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# Town OKs incentives for growth at Ameriplex

Business park could bring more than 300 new jobs

By Karen Caffarini  
For Post-Tribune

Makers of pizza, pasta and turbochargers are looking to move into the Ameriplex at the Crossroads business park in Merrillville, bringing more than 300 new permanent jobs and some 300 temporary construction jobs together.

Merrillville Town Council approved resolutions granting financial incentives to Domino's Pizza, Quality Pasta, Turbonetics and Crow Holdings at the May 25 meeting. They each need a second positive vote to become final, which is expected to come at the council's June 8 meeting.

Domino's Pizza plans to invest about \$50.3 million to build and equip a 110,000-square-foot regional pizza dough production and warehouse facility on a 15.2-acre parcel located next to Dawn Foods at the Ameriplex property.

Matthew Zaia, Domino's vice president of development, said the new facility will create 140 new jobs by the end of 2023 to support its new supply chain center. Zaia said new hires will include truck drivers, production members overseeing dough production, office and warehouse staff.

Zaia said the company is looking at a distribution network, starting with a radius including Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin at a minimum then will consider other locations.

"We love the fact that we'll be in a well-established industrial park," Zaia said.

He said the fact that the building will have Interstate 65 frontage, be in proximity to Domino's stores and be able to

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draw from a good local workforce are among the reasons the Ameriplex site was chosen.

He said construction on the new building will begin in September and should be completed in one year.

"Domino's is a global brand that could locate anywhere, and we are happy they are pursuing Merrillville, a true reflection of our friendly business climate," Town Council President Rick Bella, D-5th, said.

"We look forward to closing on the official partnership in the coming weeks," Bella said.

In addition to Merrillville incentive, Domino's was offered up to \$2 million in conditional tax credits and up to \$100,000 in conditional training grants from the Indiana Economic Development Corp., based on Domino's job creation plans.

The other two new businesses — Quality Pasta and Turbonetics — will be located in a building now under construction by Crow Holdings. Pennsylvania-based Quality Pasta, the maker of Muscle Mac and other pasta and sauce products, will hire

about 50 employees to process and package its various products and those of other private label brands, according to Karen Lauerman, president and CEO of the Lake County Economic Alliance, which helped bring the three companies to Merrillville. Total annual payroll is projected at up to \$2 million.

"We plan to hire as many local employees as we can," said Peter Kroner, managing principal of Quality Pasta.

The pasta maker will occupy 90,000 square feet in the Crow Holdings building.

Kroner said they plan to begin operations on Oct. 1.

Turbonetics, designer and manufacturer of turbochargers for vehicles, wants to move from its current 27,000-square-foot building in Hebron to a 65,000-square-foot space in the Crow Holdings building.

General manager Joe Krivickas said the company has outgrown its Hebron space, where it's been located for about 23 years.

Lauerman said the company will retain its 60 employees and hire 20 more when it moves to its new location. Krivickas anticipates the move to take place in September.

"We watched the area grow and develop. This move will give us the ability to grow with a progressive town," Krivickas said of why the company chose the Ameriplex location.

He also said it will have access to a good talent pool and highway exposure.

Crow Holdings was also given an incentive as it invests another \$5 million to build out its current structure under construction to accommodate Quality Pasta and Turbonetics.

With the two new tenants, along with Midwest Truck & Auto, the Crow Holdings building will be full, Town Manager Patrick Reardon said.

The council also approved a preliminary resolution offering financial incentives to Webb Hyundai, which plans to demolish its current building at 1000 W. Lincoln Highway and replace it with a new 25,000-square-foot dealership.

Councilman Shawn Pettit, D-6th, said the project marks a \$8.1 million investment by the dealership.

This also needs a second vote for final approval.

*Karen Caffarini is a freelance reporter for the Post-Tribune.*