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Raytheon starts work on technology center

by Henry Veneracion, Staff Writer

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DOWNEY – Raytheon has started tearing down the walls of the building located at 11899 Woodruff Ave., just north of Stewart and Gray Road and formerly occupied by One Source Distributing, to make way for its much-touted, much-anticipated 27,000-sq. ft. Public Safety Communications Center, which Raytheon officials say is ultimately geared towards improving communications technologies used by public safety agencies such as police and fire departments.

Putting up signage and other descriptive info on the site is up next, according to Raytheon NCS (Network Centric Systems) director of civil communications Mike Bostic, who will head the Downey facility's operations.

A Lakewood resident, Bostic is a 34-year LAPD veteran who retired from the force four years ago and last served as assistant police chief under William Bratton. He said he has undergone continuous training at Raytheon practically from the day he joined the giant defense, aerospace systems and hi-tech communications conglomerate four years ago. Raytheon, headquartered in Waltham, Mass., boasts 2010 sales of \$25 billion and employs 72,000 people worldwide. Bostic says he is in awe of Raytheon's people's skills sets. "They're sharp, sharp!" he said.

Recruitment to fill the center's announced 150-staff complement has also actually been ongoing, Bostic said. Human resources requirements and applications for the high-paying jobs are available at Raytheon.com. Immediate hiring priorities, he said, are program managers, program engineers and land/mobile radio specialists. This does not preclude openings in other areas, including secretarial and clerical positions.

"Raytheon is obviously in its tenant improvement phase right now," said community development director Brian Saeki. "After reconfiguring the space, they will draw up the building plan. A plan check is then done by the city upon plan submission. Turnaround time is 7-8 business days. If there are corrections, the plan goes back to Raytheon. If there are none, it can proceed to build. This all takes time, but three months is reasonable. As of this point, we haven't heard from them."

As envisioned, the Raytheon Public Safety RTC will serve as the hub of the company's civil communications business in the western United States. It will provide test and research facilities, training, a maintenance and logistics center, and customer and systems support, much like its counterpart in Raleigh, North Carolina which already serves the eastern part of the country.

With its research trained at public safety needs, the facility will include a consortium of experts from academia, industry and public safety agencies. The team will be dedicated to independently verifying current and future communications technologies so that devices (voice, video, data) and frequencies get integrated into an interoperable, or more compatible, system that's sure to bring sweet music to first responders' ears.

The main reason for Raytheon's choice of Downey, announced last month, as Raytheon's new Public Safety RTC in the greater Los Angeles area is its vaunted central location, enabling easy access by local public safety professionals precisely to test and certify current and future technologies, said Raytheon NCS president Dan Crowley.

Greeted with great excitement by Downey officialdom and residents, Raytheon's local presence cannot but add yet another layer of prestige to Downey and further solidify its increasing fame as a truly functioning, forward-looking, and vibrant place in which to conduct business, with the pieces of a dreamed-of revitalized downtown slowly but surely falling into place.

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Earlier in January, Raytheon had signed a letter of intent with UCLA to form a “strategic relationship” with the Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Sciences for the establishment of the UCLA Center for Public Safety Network Systems, while committing an initial contribution of \$1 million during its first three years. Its stated mission is to “bring together academia, industry and public safety agencies to provide technical leadership, a collaboration forum for research as well as the establishment of standards for public safety networks” — a clear fit with Downey’s Raytheon Public Safety RTC.

UCLA electrical engineering professor and center co-director Izhak Rubin is quoted as saying that UCLA students will benefit from the collaboration as it will introduce them to the corporate side of engineering through research and exposure to cutting-edge technology.

“The engineering departments at most universities tend to teach a theoretical approach to the subject,” said the center’s other co-director and likewise a professor of electrical engineering, Kung Yao. “Partnerships with corporations such as Raytheon give students the chance to apply what they’ve learned during lectures.”

At Raytheon’s first display of its self-contained, highly-equipped, and expandable Civil Communications Solutions Demo Trailer (that will travel around on a 33-ton, 53-ft.18-wheeler), viewers including city officials got to see its 46-inch LED HDTVs that continuously showed 3D animated product demonstrations and graphics—all addressed to the needs of first responders—its conference room/VIP lounge, and its rack or equipment/server section in the back. Bostic said that a prominent feature of the Woodruff Avenue facility will be its demonstration showroom.

He said finally that, barring any further undue delays, Raytheon’s initial team will be in place by the end of June.

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