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Year in Review 2009

April: Fairfield Inn opens in Blankenbaker area

Premium content from Business First

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A rapidly growing Louisville-based hotel company opened its seventh property, an 85-room Fairfield Inn & Suites, in the Blankenbaker Parkway corridor.

The \$8 million development at 1220 Kentucky Mills Drive is owned by HRS Hotels Group Inc. and its principal, Hiten Timbawala.

HRS plans to construct two more hotels with Marriott flags soon. Work is expected to begin in 2010 on a Fairfield Inn & Suites and a TownePlace Suites, both on Crittenden Drive, according to Timbawala.

McAlpine lock replacement project complete

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed the \$430 million McAlpine lock replacement project and has opened the new 1,200-foot lock chamber on the Ohio River, near downtown Louisville, to river traffic.

McAlpine now has twin 1,200-foot locks that will accommodate a projected increase in barge traffic.

About 54 million tons of goods, with an estimated value of \$11.6 billion, pass through McAlpine annually.

River City Soccer Club sold

River City Soccer Club was sold to the newly formed River City Sports Arena LLC. Terms were not disclosed.

The 28,000 square-foot indoor soccer facility is located at the corner of Freys Hill and Westport roads.

The managing member of River City Sports Arena is Scott M. Howe. Other members of the company are his wife, Susan Howe, and his parents, Ed and Joanne Howe.

The Howes bought the arena from Margaret and Louis Flamm, who developed the facility and owned it for 17 years.

Howe said the new owners plan to expand the offerings at the club beyond soccer and field hockey to also include lacrosse.

Hardin County site tabbed for battery consortium plant

A consortium of corporations, associations and research institutions collaborating to make lithium-ion battery cells for vehicles selected a Glendale, Ky., site for a future manufacturing facility.

The National Alliance for Advanced Transportation Batteries said it might invest as much as \$600 million to build its first plant in Hardin County.

Kentucky beat Texas, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania and South Carolina for the battery-production operation.

But construction of the plant was contingent on the consortium receiving funding through the federal stimulus plan. And in August, when the U.S. Department of Energy announced 48 recipients of \$2.4 billion in federal energy grants, the NAATBatt project was not among them.

NAATBatt officials said they would re-evaluate their plans for Glendale.

Brown-Forman to cut 250 jobs

Brown-Forman Corp. announced its plans to lay off 250 employees within its worldwide operations as a part of cost-cutting measures in response to the economic downturn.

Another 60 salaried employees, including 51 in Louisville, opted to take early retirement.

About 90 percent of the employees to be laid off were in Brown-Forman's U.S. and Mexico operations. Fifty-seven salaried employees at the company's Louisville operations were affected.

The remainder of the layoffs were planned for the company's Europe and Asia-Pacific operations.

Delta, Northwest consolidate at Louisville International Airport

The remnants of Northwest Airlines at Louisville International Airport disappeared as Delta Air Lines Inc. and Northwest Airlines, which merged in October, consolidated all check-in positions at Louisville International.

Atlanta-based Delta said efforts to rebrand Northwest were expected to continue through the end of 2009 at domestic airports and into 2010 at international airports.

Flow International to expand operations in Jeffersonville

Flow International Corp. officials said the company would invest more than \$2.4 million in new equipment and improvements to its 56,000-square-foot Jeffersonville facility.

Flow manufactures water-jet cutting and cleaning equipment used in a variety of industries,

The Kent, Wash.-based company also said it would add nine jobs this year, bringing its local work force to 106.

The expansion, in part, resulted from the company's decision to move some of its Canadian operations to Jeffersonville.

Another driver behind the growth is a \$30 million Airbus contract that Flow International landed in 2008.

City Block complex closes; owners cite competition from Fourth Street Live

City Block Louisville, a downtown entertainment complex, closed in mid-April, and its owners began a search for new tenants to occupy the former nightclub.

Owners Ward Plauche and Don Blackburn had operated an entertainment venue on the property, at the northeast corner of Second and Liberty streets, since the early 1990s.

Previously called O'Malley's Corner, the nearly 50,000-square-foot building housed multiple nightclubs with different themes.

The owners invested \$5 million to revamp the property in 2007, renaming it City Block.

Plauche and Blackburn decided to close the business last month after several years of setbacks, they said.

The City Block owners cited the opening of the nearby Fourth Street Live entertainment district in 2003 and the implementation of a citywide smoking ban in 2007 as crucial factors that hurt their business.

Newsmakers

- Humana Inc. named Raja Rajamannar senior vice president and chief innovation and marketing officer. Rajamannar leads the company's Innovation Center and its marketing, corporate communications and government relations organizations.
As chief innovation officer, Rajamannar replaced Dr. Jonathan Lord, who left Humana to become CEO of a Navigenics Inc. in Foster City, Calif.
Rajamannar joined Humana from Citigroup, where he was executive vice president and chief marketing officer for the company's Global Cards division.
- Gerald R. Martin, vice president and managing member of River Hill Capital LLC, was named chairman of the Louisville Water Co.'s board of water works.
Martin replaced Wendy Welsh, a senior vice president of information services at E.On U.S., who left the board after 13 years as a member.
◆ Marita Willis, an assistant vice president at PNC Bank, was named vice chairwoman.
Louisville Metro Mayor Jerry Abramson appointed Glenn Sullivan, president of the Sullivan University System, as a new member of the board.
- Brown-Forman Corp. named Mike Keyes president of its North American region operations. Keyes, who has worked for Brown-Forman since 1991, had been managing director of the North American region.
He also had worked for Brown-Forman's Korbel California Champagnes and Jack Daniel's brands. ◆