WEB EXCLUSIVE

New Green Building Concept Moves Forward

Green iBuilding model embraces drive-thru quick-serves. By Mark A. DeSorbo

It looks like a cross between Seattle's space needle and something architect Frank Lloyd Wright might have influenced, but developers of the 997-square-foot 1 Odd Duck iBuilding, an environmentally friendly, technology-based, media-driven concept, was designed with drive-thru, quick-serve restaurants in mind.

"We are looking to change the way restaurants are built through respect for the environment and for business development," says Paul Monnette, director of development for Chelsea, Alabama-based 1 Odd Duck LLC. "It is for drive-thrus only."

Odd Duck's first iBuilding is slated for spring 2008 construction in the Boulder-Denver, Colorado, metro area. Developers will use the building to demonstrate its features in order to entice potential licensees and ultimately sell area "development rights to territories across the United States and abroad to franchises seeking to operate cutting edge quick-serve restaurants." The firm is eyeing the Las Vegas area for a second location.

Howard Cannon, founder and president of 1 Smart Duck Management Group LLC, is the man responsible for the 1 Odd Duck building. Cannon is also the CEO of ROI Inc., a specialized restaurant, bar, and foodservice consulting and venture firm also based in Chelsea.

Cannon would not divulge specific build-out costs, saying the differences between building a standard facility and an iBuilding are "negligible."

"All we are trying to do is make an idiot-proof, smart building, so that all you have to do is put your menu in, put your logo up, and you're in business," he says. "You can cook anything you want in this building, from filet mignon to pizza in under a minute. The licensee can choose to do anything they want and this building lets them focus on serving their customers."

The 1 Odd Duck's iBuilding prototype has many technical features that dovetail right into restaurant start-up, security, and employee training.

Real-time interactive training will allow management to remotely coach managers and employees, using high definition video and laser technology, while two-way interactive video conferencing is expected to provide an element of personalization between management and employees from the office to the field.

A system using eye/iris recognition will not only provide security, but also track employee time and attendance. A fingerprint, biometric system will track employee hand washing. “We can track the amount of time between an employee’s last hand washing,” Monnette claims, adding that the system, as designed, will also alert and communicate “out of standard issue” in real time.

Other planned features include remote-controlled equipment, lighting, and media screens that allow universal control over all utilities, including signage, pricing, and marketing messages. The iBuilding can also take on different appearances thanks to a lighting and hologram laser system designed to create various styles of lighting and color changes that can be timed for different intervals throughout the day. Various unique looks, Monnette says, would be proprietary to each licensee.

Four turbine-style windmills and an upturned, dish-like InvertedSolarKone will convert wind and sun energy into electricity, a combination that 1 Odd Duck claims will generate more power than what the iBuilding will use during peak operation.

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The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified prototype also includes water retention devices that catch and divert rainwater to an underground reservoir where it can be dispersed on landscaping at desired intervals. Emission collection devices will collect CO^2 from vehicles sitting in drive-thru lanes and filter it through a scrubber before clean air is pumped from the roof.

Free to customers will be electric plug-in posts for recharging hybrid vehicles, while touch-screen point-of-sale systems retrofitted with reverse ATMs will allow patrons to place orders, pay for it with cash, credit, or debit, without ever having to interact with restaurant personnel.

Some building features, Monnette says, might be more attractive than others, which is why 1 Odd Duck plans to offer “plug and play” equipment packages that can be standardized for each branding partner.

“We are building a complete prototype with all the bells and whistles so that [a licensee] can pick and choose the equipment package they want,” he says. “We want to have these buildings everywhere, but we don’t want to limit the technology to just the United States. We are looking at Beijing, Buenos Aires, Johannesburg; we want to take it worldwide.”