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Louisville has high hopes for Genentech

By **Patrick Howington**
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The Courier-Journal

Now that biotechnology giant Genentech has opened its Louisville distribution center early, economic-development officials are hoping the company will pick the city for its future manufacturing needs as well.

The center at Jefferson Riverport International is the first U.S. facility outside California for the San Francisco company, whose manufacturing facilities are straining to meet demand.

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"This is a first opportunity for Genentech to experience Louisville, Ky.," Metro Mayor Jerry Abramson said at a press conference yesterday.

"We hope they're not done" investing in Louisville, he said, "and we're certainly not done" trying to convince them of that.

Philippa Norman, vice president of global

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supply chain for Genentech, said the company has recently made moves to obtain needed manufacturing space, including the recent purchase of Biogen Idec's plant in Oceanside, Calif.

Genentech also plans to expand its plant in Vacaville, Calif., to become the largest recombinant protein manufacturing facility in the world.

But the company has said in a regulatory filing that it will have to complete that and other projects and use nearly 100 percent of its manufacturing capacity in the next few years to keep up with demand.

Genentech is constantly re-evaluating its need for manufacturing space, Norman said. If it decides to expand further, it will consider other locations, but "obviously we now have a relationship" with Louisville, she said.

Genentech is one of the world's largest biotechnology companies as measured by its \$88 billion market capitalization, slightly behind that of biotech rival Amgen.

It has built its recent success on blockbuster cancer drugs, including Rituxan for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and Avastin for colon cancer.

At the press conference, Genentech announced that its warehouse and distribution center had opened three months ahead of schedule. It became operational in January.

Last year the company won approval for up to \$2.4 million in tax incentives over 10 years for the center.

It said then that its jobs would pay between \$14 and \$29 per hour.

The center has nine employees and should have 15 by the end of the year, Norman said.

"But we're going through a period of very rapid growth" and could add more employees as needed, she said.

Norman said Genentech chose Louisville because of its central location, its

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