

SPORTS



20th edition

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SWEET SUCCESS

Project Hammer recruits Ferrara Candy to DeKalb / 3



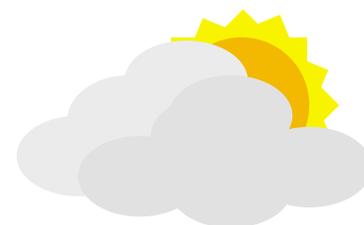
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TODAY'S WEATHER



HIGH
34
LOW
31

Complete forecast on page 7

Ferrara Candy deal sealed

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

By **KELSEY RETTKE**
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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



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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.