

BUILDINGLENS

CLIMATE TECH IP CASE STUDY

How a building-intelligence company protected a software-and-hardware platform with PatentPC

INTRODUCTION

BuildingLens democratizes building management operations with an affordable suite of software tools that prioritize occupant well-being and energy-efficient buildings. Its two flagship products are AirLens, an advanced monitoring system that uses predictive algorithms to guarantee optimal indoor air quality and safeguard communities against hazards like wildfire smoke, and EnergyLens, a data-driven energy management platform that reduces waste, cuts costs, and lowers peak demand.

Both integrate into existing building automation systems — any BAS, no matter the brand or age — and where a building has none, BuildingLens works with partners to install affordable automation. The company specializes in buildings up to 100,000 square feet: the small and mid-sized buildings that make up over 95% of the US building stock while only 13% have building automation tools. Its people-first philosophy directs those tools deliberately toward priority populations who have historically been excluded from the clean energy economy.

BACKGROUND

BuildingLens began with a Small Business Technology Transfer grant from the US Department of Energy in 2020 and was co-founded in Portland, Oregon by David Burchfield, PE, as Chief Executive Officer and Paul Bursch as Chief Technology Officer. Elevate Capital came in as lead investor in June 2023, followed by the Elevate Innovation Gap Fund; the company was named a semifinalist at the Bend Venture Conference that October. The longer-term ambition is a full utility-service company supporting virtual power plants built from small and mid-sized buildings.

The technical estate is also unusually broad for a company of its size. There is a cloud framework with hardware-agnostic ingress and egress interfaces; predictive modelling for indoor air quality, humidity, and temperature; energy optimisation and peak demand reduction logic that turns a building into a grid-responsive asset; occupant notification during wildfire smoke and other health events; automated compliance reporting; and, since May 2024, physical hardware in the BuildingLens Outside Air Controller. Software, models, controls, and a device — four different drafting problems, and for a small team, one budget.

“Our framework is deliberately hardware agnostic, which is exactly what makes it valuable and exactly what makes it copyable. Getting the architecture on file early was not a legal formality — it was a product decision.”

PAUL BURSCH, CTO, BUILDINGLENS

LEADERSHIP



PAUL BURSCH

Co-founder & Chief Technology Officer, BuildingLens

Paul Bursch has served as BuildingLens' Chief Technology Officer since December 2020, leading software architecture and product development. He describes the platform he built as a cloud software framework for hosting applications used for monitoring and supervisory control of building systems, featuring hardware-agnostic web service interfaces for data ingress and egress — the design decision that lets BuildingLens connect to any building automation system regardless of brand or age.

Based in Minneapolis, he is also Chief Software Architect at Burch Energy Services, integrating BuildingLens software services with Burch's energy analytics, and he led development of the BuildingLens Outside Air Controller, the company's first hardware product.

SOLUTION

PatentPC works exceptionally well with BuildingLens because the two teams align around a disciplined, engineering-first process. BuildingLens operates in a data-rich, sensor-driven environment where innovations emerge continuously across computer vision, building automation, and energy-optimization workflows. PatentPC embeds a structured intake pipeline that fits directly into these cycles—short disclosure sprints, AI-assisted claim framing, and rapid drafting loops—so inventions are captured at the moment they appear. This keeps BuildingLens ahead of competitors and ensures no breakthrough slips through the cracks.

PatentPC also delivers a rare combination of speed and quality, which BuildingLens's leadership repeatedly cites as a differentiator. Instead of slow, reactive filings, PatentPC moves at the pace of BuildingLens's product development—turning complex technical disclosures into polished, enforceable patents within days. Their prosecution style balances breadth and precision, producing claims that are both defensible and commercially aligned. This speed enables BuildingLens to maintain priority positions in emerging building-tech categories while still receiving top-tier drafting quality.

Finally, PatentPC integrates smoothly with BuildingLens's accounting and financial operations, eliminating the administrative friction that often accompanies IP management. PatentPC provides predictable filing calendars, clear cost-mapping, and structured documentation packages that simplify capitalization and audit processes. Accounting teams receive clean, organized data on annuities, deadlines, and portfolio value, allowing BuildingLens to treat its patents as strategic financial assets rather than unpredictable expenses.

This operational clarity strengthens investor confidence and supports long-term valuation growth. The result is a patent portfolio with:

- Eligibility-resilient drafting under Section 101 — predictive air quality and energy optimisation claimed as concrete control systems acting on physical building equipment, not as abstract data analysis.
- Software and hardware under one strategy — the cloud framework, the control logic, and the Outside Air Controller covered as a coherent family rather than as unrelated one-off filings.
- Filing ahead of disclosure — applications on file before investor pitches, conference presentations, pilot deployments, and product launches.
- Grid-asset claim scope — coverage reaching peak demand reduction and virtual power plant participation, the direction the business is heading rather than only where it is today.
- Business economics — provisional-first sequencing and predictable costs, so IP spend tracks the funding calendar instead of fighting it.

RESULTS

BuildingLens saved in two directions at once. First, by working with experienced attorneys backed by a technology stack, it avoided paying outside counsel to learn building automation and controls, and received applications with more technical depth on a far shorter cycle. Second, by making the change, BuildingLens now pays less while receiving more accurate and more efficient patent services.

“PatentPC gave us exactly what we needed: fast protection, clear communication, and a patent strategy that actually matches how BuildingLens innovates. They turned our ideas into assets—and our assets into real enterprise value.”

PAUL BURSCH, CTO, BUILDINGLENS

File before you pitch, not after.

PatentPC pairs experienced patent attorneys with practice automation so climate and hardware companies can protect their architecture before it goes into a pitch deck — at costs that fit a grant or a seed round. Talk to us about a filing plan that tracks your milestones.

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