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# Montpelier lands plant to produce motel units

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MONTPELIER — A Seattle-based company has announced plans to build a \$7 million plant in this city that will manufacture environmentally friendly modular motels.

Triad Resorts is scheduled to start construction of the plant in 90 days, and operations are expected to commence next March.

The plant will produce fully constructed rooms on site to be linked together elsewhere to form complete motels.

Moteri Management Co., a motel management and ownership company that is also based in Seattle, has signed on as a partner in the project and agreed to buy one motel room — complete with a bathroom and desk — per month throughout the next decade.

The partnership will advance Moteri's plans to open a "green" motel chain.

The Montpelier plant will also build walls, frames, siding and other components needed to assemble a \$100 million "green" casino planned for Jackpot, Nev.

The casino will also be owned and operated by Triad and will be called Spanish Bit Casino and Resort.

Jerry Ward, principal owner of Triad Resorts, said the company purchased 33 acres at the Montpelier Industrial Park for the new plant. His company will utilize exclusively recycled materials for building structures.

"Green is the wave of the future," he said. "We are going to be a 'green' nation."

Ward said the low cost of both land and labor in Bear Lake County, plus accessibility to Union Pacific Railroad, made Montpelier an ideal spot for the innovative plant.

Triad was formed five years ago with a focus on Jackpot. The company bought 113 acres and became Jackpot's largest landowner.

The company's decision to build and operate its own manufacturing plant came later.

"If you're going to build 'green,' then you have to be green as well," Ward said.

Ward said using steel for frames rather than wood reduces the weight of the modular units, which will be transported by truck, by 70 percent.

Triad managing member Patrick Howard said the long-term savings by building "green," as well as a 10 percent tax break the company will receive, were big motivators for the project.

Hari Ghadia, spokesman for Moteri Management, said his company currently owns four motels and manages 23.

Ghadia said Moteri already uses energy-efficient lighting and low-flush toilets to conserve energy.

“Building ‘green’ is not only economical, it’s the right thing to do,” Ghadia said.

Ramesh Rabadia, also with Moteri, said several locations were considered before Montpelier got the nod.

The cooperation and enthusiasm of city and county officials helped to seal the deal, he said.

The Montpelier plant will have an open ceiling to utilize natural light and reduce shadows, and Triad hopes to heat the building using a geothermal well.

The manufacturing plant will employ about 150 workers at a wage of \$12 to \$17 per hour, along with a management and administrative team of six to eight employees.

Following a 90-day training period, the team’s first job will be to manufacture 80 to 90 apartment units that will serve as employee housing. The on-site employee housing will include day care services.

Kathy Ray, spokeswoman for the Four County Alliance of Southeast Idaho, said the project has been in the works for the past three months.

“We’re gladly welcoming Triad into the community,” she said. “This is very exciting for Montpelier and this part of the state.”

Ray said the organization, sponsored by Bear Lake, Oneida, Franklin and Caribou counties and the Idaho Department of Commerce, focuses on job creation in rural areas.

Ward said he was impressed by the city’s efforts to accommodate the manufacturing plant.

“I had no idea we were going to have this big of an impact on this community,” he said. “All I did was come out here to buy some land to build a plant.”

Public Works spokesman Don Toomer said the plant will connect to city sewer and water services.

City Councilman Dan Fisher said progressive planning by the city and having the infrastructure in place helped to attract Triad to the area, and he hopes other businesses will follow suit.

While the property tax benefit to the city and county will be significant, City Clerk Kerry Haddock said the employment and payroll impact will be greater.

“The influx of new people means new construction,” he said.

Haddock noted that Bear Lake residents have the lowest property taxes in Idaho.

Bear Lake Memorial Hospital, currently the county’s largest employer, will also benefit from the 150 jobs created by the manufacturing plant.

“The fact that they offer benefits is huge for the hospital,” said Rod Jacobson, administrator at Bear Lake Memorial Hospital.

Jacobson said the Bear Lake School District, which has been shrinking by 40 students each year, will also profit from the plant.



Principal owner of Triad Resorts Jerry Ward, standing, announces the building of a 'green' manufacturing plant in Montpelier. **DEBBIE BRYCE / IDAHO STATE JOURNAL**