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Visalia industrial park lands client for warehousing Tulare efforts for an industrial park still in planning stage

By Gerald Carroll

Visalia's large-scale, 12-year-old industrial park continues to attract interest from a variety of companies wishing to ship and warehouse goods - and Tulare has industrial-park plans of its own.

Developer Bill Morgan of Exeter wants to buy 280 acres of land along state Highway 99 near the Tulare Municipal Airport. He hopes the site can be transformed into an industrial park on par with Visalia's.

Can Tulare, like Visalia, become a serious player in warehousing and transportation?

"Competition is always going to be a factor in these types of businesses," said Fred Brusuelas, a Visalia city planner. "Actually, the challenge for Visalia will be to purchase more property in that area so it can grow."

That's also the opinion of David Hernandez, director of construction services for Visalia-based The Allen Group, which just landed another client for its 480-acre Midstate 99 Distribution Center at the Visalia industrial park. WorkflowOne, a major business-documents producer and distributor based in Dayton, Ohio, has agreed to lease 118,000 square feet of warehouse space, said Douglas Burnham, the company's director of business services.

Burnham's company did have its distribution center at a Tulare location, but opted for Visalia because of the way the current industrial park is set up.

"The Tulare location was more designed for manufacturing," he said. "But the location in Visalia

is better set up for warehousing and distribution."

However, should Tulare come through with an industrial park that appeals to prospective shippers and warehouseers, competition will intensify.

"Technical details, if handled properly, will give inquiring companies confidence in your city's ability to expedite warehouse and transportation arrangements," Brusuelas said.

It's not enough to offer space for a warehouse and a road leading to it, he said.

Hernandez said that The Allen Group, started by Richard S. Allen - whose son, Luke Allen, who just joined the company, is a Redwood High graduate - began in Visalia and has spread nationally into such hub cities as Dallas and Kansas City. But the core business centers in California.

"The Allen Group and other companies located in Visalia are almost exactly split down the middle in distance between the ports of San Francisco and Oakland to the north, and Long Beach and San Pedro to the south," Brusuelas said. "That is a huge advantage for shipping."

The Allen Group isn't the only company attracted to the Visalia industrial park.

Last month, the planning commission approved more than 1 million more square feet of warehousing space near Midstate 99 for the Diversified Development Group. The buildings are finished, ready for customers.