

Kittinger: A big-time name in a small town

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Moving day for Kittinger Furniture Co. Inc. is fast approaching.

By the time Thanksgiving arrives, Kittinger should have finished moving manufacturing operations from Buffalo's Central Park neighborhood into a former roller skating rink in Clarence.

For Kittinger, whose roots date to 1866, it will be the first time the prestigious furniture maker has manufacturing operations in a suburban location instead of Buffalo.

Clarence officials, of course, will use Kittinger's presence as an economic development calling card to land more private sector investment in the town.

"It's a big win all around," said Clarence Town Supervisor David Hartzell. "For us, it's the perfect project - a small, locally owned manufacturer who is taking over what was a largely vacant building. Hopefully, it's not the last one like this we are dealing with."

Raymond Bialkowski, Kittinger president, said the move was made primarily to get manufacturing operations into a single-story building. The company had leased space on the fifth floor of Buffalo's Tri-Main Center.

With the move, Kittinger will occupy approximately 37,000 square feet including

a 15,000-square-foot addition that will be completed by mid-November. The company also has elbow room for future expansion.

"We're not moving to get more square footage, but to get more efficient space," Bialkowski said.

"What we really needed was our own free-standing building. This will help us grow."

The project was aided by a financial package approved last winter by the Erie County Industrial Development Agency.

Kittinger's move is an illustration of how expansion and new investments by smaller companies have a positive impact on the region's economy. The new site is almost around the corner from Kittinger's 6,000-square-foot Transit Road showroom.

"There will be a synergy between the two," Bialkowski said.

The \$1.4 million project is part of what has been a busy year for Kittinger that has been highlighted by a spike in sales and several unique orders. Among them:



Kittinger Furniture designed and built this chair for the Oval Office.

- The producers of the movie "White House Down" ordered Kittinger pieces similar to ones that Kittinger had made for the Oval Office. From Richard Nixon on, every U.S. president has had a Kittinger desk in the Oval Office and adjoining Cabinet Room.

- The George W. Bush Presidential Library in Dallas placed orders for the Oval Office desk and Cabinet Room furniture Bush had made during his eight years in the White House.

Bialkowski said once the move is completed, he expects to hire more people for the manufacturing plant. Kittinger employs 30 locally including 20 who work in the plant.

The move, the new hires, the prestige of having a company like Kittinger has Hartzell smiling.

"This bodes well for Kittinger's future," he said, "and the future of Clarence."