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Jabreka Dancy welds at Plum Creek Environmental.
Photo by Deanna Robinson, Dispatch Staff

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Sunday, May 22, 2022
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SUNDAY, MAY 22, 2022
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The true, driving force that keeps us strong is our people... and their steadfast dedication to our customers, our company, our environment, our community and our future. Southwive is proud to be at the forefront of local industry.

Garan Manufacturing has been the sole occupant of North Star Industrial Park for a little more than a year. But the Golden Triangle Development Link is looking to change that. “Now that Garan has been with us for a year, we are looking to attract more companies,” said Joe Max Higgins, chief executive officer for the Link.

Although Garan’s corporate headquarters are in New York City, its manufacturing arm has been headquartered in Starkville since 1964 at its former location on Highway 12. In March 2021, Garan permanently moved into the new facility. While the clothing company’s manufacturing headquarters is the only occupant of the park, there are two projects in the works to add speculative buildings to the park. Eventually, the park could have space for up to 10 industries.

North Star Industrial Park prepares for new industries

North Star Industrial Park, located off Highway 109 in Starkville, is looking to attract more companies. "Deals will come in; we had one here last week that was another (one) that we found," Higgins said. "A company came from up north looking at expanding down south to be near the automotive car corridor. (It’s a) $25 to 30 million project with 60 to 70 jobs. We met with them, showed them sites, including North Star. Once a business says they like what they see, we start working with them and bring in our partners, civil engineers to calculate cost and building plans." Higgins said the purpose of the, hopefully, temporary "off-the-street" efforts, Higgins said. In order to attract new businesses and industry to the area, the LINK must calculate cost and building plans.

Once those things are done, the LINK sends a company an incentive package. Then it finds the source and speaks with the legislators. Higgins is hoping to bring in electric vehicle battery manufacturers and more automotive supply companies because of the proximity of the Golden Triangle to Nissan, Toyota and Mercedes facilities.

In a perfect world, Higgins said he would like to see the park full within the next two years, but realistically he is looking to have it full within the next 15 to 20 years.

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In a perfect world, Higgins said he would like to see the park full within the next two years, but realistically he is looking to have it full within the next 15 to 20 years.
FedEx Ground distribution center at the Golden Triangle Industrial Park is expected to open later this year, according to Golden Triangle Development Link CEO Joe Marc Higgins.

The project was announced in October 2021. The new distribution center is located on about 41 acres off of Charleigh Ford Drive, near Golden Triangle Regional Airport. LINK Vice President for Economic Development Merl Faudrery estimated it will be between 217,000 and 235,000 square feet.

"To put that into perspective, the current facility is one building that's about 20,000 square feet, another that's 7,000 to 8,000," she said. "Combined, they're not even at 30,000 square feet.

The expanded operations there will also provide hundreds of thousands of dollars per year in increased property tax revenue for the county, because they'll be paying taxes on that building and the equipment in it. The distribution center is part of a growing trend towards e-commerce, which, in turn, provides tax revenue. A portion of sales tax collected via online sales comes back to the county for use on roads and bridges, Faudrery explained.

FedEx, in a statement sent via email to The Dispatch, said the Golden Triangle Industrial Park is chosen because of its ease of access to the highway network. "The site was chosen because of its ease of access to major highways, proximity to customers’ distribution centers and a strong local community workforce for recruiting employees," the statement said. In addition to both full- and part-time jobs, it will also employ contractors.

"The company also will contract for package pickup and delivery services with service provider businesses that hire locally for driver, helper, manager and other positions," the statement said. "We continue to experience significant package volume due to e-commerce growth and are optimizing the capacity of our network to meet growing demand for our services."
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Since 2014, Steel Dynamics has invested over $2.2 billion into our Columbus Division, but our investment doesn’t end there. SDI cares about our employees and the places they call home. We value safety, community service, and sustainability. We value being part of the local community and that’s why we invest in local schools and charities. Our team members spend countless hours volunteering in our community. They’re all in and so are we.
Plum Creek expansion exceeds expectations

BY SLIM SMITH | ssmith@cdispatch.com

Last November, the family-owned West Point company, Plum Creek Environmental, which manufactures waste containers and recycling equipment, took advantage of a rebate program from the Mississippi Development Authority to help defray costs of a $3 million expansion.

Six months later, the company has far exceeded expectations.

"What this expansion allowed us to do is buy a 60,000 square-foot building across the street from us so that we could increase production," said Plum Creek founder and president Jim Wamble. "We've more than doubled our production," said Mike Wamble, the company's director of sales.

The expansion has not only significantly increased the company's top line, it has also created jobs, which was the focus of the MDA's Mississippi Advantage Jobs Incentive Program. The program provides a cash rebate for up to 10 years to qualified employers willing to commit to wages higher than the regional average.

At the time it applied, Plum Creek said it could create 50 new jobs.

"So far, we've hired nearly 100 new employees," Jim Wamble said. The company had 70 employees at the time it partnered with the state on the expansion.

"I think at the time, like a lot of companies, we were a little concerned about being able to find workers, so our estimates were lower than we hoped," Mike Wamble said. "We just weren't sure."

Plum Creek was founded in Columbus in 2007 but relocated to West Point for a larger facility in 2016. The company has grown from one employee to 170 in its 15 years, more than doubling its workforce in the past six months alone.

In urban areas, creating 100 new jobs in six months might hardly cause a stir.

But in West Point, those jobs have a huge impact, Mayor Rod Bobo said.

"Plum Creek has always been what I would consider a community partner," said Bobo, who was elected in June 2021. "I knew they've been very cordial with me since I came into office. It's just phenomenal the job creation they've produced. I've talked to a lot of their employees and they all love it. There's a good place to work with good wages. I also think it says something very positive about our workforce here. We're so appreciative that Plum Creek recognizes that."
Plum Creek expansion exceeds expectations

Waste container manufacturer more than doubles employment over past six months

BY SLIM SMITH | ssmith@cdispatch.com

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New FedEx distribution center to open later this year

$50M investment will create 100-plus jobs

BY BRIAN JONES | bjones@cdispatch.com

The new 200,000-plus-square-foot FedEx Ground center is under construction off of Charleigh Ford Drive. It is expected to open later this year.

FedEx's Ground distribution center at the Golden Triangle Industrial Park should be complete later this year, according to Golden Triangle Development LINK CEO Joe Max Higgins.

The project will replace the two smaller buildings on South Frontage Road with a much larger distribution center.

"Think they'll be done by late summer, maybe early fall," Higgins said. "They've got the exterior of the building about done, and everything is going well." Higgins said.

"FedEx buildings will become available for a new tenant. Convincing Amazon to expand with it.

"It creates an opportunity for those centers to be used for something else," Higgins said. "A growing business could go in there and use it, so it creates an opportunity for growth for another business.

The distribution center is part of a growing trend towards e-commerce, which, in turn, provides tax money. A portion of sales tax collected via online sales comes back to the county for use on roads and bridges, Higgins explained.

"We get (use tax) revenues to the tune of $1 million per year," he said. "Conservatively I'm thinking $50 million in value."

The project was announced in October 2015. The new distribution center is located on about 41 acres off of Charleigh Ford Drive, near Golden Triangle Regional Airport. LINK Vice President for Economic Development Meryl Fisackerly estimated it will be between 217,000 and 235,000 square feet.

"To put that into perspective, the current facility is one building that's about 20,000 square feet and another that is 7,000 to 8,000," she said. "Combined, they're not even at 30,000 square feet."

"If the demand continues to grow, Higgins said there is room for the FedEx site to expand with it. The footprint for the Lowndes County center is smaller than might be expected, Higgins said. "That center serves to the state line to the east and maybe to Winona or so to the west," he said. "I never asked north or south, but if the east/west is just that far, you're not talking about a hell of a big footprint you're going to serve. That alone has made the site more attractive to e-commerce that has increased in our part of the world."

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North Star Industrial Park prepares for new industries

By Jessica Lindsey / Dispatch Staff

Garan Manufacturing has been the sole occupant of North Star Industrial Park for a little more than a year, but the Golden Triangle Development LINK is looking to give Garan a few neighbors soon. Joe Max Higgins, chief executive officer for the LINK, said plans are to build two and 10 buildings at North Star, located off Highway 109 in Starkville. Currently, the LINK is working on finishing the slab for a 50,000 square-foot speculative building across from Garan, and the materials for that building arrived on site the week of May 16.

“We’ve got $1.4 million in a grant from the state of Mississippi to do further enhancements to the park,” Higgins said. “We’re going to start clearing the trees and vegetation and knocking the hills off. We’ve got a 50,000 square-foot building that is expandable up to 100,000, and right next to it we’re going to put a 100,000 square-foot building. In that park where Garan is on the north side, we envision there will be about four buildings of about 100,000 square feet down the south side and probably three or four on the north side. We also have the real space to develop, and we’re actually looking at further enhancements to the park.”

Higgins said Garan houses administrative offices, engineers and the company’s human resources, said though the former building was bigger, Garan really needed a lot of unused space. It was very dated. We really need a lot of unused space. It was very dated. We really need a lot of unused space. It was very dated. We really need a lot of unused space. It was very dated.

Mercedes facilities.

North Star Industrial Park is a prime location. According to Higgins, there are two projects in the works to add speculative buildings to the park. Eventually, the purpose of the, hopefully, temporary building thanks to grants from the state of Mississippi.

By the end of 2022, the Golden Triangle Development LINK is looking to have at least two speculative buildings on site. The LINK is working on finishing the slab for a 50,000 square-foot speculative building across from Garan, and the materials for that building arrived on site the week of May 16.

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Photo by Deanna Robinson/Dispatch Staff

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