



Monongalia County Commissioner Jeff Arnett, Owens & Minor President and CEO Ed Pesicka, WVU Medicine President and CEO Albert Wright, state Economic Development Secretary Mitch Carmichael and Monongalia County Commissioner Tom Bloom toss dirt for the ceremonial groundbreaking. David Beard/The Dominion Post photos

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# WVUM Medicine, Owens & Minor, celebrate groundbreaking of new supply and distribution center at WestRidge

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MORGANTOWN – WVU Medicine and Owens & Minor on Monday celebrated the groundbreaking of Owens & Minor’s planned 350,000-square-foot “center of excellence” for medical supplies and logistics.

WVUM and company officials gathered along with local elected officials and other dignitaries for the ceremony inside a tent perched atop a hill at WestRidge, across from Leidos.



An artist's rendering offers a preview of the facility to be built at this site; the tent housing the groundbreaking is in the background.

WVUM President and CEO Albert Wright opened the ceremony, describing how the partnership came about. COVID, he said, was a “black swan event,” a rare and unpredictable event that changed how people think and do things.

For WVUM, it changed how they view supply chain issues and emergency preparedness, he said. Just-in-time inventory wasn't adequate, he said. “We need to have stockpiles of inventory, we need to have access to inventory and we need to start making things in America again.”

They re-prioritized their supply chain and distribution channels and started to look for a new partner, working from a list of “must haves”: It would be integrated into everything they do; it would offer

more than real time inventory; and it would be committed to come to West Virginia and bring jobs.



Wright offers opening remarks.

They met with Owens & Minor and its President and CEO Ed Pesicka. “They were the type of partner that was willing to put some skin in the game with us.” Wright took them to meet with Gov. Jim Justice and Economic Development Secretary Mitch Carmichael, and – in a few words – the partnership formed. “Today we’re here and we’re celebrating what is going to be a state-of-the-art distribution center.”

The \$50 million facility will employ more than 100 people, Wright and Pesicka said. Construction is expected to take 16-18 months and be complete in late 2023. It will serve the whole WVUM system, along with other systems in West Virginia and neighboring Ohio, Maryland and Pennsylvania, and into Delaware.

The partnership was first announced in December 2021 and expanded in January this year.



Candy packets with chocolate shovel, hard hat and 'gravel' surround a commemorative bucket of dirt set at each table.

Pesicka said, "We're really honored to be here today. ... We really look forward to being able to serve WVU Health as well as the entire state."

At a later Q&A, he said the decision to locate at West Ridge was a team decision. WVUM came to them with the supply question. "It was pretty easy for us to put together an answer and a solution for them. ... Our mission is empowering our customers to advance health care."

While many relied on Chinese-made products – especially PPE – during COVID, he said, Owens & Minor makes its products domestically. It even makes custom procedure trays tailored to doctors' specific needs for surgeries.

Carmichael observed that Owens & Minor started in Richmond, Va., just 19 years after West Virginia became a state. Now it's a global Fortune 500 company employing more than 20,000 people.

"That is the type of company that has now selected the state of West Virginia for their most recent, innovative warehousing distribution facility in this beautiful area of Morgantown," he said.

Asked about the salary range of the jobs that will come to Morgantown, John Connor, company vice president for global supply chain, said, “We always play at the top of the market.” In today’s market, it’s hard for businesses to find workers and Owens & Minor wants to provide its teammates – its term for employees – with the right compensation in order to draw the best of the best and in order to honor its emphasis on team and family.

With the company’s plan to serve health systems across the state, The Dominion Post asked about Mon Health. Pesicka said they’re in talks.

Mon Health President and CEO David Goldberg said they already work with the company as part of their group purchasing.

“I think it’s wonderful to have a business like Owens & Minor entering West Virginia, especially in Monongalia County, to help us provide for medical supplies and devices for the health care industry that supports West Virginia and beyond,” he said.

“I’m absolutely thrilled that they will be open for business for others above and beyond WVU Medicine. ... We look forward to finding ways to collaborate and use West Virginia-made products to help West Virginia citizens,” he said,

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Tags: COVID-19, Mon Health System, Owens & Minor, supply chain, WestRidge, WVU Medicine