

Vineland: Get started on industrial park

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Northeast Precast LLC is developing an industrial park off South Lincoln Avenue in Vineland. This gate blocks the access road to the property. (Photo: Joseph P. Smith)

VINELAND – City planners on Wednesday night gave unanimous approval to concrete fabricator Northeast Precast LLC to start work on a large, private industrial park on about 151 acres off South Lincoln Avenue and within useful proximity to Route 55.

The Planning Board approval was entirely expected. The project has had enthusiastic support since inception from Vineland as well as the Cumberland County Improvement Authority. The city and authority, in fact, worked together to sell the necessary land to Northeast Precast.

Financial support from Vineland includes a 20-year property tax deferral on buildings. The city also is partnering with the company on a \$2 million road project, an extension of Burns Avenue, that would connect South Lincoln Avenue to South Main Road.

After the approval, Northeast Precast owner and general manager John Ruga praised the efforts of Mayor Anthony Fanucci, the city's Economic Development director, and CCIA Executive Director Gerard Velazquez III.

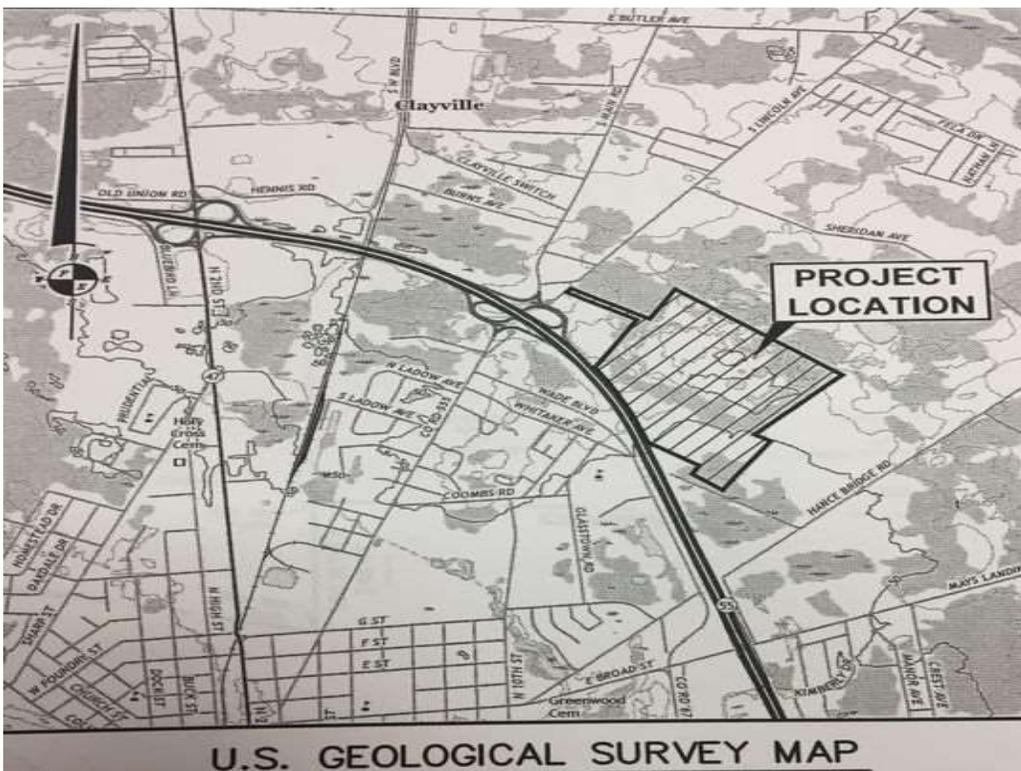
“We’re extremely thrilled to be coming to Vineland and bring this facility here, and just special thanks to them and also to the board,” Ruga said.

The city has an agreement with Northeast Precast prescribing two development stages. The first stage, which is what the board approved, serves the immediate expansion needs of Northeast Precast. The second stage, occupying another 65 acres, will open the park to light industrial and commercial tenants.

Northeast Precast presently is based at a 25-acre site at 92 Reese Road in Millville and employs 250 people, Ruga testified. The company, which was formed in 2000, began with a focus on residential construction and without its own manufacturing facility. It then began manufacturing and has moved into larger commercial projects, fabricating concrete building walls and foundations. It also does steel fabrication at the former Silverton Marine property off Riverside Drive in Millville.

Ruga testified that the Millville facility has doubled in size since it opened but still is unable to keep up with demand. The company has diversified into projects such as distribution centers for UPS and Amazon as well as parking garages, he said.

A city engineering report describes the major part of the project as a 268,962-square-foot concrete fabrication building for use by Northeast Precast. There also is a 50,707 square feet of office space in a three-story building, a 93,152-square-foot steel fabrication building with another 6,308 square feet of office space, and a concrete batch plant.



A U.S. Geologic Survey Map shows the site of a now-approved industrial park proposed by Northeast Precast off South Lincoln Avenue in Vineland. (Photo: U.S. Geologic Survey)

“So, this is a large facility,” Northeast Precast attorney Michael Fralinger said.

Northeast Precast will build over two phases: Phase one will include the steel fabrication building and its office space, the concrete batch plant, and related improvements; and phase two will include the 268,962 square-foot Northeast Precast plant with its office space.

Ruga said the facility will be the most advanced in the United States, offering major advances in efficiency and safety. “We’ve spent a lot of time the last five years looking at pre-cast production in Germany, in Finland, ... in Italy,” he said.

“And one thing that I think would be of interest to a lot of people is most of this manufacturing happens inside,” Ruga said. “And it will be a much cleaner operation than even what we have today in Millville. When this facility is done, you know, it really will be a world-class facility.”

At the public hearing, businessman Paul Riggins spoke to endorse the project and in particular the pending road construction. He is the owner of Riggins Oil Co., which has a station between South Lincoln Avenue and South Main Road, and other properties in the vicinity.

“I’ve been working with CCIA on the Burns Avenue extension,” Riggins said. “And recently, we came to a verbal agreement on how that would go through my property to extend from Main Road to Lincoln Avenue.

“That extension not only helps Mr. Ruga’s development, but it corrects an extraordinarily dangerous situation that exists at the intersection of Main Road and Burns Avenue, where I have gasoline tankers making turns on a substandard engineered intersection,” Riggins said. “So, this development will inadvertently help another difficult situation.”

The property is adjacent to the city’s Clayville electric power station. Route 55’s northbound lanes are to the south of the property.

Due to the size of the site and its remote location, the city is allowing Northeast Precast to mount an out-sized sign off South Lincoln Road and a similarly large sign that will face Route 55. City ordinance otherwise would have barred the sign facing the highway.

The property sat unused for many years after the cessation of sand mining and related activities. The property has required extensive soil grading to level the site because features could be as much as 30 feet taller than other features, according to testimony.

Ruga is facing a small fine for putting in a foundation for a concrete batch plant. City Principal Engineer David Maillet discovered the work during a Feb. 21 inspection. The work should not have been done before the site plan was approved and without permits, and a violation notice and a “stop work” order was issued, a city official said.

At the hearing, Maillet asked the engineer for Ruga whether he could testify that the work was done as the site plan specified. Engineer Stephen Nardelli replied that it was.

The board vote was 5-0. Voting in favor were Vice Chairman Michael Pantalone and members Stephen Plevins, David Catalana, John Casadia, and Robert Odorizzi.

Chairman David Manders and member David Acosta, a city councilman, recused themselves from the hearing over unspecified conflicts.

Technically, Northeast Precast is the project applicant but the landowner is NEP Real Estate of Vineland Renewal. Ruga established the corporation for the project. Northeast Precast is the site operator.

The industrial park concept supplanted an idea to place a youth sports complex there.

Joseph P. Smith; jpsmith_dj; (856) 563-5252; jsmith@gannettnj.com