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Environmental expertise retains appeal in public, private projects

BY JOSHUA BURD

Engineers in New Jersey are feeling a pinch from the state's shaky renewable energy market, which just months ago was a fertile and lucrative source of design contracts. But green building and sustainability efforts outside the industry are allowing some firms to stay active in the energy sector.

"Solar was hot and heavy a year or so ago, and while everyone still thinks that's the wave of the future, the dollars for (those projects)

have gotten more difficult as the value of the SRECs have gone down," said **Christopher Cirrotti**, a senior associate with **Dewberry**. Those SRECs — or solar renewable energy certificates — are generated by the owners of solar systems and sold to utilities, but with an oversupply of credits available, they "are not as valuable, and it makes the economics of doing a solar project more difficult."

In the meantime, engineers with environmental expertise are being retained for

building construction or renovation projects. In those cases, developers are leaning strongly toward pursuing LEED certification or meeting other environmental goals. LEED is short for leadership in energy and environmental design, and is the set of standards adopted by the U.S. Green Building Council to designate eco-friendly construction.

"Clients that own buildings have become very sensitive to the fact that an energy-efficient building — which is perceived

as, or actually does have, lower operating costs — is a more marketable building," said **Matthew Jarmel**, principal of **Jarmel Kizel Architects & Engineers**, in Livingston.

The trend has even carried over to the public sector for some firms like **PS&S**, of Warren. CEO **Anthony Sartor** said the firm has been retained by the state to conduct energy audits at several Turnpike Authority facilities.

E-mail to: jburd@njbiz.com

On Twitter: @JoshBurdNJ