

BUSINESS 380

HEADQUARTERS

TRADING TOWNS

Eco Lips to move to Marion

By B.A. Morelli, The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — Eco Lips, one of Cedar Rapids' more successful start-ups, has outgrown its space and will relocate operations to Marion, a company official said Tuesday.

The business that specializes in organic lip balms operates out of the Cherry Building, 329 10th Ave. SE.

"We've been looking for about four years in Cedar Rapids and we couldn't find anything the right size or the right space," said Steve Shriver, who started Eco Lips with his wife, Andrea, in 2003. "We've just been expanding like crazy. We operate on every floor of the Cherry Building and we just can't fit in here anymore."

The company plans to relocate in July to a 35,000-square-foot building at 1199 44th St., which is the old Squaw Creek Mill Works building, he said. He anticipates closing on the property in March.

"Our plan is to not have any business interruption," Shriver said. "We will transition incrementally during the month of July."

Shriver said the company is investing about \$500,000 to update the building, and is working with Marion on an incentive package.

Eco Lips primarily makes a wide variety of lip balm products, as well as a handful of other products, such as exfoliating lip scrub and beard oil.

The company has about 30 full-time and 20 part-time employees, Shriver said. They intend to convert the part-time staff to full time over the course of 18 months, he said.

"From the staff side, the remodeling project that was driven by Eco Lips coming to Marion is a great re-use of a building that has been underutilized for years," Marion City Manager Lon Pluckhahn said.

An outline of the incentive plan includes 80 percent reimbursement over a period of seven years, with a total award amount not to exceed \$60,000, according to Marion staff.

According to the company website, the evolution of the business and the relationship of Shriver and then Andrea Danielson are closely tied. Danielson originally was brewing lip balm concoctions in the early 1990s, and gave a sample to Shriver around 1995.

Shriver loved it and as the two developed a relationship, Shriver, a longtime entrepreneur, invested Danielson's life savings developing the couple's first lip balm product. Several years later, they started Eco Lips.

Shriver said leaving the Cherry Building location in the New Bohemia District will be a difficult but necessary move.

"We can walk out the back door and be at New-Bo City Market and hear live music, so it will be sad," Shriver said.

"But it is a necessary move for us. We are growing up."

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Cliff Jette/The Gazette

"We've been looking for about four years in Cedar Rapids and we couldn't find anything the right size or the right space," says Steve Shriver, who started Eco Lips with his wife, Andrea, in 2003.

Hames Homes eyes office move to Cedar Rapids

Marion home company wants to build a new maintenance building

By Matthew Patane, The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — Hames Homes, an almost 50-year-old business based in the metro area, plans to move its home office to Cedar Rapids from Marion, the company's president said Tuesday.

"What we're planning on doing is, we are actually going to move out of our location in Marion and consolidate it with our location in southwest Cedar Rapids," President Barbara Hames-Bryant told The Gazette.

Hames Homes also wants to build a maintenance building at 2800 West Post Rd. SW for its manufactured homes. On Tuesday, the Cedar Rapids City Council set a public hearing on that request for March 13.

The company would move its administration and sales staff to an office in southwest Cedar Rapids, 5410 Wabash St. SW, near one of its mobile home parks. Its service department would move to the new maintenance building.

The company has used the Marion location, 640 Marion Blvd., for a display center and office since its founding, Hames-Bryant said. Changing customer preferences



Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette

Workers with Hames Homes connect utilities to a manufactured house as they set it up on a pad at West Branch Village in West Branch in this 2013 photo.

"The market has changed, and now we are really selling more pre-owned homes than new homes."

Barbara Hames-Bryant, Hames Homes president

in the manufactured home industry have prompted the company to look at moving the office, she said.

"When we first were in business — and actually for the first 30 years we were in business — we were selling more new homes than pre-owned homes. This was a great display center for new homes," Hames-Bryant said.

"However, the market has changed and now we are really selling more pre-owned homes than new homes and we are really selling more homes

on-site in our communities than from our sales center."

The move is expected to be complete later this year, she said.

The Marion property may see better use from a retail development, she said. Hames's Marion office is close to Lindale Mall and a number of retail centers along Collins Road.

Hames Homes has five manufactured home parks in Cedar Rapids, Iowa City and West Branch.

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INSURANCE

Residents, businesses may see fire coverage rates reduced

C.R. has received a higher rating for its fire protection services

By Matthew Patane, The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — Cedar Rapids residents and businesses could see lower rates for fire insurance coverage after the city received a higher rating for its fire protection services.

The city and its fire department now have a Public Protection Classification of 2 as defined by the Insurance Services Office, a national analysis company.

"In our world, it's a big deal," Fire Chief Mark English said.

The new rating goes into effect June 1. English said Cedar Rapids had been at a class 3 since he started with the Cedar Rapids Fire Department in 1986. He credited the construction of new fire stations, which reduce response times, and the implementation of public fire prevention and outreach efforts for the bolstering of Cedar Rapids' ranking.

"The fire prevention efforts ... it's hard to measure how many lives that's saved or how much property that's saved because our efforts hopefully stopped that event from getting any further," he said.

The ISO scale goes from one to 10, with one being the best. While it seems like just an internal designation, the ranking helps determine insurance rates for properties within the city's boundaries, English and others said.

The higher a city's ranking, the lower insurance premiums should be.

"It's going to do one of two things — the policy goes down because, again, they're providing a better fire suppression and a better fire service, or it will stay the same," said Michael Sheeley, chief operating officer for United Life Insurance Co., a subsidiary of United Fire Group.

Sheeley said he could not provide specific dollar amounts for how much a property's insurance bill may go down. Properties vary in their risk, and each insurance company evaluates rates on different scales.

City officials also said they hope the improved ISO rating serves as an business-attraction tool.

"These results are a major economic development tool that can be added to an attractive list of reasons why businesses and industry can thrive and grow in Cedar Rapids," City Manager Jeff Pomeranz said in a news release.

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BANKS

JPMorgan women earn 1 percent less than men

Bloomberg News

JPMorgan Chase says its female employees earn 99 percent of what male employees make globally, making it the fifth large U.S. bank to disclose an adjusted gender pay gap of around 1 percent.

The company is strongly committed to diversity, the bank's Robin Leopold said.

As a growing number of financial organizations reveal whether men and women are compensated equally, they have clustered around 99 percent parity, after adjusting for factors such as job role, seniority and locale.

In addition to Wells Fargo, Bank of America, Citigroup and Bank of New York Mellon, MasterCard last week reported its gender pay gap was around 1 percent.

The numbers stand in contrast to the average gender pay gap, which has hovered around 2 percent since 2007.