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Cold Storage *is Heating Up the Economy in Vineland*

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T H E E C O N O M I C D E V E L O P M E N T E D I T I O N

Growth in Cold Storage Helps Bring Vineland National Recognition

By Sandy Forosisky, Vineland City Economic Development Director

In December, the City of Vineland was recognized as a “Top Five” location for Food Processing and Production by Expansion Solutions magazine as part of their 2016 Awards of Excellence. The 10th Annual Awards recognize locations and economic development organizations that have demonstrated progress in business retention, expansion, and relocation. Vineland was the only New Jersey community or development organization recognized in any of the seven categories selected by the magazine. Other locations that were recognized with Vineland in the Food Processing category included Jerome, Idaho; Windsor, Ontario, Canada; Maricopa, Arizona; and Oswego, New York.

“Locations and organizations were chosen because of the support systems they offer to businesses, recent growth activity, and future growth potential that can be created in each area,” said Expansion Solutions spokeswoman Nicole Cornett. “Strategic locations,

pro-business climates, investments made in improving infrastructure, and the availability of buildings and sites were also considered by the editorial staff in choosing these locations.”

“Vineland truly does have a lot to offer in terms of location and accessibility to major markets, municipal infrastructure, support services, state and local incentives, and very competitive operating costs, all of which are necessary ingredients for a healthy and profitable business environment,” said Mayor Anthony Fanucci. “These factors, along with our rich agricultural history, including hosting the largest farmers’ cooperative on the east coast in the Vineland Produce Auction, have helped draw international brands like Archer Daniels Midland, Hanover Foods, Rich Products, AdvancePierre Foods, and the AGRO Merchants Group to Vineland.”



Bridor's line of more than 100 croissants, sweet and savory pastries and breads are made by Master Bakers who have earned this distinguished title by completing extensive apprenticeships and training in Europe. (Photo: Bridor, Inc.)

In fact, over the past three years Vineland has seen nearly \$90 million invested by cold storage and food processing operations including Bridor USA, Townsend Farms, Allied Specialty Foods, Mamacita Foods, Lucca Freezer & Cold Storage, Safeway Fresh Foods, First Choice Freezer & Cold Storage, RLS Logistics, and Davy Cold Storage. As a result, Vineland is now able to offer nearly 30 million cubic feet of freezer capacity. According to the most recent USDA report released in 2016, New Jersey currently ranks 10th nationally with 108 million cubic feet of gross capacity. With nearly 30% of that in Vineland, the city is certainly a key player.

Business development is a collaborative effort. We worked closely with all of these companies to help them through the permitting and licensing process. Additionally, we were able to provide support through our successful Urban Enterprise Zone revolving loan fund when additional capital was required to move the project forward.

For example, Oregon-based Townsend Farms, a leading grower, buyer, processor, and shipper of frozen fruits throughout the United States was looking to expand their operations. "We were doing a lot of business with blueberry packers in Hammonton, buying their fruit and shipping it to the west coast for processing," said Vice President Margaret Townsend. "But as we began to outgrow our facilities and shipping costs were increasing, we wanted to set up a permanent east coast operation." The company found a reasonable location in Vineland with an existing 215,000 square-foot building. Additionally, the city was able to provide a \$4 million Urban Enterprise Zone loan to assist with renovation costs which included installing the large freezers required for frozen storage.

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The Bridor Vineland facility expansion introduced a state-of-the-art production line, which was developed in France, that has doubled production of their signature croissants and pastries.
(Photo: Bridor, Inc.)



Townsend Farms Vice President Margaret Townsend (L) and Vineland Development Corporation Board Member Mario Ruiz-Mesa (R) tour the company's Vineland re-packing operation which processes approximately 14 million pounds of frozen fruit per year. (Photo: City of Vineland)



Growth in Cold Storage... *(continued from page 15)*

Bridor USA, a leader in manufacturing authentic European bread and Viennese pastry for the retail and food service industry, to include Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts, also received funding through the UEZ program to help finance a 47,000 square-foot expansion to their existing Vineland facility. Chief Executive Officer Jean-Francois Duquesne called city officials “true work partners” and said, “The Vineland plant is key to the company’s strategy to grow in North America by turning out the highest quality products with a very strong proximity to customers.”

Bridor stores and ships its products from an adjacent RLS Logistics temperature controlled facility. In order to keep up with their growing demand, RLS recently constructed a new 2 million-cubic-foot warehouse in the Vineland Industrial Park North. According to company officials, “The (Vineland) economy is on an upturn in food service and additional warehouse space is needed in our region. It’s a good sign that manufacturers are building inventory, it shows confidence in future sales.”

Likewise, Lucca Freezer and Cold Storage, which serves as the flagship United States perishable facility for the AGRO Merchants Group, recently completed a major 100,000 square-foot addition to their existing operation. The location serves customers in the United

States and abroad including New Zealand, Italy, Peru, Argentina, Spain, Morocco, and South Africa. “We are pretty diverse now on the different products coming into our warehouse,” said Company President Rusty Lucca. “There is steady growth here. That is why we’ve made another addition.”

Lucca Cold Storage is the largest produce import facility in the United States. When companies are making commitments and investments of this kind, it shows they have a real interest in our community. We look forward to working with them on any future needs they may have.

“We are optimistic about the future and our ability to keep the momentum going,” Mayor Fanucci continued. “There are new projects in the pipeline. We have acquired 68 additional acres to expand our industrial park, and our municipal electric and water utilities provide among the lowest rates in the state, which is especially critical to the food processing industry. Whether it is an existing company looking to expand, someone looking to relocate here, or a brand new start-up, we are excited to be their partner and will do all we can to help their business succeed.”



First Choice Freezer and Cold Storage, which has completed the planning process for another major 60,000 square-foot expansion, uses their dedicated fleet of refrigerated trucks to pick-up and deliver customer products along the eastern seaboard. (Photo: First Choice Freezer)

