Spec buyer revealed

Deal worth $7 million, 75 jobs

BY MIKE EADS
THE JOURNAL

WESTMINSTER — A Georgia aerospace manufacturer will take over the shell building in Oconee Commerce Center early next year.

A.I.D. Company, a subsidiary of RBC Bearings Inc., announced plans Thursday to move its Clayton, Ga., manufacturing operation to the 50,000 square-foot facility, which has been on the market since last year.

"We are excited about growing A.I.D. Company and pleased to locate our operations in Oconee County. South Carolina has created an excellent business environment and a skilled work force that will help us succeed. We appreciate all the support we've received from state and local officials," said Michael Hartnett, president and CEO of RBC Bearings Inc. in a statement released Thursday.

A.I.D. manufactures control rods used in both fixed-wing and rotary aircraft. The move, planned for the first quarter of 2013, will double its manufacturing space.

The company is believed to have spent $1 million to acquire the shell building. It plans to invest $7 million in the new operation and create 75 new jobs over the next five years.

Richard Blackwell, executive director of the Oconee County Economic Development Commission, confirmed the building's sale last week but declined to name the buyer until Thursday.

"This deal came together because we had the product in place — thanks to County Council — that fit the needs of the company," Blackwell said. "The building provided the company a great location with the right work force nearby ... due to it being a shell-type building, it allows for quick up fit to become operational in the time they need it."

Blackwell wasn't the only county official celebrating the news Thursday.

"A.I.D. Company is the latest example of companies finding success in Oconee County. This is a testament to the confidence companies have in Oconee's work force and our pro-business climate," said Joel Thrift, County Council chairman.

This deal follows work in recent years by state officials to carve an aerospace niche within the manufacturing economy.

"Manufacturing continues to be a strong sector in South Carolina's economy, and the aviation and aerospace industry is an increasingly important part of manufacturing here. Today's announcement by A.I.D. Company location builds on the Palmetto State's reputation in the aerospace club," said Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt.

A.I.D. will begin hiring in October through readySC. State-approved job development credits will be available when hiring targets are met.

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