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Local companies spur waterfront development

Hood River is bucking the trend of recent dismal economic news with a development surge in one of Oregon's most recreationally active communities. More than \$25 million in private and public investment means saving or creating over 200 jobs in Hood River – with other projects in the offing.

The Port of Hood River's Waterfront is already known for its vibrant windsurfing and kiteboarding scene. Soon, it will also be home to Tofurky and aeronautic systems engineering. The new developments neighbor the new Hood River Juice Company operation, longtime business Hood River Distillers and a handful of other companies.

In July, the Port of Hood River closed two property deals with Key Development Corporation. The company recently started construction on two significant landmark projects at Hood River Waterfront Business Park – one each for Turtle Island Foods, creator of Tofurky and other soy food products, and Hood Technology Corporation, an engineering company that specializes in stabilized camera turrets, launch catapults for unmanned aircraft, and equipment that monitors blade and rotor health of turbo-machinery. Key Development is also completing the repurposing of a third waterfront property from a 1970s era, 30,000-square foot telecommunications building to modern office and production space for Hood Technology.

All three projects will pursue Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold or Platinum designations. They will complement the Port of Hood River's neighboring \$2.65 million Halyard Building, a 20,000-square foot LEED Silver building constructed in 2010. Local company Real Carbon Inc. occupies part of the Halyard Building and the Port is marketing the remaining space.

Combined, these four projects represent \$19.1 million in development.

"The economic development potential of the Hood River Waterfront has been recognized for many years," says Michael McElwee, Port of Hood River Executive Director. "With these important projects, we are beginning to see that potential achieved. Key Development, Turtle Island Foods and Hood Technology are forward-looking development partners. The Port Commission applauds

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the significant investment these businesses are making in this community and their commitment to high quality design, construction and sustainability.”

Key Development’s renovation of the former telephone company building for Hood Technology will be finished this summer. The new Hood Technology site is on 1.25 acres and overlooks the new Hood River Waterfront Park. Twenty employees will occupy the location. The company was founded in Hood River in the 1990s.

Turtle Island Foods is scheduled to bring 30 jobs to its new \$10 million waterfront headquarters, which will be located on 1.26 acres south of the new \$4.4 million Hood Technology site.

Construction of both projects began July 25, with planned completion late this year or in early 2012. Each will reflect the trademark of Key Development’s standard to produce projects that are economical, efficient and environmentally sound, featuring quality design compatible with surrounding infrastructure.

“In addition to LEED certifications, Key Development is carefully analyzing benefits of sustainable practices with primary focus on energy consumption and savings,” says Jeff Pickhardt, Key Development President. “The effort is ongoing to create on-site energy with things like solar panels and perhaps wind turbines. With respect to construction types, these projects are also designed with a local sustainable strategy in an effort to keep investment dollars local while supporting local trades to the extent we can,” he continues.

“From the overall planning perspective, a strategy has been put in place providing work space within the core of Hood River in a collection of carefully planned buildings allowing people to more efficiently live and work in their community,” Pickhardt says.

Turtle Island Foods’ new headquarters will sport an innovative solar system to preheat water necessary for food processing, cutting consumption by up to 40 percent. Other features include heat recovery from the refrigeration system to be used as a heating source, and high efficiency mechanical and food processing equipment.

Turtle Island Foods’ site is within walking distance of the company’s waterfront space at the Port of Hood River’s Jensen Building, where the company recently expanded to 30,000 square feet. It will continue operations at its downtown Hood River building, its home since 1992.

The Port’s new Jensen Building, historically a fishing lure manufacturing location, was redeveloped in 2010 and now houses some Turtle Island Foods operations along with three other businesses – yacht component producer RBS Batten Systems USA, custom sail maker Northwave Sails and Servpro. Combined, the Jensen Building is home to 40 jobs after the Port’s investment of \$2.8 million.

Hood River Juice Company, producer of Ryan’s Juice since 1979, also relocated to the waterfront in the past year. Its \$2 million fruit juicing plant has 108 employees. Down the street is Hood River Distillers, a Waterfront presence since 1969 providing 37 local jobs.

In addition to these projects, the Port and private developers are working to secure another \$13 million in development on other waterfront parcels.

The Port set the stage for all of these efforts a few years back. In 2007, the local economic development agency – owner of most of the vacant waterfront properties – adopted its Waterfront Development Strategy that emphasized preservation and support of local light

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industrial businesses. With a goal of enhancing job opportunities for local residents, the Port wanted to help provide a mix of employment types and uses, seeking out businesses that pay at or above Hood River County's average wages and benefits for their industry. In addition to job retention and business development, other Waterfront Development Strategy goals include quality development in a collaborative process, and ensuring compatibility with existing and future recreational activities.

Each of these projects is being develop away from the Columbia River shore, where popular community and water recreation parks still provide the energetic activity that is core to Hood River's lifestyle.

Key Development has been a steadfast player in the community, helping to redevelop former fruit canning buildings for companies like Turtle Island Foods and DaKine Hawaii. Key Development also purchased the Hood River City Hall property in 2010, is breaking ground on a new facility for Custom Interface Inc. to be located at Washington's Port of Klickitat, and has developed several Central Oregon properties.

"Hood River is attractive for development because it has an interesting base of businesses with a strong local character," Pickhardt adds. "People who live in Hood River are generally interested in making their town a better place to live. This drives responsible development encouraging extra effort in assembling buildings," he continues.

"The area has striking scenery making the task of creating buildings all the more rewarding. People are willing to make the extra investment in order to create buildings of higher aesthetic value, an obvious community benefit. This is often difficult to quantify in the front end but is a real value-builder down the road," Pickhardt concludes.