

# MacRo Report Blog

## **Eastalco property a candidate for manufacturing operation**

*Originally published in the Frederick News Post July 28, 2012 by Bethany Rodgers*

A vacant chunk of land that previously was **home** to an aluminum smelter could see new life as it enters the running for a manufacturing operation that would come with hundreds of jobs.

Eastalco Aluminum Co. is clearing away legal hindrances and old buildings to ready the roughly 2,200 acres it owns near Buckeystown for prospective buyers. Local officials report a new opportunity is opening for the Eastalco holdings, which, according to company attorneys, form the largest cluster of industrial land in Frederick County.

Last month, county officials learned about a company that is scouring the nation for potential manufacturing operation sites. Their list of site requirements includes a large power supply and proximity to a rail system, both of which are available at the Eastalco property, said Helen Riddle, the county's acting director of **business** development and retention.

If the operation's estimated 400 jobs landed in the area, the business would represent a major employer in Frederick County, Riddle said.

"Oh, my goodness, that's exactly what we're looking for right now," she said.

There are currently 21 major employers in the county, 14 of which are in the private sector, she added.

Riddle didn't have details about the type of manufacturing done by the company. She also cautioned that while the Eastalco property passed the company's first round of considerations, there are many more steps in the decision-making process. County staff don't know how many other **properties** are competing for the industrial site, she said.

Maryland Delegate Galen Clagett brought the opportunity to the attention of local officials after hearing about it through business contacts.

In a Friday interview, Clagett (D) said he'd like to see coordination between Eastalco and Sempra **Energy**, a California company that had obtained approval to put a power

plant on the site, to make a pitch to the potential buyer.

"We need to put all the parts together," said Clagett, who represents Frederick County in the General Assembly.

Meanwhile, Eastalco is continuing work to make the **property** more marketable.

Earlier this month, commissioners revisited a decades-old agreement that once limited activity on portions of the property to aluminum manufacturing. Although the rules might not apply to a new property owner, Eastalco representatives were concerned that they could scare away prospective buyers, and the county board voted unanimously to remove the restrictions.

The aluminum company has also applied to remove some zoning restrictions placed on the portions of the property in the county's most recent comprehensive plan. The 2010 plan, a road map for growth in the county, was approved by the previous board of commissioners, and sitting officials are looking at reversing some of the document's development restrictions.

An ongoing effort to demolish about 130 buildings on the property will also prepare the land, said Monica Brower, senior brownfields redevelopment manager for Alcoa, parent company of Eastalco.

"We ... are preparing the ground and making it shovel-ready," she said. "It's a huge site, and we really think it's a great asset for the whole region and state."

Brower said over the past couple of years, a number of entities have expressed interest in the property, but demolition isn't scheduled to be complete until 2013.

Selling the property in one or two pieces is preferable to breaking it up, Brower said, although she indicated the Eastalco sellers would consider other options.

Since the 2005 closure of the Eastalco plant, Sempra considered the property for an electric power generation station and the U.S. Bureau of Diplomatic Security weighed it for a training facility. Neither possibility panned out.

Staff writer Ed Waters Jr. contributed to this report.