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**RockGroup Tapped to Build 1M SF Distribution Center**

By Paul Bubny

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Smith in Social Circle, GA.

NEW YORK CITY-Rockefeller Group Development Corp., based here, and joint venture partner MeadWestvaco have been tapped to build a 1.1-million-square-foot distribution center for aftermarket tire manufacturer TBC Corp. near Charleston, SC. It's the second major industrial assignment this year for RGDC, following June's announcement that it would develop a 1.5-million-square-foot warehouse for General Mills

The new distribution center will be one of four buildings that the JV is developing at Rockefeller Group Foreign Trade Zone/Charleston, a 400-acre industrial park near the Interstate 26/Jedburg Road exit in Summerville, SC. The site's proximity to the I-26/Jedburg interchange will provide convenient access to the Port of Charleston, which "complements our growth and will allow us to meet the growing demands of our customers," says Erik R. Olsen, president and CEO of TBC Wholesale Group, in a release.

TBC expects to bring thousands of 20-foot shipping containers through the Port of Charleston annually, a level of traffic that will make it among the port's largest users. With that in mind, the JV and South Carolina state lawmakers and agencies waged a public/private campaign to woo TBC, which had also considered building an East Coast facility near Savannah, GA.

State Sen. Hugh K. Leatherman Sr., one of the South Carolina legislators who lobbied TBC to come to his state, says in a release that the tire maker's decision to build there represents "a win for the State Ports Authority since the number of containers moving through our port will increase significantly. It is a win because it will be the first of many millions square feet of distribution centers close to our port, which should encourage other companies to locate there." Similarly, RGDC EVP Leslie E. Smith Jr. says in a release, "We firmly believe that this transaction will cause other companies seeking institutional-quality distribution space to seriously consider locating in Charleston." The I-26/Jedburg area has been identified as a distribution cluster, according to a release.

Representing Palm Beach Gardens, FL-based TBC in the site selection process was a Jones Lang LaSalle team including Russ Westlake, managing director with JLL's Memphis office; Chris Skibinski, managing director in Charlotte; and Dallas-based SVP Amy Gerber. Peter Fennelly, VP of Colliers Keenan, represented the JV in negotiations. Construction of the TBC distribution center is expected to begin in the fourth quarter, with completion tentatively slated for late 2010. TBC is a subsidiary of New York City-based Sumitomo Corp. of America.

RGDC and MWV first announced the JV in May, with plans to eventually develop 2.7 million square feet of industrial space. At the time, Ken Seeger, president of MWV's Community Development and Land Management Group, commented in a release, "Given the fact that the Port of Charleston recently finalized plans to increase port capacity by 50%—necessitating more port servicing space—our land is ideally situated to help provide the additional space and services global shippers will need."

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