

Your Business ... Your Burlington

Lean, green, connected buildings benefit business: report

Friday, August 19th 2011 - The City of Burlington is taking steps to upgrade and 'green' industrial buildings here.

Last month, the Community Development Committee of city council endorsed a report by the Burlington Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) entitled Lean, Green & Connected: Innovative Industrial Buildings for Advanced Manufacturing.

The report looks at how new trends in industrial building design can help solidify and improve Burlington's manufacturing sector.

The BEDC received a grant of \$326,000 from the Government of Canada's Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, with Halton Region and the BEDC putting in some funding as well.

Kyle Benham, executive director of the BEDC, said the City of Burlington is not putting money into the project but is part of the program's steering and advisory committees and will have a "big role" in its implementation.

The BEDC said in a press release it believes encouraging developers to retrofit existing facilities and design new buildings that incorporate state-of-the-art design features, places Burlington in a better position to attract new advanced manufacturing investment as well as develop its existing manufacturing base.

Five industrial prototype models have been created using Whole Building Design to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards. Their green features, including energy-efficient technologies, offer companies the prospect of substantial savings over the life of the building, says the BEDC.

"Like the cars of today, the exterior of modern industrial buildings hasn't changed much. What is different is on the inside. Greater flexibility, green building standards coupled with smart grid, broadband and wireless technologies are shaping industrial design and functionality,"

Myron Karp, the lead designer on the project, stated in a BEDC press release.

The BEDC says advanced manufacturing needs advanced buildings that provide modern physical systems, allow for production flexibility, reduce life-cycle costs related to energy use and are environmentally sustainable.

“The next-generation manufacturers that belong in Burlington are the ‘twenty-something’s’ of today — young entrepreneurs with the ideas and drive to build a business. So, it is critically important that Burlington have manufacturing facilities with the proper amenities and the right ambience to attract young entrepreneurs to the city,”

Alf Zeuner, president and CEO of the Burlington-based manufacturing company XYZ Automation Inc., said in the release.

Intelligent design “Intelligent design will drive the industrial buildings of the future. The BEDC’s task is now to demonstrate their value to the community,” said Benham.

He said the federal grant is to get the project started but noted the cost of any changes to manufacturing facilities will be borne by the businesses.

However, it might be offset somewhat via various grant sources available for retrofits.

“We’ll help co-ordinate that on their behalf but they have to put up the capital for it (changes) because they’ll benefit from it ultimately,” said Benham.

Specific improvements to existing or new industrial buildings could include putting in solar panels and walls to reduce the overall energy consumption of the building, geothermal systems and control systems in terms of turning lights on and off.

“Let’s position a product in front of where we know where the market’s going. It’s to give them (buildings) a longer life cycle. I don’t think we’re going down a regulatory path with this. The market will respond; it’s getting to the point where it (building improvements) becomes the norm,” stated Benham.

A pamphlet has been produced for local manufacturers with tips offered in terms of what questions to ask of their landlords if they are thinking of retrofitting their business.

The information booklet will be distributed to about 500 local manufacturers in the next one to two weeks.

Over the next two years, the BEDC will engage manufacturers, land developers, landlords and municipal governments in implementing the action plan for the Lean, Green and Connected project focusing on demonstration projects, education and awareness, and new planning and building standards.

Over the coming months, the BEDC says it will work with interested developers to find and retrofit an old factory to create a prototype manufacturing centre, using green

technologies and innovative design features to encourage collaboration and reduce long-term operating costs.

Benham said the BEDC has identified about eight possible industrial sites in the city that are either empty or underused.

“We’re going to contact owners of the business and get permission to carve it up and re-tenant it. We have to start with one (site) and build some momentum and then talk to the others.

“I’d like to get a (site) candidate by the end of this year. A retrofit would take 4-6 months,” said Benham.