

“Teamwork: Another new neighbor near ballpark”

Premier Companies LLC to move HQ to floors above Brickyard restaurant; adds to area’s resurgence.

By Gil Smart, Assistant News Editor, Lancaster New Era

The ball keeps right on rolling in northwest Lancaster, where last week a consortium of three companies announced plans to move into a new home above the popular Brickyard Restaurant on North Prince Street.

Premier Companies LLC, a group of three high-tech firms headquartered at 120 W. Airport Road, Lititz, will relocate its headquarters to the second and third floors of the former A.K. Mann tobacco warehouse in the Prince Street Center. The company has bought the two floors from Prince Street Associates, a subsidiary of the Drogaris Cos.

Daryl Heller, Premier president and chief executive officer, said he hopes to move some 30 employees into the city location by this fall and could hire up to 19 more soon thereafter.

Heller said he was sold on the location in large part because of what’s happening in the city’s northwest, where Clipper Magazine Stadium and the James Street Improvement District has sparked a wave of redevelopment.

Premier’s employees are educated, white-collar workers, “so the proximity of the ballpark as well as dining and entertainment opportunities” convinced him that the North Prince site was a good fit.

Heller was just named Small Business Person of the Year by the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry. The three Premier companies: Premier Management Group, Premier Solutions Group and Premier Energy Group are part of the telecom, datacom, communications equipment and energy brokerage industries.

The site is in the Keystone Innovation Zone, which makes significant tax breaks available. In addition, Charles Maneval, Lancaster’s director of economic development, not only helped “sell” the city to Premier, but worked to line up some \$200,000 in low-interest loans to make it happen.

“The decision by Premier Cos. to relocate to North Prince Street is the latest example of the building momentum in the city,” said Lisa Riggs, executive director of the James Street Improvement District.

Premier may sublet some of the space to another firm, said Heller. The space totals a little less than 19,000 square feet, of which about 2,000 is warehouse space, he said; plans are to establish a fitness center for employees on the second floor, create a state-of-the-art resource center where technology such as VOIP (voice over Internet protocol) might be demonstrated, as well as general office spaces.

He pegged the project cost at \$2.5 million.

Premier's plans fit nicely into what Prince Street Associates is trying to do at the site, said developer Ed Drogaris. On the fourth floor of the old tobacco warehouse, termed the "Buckwalter building," will be loft apartments ranging in price from \$700 to \$1,200 monthly; next door, at the old Swisher warehouse-- actually a series of five warehouses-- another bottom-floor restaurant is planned, along with more office space, and apartments on the top two floors.

Work on the Swisher site could be complete as early as next summer, Drogaris said.

The projects are another step in turning the ballpark/James street area into a bona fide urban district featuring multiple options for young professionals to work, play and live.

What's occurring [in the district] motivated us to move down," said Heller, who noted that being headquartered in a thriving urban district might help his company's recruitment efforts.

"We have a lot of employees who have lived in tier one cities," he said.

"This was just a better fit."

- END -