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Wayne County moving with economic diversification

DETROIT – Wayne County never rests when it comes to diversifying its economic base.

“In Wayne County, we’re already reinventing the future,” said County Executive Robert Ficano. “A transformation of our economy has begun based on new manufacturing, new growth industries and a new way of doing business.”

For example in April, A123, a company that supplies lithium-ion batteries for electric cars, announced it is opening a headquarters in Livonia. The county’s TURBO (Transforming Underdeveloped Residential and Business Opportunities) program, which offers property tax abatements, was a powerful incentive for A123 to pick Wayne County.

Other battery manufacturers are considering Wayne County as a location for its plants because of the infrastructure footprint, its developed and refined intellectual capital, and the county’s innovative and creative incentives.

Ford Motor Co. announced May 6 it is converting its Michigan Assembly Plant (formerly known as the Michigan Truck Plant) from manufacturing Expeditions and Navigators to the smaller Focus. More importantly, the plant will also build a new battery-electric version of the Focus for the North American market.

The re-tooled plant will retain at least 2,000 jobs, including skilled trades, production workers and salaried positions. The number of jobs could exceed 4,000, depending on market conditions.

Keeping to its pledge to do business in a new way, Wayne County fast-tracked the processing of the Brownfield plan, 11 days, which created the necessary tax incentives for Ford to re-invest in the Michigan Assembly Plant.

Officials with Wayne County in partnership with the city of Wayne approved the Brownfield plan, which allows Ford to request tax credits for its investment and reimbursement of approximately \$14 million for planned demolition and site preparation costs.

The county also provided the consultant who assisted Ford Motor in drawing up the tax incentive package.

“This is a vital development and positive news in the current economic climate,” Ficano said. “Working with various stakeholders, Ford will secure direct manufacturing jobs as well as indirect supplier and other retail and service jobs in the area surrounding the plant.”

Ford is investing more than \$550 million in the plant, located at 38303 Michigan Ave in Wayne.

Production at the plant, which is currently idle, is expected to begin in late 2010 or early 2011.

The state of Michigan on May 5 approved a \$160 million Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA) tax credit for the project.

“I am very happy to see Ford Motor Company make their new adventure in the city of Wayne,” said Wayne Mayor Al Haidous. “I’m happy to see the positive results from working together with Ford, the state and the county.”

The production plan includes integrated stampings, which would mean investment at the Wayne Stamping Plant, located at 37625 Michigan Ave.

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