

Manufacturer plans to expand, add jobs

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JUPITER — A Jupiter engineering and manufacturing company announced a major expansion Thursday, saying it plans to occupy an additional 71,000 square feet of factory space while adding 90 employees over three years.

Power Systems Manufacturing Inc. takes up 80,000 square feet and employs 158 people at its plant on Indiantown Road. There, it designs, tests and inspects components such as fan blades for the massive turbine engines that generate power for utility companies.



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Power Systems will take over 40,000 square feet occupied by other companies, but it will build the remaining 31,000 square feet.

The part of the factory that still must be constructed will have 24-foot ceilings to accommodate large cranes for lifting the heavy parts that go into railcar-size power generators. For example, the rotor, a central component of the turbine, can weigh 50 to 60 tons, Senior Vice President Pat Conroy said.

The expansion will cost more than \$10 million. A site plan vote for the addition to the building is expected Tuesday before the Jupiter Town Council, Mayor Karen Golonka said.

Golonka lauded the company's expansion, saying aviation engineering has become an important part of the Jupiter economy, with at least two large engineering companies - Power Systems and Florida Turbine Technologies - inside the city limits.

"They're a wonderful source of intellectual capital," Golonka said. "This technology element of the economy acts as a balance to biotechnology. We've been trying to bring more biotech to the area, but we don't want to forget other industries."

Power Systems was formed in 1998 by two Pratt & Whitney engineers who preferred to leave the giant East Hartford, Conn.-based engine maker rather than move to Connecticut during the relocation of the company's military-engine unit.

Northern Palm Beach County is dotted with small engineering firms that handle outsourcing for larger aerospace companies. But Power Systems was going to be different, co-founder Bob Kraft said: It would have a manufacturing side.

The company was bought last year for \$242 million by Alstom, a \$29 billion publicly traded French company that builds power plants and rail systems around the world. In turbine production, it competes with General Electric, Siemens AG and Pratt & Whitney.

In 2006, before it became part of Alstom, Power Systems posted sales of \$70 million a year.

"We paid a premium price," Alstom Chairman Patrick Kron said Thursday at a groundbreaking ceremony for the plant addition. "This (site) is at the top end of what Alstom is doing. We hired 10,000 last year, and 5,000 of them were engineers."

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