

# Burlington County Times

## Vineland loan approved for cold storage company expansion to support food company boom

**Joseph P. Smith** Vineland Daily Journal  
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VINELAND – A \$6.5 million municipal loan to Levari Brothers Realty has wrapped up financing for another large cold storage warehouse at 1200 North Mill Road, extending a recent string of expansions spurred by growing food industry demand.

The City Council unanimously approved the loan Tuesday night. The money comes from a revolving loan fund, whose operating committee endorsed the application earlier in February.



Preliminary work already has started adjacent to the existing M&O Freezer site on North Mill Road, as seen here Friday, Feb. 26, 2021. Joseph P. Smith

Levari Brothers is a holding company that owns two existing cold storage facilities, both in that stretch of North Mill Road. Those facilities operate as First Choice Freezer and Cold Storage and as M & O Freezer and Cold Storage.

Those businesses told the city they are stretched to accommodate customers, despite fairly recently expansions. The proposed approximately 106,000-square-foot warehouse, at a total cost of about \$19.37 million, helps address that shortage. A second phase of expansion also is planned at the site.



M&O Freezer on North Mill Road in Vineland has city planning approval to proceed with two phases of expansion that will double its capacity. Joseph P. Smith

The Cumberland County Improvement Authority says that increased food processing in the county has created a shortage in cold storage rental space. The city loan analysis cites that finding.

“The food industry has skyrocketed,” CCLA Executive Director Gerard Velazquez III said on Wednesday. “And quite frankly, as function of COVID, has even gotten to the point where it’s become prevalent and relevant to the economy.

“We saw everyone waiting in line for their food,” Velazquez said. “We saw everyone in the supermarket. Quite frankly, our economy, because it is food based to a large degree, has fared better than the other economies — Atlantic County, Cape May, particularly — with respect to the impacts of COVID.”

Velazquez said the cold storage expansion trend was evident even before the pandemic, but it has accelerated. The city's main industrial areas are close to Route 55 exits, for fast transport to and from metropolitan areas, and that steers such projects to the area.

"It's not something that was a function of COVID solely," he said. "But, obviously, people are understanding now it is important to continue to grow the food industry and make sure that we have inventory and supply."

TD Bank is the primary lender for the project, at \$14.73 million.

*Joe Smith is a N.E. Philly native transplanted to South Jersey more than 30 years ago. He is a former editor and current senior staff writer for The Daily Journal in Vineland, Courier-Post in Cherry Hill, and the Burlington County Times. Have a tip? Reach out at (856) 563-5252 or [jsmith@thedailyjournal.com](mailto:jsmith@thedailyjournal.com) or follow me on Twitter, @jpsmith-dj. Help support local journalism with a subscription.*