



To replace screen
on Fountain Square,
3CDC liked LSI's ...
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BRIGHT FUTURE



Fifth Third's Lea Ann Stevenson, left, and Jeff Kursman, right, talk with 3CDC's John Fox about the new Smartvision video board installed by LSI. THE ENQUIRER/TONY JONES

Square to see light from LSI's success

By Jeff Wallner
Enquirer contributor

When executives at Cincinnati Center City Development Corp. reviewed the list of seven bidders for a new state-of-the-art video board at Fountain Square, one company stood out: Blue Ash-based LSI Industries.

Among its portfolio credits: The ribbon boards and video screens at Xavier University's Cintas Center, video boards in athletic facilities at Ohio State University and an LED lighting system that illuminates the George Washington Bridge in New York City.

"I did not know about LSI, or that they were here in Cincinnati," said John Fox, 3CDC's vice president of events and programming.

"We didn't choose them because they were local. We chose them because they were the best choice."

LSI, a commercial lighting and visual imaging solutions firm, won the Fountain Square bid by beating out Mitsubishi, which installed the original video board at the square, and Daktronics, which did the video boards at both Great American Ball Park and Paul Brown Stadium.

The company, cofounded by Bob Ready and Jim Sferra in 1976, started by producing lighting systems for gas stations, convenience stores and fast-food restaurants. Today, LSI has 1,500 employees in locations worldwide. More than 700 of those workers are based in Ohio. About 150 more work at LSI's Erlanger plant.

"We started in a garage, and from there built it with a step-by-step approach with quality products at a competitive price," says Ready, 73, who's now company CEO. "It's home-grown, and we like that."

LSI has marketing and sales offices in Latin America, Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. The company says its products are exclusively American made, though, with the exception of foreign components no longer manufactured in the U.S.

WHAT'S ON TV AT FOUNTAIN SQUARE?

Here's what's playing on the new LED video board:

- » **Local sports:** Televised Reds, Bengals and local college basketball games.
- » **Events:** Live camera footage and interactive Twitter features during events in and around the square. Also: Wrap-up videos after events, and videos and slides on upcoming events.
- » **Community content:** Videos highlighting the Cincinnati area produced by 3CDC or other entities.
- » **Nonprofit news:** Informational content produced by nonprofit or community groups.
- » **Sponsor appreciation:** Content from event sponsors.
- » **Commercial:** Limited TV commercials from paid advertisers.

Source: 3CDC



LSI's Ross Sferra works in a control room setting the new Smartvision video board that the Blue Ash-based company installed across from Fountain Square.

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"We're an American company with an American workforce building an American product," says Scott Ready, Bob's son and company president.

LSI (Nasdaq: LYTS) is positioned for growth in the digital imaging and LED space, which GE Lighting predicts will replace 80 percent of the traditional lighting market by 2020.

In 1996, LSI bought SAKO, the

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company that produced the Nasdaq video board on Times Square, and subsequently formed a new division, LSI Smartvision LED Video Displays. Now about 35 percent of LSI's sales are in the LED market.

Monday, LSI reported net sales of more than \$66 million in the third quarter of fiscal 2013, a 5 percent increase over the same quarter last year. The company reported a net loss of \$315,000 in the quarter ending March 31, narrower than a year ago.

The 470,000-pixel video board at Fountain Square was installed just in time for Opening Day. It's 30.5 feet high by 42.5 feet wide.

Since the original board's installation on the Fountain Place building across Vine Street from the square in 2006, the big-screen video board has become part of Cincinnati celebrations Downtown.

In a way, Bob Ready says, the board establishes LSI as a home-grown success.

"One of my visions was to take LSI worldwide," Ready says. "We've done that." ■