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Plans for the plant were announced by Gov. Nathan Deal in 2012.

SPECIAL

Shire PLC opens new \$1.2 billion Georgia plant

BY AMY WENK
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An Irish bioscience company this week celebrated the grand opening of its \$1.2 billion plasma manufacturing facility in Covington, Ga., the largest economic development investment in the state during Gov. Nathan Deal's eight-year term.

Dublin-based **Shire PLC** (Nasdaq: SHPG) acquired the more than one million-square-foot plant when it merged with Baxalta in

2016. Shire collects plasma from donors and manufactures life-saving treatments for rare diseases.

The project was originally announced in 2012 under Baxter International Inc., which spun off Baxalta in 2015.

Shire already employs about 900 people. But when it fully ramps up in Georgia, it's expected to have about 1,500 workers between the manufacturing facility and its plasma collection centers.

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NATHAN DEAL CEMENTS STRONG ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEGACY



BYRON E. SMALL

The 25 largest projects announced by Gov. Deal have brought 22,000 jobs and more than \$5 billion in investment to Georgia.

BY AMY WENK
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As Georgia Gov. **Nathan Deal** wraps up his second term, he's cemented one of the South's strongest legacies for economic development.

His latest win was 500 new jobs created by the discount home improvement chain Floor & Décor Holdings Inc. The project, announced Oct. 4, involves the company relocating its headquarters to Cobb County. And on Oct. 11, Shire PLC opened its new \$1.2 billion plant in Covington.

Other announcements this year have included:

- Thyssenkrupp Elevator, which is developing a \$216 million headquarters in the Cumberland-Galleria area by SunTrust Park. The project will house at least 900 jobs.
- Inspire Brands, the parent company for Arby's, which is building out its \$32 million headquarters in Sandy Springs.
- Facebook, which is investing more than \$750 million in the first phase of a data center development in Newton County. That project could employ 1,500 employees and over time invest a staggering \$42 billion. Facebook's data center also gets the title for the most unusual economic development code name, "Morning Hornet."

Still on the hook to possibly be reeled in before Deal leaves office in January are the headquarters of Norfolk Southern Corp. and, possibly, Amazon's HQ2.

In all, Deal's largest 25 economic

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JOANN VITELLI

BLIMEY!

As usage of electric scooters sweeps across the city, new rules will protect public spaces from being overrun.

STORY BY Douglas Sams • 18A

NEWS

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development projects have included the expansions and relocations of NCR Corp., Mercedes-Benz USA and Caterpillar.

Those 25 largest projects alone brought more than 22,000 jobs to the state and lured more than \$5 billion investment since 2011. The biggest win was bioscience company Shire PLC, which amounted to a \$1.2 billion investment in a new plant in Covington, Ga.

In late September, Deal announced Georgia was named the No. 1 state for business for the fifth year in a row, according to Area Development, a leading site selection publication.

"We are committed to investing in our workforce and transportation infrastructure so that companies looking to relocate or expand will have Georgia on their minds today and in the future," Deal said at the time.

He credits the state's low-tax structure, technology infrastructure and gateways to global commerce, such as its expansive ports system, for its appealing business climate. "Behind this ranking are hundreds of thousands of jobs for Georgia families and billions of dollars of meaningful investment in our communities."

Mercedes-Benz USA, which was headquartered in New Jersey, was one of several companies Deal convinced to move south.



Gov. Deal, second from left, breaks ground on Mercedes-Benz USA's new Atlanta headquarters.

BYRON E. SMALL

In fact, state officials say since Deal took office, more than 40 new corporate headquarters or relocations have come to Georgia, with a total investment value of more than \$357 million.

Also during his tenure, Georgia's film and television production grew from \$2.4 billion in fiscal year 2011 to \$9.5 billion in fiscal year 2018, a nearly 300 percent increase over seven years.

And, the state's tourism industry reached \$63.1 billion in 2017.

"Georgia's position as a leader in economic development is not by chance. It has everything to do with strong leadership from Gov. Deal," Pat Wilson, commissioner of the Georgia Department of Economic Development, said in an announcement in September.

Deal comes from a long line of governors from across the South who excelled at luring industry away from the Rust Belt and Northeast.

"The art of the economic development

deal was created in the Southeast," said John Boyd, principal with the consulting firm The Boyd Co. Inc. "He was certainly in that mold."

Deal also took the unusual step in building an alliance with former Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, a Democrat who didn't share the governor's political ideology. They found common ground in luring jobs to the city of Atlanta.

"He worked across the aisle with Reed," Boyd said. "Transit. The Gulch. Workforce development. Look at what they did in Midtown, at Georgia Tech and Technology Square."

Deal was also strong enough to maintain strong relationships with conservatives without missteps such as North Carolina's infamous "Bathroom Bill," Boyd said.

Deal also did some of this best work every spring when the world's best golfer's converged at Augusta National.

His "Red Carpet Tour" each year during the Masters Tournament is regarded as the "gold standard" in terms of a governor-led economic development event.

"I get invited to countless events by governors and mayors each year," Boyd said, "but the Red Carpet event is special as it leverages the cache of the Masters and promotes Georgia to some of the most influential business decision makers from around the globe."

The next governor would be wise to follow Deal's playbook, Boyd said.



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