



Fri, August 19, 2011, 2:26 PM



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Happy Meals and Shale Drilling Spinoffs



Gov. John R. Kasich joins executives and local officials to break ground.

Aug. 3, 2011 7:14 a.m.

By George Nelson

LORDSTOWN, Ohio -- The owners of Ohio Commerce Park -- where ground was broken Tuesday for construction of the \$28 million Anderson-Dubose warehouse that will serve McDonald's -- are exploring ways to capitalize on the rich Marcellus and Utica shale natural gas deposits in the region.

"We're in the process of looking at" different companies involved in shale activity," said Spiro Bakeris, co-owner of the industrial park. "Nothing's been signed or anything but we're examining that and looking at which options we want to go."

Gov. John Kasich alluded to the potential, highlighted by Chesapeake Energy Corp.'s announcement last week that the "discovery of a major new liquids-rich play in the Utica Shale," concentrated in eastern Ohio, that could add as much as \$20 billion to the company's value.

"It's not just about something on the wellhead. It's about industries that are attached to it," Kasich said Tuesday at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Anderson-Dubose Inc. distribution center and warehouse at the industrial park. He pointed to the best-known local example of such activity to illustrate his point, V&M Star's new \$650 million mill being built in Youngstown.

"We're hoping to get some of that" activity, Bakeris said.

The \$28 million, state-of-the-art distribution center and headquarters under construction here will position Anderson-Dubose to supply McDonalds Corp. restaurants in a four-state region for the next 20 to 30 years, executives said.

"It will be a building that you will be proud of," predicted Warren Anderson, president of Anderson-Dubose. Anderson was joined by state and local elected officials, and representatives of the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber, McDonald's and other



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companies for the groundbreaking event at Ohio Commerce Park.

The 155,000-square-foot warehouse, which will employ 160 workers, will consolidate distribution operations in Solon and in Carnegie, Pa., near Pittsburgh. The company supplies food items, paper products and toys for the chain's Happy Meals to nearly 500 McDonald's restaurants in Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and New York. It also supplies Chipotle Mexican Grille restaurants in the region.

Construction should be complete on the building by April 2012, Anderson reported.

"This will position the Anderson Dubose Co. for the next 30 years to give world-class service to an excellent customer," Anderson remarked. "It's an honor to be one of [McDonald's] suppliers."

Distribution centers such as these are important to ensuring food safety for McDonald's, said Tom Covelli, senior director for the corporation and a distant relation, "about four generations back," to former area McDonald's franchisee Sam Covelli. "Keeping [our products] at the right temperature throughout the supply chain [is essential]. The distribution center is a critical part of making that happen," he said.

Tom Humphries, regional chamber president, remarked that he has been looking forward to the event for three years -- "Some would say three long years because it's been a long road to travel."

The company initially proposed a location in North Jackson as one of the sites it was considering but township trustees rejected a proposed zoning change.

"We went to some communities that were not particularly friendly," Anderson said. "We came to this community and they were inspiring."

Anderson praised state and local officials, including the chamber's economic development staff, for the role they played in the project. "Governor, I can't say enough. When we ran into a problem, it was taken care of," he said.

The state last year approved \$3 million in loans for the project and in 2009 approved a job creation tax credit. Earlier this year, Trumbull County commissioners granted a tax abatement for the center.

Kasich, who took office in January, is "a man of few words and gets things done," Humphries said. He has made "some really tough decisions," some of which people agree with and others they don't, he continued, but "it's all for the right intent, to make Ohio more business-friendly."

Humphries has "taken a lot of slings and arrows for me," Kasich responded. The chamber president has come under fire for his support for Kasich over Democrat Ted Strickland, who represented part of the Mahoning Valley in the U.S. House of Representatives before he was elected governor, and for the chamber's support for Senate Bill 5, which curtails collective bargaining rights for state and local public workers.

Kasich said he is excited about local developments, including the prospects presented by the Marcellus and Utica shale oil and natural gas deposits. "If we handle things appropriately going forward, there is more great opportunity for our families and our kids in the Valley, but we must work together," he said.

"We have to make sure there are no roadblocks."

The distribution center is "a step in the right direction" for the park "and we hope to continue," said the Ohio Commerce Center's Bakeris. "It brings some good jobs to the area."

In addition to potential shale spinoff activity, the park is also looking at additional activity involving McDonald's, Anderson-Dubose or anything else it can accommodate, Bakeris said. "We're more than willing to look at all avenues."

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