

Morgan County

*Rural Feel,
Quick Access to
Transportation*



Top contract manufacturers choose to locate in Morgan County for its productive workforce as well as its transportation and infrastructure assets.

A solid economic base, a good work ethic and ready transportation access are just some of the reasons Morgan County is a great place to do business.

Companies like auto parts maker TOA (USA) LLC, which has undergone multiple expansions in recent years; PacMoore, one of the top contract manufacturers of dry food products in the United States; Overton & Sons Tool & Die, and Mt. Olive Manufacturing call Morgan County home.

Transportation is easy thanks to State Road 37, which runs north-south through the county. It connects to four different interstate highways — I-65, I-69, I-70 and I-74 — providing manufacturers and other businesses in Morgan County quick, direct routes to get their products

to market, and to bring in needed supplies and raw materials.

“With the transportation infrastructure available now and planned for the future, along with a reliable, productive workforce with a positive work ethic, Morgan County is poised for exciting development opportunities,” said Joy Sessing, executive director of the Morgan County Economic Development Corp.

Mt. Olive Manufacturing specializes in radio frequency heat sealing plastic films to produce air bladders, mattresses, cushions, pouches and other devices for the medical, aerospace, automotive, retail and

military industries. Mt. Olive currently employs 28 engineers, technicians and production workers at its 44,000-square-foot plant in the Mooresville’s Flagstaff Business Park.

“We have a little bit of new business in the works right now,” says President and Owner Steve Langley. “We’re seeing some growth this year. We’re adding one new line and will probably add new employees in the first quarter. We do a lot of work for the medical industry, which hasn’t been hit too badly by the recession. Our business is actually up a little bit.”

Langley likes the location because it’s close to Indianapolis International Airport, yet remains relatively uncongested. “If you have people coming in and out or you’re moving things in and out, we’re 10 to 15 minutes from the airport. Plus, transportation is good in and around Mooresville, with easy access to Interstate 70.

“The labor pool is very good,” he adds, “as is the quality of life generally. We have a small-town atmosphere with good shopping and restaurants, yet we have the proximity to a lot of the big-town amenities like the airport, the highways and all that.”

Overton & Sons Tool & Die in Mooresville is another Morgan County employer that’s managed to grow in a tough economy. The company recently hired seven additional people at its 20,000-square-foot facility in nearby Franklin, Ind.

Overton makes tooling for manufacturers of mass produced products. “We build stamping dies, plastic injection molds and different types of machinery and tooling for the tubing industry, automotive and defense,” says Steve Overton. “We don’t manufacture a product, but we make the toolings so tier one manufacturers can make baby seats, exhaust systems, guidance systems and more with the things we supply.

“For us, being in Morgan County has always been about the work ethic and the attitude of the people we hire,” Overton says. His company employs 55 to 60 people at its Mooresville location.

“Morgan County is still a very community-minded county,” he adds. “People here have a sense of community. They know each other.”

Business and civic leaders in Morgan County are continually seeking to improve opportunities for business development. One effort is the annual strategy retreat held by the board of the Morgan County Economic Development Corp. Among the issues targeted for action

are the establishment of new business and industrial sites and parks, business retention and expansion, and economic development education. The group plans to continue and expand its Manufacturers' Roundtable, a series of quarterly meetings held throughout the county with local businessmen and women to discuss ways to meet their needs. Also addressed will be the critical importance of nurturing entrepreneurship and small business development by working closely with the region's Small Business Development Center and local financial institutions on financing programs.

The Morgan County Economic Development Corp. has a revolving loan program for small businesses. It was established by a grant the corporation applied for and received from the USDA. This program is for projects meeting the

loan program's guidelines for new or expanding small businesses in Morgan County.

Martinsville, the county seat, has developed an economic development plan. Part of that initiative is developing a downtown revitalization plan of action, which is now in the works. Mooresville, in the northern part of the county, has come together to form Community Leaders Thinking for Community Improvement in areas such as lifelong learning, economic vitality, sense of security, hometown living and quality of life. The group is now forming a power plan to make the community a place where businesses want to locate and people want to live. Another effort is in work force development.

Outdoor recreation is another reason Morgan County is so appealing. Nestled

in the southwestern portion of central Indiana, residents have ready access to camping, biking, hiking, hunting and fishing, all popular activities in nearby Morgan-Monroe State Forest and elsewhere in the area.

The county is in the process of establishing a 10-mile system of hiking, biking and pedestrian trails and a greenway that will follow the White River south from the county's northern border. Morgan County Parks Department Plan Director Kenny Hale says, "We're working with property owners to get easements and to get land donated from the gravel pit operators, because they have to stay about 150 feet away from the river. We're asking for their help with donations of ground that they can't mine anyway so we can use it for matching sources on grants."•

Monroe

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Its cutting-edge software automates the training process, says CEO Ari Vidali. "We're competing directly with companies like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, EDS and Computer Sciences Corp. — multi-billion-dollar corporations."

Vidali says his company can compete with these giants because of two innovations. One is prepackaged software. "It's the first time in this particular domain that you don't have to custom build it. Primarily, our competitors are custom-building tools for each individual client. We're actually "shrinkwrapping" and making it available off the shelf.

"The other reason is agility. We can develop software much faster and more quickly than most of our competitors because our methodology allows us to prototype and build simultaneously. We're using a spiral development approach that allows us to stay out in front of the competition. It gives our customers a better product more rapidly at a lower cost."

Vidali says Monroe County is a good place to do business. "We have an incredible quality of life here with the university. You get all the cultural amenities of a big city in a small town, and there's a lot of intellectual talent. The cost of living is definitely a different scenario from San Francisco or New York. Coupling high quality of life with low cost of living creates a phenomenal

opportunity for businesses."

Another company thriving on the intellectual resources Bloomington affords is Morris Innovative. It has developed and manufactures a medical device used in cardiac catheterization. The FISH' vascular closure device employs a biomaterial that serves as a scaffold and attracts cells, promoting regeneration in the area where the catheter entered the femoral artery. The result is minimal inflammation, no scar tissue and natural resistance to infection.

Company founder and CEO Edward J. Morris says, "Our device is about reducing pain and increasing safety for patients undergoing vascular procedures. We are also proud that several centers using our device are seeing cost savings and increased throughput in their labs.

"Bloomington is a hotbed for medical and biological innovation," he points out. "There is a dense network of universities, businesses and suppliers to support our growing needs as a company. We are also very fortunate to have received multiple grants from Indiana's 21st Century Fund (a state-funded venture capital fund). These benefits continue to be a great factor in our success."

One of the latest enhancements to the quality of life in Bloomington is the newly completed B-Line Trail, a .6-mile urban pedestrian trail that will soon be expanded to link to the city's broader existing trail system.

According to Danise Alano, the city's economic and sustainable development director, the trail is more than a pedestrian

amenity; it's an economic development project as well. The city partnered with the Urban Enterprise Association to provide grants to businesses along the trail to change their facades to provide greater access to the new audience along the trail. Phase II, which should begin construction this fall, will tie the B-Line into the rest of Bloomington's trail system.

"The mayor has called it the largest economic development project on our city agenda," Alano says. "We've seen other urban trail systems have a great impact on private investment, and we fully expect the same will happen in Bloomington.

"It's not only something that will enhance businesses along the trail, it enhances the community's attractiveness to businesses looking to locate here. This is a quality of life issue that will attract residents. That helps us to bring in more businesses."

There are many advantages to living in a university town beyond business spinoffs. Bloomington is relatively small and stress-free, and arts and recreation abound. Music is a staple of life in no small part due to the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, which is perennially ranked as one of the best music schools in the world. The school holds more than 1,100 performances annually, including eight fully staged operas, three ballets and six orchestra concerts. Lake Monroe, the state's largest lake, set in Hoosier National Forest, is nearby. It and Hoosier National Forest offer boating, swimming, hiking, biking and other recreational opportunities. •