

Drug maker decides on West Chester

By Candice Brooks

HAMILTON — Butler County beat out Northern Kentucky and three other states Thursday to lure Amylin Pharmaceuticals Inc. to West Chester Township for a \$70 million biomedical manufacturing plant.

The region's qualified workforce and its close proximity to suppliers were two primary selling points that got the San Diego, Calif.-based company's attention, said Reed Vickerman, vice president of corporate services for Amylin.

"Between Cincinnati and Dayton, there seems to be a hub or corridor developing of life sciences and high-tech expertise," Vickerman said. "Plus, our partner Alkermes is in Wilmington and we wanted to be close to them."

The company will invest between \$70 and \$84 million in an existing 151,200 square-foot facility at 8814 Trade Port Drive in the Union Center Boulevard district of West Chester Township. With that investment, the drug company will bring an initial 50 jobs with more than \$2.7 million in annual payroll. Operations should begin by the end of 2007 and the number of jobs could reach 150 within the next three to five years, Vickerman said.

In exchange, the commissioners Thursday approved an eight-year, 75 percent tax abatement to Amylin Ohio LLC, a subsidiary of the parent company. However, the Lakota Local School District will not be affected by the tax break.

In addition, the state has offered the company a 60 percent tax credit valued at \$362,987 over seven years if the company maintains operations in Ohio for at least 14 years.

"We are so grateful that you have chose our county," Commissioner Michael Fox said. "This is in line with our strategy in having a company like yours be like an anchor store in a mall."

County officials are banking on the magnetic power of Amylin, the Health Alliance and Cincinnati Children's Hospital — three health care businesses that have recently made investments in Butler County — to spur economic growth.

Meanwhile, the Liberty Interchange project could be key in continuing to develop Butler County as a "medical mecca," Liberty Township Trustee President Christine Maticic noted before the commissioners approved an agreement for managing special tax districts that will fund the transportation project.

Amylin's plant will produce one of its developmental products called Exenatide LAR, a long-acting release insulin that if approved by the FDA could be taken weekly for the management of Type-2 diabetes.

Two drugs Amylin produces received FDA approval earlier this year — Symlin, a meal-time insulin injection, and Byetta, a twice-daily injection for long-term blood sugar control.

While the 18-year-old company has not turned a profit since its inception, the drugs in its pipeline to treat diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease have placed it on the radar of market analysts.

For the quarter ending Sept. 30, Amylin reported a \$69.5 million loss, compared with \$34.1 million shortfall for the same period in 2004.

With suppliers in the Northeast and Midwest, it was not economical to ship products to the West Coast, Vickerman said. More than a year ago, the company decided to search for its own manufacturing site and it settled on Butler County after looking in Kentucky, North Carolina, Massachusetts, and California, he said.

"This is a huge investment for Butler County in a new biomedical technology," Commissioner Gregory Jolivette said. "I think that this is a testament to the quality of our workforce and validation by Amylin that they believe we can provide professionals with the skills that they require."

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