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Breaking News: Volume 11 Edition 04

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BREAKING NEWS
YOUR ONLINE SOURCE FOR INDUSTRY NEWS AND INFORMATION

**Bringing it back to Buffalo -
State-of-the-art laundry facility for
Buffalo's East Side**

By Susan Capparelle

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- "Wright Place" is the biggest private sector investment that the East Side of Buffalo, New York has seen in over 30 years. Touted as an economic boost for the city, the development project's centerpiece is a brand new 60,000 square foot state-of-the-art laundry facility housed in the long abandoned Curtiss Wright engine plant on Grider St.

"Within our community we wanted to reinvest in a neighborhood," explains John Giardino, CEO, Centerstone Development, who spearheaded the \$22 million project in conjunction with Sodexho, Inc.

Giardino's company has several development projects in New York State and the Northeastern United States. Although revitalizing East Buffalo is one of his reasons for the project, he cites another compelling reason. In 2005 Giardino discovered that a Buffalo based laundry was at the top of every local hospital's wish list.

"In discussion with area hospital CEOs there was a desire to outsource their linen," says Giardino. Until then many area hospitals handled their laundry in-house while others utilized commercial suppliers as far away as Rochester and even Syracuse. "Another significant reason was the capital cost of maintaining laundry equipment at the hospitals when it could be better spent on medical machinery," he says.

Giardino partnered with Sodexho to handle the plant's linen processing. "Sodexho has a great track record of providing quality managers and managing services -- we were very impressed with what they did with the Cleveland Clinic hospital," says Giardino.

The site was acquired in April 2005 and all site remediation took place between then and Dec 2005. "The plant was gutted," said Giardino. "Floor trenches and pits were cut into the floor to run hot water and wash solvents and to reclaim heat and recycle. "New high efficiency boilers, new thermal windows, new truck docks, new offices, a cafeteria and locker rooms were all installed. By July 2006 the process was complete and on Dec 21st 2006 the laundry opened for business.

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The 60,000 square foot laundry currently employs 160 full-time people with the expectation of employing 200 local residents at the laundry's peak performance. Hours of operation are 6am-11pm with two shifts.

Twenty-one million pounds of hospital linen are currently processed at the facility which has a 30-40 million pound potential according to Bob Pfeiffer, District Manager East Coast, Sodexho Laundry Services.

The laundry services several hospitals and hospital systems throughout Western New York including Brooks Memorial Hospital, the Catholic Health System of Buffalo, Erie County Medical Center Corporation, Kaleida Health, Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center and TLC Health Network, through an agreement with the Western New York Purchasing Alliance LLC.

According to Pfeifer the furthest hospital is 50 miles way and Sodexho has contracted with a delivery company to deliver the laundry to the facility.

"We offer a very comprehensive linen and laundry service to the hospitals," says Emeka Okeani, President, Sodexho Laundry Services. "We are not a company that just drops laundry at the hospitals -- we want to insure the maximum efficiency of our products and that we impact the patient experience positively."

To meet such stated high standards the plant is not only state-of-the-art but also ergonomically friendly. Computerized programming moves the goods around the building while long-standing stations have soft mats and the new equipment's design takes into account the position and angle of the worker.

Plant equipment includes 2 Lavatec 16-pocket tunnel washers, 6 Lavatec dryers supporting each washer, 4 Chicago feeder/folder/ironers, 5 Chicago small piece folders, 2 Chicago blanket folders, a Kemco hot water system, and 2 Cleaver Brooks boilers.

While 160 jobs may not seem like enough to reinvigorate an old inner city neighborhood, Giardino points out that for a community that traditionally loses jobs, gaining 160 permanent jobs with the potential for more is a big plus. (Centerstone has a business plan in the works for the remaining 80,000 sq feet of the plant.) Giardino also believes that the project sets a precedent for future successful collaborations in the area.

"From a developer point of view the key to success is to listen to the different needs of the participants in the project," he says. "The hospitals all had different business projections, different assessments but we balanced the different interests of different hospital and brought them together in a communality of participants."

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