



Mass. officials tout efforts to boost business

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BOSTON — Incubated by a team of scientists in a UMass Lowell chemistry lab, the seeds for Konarka Technologies were planted in Massachusetts.

Founded in 2001, Konarka took advantage of local resources and talent to develop cutting-edge, lightweight solar panels using polymer plastics.

So when it came time to start manufacturing its product, the decision to locate and expand in Massachusetts was an easy one, Konarka President and CEO Rick Hess said.

The growing solar company moved into the former Polaroid facility in New Bedford to begin

Business support paying off in jobs, officials say

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manufacturing and now expects to add 100 new jobs over the next three years.

“The proximity to the university and qualified technical people is a great draw,” Hess said. “The reason for New Bedford was the existing facility and ex-Polaroid personnel that could manage and run the facility.”

The company’s success story is one that Gov. Deval Patrick’s administration and the Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development hope to replicate by giving businesses looking to locate or expand a one-stop-shopping experience.

“There is talent and readiness in every corner of the commonwealth and we have to focus on that,” Patrick said this week.

A new initiative announced this week by MassEcon and the governor has identified 70 “market-ready” sites across the state that offer businesses easy access to an inventory of industrial and office spaces ready for companies to move in.

They include properties across the Merrimack Valley, from 73,500 square feet of office space at the Cross Point towers in Lowell to 262,000 square feet of industrial space on Fordham Road in Wilmington.

The properties are listed on a new,

interactive Web site that will be updated quarterly with new sites:
www.massecon/readymass.

“This will be a sustainable, long-term effort. Everything is within reach,” said Susan Houston, executive director of MassEcon. “You can traverse this state in just a few hours. Californians take note. You can start a company in Lowell and grow in New Bedford.”

Houston said each property listed on the site had to meet size requirements of at least 50,000 square feet in areas outside Boston. The sites also have key local permits in place, the ability to obtain state and other necessary permits within 180 days, and the capacity to be “move-in ready” in two to six months.

“As a group, we wanted them to present different use types in different parts of the state. We’re calling them the freshman class because we will be restocking our inventory,” Houston said.

The ReadyMass initiative is an offshoot of the “Massachusetts: It’s all Here” campaign that strives to lure business, students and residents to the commonwealth.

Both the governor and business leaders cite the proximity to top-caliber colleges and universities and a work force with high technical training as the

major draw to locate in Massachusetts.

The ReadyMass site was unveiled Wednesday at the Seaport Hotel in Boston, where MassEcon honored a number of local businesses with its sixth annual Team Massachusetts Economic Impact Awards.

MassEcon recognized Starent Networks, of Tewksbury, as a leading provider of mobile technology with its top Gold Award. Starent, which was recently acquired by Cisco for \$2.9 billion, saw its revenue soar 74 percent in 2008 as it grew its local work force by 44 employees.

IBM, which in 2008 relocated its software development business to its new “software campus” in Littleton and Westford at the Westford Technology Park, also earned a Gold Award. The campus is the company’s largest software development site in North America.

A silver award went to EMD Serono of Billerica. The medical company launched a \$75 million expansion earlier this year at its Billerica facility and plans to open a new site in Cambridge, creating 150 new science jobs.

Reveal Imaging Technology took home a Silver Award after a \$3.7 million expansion in Bedford completed last April helped create 28 new jobs. The company plans to continue to grow.