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# Champaign turbine draws no complaints, unlike Urbana proposal

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CHAMPAIGN – A new accent on the horizon in northwest Champaign has not drawn any complaints, its builders say, and should save \$40,000 annually on Midwest Underground Technology's energy bills.

The company, which primarily installs telecommunications towers throughout the country, erected a wind turbine at its corporate headquarters just northwest of the intersection of Interstates 74 and 57 at the end of the year.

Darrin Peters, Midwest Underground's president and CEO, said he has not received any complaints about the tower, which at 156 feet is the tallest turbine in Champaign.

The turbine does produce noise: 55 decibels, roughly the volume of a normal conversation, at its hub 121 feet above the ground, Peters said. The tower will cast a shadow on a building to the northwest for about a half-hour a day during October, said city planner Jeff Marino. It also will cast a similar shadow on I-74, but that would not be beyond shadows from trees that drivers already would be used to.

The tower is dwarfed by the University of Illinois' proposal to build a 400-foot turbine south of Urbana. The UI project has drawn public scrutiny from nearby residents and city officials.

Midwest Underground Technology began installing wind turbines in early 2008, so building a turbine on its own property was cheaper than if the group was not in the business, Peters said. Typically, the 156-foot, 100-kilowatt turbine would retail between \$500,000 and \$600,000.

It is a source of renewable energy, Peters said, and he expects it to be worth the investment. He estimated that the turbine will generate about 200,000 kilowatt hours of electricity each year, saving the company \$40,000 annually on its energy bills over the turbine's 20-year lifespan.

"We believe in the products," Peters said. "We wanted to have one here at the facility."

The turbine was designed with the city of Champaign's zoning regulations in mind, said Marino. Industrial properties, like Midwest Underground's lot, are allowed to have taller turbines than a typical residential property.

The company also has a relatively large lot, which allows it to build a taller turbine. The city's zoning regulations require that the base of the turbine be at least as far from the property line as it is tall – so at 156 feet, the bottom of the turbine must be at least 156 feet from Midwest

Underground's property line.

The company's lot was a good spot for a turbine because of its distance from residential properties, unlike the university's proposal south of Urbana, Marino said.

"That makes that property at Midwest Underground pretty convenient because there aren't any residential properties close by," Marino said.

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