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*The*  
***Bessemer Business Review***

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

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Information about Board services can be found on-line at [www.bessemer.biz](http://www.bessemer.biz)

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## **NEW BUSINESS ACTIVITY**

***Over the Mountain Glass (OTMG) Company***, a firm that manufactures specialty glass pieces for use in automobiles and the window systems of residential and commercial structures, has moved into an existing 14,000 sq. ft. industrial facility in Bessemer's Mountain View Industrial Park, near State Highway 150 and Lakeshore Parkway. According to OTMG president Scott Metcalf, the firm will use the facility to expand its operations and place in service new capital equipment items valued at more than \$600,000. The project was assisted by the Bessemer Development Board and Glenn Ponder of Ponder Properties. The company, which has been in existence for over ten years in a neighboring county, currently employs 14 people. It expects to create 5 to 10 new jobs at the Bessemer location over the next several years.

***Military, Industrial, and Commercial Security (MICS), Inc.***, a design/engineering company and manufacturer of metal door systems under the brand name "Old Iron Doors," is nearing completion on its new 17,000 sq. ft. industrial facility in Bessemer's Morgan Industrial Complex, a park located two miles north of Exit 6 of I-459. Capital South, the Southern Development Council (a SBA financing provider), and the Bessemer Development Board/City of Bessemer (a HUD CDBG lender) are assisting with project financing. According to company president Eduardo Cuneo, the company's decision to manufacture its door designs in-house will maximize quality and reduce freight costs; previously, the firm outsourced the work to plants located outside the U. S. MICS also makes and sells "blast resistant" door systems to government and corporate institutions. The company will relocate its Riverchase office personnel to the Bessemer facility, and expects to employ over 25 people at the Bessemer facility. Additional information on the company is available on-line at [www.oldirondoors.com](http://www.oldirondoors.com).

### ***READ ALL ABOUT IT: Bessemer's Growth Makes Good Copy***

*The Birmingham News* recently labeled the Bessemer area economy as "booming." View the April 1, 2007 article at [www.al.com](http://www.al.com).

## Bessemer Business Review – 2

**Extec Industries**, a global firm that manufactures earth scalpers and screeners, has announced plans to lease a 10,000 sq. ft. building in Bessemer's Mountain View Industrial Park. Project assistance was provided by Austin Blair of LAH Commercial Real Estate and the Bessemer Development Board. The firm will utilize the Bessemer facility as a parts distribution and servicing center for its equipment products. Extec, which was formed in 1987, builds metal screens that fit onto mobile rock crushers, filtering and separating concrete, topsoil, granite, sandstone, and other material. The Bessemer facility will employ 5 to 10 people initially. The company's website is [www.extecscreens.com](http://www.extecscreens.com).

**The Parker Companies**, a grouping of firms engaged in the secondary mortgage market and real estate development field, has purchased a 15,000 sq. ft. office/warehouse facility in Bessemer's Morgan Industrial Complex. The warehousing space will be leased to the business entity **Lights of Christmas**, a firm that rents decorating supplies to regional shopping malls and other commercial clients during holiday seasons. [The firm's product listing can be viewed on-line at [www.lightsofchristmas.net](http://www.lightsofchristmas.net).] John Hardin of Southpace Properties assisted in the project. Employment at the two firms totals 10 people.

**Acuren** is a materials engineering and testing firm that has leased a 7,500 sq. ft. facility in Bessemer's Corridor West Business Park. The park is located on Powder Plant Road near Exit 108 of I-59/20. The company was assisted in the project by Jack Brown of Graham and Company, industrial realtors. The company employs 5 people at the Bessemer location.

**Norflex**, an expansion joint design and manufacturing firm, has relocated its office operations and manufacturing processes to a 40,000 sq. ft., 1970s-era facility on Parkwood Road in Bessemer, near Exit 6 of I-459. The building, equipped with eight overhead cranes, represented a capital investment of approximately \$1 million. Graham and Company assisted in the project; financing incentives were provided by the Bessemer Development Board. According to company president Tom Norwood, the site was chosen primarily due to the building's crane capabilities and its proximity to I-459. Norflex supplies metal and non-metallic expansion joints to utility, pulp and paper, and industrial market. The company anticipates the creation of 10 to 15 new jobs at the facility over the next year, with total employment reaching 40 people by the year 2010. Information on the company is available at [www.norflexinc.com](http://www.norflexinc.com)

### **SPOTLIGHT ON: Modular Connections**

*Modular Connections is a Bessemer-based manufacturer of buildings, shelters, and equipment enclosures, which are made from pre-cast concrete, steel, or polyurethane insulated panels. Each structure is formed in Bessemer at the company's facility in the Pine Valley Industrial Park, transported by vehicle to a building site, then erected with electrical, mechanical, and plumbing connections already installed in the unit. The firm employs approximately 30 people. View a brochure at [www.modularconnections.com](http://www.modularconnections.com).*

## GRADING WORK BEGINS ON NEW RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS

Approximately \$3 million in new infrastructure work continues at the corner of Lakeshore Parkway and State Highway 150 in Bessemer, the site of **US Steel's** new retail development. [A portion of those infrastructure improvements will be made on the adjoining 100-acre light industrial park that US Steel is now developing – Bessemer's 17<sup>th</sup> industrial park, and its 15<sup>th</sup> new park since 1984.] The 30-acre retail site is expected to be anchored by a grocery store and small, regionally and nationally-known commercial tenants, including a bank.

At Exit 1 of I-459 (the Eastern Valley Road exit), grading machinery is changing the topography of an 80-acre site owned by **Colonial Properties**. The large retail development company that successfully renovated Homewood's Brookwood Village Mall anticipates investing \$60 million into the construction of a 500,000 sq. ft. shopping center in Bessemer that will likely be anchored by retailer **Target**.

## EXISTING BUSINESS EXPANSIONS

**Aluma-Panel**, a Georgia-based supplier of paint and components used in the manufacture of interior and exterior signage, has added another 4,000 sq. ft. to its Pine Valley Industrial Park operations in Bessemer. According to local manager Mike Pike, the expansion project was needed to accommodate recent growth in the firm, which now services clients in Mississippi and south Alabama from the Bessemer branch. Financial assistance for the project was made possible by the Bessemer Development Board. Aluma-Panel employs approximately 15 people in Bessemer.

**Flex-N-Gate**, the Ohio-based automotive parts supplier that purchased the holdings of the now-defunct Oris Automotive of Alabama in 2006, has announced an \$8.4 million expansion project for the Bessemer facility, which is located in the city's Paden Business Park. [The park is located at Exit 104 of I-59/20, approximately 15 miles from the Mercedes-Benz manufacturing plant in Vance.] Flex-N-Gate manufactures trailer hitches, tailgates, running boards, and other automotive accessories. The company anticipates the creation of 40 new jobs with the expansion. The firm's website can be found at [www.flex-n-gate.com](http://www.flex-n-gate.com).

**Industrial Manufacturing and Fabrication (IMF)** has announced the acquisition of an additional 15,000 sq. ft. of manufacturing space. The company, which builds machinery components for US Steel and paper mills across the south, began operations in late 2004. To date, the company has grown annual revenues to more than \$1.5 million. Financing the purchase of the building space was made possible by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham and the Bessemer Downtown Redevelopment Authority. IMF employs over 20 people in Bessemer.

## BUSINESS INCUBATOR REPORT

By Devron Veasley

The Downtown Entrepreneurial Center (DEC) recently welcomed start-up operation ***Southern Research Automotive***, a project of former Southern Research engineer Tom Ackerson. The company, which has since merged with Metals & Materials Engineers, maintains a laboratory inside the DEC, which it uses to conduct experiments (such as stress and corrosive tests) on parts and components used by area manufacturers. The firm anticipates graduating from the incubator within the next 18 months. [NOTE: At present, tenant occupancy at both Bessemer business incubator facilities exceeds 80%.]

## DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENTS

By Jeff Traywick

Demolition work has begun on the \$4 million downtown expansion project of the ***Bessemer Public Library***. The project is expected to take 18 months to complete, and will add over 15,000 sq. ft. to the library. Fortinberry & Associates will act as project architect; Clements-Dean will serve as general contractor.

Site work is proceeding on ***Jefferson County's*** new courthouse building and jail renovation effort, a capital improvements project that will exceed \$40 million. The new courthouse facility will occupy an entire city block, between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North in downtown. It is expected to be completed by 2009.

The ***Bessemer Downtown Redevelopment Authority (DRA)*** has started renovation efforts on the former Jefferson Home Furniture building, an approximately 12,000 sq. ft. structure that was gifted to the City of Bessemer by local businessman ***Jerry Cherner***. [Cherner's family operated a furniture store in the building for eighty years.] As part of the renovation project, the DRA is working with the non-profit art group ***Studio O<sup>2</sup>*** to lease space in the building to local artists and craftsmen, including McCalla resident and colored-glass artist ***Donna Branch of Tara Glass***.

*The Bessemer Business Review* is published by the Industrial Development Board of Bessemer. Address comments/change of address to: Troy Post, Editor, 1913 Fourth Avenue North, Bessemer, Alabama 35020.

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](http://www.bessemer.biz).

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## Bessemer Development Board

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