

Electronics design centre opens in the Tannery building

By Rose Simone, Record staff

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KITCHENER — Fidus Systems, an electronic products development company headquartered in Ottawa, has set up a design centre in the Tannery building in downtown Kitchener.

The company plans to hire 15 to 20 people over the next two years for the Kitchener office, said Cameron Redmond, the company's general manager and vice-president of business development.

Half a dozen people currently work in the office, and the company will be adding senior software engineers, senior digital and analog hardware engineers and senior field-programmable gate array designers in the coming months. It also plans to hire younger engineers and eventually take some students from the University of Waterloo's co-op programs, Redmond said.

The company designs the architecture for the "green boards" found inside most electronic products that operate using computer chips. It does the custom design and firmware that goes on those chips for a wide variety of products, including high-speed and video cameras, communications equipment, and medical and defence electronics equipment.

Fidus was launched in Ottawa in 2001 and now employs about 65 people in Ottawa, Milpitas, Calif., and Kitchener.

The main reason for starting an office in the Waterloo Region is the strong "target customer" base, Redmond said.

With a number of manufacturers of electronic equipment such as cameras and communications devices in this region, as well as in the area around Toronto, it offered a central and compact technology hub to gain customers from, he said.

Companies that are into high-end electronics products "want their hardware and firmware design to be as local as possible," Redmond said.

The engineering talent base was also a big factor in attracting the company to the region, he said.

"I am pretty excited about the vibrancy of the technology community in Kitchener and Waterloo," Redmond said. It is "involved and engaged" and very much like the technology hub that took root in Ottawa in the 1990s.

Personally, Redmond is a supporter of Shad Valley, an in-residence summer enrichment program based in Waterloo that aims to get young people from high schools more interested and involved in business, science, mathematics, and engineering.

"We want to give back to the community and help to perpetuate that kind of an ecosystem," he said.

Redmond said the Tannery building, which already is home to Google, Desire2Learn and other high-tech companies, is a vibrant place to set up the design centre. "There is a lot of traffic and activity. It has a lot of things going on to participate in as well as the potential customer flow and employee flow."

The new design centre will officially open at an event on Oct. 27. There will be an open house for interested prospective employees on Nov. 17.