

Work starts soon on Helena's new site in Ridgeway

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RIDGEWAY – When the Orleans Economic Development Agency began working with the Ridgeway Town Board to attract more business to the rural Western New York community in 2009, the group began looking for parcels to rezone that would also give potential new customers rail access.

One of the first was on Allis Road, off Route 31. The Town Board's foresight then prompted executives of Helena Chemical Company to pursue a much-needed expansion project for their growing WNY distribution center.

"Prior to 2009, we didn't really have any industrial sites in town," points out Ridgeway Town Supervisor Brian Napoli. "After meeting with our EDA, we found a few suitable pieces of land, including the one on Allis Road, and decided to be proactive to ensure available land in Ridgeway would be ready for future prospects."

The relocation of Helena Chemical Company, from Albion to Ridgeway, is one the community hopes will pay off. An estimated \$4 million project, Helena plans to build a 75,000 square-foot, six-building complex as a distribution point for chemicals, seeds and other agricultural products. The Ridgeway site gives the company rail access and the ability to develop a more expansive infrastructure.

"The move to Ridgeway will allow us to offer more products and services," said Mitch Wilber, Helena branch manager. "The quality of the agriculture is what brought us here; there are good farmers growing good crops."

Headquartered just outside of Memphis, Tennessee, with 450 branch locations across the United States, Wilber notes the "strong inter-municipal support" the company received from the Orleans County EDA and Ridgeway officials as the stimulus to expand Helena Chemical's footprint in New York State.

The contracts are signed and Allied Builders is scheduled to begin work at the site this week.

"Good development opportunities do not just happen here," said Jim Whipple, EDA chief executive officer. "Development opportunities come about as the result of years of strategic

planning and anticipating how we can make the most of our available land and resources. The need may not be apparent right away, but we are ready and waiting when it is.”

Positioning the Allis Road site, and other land throughout the county, is what the Orleans EDA does every day, “There was no specific project when we began working with Ridgeway to rezone the Allis Road property,” notes OEDA VP Gabrielle Barone. “What we believed then, and continue to reinforce to our communities, is that we need sites ready and waiting when the right project does come along.”

Citing the value the OEDA and local municipalities place on retention projects, Barone explains, “The Town of Ridgeway demonstrated they wanted more development and became full partners in keeping Helena Chemical in Orleans County and bringing the project to fruition.”