Shire PLC opens new $1.2 billion Georgia plant

BY AMY WENK
awenk@bizjournals.com

A
n 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 Baxter 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

BY AMY WENK
awenk@bizjournals.com

A
s 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 & Decor 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:

► Thysenkrupp 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 Horntet.”

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
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.


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 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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