

Menards to add 350 area jobs; State gives tax credit to expansion in Williams County

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HOLIDAY CITY, Ohio — Home improvement retailer Menards Inc. will add 350 jobs at its distribution center here in Williams County as part of an expansion that will receive a 55 percent, 10-year tax credit that was awarded Monday by the Ohio Tax Credit Authority.

State development officials said the jobs, which would come over the next three years, would add \$8.2 million to the facility's \$10.6 million payroll, which Menards would have to maintain for at least 13 years, starting in 2013.

Wages for the new positions would average \$11.30 an hour, plus \$2.12 an hour in benefits, the Ohio Department of Development said.

Jeff Abbott, spokesman for the privately held home improvement warehouse chain based in Eau Claire, Wis., said the company could not yet comment on the state action nor give details on how it plans to expand the Holiday City warehouse operation.

The company's Web site indicates it has 20 retail stores in Michigan and 17 in Ohio, including three in the Toledo area.

In addition to its facility in Holiday City, Menards has distribution centers in Eau Claire, Plano, Ill., and Shelby, Iowa.

Construction began in 2006 on the roughly 700,000-square-foot manufacturing and distribution complex, which is in the extreme northwest corner of Ohio, six miles south of the Michigan border and 60 miles west of Toledo. The 640-acre complex is about a mile from Exit 13 of the Ohio Turnpike.

At the time of its construction, a Menards executive told The Blade that the company chose the location "because it has a good railroad system, a good community to work with, a good state to work with, and the land was available."

Menards needs such a large complex because it makes many of the products that are sold in its stores such as concrete landscaping blocks, siding and lumber products such as trusses.

In June, 2004, the State Controlling Board approved a \$500,000 business development grant for costs associated with water and sanitary sewer improvements for the Menards

project and a \$980,000 roadwork development grant. In May of that year, the Ohio Tax Credit Authority approved a Job Creation Tax Credit that began in 2008.

Mr. Abbott would not disclose the number of employees at the distribution center.

However, the Ohio Department of Development said the firm had about 230 employees at the end of 2008. Williams County's jobless rate was 9.9 percent in September, with an estimated 1,900 people actively seeking work, down from 10.5 percent in August, according to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

In other action Monday, the Ohio Tax Credit Authority approved:

A 40 percent, five-year tax credit to Charter Manufacturing Co. of Wood County's Perry Township, near Fostoria, to permit the company to add 25 full-time jobs, resulting in a \$1 million addition to the company's \$4.3 million annual payroll, beginning in January, 2012. The new jobs are expected to pay \$20.81 an hour plus \$12.40 an hour in benefits, state development officials said.

A 45 percent, six-year tax credit for P&G Manufacturing Co. in Allen County's Bath Township to add 48 full-time employees, resulting in a \$2.8 million addition to the company's current \$34.2 million payroll. The new jobs are expected to pay \$28.19 an hour plus \$12.12 an hour in benefits. The tax credit is to begin in January, state development officials said.

A 45 percent, seven-year tax credit to Grob Systems Inc. in Bluffton, which will add 113 full-time employees, resulting in a \$3.5 million growth in the company's current \$17.6 million payroll, beginning in January. The new jobs are expected to pay \$15 an hour, plus \$3.08 an hour in benefits, state officials said.

Also Monday, the state's Development Financing Advisory Council recommended the release of a \$4 million Ohio Enterprise Bond Fund Loan and a \$3 million Direct Loan to FWT LLC/Newco, a Fort Worth, Texas, designer and manufacturer of custom steel support products for the telecommunications and utility industries.

The loans will be used in Defiance County, where FWT will create 200 full-time jobs with average hourly wages of \$17.

It involves the purchase and renovation of a 300,000-square-foot building on 92 acres of land in Hicksville.