

Region could lead in unmanned vehicles

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Correspondent

Tevan Green, founder and chief executive officer of Citadel Logic LLC, is a man with a plan to enhance Hampton Roads' future with unmanned systems.

"The goal is to make this community the international hub for commercial and military unmanned systems because the pieces are already in place," he said.

The pieces, Green said, include the air traffic control program in the Department of Aviation at Hampton University, Langley Air Force Base, NASA Langley Research Center and National Institute for Aeronautics, Old Dominion University and the College of William and Mary.

"The skill set is easily here," he said.

Robert Fitzgerald, president and chief executive officer of Newport News' Bosh Global Services, a service provider that offers technical and operation support for unmanned systems, agrees with Green's assessment that Hampton Roads is poised to be a leader in the state-of-the-art industry.

"This is a de facto hub," Fitzgerald said.

Green, a retired U.S. Air Force major who was injured in Afghanistan, has developed a strategic plan and is working with Rick Lally, director of Innovate Hampton Roads at the Hampton Roads Partnership.

"This is similar to the way Charlotte, N.C., has created itself as a banking hub," he said.

According to Green, the market for unmanned systems will double in the next 10 years.

In the past nine years the number of unmanned systems has jumped from 50 to about 2,400, he said.

Unmanned systems have several applications including commercial security, wildfire elimination, illegal fishing control, agriculture research, port and border patrol, engineering site surveys and mapping, he said.

They can also be used for air sampling including chemical and biological warfare monitoring plus nuclear remote sensing and monitoring, Green added.

"For example, after an earthquake, leakage from energy power plants can be detected," he said.

To begin his plan, Green sought the help of Lally and his department.

"Part of Tevan's grand scheme is to get the momentum moving forward and to capture the perception that people will look here to find unmanned systems," Lally said.

"The next step is to start a public assessment to get existing businesses on board."

Green figures the way to get Hampton Roads to be the center of unmanned vehicles is to begin an online journal focusing on the subject.

"The idea of the journal is to get the ball rolling and bring attention to the area a little faster," he said.

"The expertise in the area will benefit the region and the unmanned community worldwide as Hampton Roads possesses some of the best and leading agencies, organizations, companies and experts on unmanned vehicles in the world," Green said.

The journal, based in Hampton Roads, would allow experts to flourish and give the area more international recognition. Ideally this would lead to domestic and international companies moving headquarters and satellite offices here to be part of the international hub of unmanned vehicles, he said.

While Green acknowledges there are unmanned systems experts around the world, he said primarily using local experts will serve the region better.

He hopes to launch the journal in the first quarter of 2013. It will focus on commercial unmanned vehicles rather than military, he said.

In six to 12 months, Green would like to expand it to include a print publication.

Together with Lally, Green has enlisted the help of Thomas Flake, director of the Peninsula Technology Incubator, where Green's business is housed.

Green called Flake and Lally "the two most knowledgeable, neutral and connected individuals in the entire technology community in Hampton Roads."

He sought their help because "they interact and connect companies and agencies to each other across the entire region,"

Green said they have identified organizations, agencies, universities and companies that could contribute to the journal.

"We are already vetting articles and authors of potential columns to be published," he said. "There are so many experts from around the world who will be able to advance their new ideas once they are able to collaborate with our experts, which will help develop products and ideas from around the world that are underdeveloped."

Green talked with Dan Girouard, asset manager of the Hampton Department of Economic Development.

"Dan has offered to engage with state economic development agencies to assist in marketing this existing expertise in the region," Green said.

"This innovative idea of Tevan's [Green] will help business grow in Hampton Roads," Lally said.

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