

# Stratford fails to win smart city crown

By MIKE BEITZ, Staff Reporter Beacon Herald

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NEW YORK - It may not be the Intelligent Community of the Year for 2011, but Stratford is still extremely smart, according to Mayor Dan Mathieson.

And it's getting smarter.

"It's a little disappointing," said the mayor after losing out to Eindhoven, Netherlands, for the coveted Intelligent Community crown Friday in New York. "But I think we've done extremely well here and we've got a lot to build on for next year. There are a lot of communities around the world that would love to be where we are."

There was some drama surrounding the announcement at, appropriately enough, the Steiner Studios in Brooklyn, where the big-budget blockbuster "Spiderman" was filmed, as the Intelligent Community Forum (ICF) co-founders kept the Top 7 finalists in suspense.

A Philips light bulb brandished by one of them was an early tipoff that things would go Eindhoven's way. (Philips was founded as a light bulb manufacturing company in Eindhoven in 1891.)

Mathieson was gracious in defeat, congratulating the ecstatic Dutch team and thanking the sizable Stratford contingent that came to New York to support the city's bid for the ICF designation.

The ICF is a New York-based think-tank that recognizes forward-thinking communities around the world which have embraced information and communication technologies (ICT), and particularly broadband connectivity, as key to social and economic development in the 21st century.

And Stratford is one of those innovative communities, said Mathieson, pointing to its fibre-optic grid and citywide wireless network, which helps connect city residents, businesses, industries and institutions and which has already played a role in attracting a University of Waterloo digital media campus in Stratford, as well as a \$200-million RBC data centre.

"We are a smart city," he said. "We were named as one of the smartest cities in the world, so it's hard to be too disappointed by that."

After the announcement, Waterloo Mayor Brenda Halloran came over to Mathieson, patted him on the back and told him, "We didn't win our first time."

Waterloo was named the ICF Intelligent Community of the Year in 2007.

That's something Stratford will continue to shoot for, said Mathieson.

"It's really quite an accomplishment that in two years we got to where we are," added economic development director Larry Appel. "The Top 7 is something to celebrate and something to be proud of."

Stratford earned a spot on the short list after a series of preliminary victories over the past year.

In October 2010, it was named to the ICF's prestigious Smart 21 list of intelligent communities from among 400 applicants from around the globe and in January of this year it survived the cut as the list was whittled down to the Top 7.

ICF co-founder Lou Zacharilla said it's typically a "dead heat" between the finalists, and this year was no different.

"For my money, Stratford was right there," he said, suggesting that the city should hold its head high based on what it has done to reinvent itself as a digital centre of excellence.

"Stratford is really one of the great stories to be told in North America," said Zacharilla.

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