

## Bensalem's bright future: A new showroom points the way for the Riverfront Renaissance and beyond

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A new technology company is officially open for business in Bensalem. As a cornerstone of the town's recent Riverfront Renaissance, it represents the future not just for the township, but, arguably, the world in general.

"There's no question about the technology, it's here," said Bensalem Mayor Joseph DiGirolamo. "We see it happening here in our area: 700 acres in an area that can dictate the future to those around us."

The company, Smart Retail User Interface, recently opened its only showroom on State Road in Bensalem. That puts it in the Riverfront Renaissance area: A stretch of land between Station Avenue and Street Road, and spanning from the Delaware River to I-95

Underutilized for decades, the area has been reimagined into what will be almost a small town within Bensalem. With some houses already up and new residents living in the area, the township's full plans for the parcels include supermarkets, retail stores, beauty salons, office buildings, entertainment venues and more — an almost completely self-contained area.

If new suburban communities like these are the wave of the future, then that makes a company like this an appropriate flagship for them. The incubator company deals in the latest sustainable technologies, and to prove their worth, the Bensalem showroom is powered by them.

“This is what the next generation will expect,” predicted Michael Holbert, the U.S. founding member of SRUI. Accordingly, the new 1,100 square foot building uses not only the products they sell, but also ones that are still being perfected.

Open since February, showroom viewing is by appointment only.

The flagship product is a 165-inch interactive media window. Basically, what looks like regular, clear plate glass also works like a giant tablet where users can scroll, type or toggle programs with just the swipe of one finger.

“It’s like an iPad times 1,000,” noted Holbert.

The window is a centerpiece of the showroom, but it shares top billing with the building’s sustainable features.



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Also inside is a self-contained hydroponic system with three long rows of kale and lettuce. The crops grow under LED lights powered by the building’s solar components, and the process is fast: seeds germinate within a week, and are ready for harvest in about a month. Soon, the company will install an atmospheric water generation system that literally pulls moisture out of the air and converts it into drinkable water.

To power this, and the building in general, the exterior glass walls of the showroom, rated above Miami-Dade hurricane standards, are outfitted with thin photovoltaic films that convert sunlight into electricity without having to be pointed in a certain direction like solar panels. Inside, the walls are covered with a nanocoating, a product that’s applied like paint and is self-cleaning, anti-mold and anti-odor and makes interior surfaces hypo-allergenic.



The building has the potential to produce 100 percent of its own power consumption and will be self-sustainable soon. Already, it generates around 12,000 kilowatt hours per year — roughly the same amount of energy the average family of four uses per year in the United States today.

If it all sounds like science fiction, that's why a showroom like this is crucial to having these technologies catch on.

"It's not just a display," explained Holbert. "We're showing you can have a self-powered building today."

That's a big part of what made Bensalem, with close proximity to Philadelphia, New York and Washington, D.C, plus quick access to I-95 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike, the first place in the country to showcase these products.

It's the kind of business Bensalem officials had in mind when envisioning the new riverfront.

"Where we're located, I'm very optimistic," said DiGirolamo. "The future's going to be sooner rather than later."