

## SPORTS



### 20th edition

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# SWEET SUCCESS

## Project Hammer recruits Ferrara Candy to DeKalb / 3



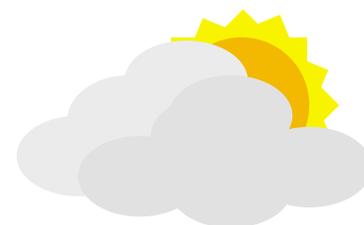
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Complete forecast on page 7

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815-756-4841, ext. 2217

OBITUARIES

815-526-4438  
obits@daily-chronicle.com

Publisher

Laura Shaw  
lshaw@shawmedia.com

General Manager

Eric Olson  
Ext. 2257  
eolson@shawmedia.com

Managing Editor

Kevin Solari  
Ext. 2221  
ksolari@shawmedia.com

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DeKALB

# City, state leaders are excited by Ferrara Candy Co. announcement

By KELSEY RETTKE  
krettke@shawmedia.com

DEKALB – City leaders said the announcement that Chicago-based Ferrara Candy Co. is investing \$100 million in the city of DeKalb will change the economic climate of the region.

The candy company Friday announced it's committed to building a 1.6 million-square-foot distribution facility at the ChicagoWest Business Center on DeKalb's south side after months of will-they-won't-they speculation. Now a commitment has been made, and with it 1,000 temporary construction jobs and 1,000 Ferrara employees are expected to be a part of the build-out. By the second quarter of 2021, the facility will have employed 500 people, according to a news release, with an additional 500 expected as multiple phases of the complex are completed.

"We want people who work at Ferrara to strongly consider living in this city," Mayor Jerry Smith said. "So we're going to work very hard on that. I'm also excited about the fact that if you believe that dominoes do fall, one to the other, I believe this announcement today will be a catalyst for even further economic development."

### Timeline for construction, jobs

Construction already has begun on the site, City Manager Bill Nicklas said.

"They started the foundation and footings earlier this month," Nicklas said. "And even in this lousy weather, they've got nearly all the foundation wall in and are operating now. Laborers are out there, machine operators, the like."

Thanks to an intergovernmental agreement Ferrara will receive 50% of its property taxes abated over the next 15 years.

Sarah Kittel, head of corporate affairs with Ferrara, said the hiring timeline is subject to the timeline for the build. According to the incentive agreement, Ferrara will have two years to reach 1,000 jobs, and if it drops below 80% of that, it will have to give back a prorated share of the tax abatements. If it falls



Mark Busch – mbusch@shawmedia.com

Construction crews continue work preparing a site for the Ferrara Candy Co. at the ChicagoWest Business Center in DeKalb.

“[Construction crews have] started the foundation and footings earlier this month. And even in this lousy weather, they’ve got nearly all the foundation wall in and are operating now.”

Bill Nicklas, DeKalb city manager

below 50%, the abatement will be suspended.

Paul Borek, executive director of the DeKalb County Economic Development Corp., headed up Enterprise Zone efforts and said the effect of Ferrara's investment in DeKalb isn't only in property tax revenue.

"The significant investment, job creation and generation of new tax revenue will constitute a significant expansion of DeKalb County's overall economy,"

Borek said. "And these resources can be invested in strengthening and improving our communities."

State Rep. Jeff Keicher, R-Sycamore, said Ferrara's deal is even sweeter because they're a home-grown company, located in the Chicago area. Keicher teamed up with state Rep. Tom Demmer, R-Dixon, to appeal for state funding for a portion of road improvements needed on Gurler Road between Peace Road and Route 23 to address what's expected to be significant daily truck traffic in and out of the site.

"Today's a fantastic day," Keicher said. "The fact that we will have iconic brands being made and sold in our own backyard is transformational."

Demmer echoed his remarks.

"I think this is one of the best aspects of the Illinois economy," he said. "That we have both this large urban center like Chicago that tends to attract some of the large corporate headquarters but also just an hour away we've got land open for development."

### WHERE IT'S AT

A Closer Look .....	3	Obituaries.....	6
Advice.....	25-26	Opinions.....	15-16
Classified.....	30-31	Puzzles.....	25-27
Comics.....	23-24, 30	Sports.....	17-22
Local News.....	2-8	State.....	12-13
Lottery.....	14	Television.....	28-29
Nation&World.....	14	Weather.....	7

### CORRECTIONS

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### ON THE COVER

Construction crews continue preparing a site at the ChicagoWest Business Center on Friday in DeKalb. Ferrara Candy Co. has announced plans to build at the location. See story on page 3.

Photo by Mark Busch – mbusch@shawmedia.com

# Ferrara Candy deal sealed

Maker of Laffy Taffy, Keebler products commits to ChicagoWest Business Center

By **KELSEY RETTKE**  
krettke@shawmedia.com

DeKALB – An American confectionery company is coming to DeKalb and is bringing with it 500 jobs in the first phase of the \$100 million development, known for months as Project Hammer and heralded as transformational for the future of DeKalb County.

Ferrara Candy Co., based in Chicago and known in the U.S. for making items such as Lemonhead, Trolli, Nerds and Red Hots, announced DeKalb has won its bid – beating out a city in Wisconsin – and will invest \$100 million in the city with a move into a 1.6 million-square-foot distribution facility in the ChicagoWest Business Center near Interstate 88 by the end of 2020. The sweet deal is expected to bring with it about 1,000 temporary construction jobs, and about 1,000 total employees by the time the entire distribution complex is completed.

DeKalb Mayor Jerry Smith said he hopes the announcement also will entice potential employees to live in DeKalb.

“I’m very excited,” Smith said Friday. “The announcement today is just evidence that we are a community that is so invested in realizing the importance of economic development in our community, that we can make a site like the ChicagoWest Business Center attractive to a major player like Ferrara.”

The center is expected to be fully operational by the second quarter of 2021, according to a news release from the city.

“The new distribution complex represents growth not only for Ferrara, but for the city of DeKalb,” Mike Murray, Ferrara Chief Operating Officer said in a news release. “This is an exciting time for our company. As our business continues to grow and our portfolio expands, we need additional space to match our ambition. The distribution capacity in DeKalb will allow us to continue to scale our network in the U.S.”

Founded in 1908, Ferrara is related to The Ferrero Group – a Luxembourg-based confectioner known for making Nutella – and was formed in 2012 after a merger between Illinois-based Ferrara Pan Candy Co. and Minnesota-based Farley’s & Sathers Candy Co.

Ferrara acquired a portion of Nestlé’s U.S. candy line April 1, 2018, for \$2.8 billion, which included taking over operations for lines such as Sweet Tarts, Nerds and Laffy Taffy, head of



Mark Busch – mbusch@shawmedia.com

Construction crews continue preparing a site at the ChicagoWest Business Center on Friday in DeKalb.

corporate affairs at Ferrara Sarah Kittel said.

On July 29, Ferrara completed a second acquisition, this time worth \$1.3 billion from Kellogg Company, and included brands such as Keebler, Mother’s and Murray Cookies and Famous Amos. The Keebler acquisition also included Little Brownie Bakers, supplier to the Girls Scouts of America.

Kittel said expanding Ferrara’s operations in the Chicago area was “of keen interest” to the company, since it employs 2,600 of its 6,000 employees in the Chicago area.

On Oct. 28, the DeKalb City Council approved plans for a facility that would have 1,000 jobs by 2020 at the 343-acre site between Route 23 and Gurler Road, with an additional 466,000-square-foot food packaging center, which will be Phase 2 of the project.

“Today, literally, the company signed the document, so it’s still very fresh, the ink is barely dry,” said DeKalb City Manager Bill Nicklas, who said he believes Ferrara’s investment will spur other companies to commit to DeKalb.

Chicago-based Krusinski Construc-



The Ferrara Candy Company is investing \$100 million in a distribution center in DeKalb.

Rendering provided

tion Co. is the general contractor on the build-out in ChicagoWest Business Center, which is owned by Trammell Crow Co.

A not-yet-announced knowledge-based company also is interested in the business park, and could bring 100 to 200 high-paying, technology jobs, Nicklas has said.

Countywide municipalities, including the city of DeKalb, have for months appealed to the companies by offering property tax abatements, financial assistance in looping water man, grants from the Illinois Department of Transportation for roadway improvements and incentives from the DeKalb County Enterprise Zone.