

Locals get a lift from residential upgrading

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Weifang Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone is moving to transform its residential environment in line with the nation's rural revitalization strategy.

According to local officials, residents of 91 shanty towns agreed on a plan to relocate within the zone by April 29. And the clearing of the shanty town sites has begun.

Officials said local authorities had taken great care to ensure relocated residents enjoyed significantly better conditions in their new homes.

They said the zone would accelerate construction of new apartments, so that residents could move into their new homes as soon as possible.

The zone is also encouraging property developers to construct high-end apartments, featuring quality design and efficient property management services, to settle those relocated residents. The construction of low-end properties is not allowed.

The zone plans to invest 15.74 billion yuan (\$2.45 billion) in 152 urban construction projects to upgrade its living, education and business environment in this year.

It is adding more parks to upgrade local living standards, and providing more space for people to do physical exercise.

The zone plans to build different types of parks adapted to the different landscapes and needs of residents. These will range from "pocket parks" — small green areas, usually built on irregular pieces of land — to larger parks that occupy bigger areas and offer more recreational facilities.

Apart from adding more green space, the zone has also made investments in associated infrastructure like the city lighting system, intelligent parking lots and pedestrian sidewalks.

Ronghuali, an 829-meter-long street in the zone, has become a popular attraction because of its international style and is admired for its fashion stores.

"I know Kuanhouli in Shandong's capital Jinan, the Wide and Narrow Alleys in Chengdu in Sichuan province and Beijing's Taikoo Li Sanlitun and 798 Art Zone. I love their atmosphere," said Weifang resident Xuan Xian.

"I never expected our zone to have that kind of street."

In upcoming years, there will be more cultural and leisure tourism destinations in the zone to satisfy the different tastes and needs of its residents.

Officials said their interests always come first in the zone, and its administration has paid a great deal of attention to helping residents to meet various needs, including healthcare, care of the elderly, education, employment and improving living conditions.

It also built some subdistrict-level and village-level museums to conserve documents containing family trees, social history and anecdotes that have cultural and historical value, as high-rise apartments gradually replace the old shanty towns in the rural area.

Officials said those museums were giving the young generations opportunities to learn more about the city's traditions and culture. They added that government spending on improving the living conditions for residents in the zone increased 22.2 percent year-on-year in 2017.

The zone has embarked on 59 projects to improve conditions since 2016 with a total investment of 3.2 billion yuan.

Zhuang Jian contributed to this story.



A technician with Shengrui Transmission examines a front-drive eight-gears auto transmission unit produced by the company. Located in the Weifang Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone, the company is a winner of the National Science and Technology Progress Award in January last year. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Companies go on the hunt for international partners

Strategic cooperation seen as key factor for groups to achieve better growth

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Companies in the Weifang Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone are looking for international partners in order to strengthen their long-term development, and officials and business leaders there said they were making good progress.

Chinese equipment manufacturer Weichai Group, headquartered in the zone and currently in a key phase of its business upgrade and transformation, hosted the first suppliers gathering there since it was established, aiming to deepen cooperation with companies overseas.

More than 220 representatives from more than 100 companies participated in the meeting on Feb 26. Officials said that Weichai Group in recent years has taken on great responsibilities in supporting Shandong's efforts to replace old economic development drivers with new ones.

The company has announced an ambitious plan to achieve annual sales revenue of more than \$100 billion in the upcoming years, compared with sales of about 220 billion yuan (\$34.4 billion) last year. For both Weichai and its suppliers, that kind of exponential growth means tremendous business opportunities

will spring up.

In line with that, Weichai is building an industrial park in the zone to support its production and upgrade.

Global vehicle parts suppliers and service providers are encouraged to set up production facilities in the park.

Meanwhile, Weichai's German supplier, Mann+Hummel has decided to utilize its know-how to enhance the speed of its responses to Weichai's requests and apply better controls on its costs to support Weichai's development plan.

Strategic cooperation is considered a key factor for companies in the Weifang Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone to achieve better growth. Apart from Weichai, automotive manufacturer Foton and some local manufacturing giants have also partnered with international companies to boost their core competitiveness. The local giants include GoerTek, an audio equipment developer, Shengrui Transmission, the developer of the world's first front-engine, front-drive eight-gear auto transmission, and Weifang Special Steel.

Shengrui Transmission won the National Science and Technology Progress Award in January last year. The award is one of the top prizes devised by the State Council in recognition



tion of scientific contributions made by both companies and individuals.

It is the first time a vehicle component maker in China has won such an award. Since its establishment, the company has been committed to integrating its overseas resources to support its growth.

Shengrui has established research and development centers in Germany and the United Kingdom to support its new product development. Shengrui claims its products have leading German design, UK engineering technologies and China's industrial production technologies.

Shengrui also claims intellectual property rights for products developed through partnerships with German companies. "We required our partners to disclose the complete development process. Our engineers stayed in foreign countries for three

years," said Zhang Guanghan, deputy director of Shengrui's Engineering and Technology Research Institute.

Zhang was assigned to work in leading companies and labs in Germany and Italy, to learn about their technologies and methods in dealing with matters over the years. Shengrui has built an industrial park and invited some leading transmission component makers to launch operations there.

The park is now home to nine companies, including two listed companies and one State-owned enterprise.

The zone has long been committed to encouraging leading companies, such as Weichai and GoerTek to strengthen communications with famous universities and institutes to expand local R&D capacity.

The zone has set out a goal to have 50 famous universities, institutes and other campuses set up representative offices there by 2020. And it is estimated that the output value of its high-tech industry by 2020 will account for 80 percent of overall output value of the zone. Officials said they aim to have two companies established there with annual sales revenue of more than 100 billion yuan by 2020.

Zhou Jinjiang contributed to this story.

Weichai Power buys into nascent global solid fuel cell market

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Weichai Power, the subsidiary of Weichai Group, has signed a strategic agreement with the United Kingdom's solid oxide fuel cell supplier Ceres Power — to strengthen its position in the new energy power supply industry.

The move means Weichai Power is breaking into the cutting-edge solid oxide fuel cell, or SOFC market, and is a major step in the company's efforts to adopt new power sources.

Weichai agreed on May 16 to buy a 20 percent stake in Ceres Power for £40 million (\$53.26 million). It will also establish a joint venture with Ceres Power before 2020 in Weifang.

Initial plans are for the parties to work together to develop a 30 kilowatt Steel-Cell SOFC fuel cell range extender system for the Chinese market in early 2019, utilizing compressed natural gas technology.

The joint venture will be the only authorized company in China to use the Steel-Cell technology, which is a low-cost SOFC technology developed by Ceres Power.

According to Ceres Power, its unique patented Steel-Cell technology generates power from widely available fuels at high efficiency and is manufactured using standard processing equipment and conventional materials such as steel, meaning that it can be mass produced at an affordable price for domestic and business use.

Weichai Group, a leading heavy truck and components developer and manufacturer in China, is set to build a new energy industrial park, supporting Shandong province's efforts to replace old economic development drivers with new ones.

The industrial park will have a complete new energy vehicle production industrial chain, including complete

\$53.26 million

is spent to buy a 20 percent stake in Ceres Power.

vehicles, powertrain systems, batteries and engines. The investment for the industrial park will total 50 billion yuan (\$7.81 billion), according to the company.

"Weichai, one of the leading companies in China's equipment manufacturing industry, has responsibilities and confidence to bring important resources, leading experts and the state-of-the-art technologies to China to support Shandong's economic upgrade plans and China's environment protection efforts," said Weichai Power Chairman Tan Xuguang.

Tan said the partnership with Ceres Power was a key step in advancing Weichai's development plan and supporting the construction of its industrial park.

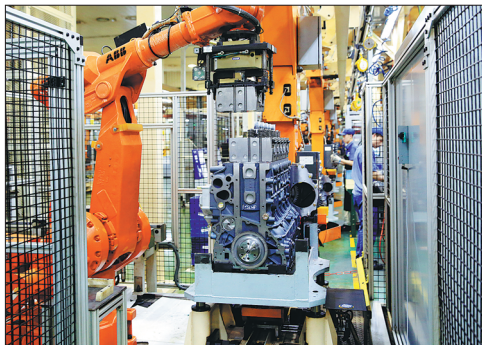
"We look forward to progressing our partnership with Ceres Power to bring more solutions to China's new energy industry," Tan said.

Phil Caldwell, CEO of Ceres Power, said that the partnership marked a milestone in Ceres Power's development by providing it access to the Chinese market, the world's fastest-growing market for fuel cells.

"We are delighted to be

working with Weichai in a partnership that provides access to the Chinese market for our SteelCell technology and also scale-up capital for our growth in the UK," Caldwell said.

Caldwell said Weichai has a successful track record of partnerships with international companies, which made his company confident about future cooperation.



Weichai Power, a leading heavy truck and components developer and manufacturer in China, has equipped its plant with an advanced production line.

Links to leading research and development bodies yield top results

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The Weifang Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone is encouraging companies to partner with leading research and development institutes to strengthen their technological innovation capabilities.

Weifang Wanlong Electric Co Ltd, a traditional electrical products manufacturer in the zone, on April 3 joined forces with the Chinese Academy of Sciences to launch a new institute aimed at speeding up its work on thermoacoustics — a type of energy generation using heat to create sound, and sound to create electricity — and the commercialization of that technology.

On the same day, Wanlong also obtained 1 million yuan (\$156,156) in funding from the zone to support its recruitment plans for the institute.

It is not the first time a firm



A technician from Weifang Wanlong Electric Co Ltd works on the development of its thermoacoustic technology.

has partnered with the CAS to boost its innovation. With support from the zone, Wanlong set up a joint venture company in 2016 with the academy to focus on developing electroacoustic technologies.

Liu Lin, chairman of Wanlong, revealed that the company has reached a preliminary

agreement with China's leading home appliance maker Haier to supply five million units of thermoacoustic refrigerators to Haier. Currently, Haier is undertaking reliability tests of Wanlong's products.

The zone hosted a meeting on April 20 and invited rep-

We invested a lot in seeking the right people and advanced technologies."

Liu Lin, chairman of Weifang Wanlong Electric Co Ltd.

resentatives from Wanlong to share the company's experiences in partnering with leading research institutes to support its business upgrade and its transformation.

"It is painful to perform industrial transformation. We invested a lot in seeking the right people and advanced

technologies," Liu said.

Liu said Wanlong used profits generated from its traditional businesses to support the development of new projects.

Sun Dexiu, chairman of Shandong Hangwei Orthopedics Medical Instrument Co, said that the meeting was inspiring for businesses.

"Companies need to have courage to enhance their core competitiveness. They should not begrudge the money spent on innovation," Sun said.

The zone's authority decided to regularly host gatherings for companies that have successfully accomplished industrial upgrades, so business managers can have more opportunities to exchange ideas and solve problems.

"We hope the business and institute cooperation model can be adopted by other businesses in the zone, so as to

support the zone's long-term industrial growth," said Guo Deyong, head of the Commission for Discipline Inspection in the zone's Economic Development Bureau.

Establishing collaboration between companies and leading research institutes is a practical way to maintain local economic growth, according to the zone's official.

In addition to its existing recruitment and training policies, more personalized policies will be rolled out to lure professionals to the zone to support business innovation, according to zone officials.

Guo said the zone will soon release two policies to encourage high-growth and technically driven small and medium-sized enterprises, paying more attention to enhancing research, innovation, technological upgrades and design capabilities.