of Stamford, Conn. -- also being built on the company's dime.

A lot of the early microgrid projects, Asmus noted, are getting public funding from research-and-development-centric state and federal agencies. The analyst anticipates a continued shift toward such projects because the national grid is so taxed.

Some utilities have raised safety concerns about connections back to the main grid or tried to impose onerous charges. Asmus noted that there are no federal policies in place to govern the system.

Still, the analyst anticipates continued growth of the microgrid market. There are presently 100 of these plants worldwide, according to Pike, which forecasts the development of more than 2,000 sites by 2015.

Asmus expects academia, which often has the infrastructure to build upon, to lead the charge. The entire University of California network, for example, is said to be entertaining the idea, as is the University of Connecticut, which is in talks with Pareto.

While Pareto's Flank said it is too early to quantify Howard's potential energy cost savings, he expects the university to see reductions immediately. "We're designed to cost less than their current utility service, and [Howard] won't be making any upfront cost investment."

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