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Md. Chemical begins work on Fairfield site

BY LORRAINE MIRABELLA
(SUN REPORTER)

Businesses are beginning to move from an industrial swath of South Baltimore on the Middle Branch waterfront to make way for Gateway South, a \$250 million sports-themed office and recreation complex.

Yesterday, Maryland Chemical Co., a 54-year-old chemical distributor, started work to renovate and expand a warehouse in Fairfield, an industrial peninsula of Southeast Baltimore. It plans to relocate the 20-employee company there by March.

City officials are hoping the Gateway South project planned for 11 acres east of the Carroll Camden Industrial Park will transform the Russell Street corridor into an inviting and lively entry point to the city.

Cormony Development and its partners plan 1 million square feet of offices in addition to a sports complex with indoor and outdoor playing fields, shops, restaurants and recreational activities such as indoor golf, a fitness center and swim club. Gateway also will become the new site of a Greyhound bus terminal.

The city owns much of the land and is working to acquire the rest. Officials purchased Maryland Chemical's current building and 1.5 acres on Russell Street in late 2005, two years after the company learned it would need to move to make way for the new office park, said Jeanette Glose Partlow, president and third-generation owner of Maryland Chemical.

"Since that time we've been on a quest for a new home," Partlow said.

The company will renovate and expand a warehouse and storage structure on three acres in Fairfield that had been used by a forklift repair company.

The move will enable the chemical distributor to continue expanding with its new ChemStation venture, which distributes cleaners and sanitizers for commercial use. The company also hopes the growth of companies in the city's new east-side and west-side biotechnology parks will bring more business opportunities, Partlow said.

She said the company chose to stay in the city because it is where many customers are located and where she lives.

"Industry is alive in Baltimore, and Fairfield is the hottest neighborhood for industry in Baltimore," Partlow said.

The city has encouraged industrial growth in Fairfield, an enterprise zone where importers, manufacturers, distributors and other companies have been investing over the past decade. The city is continuing to acquire land in Fairfield to offer to industrial developers, said M.J. "Jay" Brodie, president of Baltimore Development Corp.

Partlow said Maryland Chemical had also considered industrial space on the city's east side and in Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties.

"But Fairfield really seemed to be up and coming," she said.

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