



## **CHAMPION IN ENERGY**

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### **Syd Kitson**

President & CEO

*Kitson & Partners*

**Throughout your career, you have been a champion for clean energy, what influenced you to build a real estate business centered around renewable, specifically solar, energy?**

Developers have an opportunity to engage in work that makes a difference in people's lives. Our impacts extend far beyond the end of our individual lifespans. And I believe that opportunity comes with a responsibility to ensure what we build adds to the quality of life for generations to come.

About 1,000 more people are moving to Florida every single day. Clean, renewable energy is an essential part of accommodating that growth without destroying the natural beauty that attracted all of us here in the first place. And in the sunshine state – solar is the natural choice for achieving that goal.

**In 2005, you began the acquisition and planning of Florida's first solar powered town, Babcock Ranch. In your experience, what are the greatest opportunities for the growth of renewable energy in the State of Florida? Were there any surprises in the cost or sustainability of solar energy when building Babcock Ranch?**

When we first started planning Babcock Ranch it was surprising to learn that our "sunshine state" was way behind the curve on harnessing solar energy. The costs for solar generation at the time were not competitive with traditional generation and utilities were not allowed to build those costs into their rates.

We were able to help bring costs into line by donating the land for the solar field that now powers Babcock Ranch, and by the time construction got underway the combination of lower prices and increased efficiency of solar panels allowed Florida Power & Light to launch a massive expansion of solar generation. We were the first of an expansion that will add up to 30 million FPL solar panels in Florida by 2030 – and we are extremely proud to have helped spark a movement that will make our sunshine state a leader in solar energy.

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The annual Florida's Women in Energy Leadership Forum aims to promote opportunities in the energy industry by recognizing the success that women leaders in the industry have demonstrated in growing Florida's economy and diversifying an already tremendous workforce.

**As Chairman and CEO, you have a powerful influence on workforce diversity, why do you believe it is important to embrace diversity of thought and encourage women to rise in the ranks of leadership within Kitson & Partners?**

Women bring a different perspective to our industry and it is extremely important to have that perspective. There has been a focused effort at all levels – from primary schools through graduate schools – to attract more women to STEM fields, and we are reaping the benefits. Babcock Ranch would not be possible without the efforts of an amazing team of highly qualified and experienced women and men who share a passion for responsible, sustainable growth.

**What have you learned by partnering with Florida Power and Light on a project like Babcock Ranch? Do you think this is a model that can be replicated throughout the state?**

When you find a partner that has a similar vision and similar goals it is amazing what you can get done. And when that partner is a company, like FPL, that is in a position to really make a difference – the benefits seem boundless. While we have a very unique situation in having a direct feed of power from the solar field through our substation and into the community – I do think the model of expanding renewable energy production to meet the needs of new development can and is being replicated.

**With the creation of Babcock Ranch in Southwest Florida, what procedures do you implement to ensure sustainability throughout hurricane season?**

Sustainability during storms – resilience – starts with location. Babcock Ranch is on some of the highest ground in the area with elevations as high as 30 feet above sea level – a virtual mountain in Florida. It would take a category 5 hurricane to push the storm surge up the to southernmost edge of town. Strong building codes combined with that elevated location will allow Babcock residents to shelter in their own homes during storms up to a Category 3 hurricane. Commercial and public buildings, built to an even higher standard, will provide shelter during stronger storms.

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Underground conduit of power and fiber-optic cable systems combine with smart-grid technology to minimize service disruptions. The centerpiece of the town’s storm resiliency plan is a comprehensive storm-water management system. The master plan was designed by taking advantage of the natural systems and restoring historical drainage flow ways that have been weathering storms for years. That drainage plan is not just about making Babcock Ranch more resilient. The drainage improvements are also aimed at alleviating historic flooding issues for our lower-lying neighbors.