

# Emporia Success Story



It's the age-old question for community developers: Is it possible to combine small-town charm with big business? For the answer, look no further than Emporia.

On one hand, this city of 27,000 is defined by gorgeous Victorian homes, tree-lined avenues, brick streets and welcoming front porches. At the same time, the city is a regional leader in manufacturing, education, transportation, trade, medicine and food production and an outstanding overall location for business. Just ask companies such as Tyson Fresh Meats, Wonder-Hostess, Hopkins Manufacturing and the dozens of others that are finding success in Emporia. "It really is the perfect blend of industry and Midwestern quality of life," said Kent Heermann, President of the Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas. "Whether you're looking to raise a family, start a career or grow a business, Emporia has it all."

Like many Kansas cities, Emporia has a legacy in manufacturing and agricultural production – industries that continue to thrive there today. But in recent years, Emporia has also emerged as a leader in pet food production. In fact, the city is a key part of the Global Animal Health Corridor, a 200-mile stretch of the Kansas City metro area that comprises a whopping 32 percent of total sales in the \$19 billion global animal health market.

Emporia is home to Emporia Pet Products – formerly Safeway, which came to Emporia in the mid-1970s – as well as Menu Foods Midwest, which set up shop in 1997. And in 2007, Hill's Pet Nutrition chose Emporia over a dozen other potential sites for a 500,000 square-foot facility. The plant is scheduled to come online in 2010 and employ nearly 100 workers. "We're excited about our concentration of animal nutrition-related producers," Heermann said. "To be part of the Global Animal Health Corridor is huge for us, and it makes us a viable option for virtually any animal food-related company looking to locate in the Midwest."

## **Location, location, location**

Perhaps the city's strongest business asset is its location. Situated midway between Topeka and Wichita on I-335 and between Kansas City and Wichita on I-35, Emporia is a key crossroads and trade area for East Central Kansas, which comprises 82,000 people. Highway bus service is available to and from Emporia, and 13 motor freight carriers serve the Emporia area. In fact, the amount of heavy commercial traffic coming through Emporia is second only to the Kansas City metropolitan area.

And it's not just highway traffic. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad line passes through Emporia, with dual main track lines supporting up to 80 intermodal trains daily. The city is supported by the Emporia Municipal Airport, which boasts a 5,000-foot hard-surface runway that can accommodate most corporate aircraft. Less than 100 miles down the road is Wichita Mid-Continent Airport, which offers 10 carriers and 30 daily flights. And just 130 miles away is Kansas City International Airport, which offers 13 major carriers providing 250 daily flights and nine air cargo carriers with 19 daily flights.

"It's tough to beat Emporia's location, especially when you're talking about shipping and accessibility to other major metro areas," Heermann said. "To be so close to Topeka, Kansas City and Wichita is clearly a huge logistical advantage."

### **Education and training**

Emporia-area businesses also benefit from the city's outstanding education institutions. Emporia State University is one of the finest medium-sized universities in the Midwest. More than 6,000 students are enrolled in the university, which offers outstanding programs in education, business, arts and sciences, library science and information management.

Additionally, the Flint Hills Technical College offers training in a variety of fields – such as automotive technology, business administrative technology, computer program design and development network technology, construction technology, dental assisting, graphic arts and machine tool technology – and is constantly developing training partnerships with local businesses. Emporia companies also have access to talent and resources at nearby Kansas State University and Wichita State University.

### **Financing**

On top of all this, the City of Emporia works with the Kansas Department of Commerce and Lyon County to offer outstanding financial packages to companies looking to grow or relocate in Emporia. Emporia offers a 10-year, 100 percent tax abatement on real property and buildings for a qualifying business, sales tax incentive fund, a performance-based cash grant, real estate at a reduced price with infrastructure improvements and other creative incentives based on the needs of the qualifying business. Additionally, the city has performance-based incentives for commercial and retail development, including Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Transportation Development District (TDD), Community Improvement District (CID) and the Neighborhood Revitalization Policy.

For more information on doing business in Emporia, contact the Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas at:

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