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Citrus Company Buys Site For Move PASCO BEVERAGE FACILITY IS BEING SOLD IN PARTS

WESLEY CHAPEL — Citrus Country Groves, the packing company that's a fixture at Interstate 75 and County Road 54, has bought part of Pasco Beverage's facility in Dade City and will move there by spring. Citrus Country President **Jim Guedry** has sold his Wesley Chapel site to a Honda motorcycle dealership. Citrus Country has been at its location since 1982. **Guedry** has owned it since 1991.

Guedry said he will add about 30 employees as part of the move, expanding his operation by about one-third.

Guedry recently bought more packing machinery and has begun moving it into the new facility. A full transition is set for March, said broker Tom Gola, vice president of Grubb & Ellis commercial real estate. The Pasco Beverage deal gives Citrus Country 410,000 square feet of warehouse space on about 57 acres of the 70-acre beverage plant, which is being sold in pieces. **Guedry** paid about \$1.7 million for part of the factory between U.S. 301 and the CSX railroad tracks.

Pasco Beverage will close at the end of the year.

Citrus Country will claim about 80,000 square feet of the site, leaving more than 300,000 square feet for other tenants, **Guedry** said. He plans to turn his part of the beverage plant into an industrial park, pending renovation and adding water and sewer lines, Gola said.

Guedry has laid out a three-year schedule for renovations but says things could move more quickly depending on how quickly the property draws tenants. The site also could include retail and office space along U.S. 301, **Guedry** said.

"Our goal is to bring businesses in there that will provide jobs for the community," **Guedry** said. "Our focus is bringing in small manufacturers."

Guedry will meet Thursday with Dade City officials to talk about annexing his land — something city officials tried to get Pasco Beverage, and Lykes Pasco before it, to do.

"We believe we can provide them an attractive offer to come into the city," Mayor Hutch Brock said.

As for **Guedry's** plans for the property — including retail and office sites with manufacturing — Brock said the city is interested in what he has to offer.

"We are open to anything that would be a fair and equitable use of that property," Brock said.

Guedry said the annexation could cost him in added taxes, but he's willing to pay.

"The community needs it," he said. "They want it in there."

City officials also are more likely to give the company the zoning and permitting attention it can't get from county officials, **Guedry** said.

"Long-term, it's going to be better for us to be connected to the city," he said.

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