

## Tannery District redevelopment wins national brownfields award

By Terry Pender, Record staff

October 7, 2011

KITCHENER — The Tannery District is the best overall redevelopment of a former industrial site in the country, says a panel of urban development experts.

The building at Victoria and Charles streets now houses 28 high-tech firms — from small startups to the internet behemoth Google — in what was once the biggest tannery in the old British Empire. It is affectionately called The Hub by the techies working there.

The Region of Waterloo and the City of Kitchener provided the developer, Toronto-based Cadan Inc., with \$891,000 to help pay for the environmental cleanup at the site.

The cleanup and reuse of old industrial sites is called brownfield redevelopment and the Canadian Urban Institute hands out honours — called the Brownie Awards — each year for that work. The Tannery won the best over all project Brownie for 2011.

“When you look at this one you say; ‘This has really made a great place,’ ” said Glenn Miller, the institute’s head of research.

“It is a great place in its own right, but it is also going to help downtown Kitchener become a better place, too,” Miller said.

The Tannery redevelopment was the first for the joint Region of Waterloo and the City of Kitchener program that helps developers finance the cleanup of contaminated industrial sites.

“The city and ourselves worked with the developer and nominated them,” said Brooke Lambert, a regional planner in charge of the program. “It is a great achievement for everyone involved.”

The region’s incentive program won awards for helping the developer of Waterscape on the Grand River in Galt and a 103-unit townhouse development on Lawrence Street in Cambridge.

Kitchener Mayor Carl Zehr said it is nice to see outside experts recognize the work the city has done to rejuvenate and reuse former industrial sites in the downtown. The Kaufman Lofts, the University of Waterloo school of pharmacy and the Tannery District now anchor the west end.

“I am delighted for them and the entire process,” Zehr said. “I am not surprised by it because clearly it was a major project.”

The Tannery has about 350,000-square-feet of space. Cadan reused a lot of original bricks and wood salvaged from the site during the redevelopment.

“It’s just another example of the transformation of an older part of the city that has a new life,” Zehr said.

The Lang Tanning Co. was started in the 1850s by Reinhold Lang. After leaving his native Bavaria in 1848, he settled in Kitchener, was elected to the city council and played a key role in developing the Factory Policy that helped turn what was then called Berlin into a manufacturing centre.

A fire destroyed the original tannery buildings and the current ones were built between 1896 and 1956. It became the biggest tannery in the British Empire.

The Lang Tanning Co. made leather saddles, harnesses and boot soles for Canadian soldiers in the Boer War and the First World War. It also made the leather lining for aircraft fuel tanks in the Second World War.



CUI BROWNIE AWARDS 2011  
BEST OVERALL  
*THE TANNERY DISTRICT*

