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Columbia Industries

pumps to dump trash. In the 90s, it added oil and gas drilling equipment, such as heavy-duty cranes, to its list of products. In July 2022, Moss decided to move to Starkville and announced a $9.5 million investment into the former metal manufacturing plant. The company began operating the plant in January.

Moss also said their Starkville location is perfect for two reasons: access to interstate highways and available workforce.

“When we ship our equipment to our customers, which are predominantly in the eastern part of the United States, it would cost us $50,000 just to ship it from Oregon.” Moss said.

“Now with fuel prices and inflation. It’s $60,000-$70,000 just to ship the equipment. So we started looking for a place in the southeast that had two things,” said Tom Moss, Columbia Industries President.

“We are going to improve operations over the next three years.” Riel said.

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Buildings

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“I think we’re going to have something pretty soon that we can share with the public.” Higgins said.

“Let’s do our due diligence done on it and then start marketing it and every day we come to work and we’re making headway towards getting that done. I think we’re going to have something pretty soon that we can share with the public.”

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4-County ‘vital’ to industrial recruitment in Golden Triangle

Electric cooperative plays key role in recruiting, servicing industry

BY GRANT MCLAUGHLIN
grant@cdispatch.com

When the Yokohama Tire Plant was built in West Point in 2015, executives from the company’s home country, Japan, flew in to see the site via helicopter after being interested in the previously finished project. But when they wanted to land next to the plant, power lines were blocking their way.

What did then 4-County Electric Power Association CEO Joe Burt Cade do? He lowered a set of power lines, allowing the helicopter to land.

“(Cade) said ‘Well, they’re our power lines and I can take them down if I need’ That’s just what he did,” current CEO Brian Clark said. “The biggest takeaway from that standpoint is we don’t go in the shallow end in terms of doing what needs to be done to help our areas grow.”

Clark told The Dispatch the power association, which has a presence in nine counties, has always tried to lend a hand to assist industries with recruitment and development.

Over the years, 4-County has assisted in connecting power to several large companies through the area, with notable examples such as Steel Dynamics, Pacari and Yokohama. Golden Triangle Development LINK CEO Joe Max Higgins said the power association has been critical in more ways than just providing power to industries.

“Our biggest takeaway from that standpoint is we don’t go in the shallow end in terms of doing what needs to be done to help our areas grow.”

“Cade told us that he was going to do,” Higgins said. “They bought it for when they had to take men to work on jobs. Peers had concerns that they had several people going to, and the link probably uses that van more to show people around.”

Higgins added that 4-County has also improved the area by installing broadband lines throughout its nine-county territory, which also looks good for industry recruitment.

“They go over and above and beyond what most utility companies do,” Higgins said. “For the last 20 years, they’ve done more, exceeded and signed up for more than anybody ever signed up for and they do it very well. They don’t half-ass anything.”

Higgins also added that 4-County has a fast return on investment for when they have to take men to work on jobs.

4-County Electric Power Association electrician repairs a powerline. 4-County has been heavily involved in industrial recruitment in the Golden Triangle by connecting major companies such as SDI, Paccar and Yokohama to the TVA grid. Golden Triangle Development LINK CEO Joe Max Higgins said the power association has been vital not only to recruit, but also lend a hand to the LINK when needed.

Grant@cdispatch.com

BY GRANT MCLAUGHLIN
grant@cdispatch.com

When Columbia Industries President Tom Moss and his team looked for a new location to move their manufacturing business, they first turned to West Point.

But after a deal to purchase the former West Point building went sideways, Moss and the company looked on the former Gulf States building at 101 Airport Road in Starkville. Along with manufacturing operations, the company is moving its headquarters to Starkville in the next six months.

“We initially looked at West Point in a building, and we couldn’t come to an agreement with the owner of that property,” Moss said. “So we moved on and within a week, we landed on this property.”

Moss said the company had been looking to leave Oregon, where it has been based for more than 40 years, due to what he described as increased hostility toward large businesses from the state government.

“One of our key goals is to work in a local market that’s driven to accept business,” Moss said. “Oregon today, where we are, is not what’s considered a business-friendly environment, unfortunately. So we were looking for a partner, if you will, from the state so when we start manufacturing, we can count on the state not to change its mind on things.”

Moss added that he has such confidence in 4-County, he “firmly believes” it would send workers in if the LINK was ever short-staffed.

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Moss said the company sold that part of its property.

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Columbia Industries is moving its headquarters to Starkville, where it has been based for more than 40 years, due to what it described as increased hostility toward large businesses from the state government. He said a place like Starkville fits the relationship the company wants to have with both the state and local municipalities.

“To our key goals is to work in a local market that’s driven to accept business,” Moss said. “Oregon today, where we are, is not what’s considered a business-friendly environment, unfortunately. So we were looking for a partner, if you will, from the state so when we start manufacturing, we can count on the state not to change its mind on things.”

Moss added that he has such confidence in 4-County, he “firmly believes” it would send workers in if the LINK was ever short-staffed.

“Why do we have to put a lot of work up front to make sure that these businesses have power,” Clark said. “It takes time for us to recoup that cost. Because we’re a not-for-profit, we don’t have to have a fast return on investment like for-profit entities.”

Golden Triangle Development LINK CEO Joe Max Higgins said the power association has been critical in more ways than just providing power to industries.

“They actually bought a van that we probably use more than they do,” Higgins said. “They bought it for when they had to take men to work on jobs. Peers had concerns that they had several people going to, and the link probably uses that van more to show people around.”

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Land: Lowndes County’s best problem

BY GRANT MCLAUGHLIN
grant@cdsdispatch.com

Last fall, Lowndes County was sitting on the largely vacant Infinity Megasite, 2,100 acres of shovel-ready industrial development land west of Golden Triangle Regional Airport. But with the announcement of Aluminum Dynamics’ intent to purchase the entire site, the county now finds itself with very little land to market.

Lowndes County has been home to three Tennessee Valley Authority certified Megasites, which collectively represent more than 8,400 acres. A fourth site, called the Link Industrial Park, includes more than 500 acres.

Marking the south edges of land with established infrastructure has long been the strategy of the Golden Triangle LINK, the organization tasked with industrial recruitment for the area. The strategy has been successful. In addition to ADI and Yokohama, the other Golden Triangle Megasites have Parcar and Steel Dynamics.

“It’s a good problem to have,” Lowndes County Board of Supervisors President Trip Hairston said of Lowndes County’s sudden shortage of land. “You’re going to see vast amounts of construction going on in that megasite over the next one to three years. It sounds odd that we don’t have any more land. However, it does create a challenge. We just don’t want to sit back and do nothing.”

Hairston said The Dispatch helped sell the LINK the megasite, which was created by the county to prepare for the next generation of recruitment that we’re going to see.

“We’ve got people that want to buy the building, but the owner of the company will not give their sale price,” he said. “...A lot of companies that are looking will first ask for an existing building, or these types that are still on the market. Since we get an RFP, they first prefer that kind of building with 20 to 30 feet high ceilings such as the speculative building and Freedom buildings would be good for mid-sized companies. We’ve had distribution look at it, we’ve had manufacturing look at it, we’ve had manufacturing, so it’s been the scoop of nuts.”

Higgins said working with the Golden Triangle Development LINK and the city are currently marketing the two Flexsteel buildings as well as the speculative building inside the NorthStar Industrial Park.

“We’ve got people that want to buy the building, but the owner of the company will not give their sale price,” he said. “...A good, older, industrial building for $1 a foot, maybe $4 would be a decent price.”

For CURiO, Higgins said high-end manufacturing is unlikely there, but it still has potential, and LINK will definitely show it. Also have the benefit of having a cheaper option for smaller and already industrial sized companies.

“A ‘shaded shelter’ building is how I would categorize it,” he said, referring to the property’s relative lack of amenities. “Is there some company that could use that building? Absolutely, because it’ll be a relatively inex

Available space key

Vacant buildings in Starkville ready for new industry players

‘We’ve got people that want to buy the building, but the owner of the company will not give their sale price. ... A good, older, industrial building for $3 a foot, maybe $4 would be a decent price.”

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Last fall, Lowndes County was sitting on the largely vacant area that is the Infinity Megasite, 2,100 acres of shovel-ready industrial development land west of Golden Triangle Regional Airport. But with the announcement of Aluminum Dynamics’ acquisition of the entire Infantry Megasite, which collectively represent more than 4,200 acres, a fourth megasite program in the Golden Triangle is crafted to be even bigger and better.

Megasites have been home to three Tennessee counties over the next three years. It sounds odd that we have the strategy of the Golden Triangle’s Megasites, which collectively represent more than 4,200 acres. A fourth megasite program in the Golden Triangle now includes more than 500 acres.

Marking large swaths of land with established infrastructure has long been the strategy of the Golden Triangle LINK, the organization tasked with industrial recruitment and the megasite program is managed by the Lowndes County Board of Supervisors. The strategy has been successful. In addition to ADI and Yokohama, the other Golden Triangle Megasites house Paccar and Steel Dynamics.

It’s a good problem to have,” Lowndes County Board of Supervisors President Trip Hairston said of Lowndes County’s sudden shortage of land. “You’re going to see vast amounts of construction going on in that megasite over the next three years. It sounds odd that we won’t have any more land. However, it does create a challenge. We just don’t want to sit back and rest on our hands and say ‘Look at what we’ve done.’ We got to prepare for the next generation of recruitment that we’re going to see in the area. We’ve got a lot of land to work with, and we’re trying to do it right.”

Haitson told The Dispatch he and LINK CEO Joe Max Higgins began planning out an idea to add a new megasite shortly after ADI announced a $2.2 billion investment to build two buildings totaling 200,000 square feet, the CÜRiO building a 62,000 square-foot light industrial building and the speculative building located at the NorthStar Industrial Park across from Ganan Manufacturing. The new site, the county now finds itself with a very little land to market.

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One of those is the Yellow Megasite, the third other vacant sites sit poised for potential development. Those left include the former Flexsteel site, which consists of two buildings totaling 200,000 square feet, the CÜRiO building a 62,000 square-foot light industrial building and the speculative building located at the NorthStar Industrial Park across from Ganan Manufacturing. The new site, the county now finds itself with a very little land to market.

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4-County ‘vital’ to industrial recruitment in Golden Triangle

Electric cooperative plays key role in recruiting, servicing industry

BY GRANT McLAUGHLIN
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But when they wanted to land next to the plant, power lines blocked their way.

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Clark told The Dispatch the power association, which has a presence in nine counties, has always tried to lend a hand to assist in industrial recruitment and development throughout its nine-county territory, which also looks good for industry recruitment.

"They go over and above and beyond what most utility companies do," he said. "They actually bought a van that we probably use more than they do," Higgins said. "They bought it for when they had to take men to work on storms or they had concerns that they had several people going to, and the link probably uses that van more to show people around."

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Higgins added that he has such confidence in 4-County, he "firmly believes" it would send workers in if the LINK was ever short-staffed.

"That's just the type of relationship we've built," he said. "They believe in 4-County, and..."

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Columbia Industries

Continued from Page 5

Continued from Page 10

Tom Moss, Columbia Industries President

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About the cover

Stacy Edwards welds metal at the Columbia Industries plant at 101 Airport Road in Starkville. The company began operating out of the former Gulf States building in January and is currently in the process of moving headquarters to Starkville from Oregon, where the company is currently based. Photo by Grant McLaughlin/Dispatch Staff

Index of Advertisers

4-County Electric Power Association ........................................ 3
Aurora Flight Sciences ......................................................... 6
Baptist Memorial Hospital-Golden Triangle ......................... 4
Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau....................... 11
Columbus Light and Water .................................................. 8
East Mississippi Community College ................................. 9
International Paper ............................................................ 8
Jackson Newell Paper Company ........................................... 3
Lowndes County Board of Supervisors ............................... 4
Neel-Schaffer ................................................................. 4
Paccar Engine Company .................................................... 13
Southern Ionics ................................................................. 12
Steel Dynamics - Flat Roll Group ........................................ 2
Sullivan’s Office Supply ....................................................... 6
Superior Catfish ............................................................... 11
The Clinic at Elm Lake ....................................................... 16
The Golden Triangle LINK ................................................ 15

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