

# Five Additions and Expansions to the Lehigh Valley's Economic Landscape

By Paul Muschick

LEHIGH VALLEY - Economic development progressed at a brisk pace in the Lehigh Valley during the first half of 2023, with established companies expanding operations and new businesses locating in the region.

Many of those projects, which number more than two dozen, are bringing jobs to the region along with their financial investment in facilities for manufacturing and operations. They span many different sectors of the Lehigh Valley's diverse economy, such as food and beverage, life sciences, and production of consumer goods.

Executives at several of the firms that announced new operations in the Lehigh Valley this year have cited the region's prime location in Northeast Pennsylvania, within a day's drive of one-third of U.S. consumers, and its available and skilled workforce.

"The Lehigh Valley's proximity to major markets provides manufacturers with a strategic advantage," said Kristin Cahayla-Hoffman, Vice President of Business Development and Attraction at Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corp. (LVEDC). "A workforce of 1.7 million people live within an hour's drive of the Lehigh Valley, providing employers of all types with the talented labor they need for their operations."

Last year, the region ranked second in the nation among mid-sized regions for the number of new or announced economic development projects. Growth among international businesses was particularly strong, with more than 2 million square feet of space completed or announced.

Here is a look at five of the projects from the first half of the year.

## Schless Bottles

Schless Bottles, a premium plastic jars and bottles manufacturer, announced in June that it had chosen the Lehigh Valley for its new home. The company, currently located in northern New Jersey, is investing \$7.5 million to acquire and renovate a production facility in Allentown. Over three years, 98 jobs will be created.

Schless needed more space to expand its operations. It chose the Lehigh Valley because of its workforce and proximity to major distribution markets, according to a news release from Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro's office.

LVEDC collaborated with the company, state officials, and the Allentown Economic Development Corp. (AEDC) on the relocation. Schless will receive a \$300,000 Pennsylvania First grant and a \$196,000 grant to train new workers, from the Department of Community and Economic Development.

"I'd like to thank Governor Shapiro, the Governor's Action Team and the people here in Allentown for helping to make this relocation happen," said Mark Schlesinger, Executive Director at Schless Bottles. "We look forward to being part of the Allentown community for many years to come and are excited to bring nearly 100 new jobs to the area."

## American Millwork & Cabinetry

American Millwork & Cabinetry in Emmaus is adding 20,000 square feet so it can expand production of acoustic paneling and ceiling tiles and have more room for its traditional cabinetry work, Lehigh Valley Business reported in June.

The company and its subsidiaries provide high-quality custom architectural millwork for institutions, offices, luxury apartment buildings, resorts, healthcare facilities, and retail spaces.

It anticipates hiring 35 to 40 new employees as it continues to grow.

## Linde Engineering

Linde Engineering, a global gases and engineering firm, announced in March it would be opening an office in Upper Macungie Township that will employ about 50 people.

"The decision to expand our presence in the Lehigh Valley region was a logical step in our business growth strategy," said Dominic Cianchetti, Senior Vice President Americas for Linde Engineering. "The area offers diverse talent from well-known prestigious colleges and universities. This location will increase the breadth of our engineering and business development teams, as well as our ability to service the growing clean energy market."

Linde Engineering's products are used by the chemicals and energy, food and beverage, electronics, healthcare, manufacturing, and metals and mining sectors. Linde's industrial gases and technologies are used to produce medical oxygen, high purity and specialty gases for electronics, clean hydrogen, and carbon capture systems.

## Factory Manufacturing LLC

Factory Manufacturing LLC was created by accomplished manufacturing entrepreneur Rich Thompson and his team of seasoned pros as a flexible space to manufacture a variety of products for the Lehigh Valley's fast-growing food and beverage industry.

The 75,000-square-foot facility in Hanover Township, Northampton County, is equipped for the production and packaging of powdered drinks, supplements and energy/protein bars. The facility, leased from J.G. Petrucci Co.'s Triple Net Investments, includes blending machines for powder-based beverages, machines that can package the powder in individual, serving-size sticks or bulk containers, and a production line that can produce energy/protein bars in various shapes with short changeover times.

Initial clients have included beverage company ROAR and Honey Stinger, which makes performance chews, energy waffles, and protein bars.

The operation also includes contract manufacturing.

## TopRx

Leading pharmaceutical distributor TopRx opened a 40,000-square-foot facility at Lehigh Valley Flex Center in Hanover Township, Northampton County. The facility, leased from J.G. Petrucci Co. Inc., strengthens the region's life sciences ecosystem.

"J.G. Petrucci Company's ability to move quickly and efficiently was really the differentiator for us. This will be a top-notch facility that will allow us to expand our national footprint and greatly enhance our service to our customers. We look forward to calling the Lehigh Valley home," said Douglas Troy, CFO of TopRx.

