

MAYOR
Lamar Scroggs

CITY COUNCIL
Martha Collins
Sam Evans
Ron McFarland
Montie Robinson, Sr.
Todd Wilson



CITY MANAGER
Stan Brown

CITY CLERK
Tangee Puckett

NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on October 27, 2013

King's Hawaiian growth may spur need for road improvements

Oakwood seeks money for infrastructure help

King's Hawaiian's expansion in Oakwood also could illustrate the need for growth in another way — roads leading to the plant.

Following last week's announcement the California-based bakery could add another 400 jobs to its Oakwood operation, Oakwood City Manager Stan Brown said he plans to pursue grants that would help the South Hall city improve infrastructure in the area.

Brown said possibilities lie with the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' employment incentive program.

The regional commission is an economic development agency that provides funding for several hundred projects in Appalachia, which stretches from Alabama to New York state and includes Hall County.

Oakwood is working with the Gainesville-based Georgia Mountains Regional Commission "on doing the preliminary work to try to get grant applications in on those," Brown said.

Generally, "we're looking at some shifting of the existing road to try to better accommodate (a new) building, (additional) parking and things like that, probably some truck access to H.F. Reed (Industrial Parkway) and intersection improvements," he added.

King's Hawaiian is off M. Stringer Road and the two-lane H.F. Reed, which runs between McEver Road and Thurmon Tanner Parkway.

The company has been operating in a 120,000-square-foot plant since the fall of 2011. Last week, Gov. Nathan Deal's office announced King's Hawaiian plans to double production at its current plant and build a neighboring 120,000-square-foot facility over the next year, creating more than 400 jobs by 2016.

The company now employs about 160 people, so the total employment could hit 560, "and that's a conservative estimate," said Tim Evans, the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce's vice president of economic development.

Also, officials expect that when the expansion is completed, King's Hawaiian will have invested \$100 million into its Hall County operations.

"With this significant investment, King's Hawaiian is putting bread on the table in Hall County in more ways than one," Deal said last Monday.

King's Hawaiian CEO Mark Taira said the end result could be that a majority of the family-owned company's employees would work in Oakwood by about 2014 or 2015.

"This project will probably necessitate some grant applications," Brown told the Oakwood City Council last week.

Brown said he believes "this development even more emphasizes the need for access" to Interstate 985 and at least a need for a traffic signal at H.F. Reed and Thurmon Tanner.

In the early stages of planning is a project that would extend H.F. Reed over I-985, connecting it with Martin Road at Ga. 13/Atlanta Highway.

The governing board for Hall County's transportation planning arm, the Gainesville-Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization, voted last November to make the proposed Exit 14 interchange its top priority.

Oakwood Mayor Lamar Scroggs, who is part of the MPO's policy committee, said at the time he believed the move showed "support for the industry and commercial (development) that we have, that we have demonstrated in (that) area."

Officials at King's Hawaiian "are still asking me is (Exit 14) going to happen and when," he added.

Teri Pope, the Georgia Department of Transportation's district spokeswoman, said the Exit 14 project is in design and preliminary plans and environmental studies are ongoing.

Right-of-way acquisition, still several years away, could cost \$15.7 million and involve 30 parcels, she said.

The estimated construction cost is \$20 million, but the project "is in long range" with no year assigned to it and no funds allocated, Pope said.

"Factors like safety, congestion and economic development can at times move a project ahead," said Srikanth Yamala, the MPO's director, "but it all comes down to the funding availability, along with a completed environmental document."