



The Cincinnati Enquirer/Gleyn Hartong

Dump trucks wait at the site of the future expansion of Moxy Trucks of America in Lockland. Moxy makes road construction vehicles. The Lockland expansion is a \$5 million project.

Village survives loss of factories

BY MARIE McCAIN
The Cincinnati Enquirer

LOCKLAND — Several years ago, leaders of this village of 4,400 were uncertain about the economic future.

With the closing of Jefferson Smurfit Corp., a turn-of-the-century, 20-acre paper and boxboard plant on South Cooper Avenue, Lockland joined the ranks of towns brought low by the downturn of established businesses.

However, five years and an economic boom later, the only uncertainty is who will want to build here next.

That didn't seem possible when Smurfit, one of the village's major employers, left 400 jobless and took with it \$400,000 in earnings tax. Jefferson Smurfit was the last of several major factories to close, leaving Lockland — with its budget of about \$3.5 million — to suffer.

"We lost about a quarter of

the village's operating money," Mayor Jim Brown said. "We lost a lot of people through attrition, and we weren't able to give raises for a while. . . . The earnings tax runs the machinery around here."

In the past two years, at least 15 businesses have landed on the Jefferson Smurfit site, now called the Lockland Commerce Park. Last month leaders approved an \$8.4 million village budget.

Village officials credit the success to a willingness to work together, as well as the availability of state and federal funding.

"Location and stability of government are critical for any type of development like this," said Will Korte, project manager with the Lockland Development Co. Ltd., which oversees development in the Commerce Park.

"We are loving it," added

Village Administrator Evonne Kovach, an economic-development expert hired in 1996.

A \$1 million state grant helped the village to clean the former paper factory site, which had been designated a brownfield — developed land that was chemically polluted.

The Lockland Commerce Park's newest addition can be seen from Interstate 75.

A \$5 million project, the structure will house an expansion of Moxy Trucks of America, a producer of road construction vehicles. It should be done by November.

Businesses in the commerce park employ about 100 people, Mr. Korte said. Many fit inside the existing 35,000-square-foot structure that lines South Cooper Avenue.

Workers also have begun excavating for a 25,000-square-foot structure.

Officials hope the park will bring 250 new jobs and gen-

erate \$15 million.

Development is also taking place in other areas.

In the 400 block of Shepherd Avenue, officials will break ground today on a \$6 million project that will become the headquarters of Catanzaro Sons & Daughters Food Service Distributors.

Bishop Donald Sorrells, leader of Christ Temple Apostolic Church, has seen the effects of the boom in areas that were once plagued by boarded-up houses, trash and illegal activity.

For months, the village has been buying vacant or dilapidated property, demolishing the structures and holding the vacant land.

Cincinnati Housing Partners will begin the first of 20 houses within the village.

"I've seen a change in the residents, and we're looking for some big things in this community," Bishop Sorrells said.