



FILE PHOTO

A dedication ceremony took place recently at the University of Georgia Griffin Campus for the new Food Product Innovation and Commercialization Center. Featuring numerous speakers — among them UGA President Jere Morehead, state Rep. David Knight, R-Griffin, and Griffin-Spalding Development Authority Chairman Chuck Copeland — the event concluded with a symbolic ribbon-cutting before guests were invited to tour the facility.



RAY LIGHTNER/DAILY NEWS

Community leaders came out in October 2017 to celebrate the grand opening of Marukan's new rice vinegar brewery in Griffin. The company, which began in Japan in 1649, made a \$30 million investment in the Griffin plant located on 16.2 acres in the Lakes at Green Valley industrial park. The 77,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art brewery, is the Japanese company's second U.S. plant.

Copeland: 'I truly do Griffin'

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Chuck Copeland grew up in Zebulon, but "has spent 95 percent of my adult working life in Griffin. I truly do love Griffin."

Copeland, the president of First National Bank and chairman of the Griffin-Spalding Development Authority, said, "I believe in Griffin as a place where people can enjoy life. It's close enough to be convenient to Atlanta but far enough away to maintain our sense of identity and community."

He said the success of Griffin, "is very self-serving. The more successful Griffin is, the more successful the bank is and the higher quality of life I and my employees share."

The Griffin-Spalding Development Authority has had a lot of success at the Lakes at Green Valley industrial park. The latest success story was Rinnai, which announced that it will construct a new facility here, and has opened up a temporary facility off of Hudson Road.

"I am very pleased with the new additions in the last 24 months," Copeland said. "We would not have had it without that new industrial park."

The new facilities at the Lakes at Green Valley include Toppan, Otsuka and Marukan.

Copeland said he is "very pleased with progress, the pace we've been able to attract industry into that park. We continue to get lots of inquiries from the Georgia Department of Economic Development on properties here."

He said there is "a considerable amount of interest with international companies to start manufacturing facilities, not just in the U.S., but in Georgia. The general

mood is very positive." There has been "great feedback from the Georgia Department of Economic Development on how prospects view us, positive on the quality of the workforce and the ability to attract to their facility," Copeland said.

Marukan, one of three Japanese manufacturers in the park, "is so pleased to be able to hire locally and the quality of the applicants," Copeland said.

He said there are two additional sites under a memorandum of understanding or purchase agreement, "but are not at the point to announce yet what the plans are. I do look forward to making an announcement in 2018."

With those, he said, "There are two sites left unsold in that park, and we are actively working with another international prospect, an early stage prospect. There continues to be strong interest in Spalding County for industry."

One of most outward signs of the success of Lakes at Green Valley, he said, is that "we hope to be installing landscaping and entrance way signage this year."

These were pay-as-you-go projects, he said, "but with the assistance from the Archway Project, we were able to get free design services from UGA students to develop the conceptual plans."

The Development Authority, Copeland said, is now spending more time on long-range planning.

With only two sites left, "We need to see what's available for future industry and manufacturing. It's only logical to anticipate more growth along that corridor, and to develop areas contiguous to the existing industrial parks."



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Grand opening ceremonies at the Toppan USA plant in Griffin in April 2016 included a sake barrel opening. In ceremonial kimonos for the opening were Toppan USA President Sumio Ezaki, Toppan Printing Company Ltd. President and Representative Director Shingo Kaneko, Consulate General of Japan in Atlanta representative Takashi Shinozuka, Director of Global Commerce for the Georgia Department of Economic Development Scott McMurray, Griffin-Spalding Development Authority Chairman Chuck Copeland and Kajima Corp. Managing Executive Officer Shigeru Tomoda.



Otsuka Chemical America held its grand opening ceremonies in July 2015 for the site in the Lakes at Green Valley industrial park. Local and state officials were on hand for the ribbon-cutting for Otsuka, which was the first of three Japanese companies to open plants in the "eco-friendly industrial park."

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