

Business First of Columbus - April 14, 2008

<http://columbus.bizjournals.com/columbus/stories/2008/04/14/story14.html>

COLUMBUS BUSINESS FIRST

Friday, April 11, 2008

Le Gourmet Chef bringing distribution operation to Pickaway County site

Business First of Columbus - by [Brian R. Ball](#) Business First

The new owner of the former **Thomson SA** manufacturing complex in Circleville has quickly filled the only major building remaining on the 227-acre property.

Le Gourmet Chef Inc., a retail division of Chillicothe-based **Kitchen Collection Inc.**, plans to move its distribution center in May from New Jersey to the 167,600-square-foot warehouse off Route 23. Plans for the move come just after Los Angeles-based **Industrial Realty Group LLC** paid \$2.2 million April 4 for the complex, which was vacated nearly four years ago by the television set maker.

The operation is expected to create as many as 30 jobs.

Kitchen Collection CEO Randy Gawelek said the distribution center's relocation to Pickaway County follows his company's 2006 acquisition of Le Gourmet Chef, a specialty retailer of kitchen gadgets, small appliances, gourmet foods and cookware.

"We like the (site) because it's closer to our headquarters," Gawelek said. "We couldn't find anything in Chillicothe." Chillicothe is about 20 miles south of Circleville along Route 23.

Thomson closed its sprawling complex in 2004 as it began to wind down production of TV sets with heavy glass tubes in favor of plasma sets and those using other screen technologies. It also shifted manufacturing overseas. The plant employed 545 people when it closed.

Industrial Realty began looking at the property nearly two years ago as Thomson began demolishing a 400,000-square-foot factory and other buildings. The distribution center and a 10,000-square-foot office were spared from the wrecking ball.

The company expects to redevelop the Circleville site for a mix of uses, including retail, to play off a nearby **Wal-Mart Stores Inc.** shipping center, said Industrial Realty Group President Stuart Lichter. He envisions industrial and perhaps housing.

"It has development potential," Lichter said. "I don't think it will take long to get (a redevelopment plan) down on paper. ... Obviously, it's terrific (the warehouse) will be occupied so quickly."

Industrial Realty's Central Ohio holdings include the former Distribution Fulfillment Services Inc. warehouse on Fisher Road that was once occupied by Spiegel Inc. and **Sears Roebuck and Co.** Apparel merchant Steve & Barry's LLC now anchors that 4.1 million-square-foot facility.

Nathan Green, economic development director of Pickaway Progress Partnership, which oversees development in Circleville, said the city welcomed the sale because of Industrial Realty's expertise in redeveloping vacated industrial properties.

Agent Tom Sugar of the **Continental Realty Ltd.** said Thomson first offered to sell the property for \$5.5 million.

"The struggle (in selling) was the environmental," he said. "We ended up with a solution that's reflected in the price."

Joel Schomaeker of NAI Bergman Group Inc. in Cincinnati represented Industrial Realty. Le Gourmet Chef was represented by Phil Bird of NAI Ohio Equities LLC.

614-220-5442 | bball@bizjournals.com

All contents of this site © American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.