

Charlotte Business Journal - November 10, 2008

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CHARLOTTE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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Friday, November 7, 2008

Gastonia losing key partner for downtown hotel project

Charlotte Business Journal - by [Ken Elkins](#)

Plans for the \$30 million Gastonia hotel and conference center have been all but canceled.

The winning developer for the project, [Hotel Investment Services Inc.](#) of Troy, Mich., recently dropped out, citing a lack of financing.

Gastonia officials will turn their attention to helping existing downtown businesses.

The city began efforts this year to build the center on 2.4 acres of a city block bounded by Franklin Boulevard, Main Avenue, and Marietta and South streets.

Plans called for a 25,000-square-foot conference center with an attached hotel. City officials wanted a major hotel brand for the site, such as Hilton or Marriott.

[Catellus Group](#) of Charlotte and Hotel Investment Services competed to be the private partner in the venture. Catellus owner Steve Barker says Gastonia has decided to "go in a different direction" instead of awarding the development contract to his firm.

So the conference center idea may be dead, although no one will pronounce it canceled. Jim Palenick, Gastonia city manager and a prime mover for the project, couldn't be reached for comment.

Poultry company grows in Troutman

[Case Farms](#) has launched an expansion and renovation of its Troutman administration offices.

The poultry processor expects to nearly double employment to 42 jobs in its financial department over the next five years.

The \$1.8 million expansion of the 8,000-square-foot building includes the addition of a server room for information-technology integration, an electrical room, a new parking lot and additional storage and offices.

The construction will bring the Troutman offices to 13,000 square feet, says Mike Popowycz, chief financial officer.

Case Farms chose to add to the office because it's easily accessible to its Morganton and Goldsboro operations.

The company hired [Hennon Group Architects](#) of Mooresville and Charlotte-based [Lee Morgan Inc.](#) for design and construction. Hennon is using a three-dimensional modeling process to design the addition, says Heather Poston, spokeswoman for the firm. "Case Farms was able to see exterior and interior renderings and compare costs of various elements before groundbreaking."

Case Farms is based in Maryland. The company processes 1.6 million birds per week and has more than 2,000 employees in North Carolina, Maryland and Ohio. Its Troutman facility was established in 1993 and originally included the company's genetics program.

Industrial site prepared near NCRC

The [N.C. Research Campus](#) is attracting more than plans for groundbreaking life-sciences research.

Three local groups are working to prepare a 130-acre industrial park for projects that don't exactly fit into the \$1.5 billion Kannapolis campus, says Ryan McDaniels, vice president of [Cabarrus Economic Development Corp.](#)

"It gives the team at the research campus an annex site."

Cabarrus Economic Development, [Duke Energy Carolinas](#) and [Castle & Cooke](#), which is developing the N.C. Research Campus, are cooperating on the project. The site is on N.C. Highway 3, about a mile from the campus.

A McCallum Sweeney Consulting evaluation found the park could house food and beverage production, life-sciences facilities and plastics manufacturers.

McDaniels says the park also could become the home to one large user and several small tenants.

The project allows Kannapolis to have space available for quickly moving businesses that need sites ready for construction. "It will provide us with another piece of product," McDaniels says.

The park could be ready for construction of its first buildings in the spring.

Duke Energy is aiding in the study of the property through its Site Readiness Program, which was established to help communities hit by struggles in the textile industry.

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