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Amgen plans expansion of distribution center

Kentucky's '05 tax exemption a factor

By **Patrick Howington**

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The Courier-Journal

Amgen, one of the world's largest biotechnology companies, will spend \$38 million on a 27,000-square-foot expansion of its U.S. distribution center in eastern Jefferson County.

The expansion, expected to be completed next year, eventually will create some jobs at the facility at 12000 Plantside Drive, though Amgen officials said they don't yet know how many.

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The distribution center opened in 1992 and employs about 40 people. It ships medicines created and produced by California-based Amgen to hospitals and other health-care providers around the country.

Amgen said at a press conference yesterday



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that it will increase the facility's size by about one-third and upgrade equipment to help meet increasing demand. The expansion will include a new walk-in freezer and two new cold rooms.

The project might not have happened if the Kentucky General Assembly had not passed a bill last year to exempt the medicines Amgen ships from local property taxes.

Amgen ships small vials of very expensive medications from the Louisville distribution center. Each year, billions of dollars worth of medicine flows in and out.

Those medicines were subject to local property taxes -- an unintended "anomaly" of Kentucky's tax code, said Joe Reagan, president and chief executive of Greater Louisville Inc., the metro chamber of commerce.

So city and state economic-development officials worked with legislators to change that. A measure sponsored by Ron Crimm, R-Middletown, added "biotechnology products held in a warehouse for distribution by the manufacturer" to a long list of other property exempt from local taxes.

The bill's passage "created a favorable climate" for Amgen to stay and grow in Kentucky, said Bob Bradway, Amgen vice president for operations strategy.

Gov. Ernie Fletcher, who spoke at the press conference at the Amgen facility, said the tax change has also helped Kentucky land other biotech-distribution businesses.

Those businesses, Reagan said, include biotech giant Genentech, which opened a distribution center in Louisville in January, and Johnson & Johnson subsidiary JOM Pharmaceutical Services, which is building a distribution center in Shepherdsville.

Amgen will have about \$14 billion in sales this year, and about 85 percent of the products it ships in the United States go through the Louisville center, said Ed Kremer, the center's director.

Louisville is Amgen's only U.S. distribution center, but the company is looking for a second U.S. location to open another one, Kremer said.

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