

## Giant cement company looks at New Hanover County for plant site

### Commissioners might offer up to \$4.2 million in incentives

By [Chris Mazzolini](#)

Staff Writer

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A giant cement company might build a manufacturing plant in New Hanover County, and county officials are considering giving the company millions of taxpayer dollars to make that happen.

New Hanover County is prepared to pay Titan America LLC – the U.S. subsidiary of an international cement colossus based in Greece – up to \$4.2 million over seven years in exchange for as much as \$450 million in investment into the local economy and creation of 160 new jobs.

There are no other cement plants in North Carolina, said Scott Satterfield, chief executive officer of Wilmington Industrial Development Inc., a nonprofit economic development corporation for New Hanover and Pender counties and the town of Wallace.

"This would be one of the largest potential manufacturing investments made in Southeastern North Carolina in recent years," Satterfield said. "The potential of a project of this size, in manufacturing, would create a broad range of positive effects across the region and the state."

Satterfield said the deal has been in the works for about three years. But while local officials lauded the potential investment and new jobs, they cautioned Wednesday that it's not a done deal. Titan is still being courted by other suitors.

The first public step toward winning over Titan comes Monday, when the county commissioners will hold a public hearing and vote on the economic incentive package, which would come from the county's general fund. Titan America must also agree to terms, and a contract with specific milestones for investment and jobs and payment details would need to be finalized.

"We would hope that if we should be successful and the county chooses to participate in this, it will send a clear message to Titan that our area is desirous to seeing them put this type of investment and create this opportunity here," Satterfield said.

Officials with Titan America were tight-lipped about the deal Wednesday.

Kate McClain, a spokeswoman at the company's headquarters in Norfolk, Va., said the company won't discuss its expansion plans at this point. She said the company is still looking at "a couple of different locations."

"We will certainly be happy to entertain the opportunity to receive these incentives, if they are offered to us," McClain said. "We are considering expanding our operations there and it would be a marvelous thing if we can get the incentives."

County commissioners, meanwhile, said the company's interest in the county says only good things about the area, and that the large investment and influx of jobs would bolster the economy and increase the county's tax base.

"I am always excited when business and industry are going to make a nice investment in our community," said Bobby Greer, chairman of the county commissioners. "I think it's going to be really good for everybody. It's going to be a win-win for our citizens, a win-win for the county and a win-win for the company moving in."

Titan America and its corporate children have dozens of facilities along the East Coast, including two cement plants, three quarries and more than 80 ready-mix concrete facilities, according to the company's Web site.

The company already has a presence in the Wilmington area. S&W Ready Mix Concrete Company, which Titan acquired last year, has two facilities in the county, one in Wilmington and one in Castle Hayne, according to the Titan Web site. Another subsidiary, Roanoke Cement, operates a rail terminal in Castle Hayne.

The company currently has 40 employees in the area, McClain said.

Satterfield said Titan is considering building a "state-of-the-art" cement plant in New Hanover County. He said the jobs at the facility would likely pay well above the average salary for the area, which is roughly \$30,000 to \$35,000 a year.

Satterfield emphasized that such a facility is not a short-term investment, and one that could create economic opportunities for the area well into the future.

"It is incumbent upon them to be a major positive part of any community they are in," he said.

Titan America currently has cement plants in Roanoke, Va., and Medley, Fla. Those plants combined produce 3.7 million tons

of cement each year, according to a fact sheet on the company's Web site.

New Hanover County has been on a roll in attracting large companies. Last year, the commissioners approved a giant incentive deal for General Electric-Hitachi Nuclear Energy and Invista, giving the two companies \$13 million over several years in exchange for \$1.1 billion in new investments and 950 new jobs.

Chris Mazzolini: 343-2223

chris.mazzolini@starnewsonline.com

#### **WANT TO GO?**

**What:** New Hanover County Commissioners meeting

**When:** 9 a.m. Monday

**Where:** New Hanover County historic courthouse

#### **On the Web**

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