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Weber Grills eyes expansion in Huntley

The combined moves would add up to 500 jobs within the village

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HUNTLEY – The maker of Weber Grills wants to build a global distribution center near Interstate 90 in Huntley, as part of a two-fold plan that could create nearly 500 jobs for a village focused on business growth.

Weber-Stephen Products would move distribution operations from its current facility along Oak Creek Parkway in Huntley to 89 acres east of the Huntley Outlet Center not yet in village limits.

The popular grill maker would then transform its existing facility in Huntley to a manufacturing factory, under an initial plan Village Board members will see for the first time Thursday.

The combined moves would bring up to 500 permanent and seasonal jobs for a village that has eyed a business boom since a full interchange opened at Route 47 and Interstate 90 last fall, following years of exponential residential growth.

"With the new interchange put in place, we feel that this is a great location," said Brooke Jones, vice president of corporate marketing for Weber. "We want to keep our factories and distribution together."

Weber has operated a combined distribution and manufacturing facility behind the Jewel-Osco in Huntley since 1996. Jones said the company has been happy with Huntley and wanted to expand its operations within the village.

But the process to make that expansion a reality is just beginning. The village would first need to annex a combined 131 acres east of the outlet mall into its limits before Weber can go through the village's zoning and design process.

Once annexed, the newly-acquired land – owned by Component Management Group – would include 89 acres for Weber's proposed 757,120-square-foot distribution center. The remaining acres would be slotted for future development.

Weber would then devote most of its 625,000-square-foot facility behind Jewel-Osco to manufacturing. The converted manufacturing space would add 450 jobs, while the distribution center would add 75 jobs, according to village estimates.

Construction on the global center depends on how quickly Weber can move through the village's process, Jones said.

She didn't know how many dollars Weber would be investing in Huntley for the moves, adding the company is finalizing business incentives at the village and state levels.

"It all depends," Jones said. "We would love to say construction will be this summer."

The job growth in Huntley would be one of the largest by a manufacturer in recent memory, said Victor Narusis, the village's business recruitment coordinator.

Huntley officials in the past year have looked to capitalize on the new interchange, which for the first time opened the once rural village to interstate traffic from both Chicago and Rockford.

The village already has recruited companies such as Cargo Equipment in Elgin and Lionheart Engineering in Woodstock to relocate to Huntley's industrial park along Interstate 90.

Weber's expansion plan significantly boosts the village's long-term goals of diversifying its tax base and adding a daytime population to entice retailers, Narusis said.

"We want to be a community where people can work, live and shop," Narusis said. "The more jobs we create in town, the better it is for the quality of life in town."

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