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LEGO Lays New Brick at Enfield Business Park

by Amy Lyons

After 35 years of operations at Enfield Business Park, LEGO, the world's fifth largest manufacturer of play materials, is about to become an even stronger presence at the Connecticut industrial hub.

The Danish toy maker, which employs upwards of 8,000 people worldwide, keeps its North American headquarters at Enfield Business Park, where they formerly occupied manufacturing and warehouse facilities until moving those operations overseas in recent years. Now, the originator of the world-famous play building brick is doing a bit of in-house building of its own, expanding its commitment at Enfield Business Park by 80,000 square-feet.

“This Enfield site has been the LEGO Systems home for 35 years, and we are very happy to be able to assume incremental space to meet the needs of our company growth here at our long-time Enfield home,” says Michael McNally, brand relations director, LEGO Systems. “We have developed a good working relationship with the town, and the location continues to be very convenient for our employees, who come from both Connecticut and Massachusetts.”

It's no surprise that many LEGO employees commute from out-of-state locations. Enfield's highway access is second-to-none, with Interstate 91 in close proximity to Enfield Business Park. On a more local note, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the two biggest industries for employing residents of Enfield are Manufacturing (17.1%) and Education, Health and Social Services (17.3%). Enfield Business Park is a big contributor to the manufacturing industry in Enfield, with its world-class, 115-acre, five-building campus. The warehouse and manufacturing facilities formerly occupied by LEGO were left in top-notch condition due to the toy maker's investments over three decades. The 445,597 square-foot distribution center and 587,736 square-foot manufacturing center continue to reap the benefits of LEGO's commitment to excellence.

The new space, said McNally, is indicative of a forward-thinking business model. LEGO, he said, has very strong momentum and is in a position to hire against current needs for growth. They are preparing for future needs of the business.

“Many of our areas are expanding, and some new functions are developing, creating new jobs and also a need for additional space,” says McNally.

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The job growth at LEGO tracks with national trends showing a modicum of hope in underemployment rates, according to a July 19 Gallup poll. Underemployment, the poll showed, was at 18.3% in mid-July, unchanged from the end of June and remaining at its lowest level of the year. Underemployment peaked at 20.4% in early April.

Construction on the new LEGO space at Enfield Business Park will begin in the coming weeks, with an anticipated occupancy of March 2011. The incremental space will house several different departments within the company, such as direct-to-consumer retail operations, finance, consumer services, facilities management, IT and human resources. In addition to a combination of open, loft-style workspace and traditional office spaces, there are plans for an indoor atrium/garden and gathering place for meals, meetings and social functions.

The town of Enfield is no stranger to business growth. With more than 1,600 businesses calling Enfield home, including world-class companies like Hallmark Cards, Mass Mutual and Eppendorf Manufacturing, the town is a boon of industry. RBA, which operates 1,100 women's retail clothing stores in 46 states and employs 10,000 people, maintains its corporate headquarters and distribution center in Enfield because of the workforce, location and quality of life.

Mayor Scott Kaupin says the town, located at the center of the Hartford-Springfield interstate region, has the perfect storm of business assets.

“Major companies including LEGO, Mass Mutual, Hallmark Cards, and Eppendorf Manufacturing chose Enfield because of access to markets, an abundant supply of educated and trained workers and a local government with the attitude and aptitude to meet tough business timetables for approvals,” Kaupin said.

Michael Hackman, founder and chief executive officer of Hackman Capital Partners, LLC – one of three owners of Enfield Business Park – says the new commitment by LEGO is a win-win for the town and the park.

“When you have a company like LEGO, a trusted tenant for more than three decades, saying they need more space for growth, you know the location and the quality workforce have everything to do with that move,” Hackman said. “We look forward to welcoming the new members of the growing LEGO family.”

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Enfield Business Park (www.enfield-businesspark.com) is a joint venture among entities formed by Hackman Capital Partners (www.hackmancapital.com), Calare Properties (www.calare.com), and KBS Real Estate Investment Trust (www.kbsreit.com). Enfield Business Park has space available for lease at 300 Shaker Road and 555 Taylor Road in Enfield, CT. For leasing information, visit www.enfield-businesspark.com or call Sean Duffy, Cushman & Wakefield, at (860) 249-0900.