

Bridgeport's Wade's Dairy ready to double in size

By Hugh Bailey

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Photo: Brian A. Pounds / Hearst Connecticut Media

Wade's Dairy President Douglas Wade, Jr. unveils the plans to expand the company's operation at 1316 Barnum Avenue in Bridgeport, Conn. on Tuesday, September 15, 2015. The approximately 2 million dollar expansion is scheduled to be completed by February 1, 2016.

With plans complete and financing in place, Wade's Dairy is ready for a significant expansion on Barnum Avenue in Bridgeport.

The existing warehouse will make way for a 7,000-square-foot space on the same property, more than doubling in size. Shelton resident **Doug Wade**, who runs the fourth-generation family business, says it will be the largest expansion in the company's 122-year history.

"This is a big, big project for us," he said. "It will set the stage for the fifth generation of the family to take over."

And the company is moving beyond milk. Part of the expansion will include taking over a wholesale meat company and bringing it under the Wade's umbrella.

The state **Department of Economic and Community Development** is funding almost \$1 million of the project, with **Newtown Saving Bank** providing interim funding until the state money arrives.

Wade said construction should be completed by January. The business will then have an \$850,000 mortgage with Newtown Savings. “We’ve had a very positive relationship with them going back years,” Wade said.

The DECD money includes a commitment to add jobs from the company’s baseline of 48 workers. It’s already up to 53, and has three years to reach the 40 more jobs it agreed to add. If it reaches that level, \$200,000 of the DECD loan can be forgiven.

The company is also taking advantage of funding from the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program from Connecticut’s Green Bank. That \$612,000 investment will put solar panels on roofs covering the dairy’s trucks, which are currently stored outside.

The C-PACE program pays upfront costs for solar installation that are repaid over a 20-year period. The solar panels will supply all of the company’s energy needs, and allow for some to be sold back onto the grid, Wade said.

“It’s a home run for a company like ours,” he said. “It’s going to be putting money in our pockets and we’ll be generating electricity at the same time. Plus now we won’t need to get up and sweep snow and ice off the top of the trucks, and it’s less yard to plow.”

A board member of the **Bridgeport Regional Business Council**, Wade said he hears plenty of talk about various incentives available to help businesses grow, and decided to pursue some of them for his own company.

In addition to the larger space, the project will provide some order for the business, which took over the space from a lumber yard 20 years ago. The office space, which will be untouched, will now be directly linked to the refrigerated warehouse, rather than in a separate building.

Wade linked the expansion to improvements around the city. “We’re very up on Bridgeport and on the future of Bridgeport,” he said.

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