

# Growth Distribution

## Logistics Fuel Community's Expansion Opportunities

By Symone C. Skrzycki

Director of fulfillment Paul McKee says that "there is never a dull moment" at BDA, which has grown during his four years with the company. During the holiday season, many customers request kits with a variety of self-promotional products to provide to clients.



**P**lanes, trains and automobiles – critical for moving people and products (as well as the title of a quirky 1980s movie starring the late comedian John Candy). The phrase could also describe Plainfield's transportation assets that have contributed to a decade of explosive growth.

Located in the state's second-fastest growing county (Hendricks has 104,000 residents), Plainfield's population jumped nearly 30% in the five years following the 2000 U.S. Census (from 18,800 to 23,500).

Propelling residential and industrial growth in the town, situated just west of Indianapolis off of Interstate 70, are more than 25 million square feet of distribution and light manufacturing space, industrial parks with close proximity to the expanding Indianapolis International Airport and major roadways. Interstate 70 provides exits at Ronald Reagan Parkway (a recently extended, north-south corridor with an additional interchange at Interstate 74) and State Road 267 (the town's main north-south road was reconstructed between I-70 and U.S. 40 as part of the Major Moves initiative).

Gaining prominence as a hub for logistics and distribution businesses, Plainfield attracted several global companies in 2007. Among them:

- Third-party logistics company Prime Distribution Services (PDS) consolidated its Indianapolis operations
  - Sunrise Medical, a manufacturer of homecare and extended care products, brought together its North American operations into a 180,000-square-foot distribution center
  - Full-service merchandise agency Bensussen Deutsch & Associates (BDA) opened a 150,000-square-foot Midwest Fulfillment Center
- Cinda Kelley, executive director of the Hendricks County Economic Development Partnership, asserts, "All of our transportation systems play a role in economic development. You have to be able to get from one spot to another in a timely fashion, and for logistics and distribution facilities that is critical. Access (to the airport) and around parkways such as the Ronald Reagan, that's what tips the scale."

### A day at the park

Spanning nearly 920 acres in northern Plainfield along Ronald Reagan Parkway, AllPoints Midwest is designed to house more than 12.5 million square feet of bulk distribution space. Managed by Browning/Duke LLC (a joint venture between Browning Investments and Duke Realty), it offers a variety of transportation options (including access to the CSX intermodal rail facility in Avon).

When AllPoint Midwest landed PDS as its first tenant, it secured one of the state's largest lease transactions of 2007. Following expansion this fall, the company's warehouse and distribution center will encompass 1.2 million square feet and add 48 jobs to its workforce.

Joining PDS in AllPoints Midwest will be a 533,520-square-foot bulk distribution warehouse facility being built with the capability to double in size. The continuing strength of the sector is reflected in the fact that it is one of the few new warehouse facilities being constructed without having a tenant in place.

Three contiguous facilities comprise Plainfield's second industrial park and are adjacent to the airport: the Plainfield Business Park (used when describing the three parks as a single entity), Airtech

Business Park (a Browning Investments development) and Airwest Business Park (the town's first industrial park).

"In 1993, we kicked off Airwest Business Park, which has grown to 1,000 acres," recalls Mac McNaught, president of residential and industrial real estate developer Denison Properties, Inc. "We had no idea of the breadth and depth of the market. It's been a good thing for Plainfield and Hendricks County, and a good thing for the distribution and other companies that have located there."

Kelley muses, "Is there room for more growth (in the industrial parks)? Yes, and we continue to see interest in the available areas. We are always looking to diversify our industrial sectors."

### Self-promotion at work

In 1984, BDA (then known as Sports Marketing, Inc.) was launched as a supplier of promotional merchandise for professional sports teams. It later expanded its focus to include the corporate market, resulting in the name change. It employs more than 500 people in 27 locations worldwide with services ranging from sales promotions to graphic design and product development.

The new distribution center created approximately 60 jobs. Local customers include Eli Lilly and Company and Federal Express.

Along with the Plainfield Business Park site, BDA has two warehouses in Washington state where the company is headquartered, with several national sales offices (including one in Indianapolis) and a China office.

"Anything you can put your logo on, we'll sell," remarks director of fulfillment Paul McKee. Products shipped from Indiana include paper, notepads, pens, caps, shirts, coolers and flash drives.

"What we support clients with is merchandise they use for giveaways, in their offices or to get a potential client. We (also) manage the uniform business for some of our clients."

At the time of this interview, the facility had shipped close to 160,000 orders this year and averaged close to 1,200 a day. McKee points out several reasons BDA chose to set up shop in Plainfield last July.

"We analyzed 45 different locations in seven different cities," he says. "It was a long process. This (existing) building has been around for a long time. It was a good deal. It was a great



**In addition to distribution services, Sunrise Medical has production lines at its Indiana facility involving customized manual wheelchair assembly.**

location. Unemployment in this area was still relatively low.

"It's a mecca for warehouses," he adds, noting that the presence of an Indianapolis sales office was a factor in the decision. (Plus), the proximity to the airport is a huge benefit for us."

### Mobilizing home health care options

Since 1983, Sunrise Medical has been serving the homecare industry with mobility equipment and daily living aids. With North American headquarters in Colorado, its manufacturing facilities are located in the United States, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain.

In 2006, it opened a pilot facility in Indianapolis' Park 100 to gauge Central Indiana's work climate. A year later, it consolidated operations from Tennessee, Florida and Massachusetts into an existing building in the Plainfield Business Park.

"When we moved into the facility, we built it out to our specifications. It was an empty shell, which was great because it allowed us to build the facility to our needs," explains facility manager Perry Utley. "We were on a short timeline, so we needed to move relatively quickly."

Two smaller distribution centers remain in California and North Carolina.

"We basically cover all of the Midwest here," Utley states. "Our core competence is distribution. We distribute about 4,000 packages per day. It's a big variety. We do medical equipment and hardware that consists of canes, walkers, beds, toilets – anything you could possibly find in a hospital. Normally we sell (our products) directly to hospitals."

Utley cites Plainfield's infrastructure as a major influence in the decision to locate there.

"This area has close proximity to (the) airport," he notes.



**Current anchors at Metropolis include JCPenney and Dick's Sporting Goods.**



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— Cinda Kelley, Hendricks County Economic Development Partnership

“Ronald Reagan Expressway was a major factor to ensure our employees could get back and forth quickly with more than

one route. (And) I-70 gives a straight shot for many of our employees from where they live.”

### Regional shopping destination

Boasting nearly 600,000 square feet of retail, restaurant and entertainment venues, Metropolis Mall is the largest on the west side of Indianapolis. Designed as a two-phase, \$120 million endeavor, it opened in late 2005.

Despite financial mismanagement for original developer Prime Properties that led to its bankruptcy filing earlier this year, Metropolis continues to thrive. A Florida-based company is involved in negotiations to buy the property, move forward with the second phase and build an additional 400,000 square feet.

“Oftentimes, people will spend money where they work,” Kelley comments. “While I’m headed home, doing that commute – whether it’s five minutes or an hour – if I’m driving by it, I’m going to stop.”

Mitch Haase, owner of Mitch’s Incredible Ace Hardware on the east side of Plainfield, agrees. His parents owned a shoe store in Plainfield Plaza (considered Plainfield’s first shopping center). Later, he worked in the store before starting the Ace Hardware franchise in 1983.

“I consider it (Metropolis) a huge boon to the town of Plainfield and stabilization of its retail base for the next 20 years that puts us at the head of the game instead of behind,” he proclaims. “This will give the opportunity to bring in many more merchants and shops.”



Mitch Haase, owner of an Ace Hardware franchise and former member of the Plainfield Board of Zoning Appeals, has worked in the town’s first shopping center since his parents purchased it in 1978.

### Challenges and strengths

Kelley has been involved in economic development efforts across the state, including work with the White County Industrial Foundation and the Lafayette-West Lafayette Economic Development Corporation.

“Some of the biggest differences we have (in Hendricks County) are access to developers and builders,” she observes. “It makes what we do so much easier. There is the access to the resources we need at each site, the facilities. In the more rural communities, the more difficult it is to find a developer and a builder who is ready to put a spec building up and take that risk.”

When reflecting on obstacles Plainfield faces, Kelley says, “Every community always faces the challenge of how do we continue to expand funds for future growth? How do we find those in our limited budgets? What’s the timeframe for the return on our investment?”

“Communities that bite the bullet and put in the infrastructure they need are winning,” she stresses. “Companies can’t wait for the infrastructure (water, sewers, roadways) to get to them.”

### Quality of life

Not only has Plainfield expanded industrially, but also in terms of its educational and recreational offerings. The four-star Plainfield Community School System opened a new high school this fall. In addition, the Plainfield Recreation and Aquatic Center unveiled the Splash Island Family Waterpark in 2004, which according to Haase, “has been huge for the town.”

“We’ve gone from a very, very small town to a large town,” Haase offers. “The quality of life has remained very good. They keep adding to it. It just takes you 15 to 20 minutes to get from one side of the town to the other, where it used to take seven minutes, because of the stoplights and traffic.”

McNaught emphasizes, “The community has pursued not only economic development, but also quality of life. You don’t just do economic development in a vacuum. You tie it into quality of life issues so that as a rising tide, it lifts not only existing businesses, but also attracts new businesses and helps residential neighborhoods as well.”

#### INFORMATION LINK

**Resources:** Cinda Kelley, Hendricks County Economic Development Partnership, at (317) 745-2400 or [www.hcedp.org](http://www.hcedp.org)

Paul McKee, Bensussen Deutsch & Associates, at (317) 713-4590 or [www.bdainc.com](http://www.bdainc.com)

Perry Utley, Sunrise Medical, at (317) 839-5822 or [www.sunrisemedical.com](http://www.sunrisemedical.com)

Mac McNaught, Denison Properties, Inc., at (317) 472-0038

Mitch Haase, Mitch’s Incredible Ace Hardware, at (317) 838-8242