
The Bessemer Business Review

A publication of the Bessemer Development Board
of the City of Bessemer, Alabama

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Information about Board programs and services can be found on-line at www.bessemer.biz

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NEW BUSINESS ACTIVITY

El Paso Corporation (NYSE: EP), which owns North America's largest interstate natural gas pipeline system (over 42,000 miles), has purchased a 17,000 sq. ft. office building in the Morgan Industrial Complex. The natural gas distribution and exploration firm is using the facility as a regional headquarters for its field exploration teams. The operation is expected to house 15 to 20 employees. El Paso Corporation supplies approximately one quarter of natural gas used each day in the U. S. The company's web site can be found at www.elpaso.com.

Consolidated Pipe has purchased the former LaBarge Steel distribution yard in the Bessemer Industrial Park. The 45-acre site, which is served by Norfolk-Southern rail and consists of several metal building structures, will be used by the firm as a pipe welding and distribution yard. The Birmingham-based company, which has branch locations in twenty states, supplies pipe, valves, and fittings to chemical, utility, and mining operations. The Bessemer facility is expected to employ approximately 20 people initially. Graham and Company assisted with project implementation. For information on the firm, visit www.consolidatedpipe.com

SPOTLIGHT ON: Bessemer's "Energy" Economy

*Despite the recent financial troubles affecting the nation, several firms which comprise Bessemer's economic base stand well-positioned to weather current economic conditions. Pipe producers like **U. S. Pipe and Foundry** and distributors like **Consolidated Pipe** continue to supply pipe to the nation's oil, gas, and nuclear power producers. As the demand for alternate energy sources such as gas-to-liquids and bio-fuels grows, the need for pipeline delivery systems should ensure continued business activity for these Bessemer companies.*

Pumps, Parts, & Service, Inc. (PP&S) has acquired a 14,000 sq. ft. building in the city's Morgan Industrial Complex to house an expanded distribution and pump repair operation. The North Carolina-based firm, which specializes in custom-designed pump applications, supplies pump products to both environmental (water and sewer treatment facilities) and general manufacturing users. According to local manager Dennis Huff, PP&S will employ approximately 15 people at its Bessemer location. For additional information on the company, visit the firm's website at www.pp-s.com.

Corporate Express, part of the Staples' office supply company network (as of 2008), has taken occupancy of approximately 15,000 sq. ft. in the latest multi-use industrial building constructed by White Oak Investments in the city's Park West Corporate Center, near Exit 6 of I-459. The company will use the location for office staffing and warehousing of select office furniture products. Employment at the Bessemer location is expected to total 25 people. Corporate Express is one of the world's leading distributors of office equipment to businesses and institutions. The project was assisted by the real estate development firm of Eason, Graham, & Sandner (EGS). For more information on Corporate Express, go to www.corporateexpress.com.

WAGE SURVEY UPDATE

An updated listing of wages paid by Bessemer area firms has been prepared by UAB Master of Arts in Public Administration (MPA) graduate student Yvonne Murray, as part of an intern project for the Bessemer Development Board. To access a free copy of the report, please visit www.bessemer.biz.

EXISTING BUSINESS EXPANSIONS

Piggly-Wiggly Alabama Distributing Company is nearing completion on an \$18 million expansion project to improve its distribution operations in the Woodward Industrial Park, near I-59/20. The company, one of Bessemer's largest private sector employers with over 450 employees, distributes food products to Piggly-Wiggly and independent grocery stores located within a five-state region. The company, which was recruited to the city by in the late 1980s with assistance from the Bessemer Development Board, occupies land that was once part of the historic Woodward Iron plant.

PUMP UP THE VOLUME: Bessemer and the industrial pump industry

*Pumps may be a staple in women's shoes, but with the addition of **Pumps, Parts, & Service**, Bessemer is expanding its base of industrial pump companies. For many years, the city has been the home of **Adco Boilers** and the southeastern distribution center for **Ingersoll-Rand**, both of which distribute air pumps. On Morgan Road, **Hudco Industrial Products** manufactures and distributes pump and chute protective products. The southeastern regional facility for **Philadelphia Gear**, one of the nation's largest manufacturers of utility equipment pumps, is located in adjacent Hueytown. And, of course, there is always much iron "pumping" in the fitness room at **Legacy YMCA**.*

Fortune 500 firm *Ingersoll-Rand*, which has maintained a Bessemer presence for over ten years, has expanded into a new 30,000 sq. ft. facility on Powder Plant Road constructed by the firm Shirley and Sons Construction Company. The brick and metal facility, which supplies central Alabama and parts of Mississippi with air compressors and components, employs approximately 22 people. The project was made possible with assistance from Graham and Company.

C & I Enclosures recently purchased a set of metal industrial buildings in the Pine Valley Industrial Park, near U. S. 11 in Bessemer, for use as additional warehousing and light manufacturing space. C & I manufactures the metal housings for electrical switches; it employs approximately 35 people at its Bessemer location. The expansion project was made possible with financial assistance from ServisFirst Bank and the Bessemer Development Board.

SIGNS INDICATE BESSEMER ECONOMY SLOWING

Recent employment statistics (September 2008) for the city – reported prior to the disruptions in the national economy in October – were already showing employment contraction in Bessemer. For the month of September, the Alabama Industrial Relations Department reported a total civilian labor force in Bessemer of 10,651 persons, of which 790 were classified as unemployed, thus producing an unemployment rate of 7.4%. By contrast, Bessemer's unemployment rate one year ago stood at 5.3%.

Although the global financial crisis is likely to have an impact on local producers and retailers, several sectors of the local economy – such as mining, pipe, and staple products distribution (like food and pharmaceuticals) – are likely to maintain stable activity and employment.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENTS

By Jeff Traywick

Simmons Sporting Goods has purchased the former Jefferson Furniture store building for a planned expansion of its retail and warehousing space. The decades-old hunting and fishing store – one of Bessemer's largest producers of retail sales – anticipates completion of the new retail space by late 2009. A plaque noting the historical nature of the 1920s-constructed building - originally provided as a gift to the city by the family of long-time businessman Jerry Cherner - will be added once the renovation project is complete. The project was made possible with assistance from the Bessemer Downtown Redevelopment Authority (DRA).

For the latest information on downtown Bessemer, check out the new web site for the Bessemer Downtown Redevelopment Authority at <http://downtownBessemer.org>.

BUSINESS INCUBATOR REPORT

By Devron Veasley

Trinity Design Group is moving from its location in the Bessemer Business Center – one of the city's two business incubator facilities - into a newly renovated 8,000 sq. ft. facility in Bessemer's "Old Rolling Mill" Business District, an industrial area located between 19th Street North and 22nd Street in downtown Bessemer. The firm, which specializes in the fabrication of return packaging for manufacturers and equipment providers, will vacate its space in the business incubator building by the end of 2008. According to company president Fernando Valentin, the company will add two to three new staff over the next year, bringing total employment at the facility to 10 people. The project was made possible with financial assistance from ServisFirst Bank and the Bessemer Development Board.

For information on space availability and tenant requirements for Bessemer's incubator program, please visit www.bessemerincubator.com.

SPOTLIGHT ON: Bessemer's "Old Rolling Mill" Business District

Envisioned last year by Auburn University graduate architecture students who helped produce a new master plan for Bessemer's downtown redevelopment, the area between 19th Street North and 22nd Avenue North in downtown has been labeled the "Old Rolling Mill" Business District. A U.S. Small Business Administration "HUB" zone (offering benefits for contractors seeking federal sector work), the area features more than 500,000 sq. ft. of unused industrial space, largely contained in older building stock priced well below market rates. To view a map of the area, contact Jeff Traywick of the Bessemer Development Board at 205-481-4963.

AVAILABLE BUILDING IN BESSEMER

35,000 sq. ft. metal industrial building located near Interstate 59/20, with multiple overhead doors. Office area approximately 4,000 sq. ft. Facility is available for sale or lease. For more information, contact Jeff Traywick at 205-481-4963, or jtraywick@bessemer.biz

The Bessemer Business Review is published by the Industrial Development Board of the City of Bessemer. Address comments/change of address to: [Troy Post, Editor, 1913 Fourth Avenue North, Bessemer, Alabama 35020](mailto:Troy.Post.Editor@1913FourthAvenueNorth.Bessemer.Alabama.35020). Address comments about Martian invasions, lab mice, and your favorite shampoo brand to other interested parties.

A non-profit economic development agency, the Bessemer Development Board operates a variety of technical and financial assistance programs for businesses. To learn more, visit the Board at www.bessemer.biz.

Bessemer Development Board

Administrative Offices

1913 Fourth Avenue North

Bessemer, Alabama 35020