

## **Update on City Incubators**

While I have reported on it in the past, the success story of TR's business incubator buildings bears repeating.

These two buildings, one 20,000 square feet, the other 5,000 square feet, are located on Wentker Court, just off 14<sup>th</sup> Street (STH 310) on the south side.

The City offers the buildings at reasonable lease terms to encourage development of young, growing companies. Fifty percent of the rent paid by tenants in these buildings can be credited against the purchase of land at the City's industrial parks.

And while not every tenant of the incubators has been a success, or decided to stay in Two Rivers, there have been several great local business success stories at our incubator in the past few years. They include:

**Rusch Machine**, which occupied the smaller incubator building from 2000 to 2004. Chris Rusch moved in with three employees, and had grown to about a dozen when his company graduated to larger space, on Columbus Street, in 2004. Rusch continues to grow, selling its custom tube-bending machinery throughout North America and now in Europe. City loans have helped finance some of that growth. Today, Rusch Machine employs 18.

**Woodland Face Veneers**, which got its start in the larger incubator in 2002. Company President Rick Philipps has guided the company through phenomenal growth, with an emphasis on customer satisfaction and employee involvement. WFV moved to larger quarters on Columbus Street in 2005.

Today, Woodland Face Veneers employs 45 people. Rick Philipps reports annual sales growth consistently in the range of 20 percent.

**Manitowoc Relay and Protector**, which began operation in the small incubator building in September 2005. The first North American manufacturing operation for Electrica, s.r.l. of Milan, Italy, this company produces electromechanical relays used for starting compressors in refrigeration and HVAC equipment, as well as other applications.

After just 18 months, the company grew out of the incubator, and purchased a 10,000 SF building in the City's Woodland Industrial Park. According to plant manager Andre Lafond, the company employs 18 people today, and continues to expand its production for Electrica's North American customers.

**GT Machine**, which moved into the 20,000 SF incubator in 2006, with 14 employees. Partners Tom Jachimstahl and Gary Messman have overseen significant growth in their business, performing custom machining work for area companies like Manitowoc Crane and Formrite Tube.

Assisted with a City loan of \$200,000, the company invested \$600,000 in new machinery and equipment in late 2007. Today, GT Machine has 38 employees.

The City is currently in discussions with a new tenant for the 5,000 SF incubator--a small business owned by an Illinois couple who have relocated to Two Rivers, drawn by the area's quality of life. More details on that new tenant once a lease is signed.

For more information on economic development activity and incentives in the City of Two Rivers, go to [www.two-rivers.org](http://www.two-rivers.org) and click on "Business."

### **Congrats to the Historical Society on Two Great Events**

Kudos to the TR Historical Society on its successful events of March 29.

The Hamilton Community House was packed for a concert by the McDowell Male Chorus of Appleton that evening. Plus, the community got to view the Society's growing collection of artwork by TR native son Lester Bentley, on what would have been Bentley's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Kudos to Jacqui Dickenshied, the driving force behind the concert and so many great events organized by the Historical Society.

And a huge thank-you to Gail Fox and Nan Webster, who have worked so hard to bring Bentley's artwork home to Two Rivers, and to celebrate the talents of this native son.

### **City Manager's Column Moving to the Sunday Chronicle**

Starting next week, my column will move from Wednesday's *Lakeshore Chronicle* to the Sunday edition of the paper. This column can also be read online at [www.two-rivers.org](http://www.two-rivers.org).

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