Two Wichita Companies Announce Expansion in Air Capital

By Emily Younger Barnwell

Approximately 20 new employment opportunities, with the potential for dozens more, will be available in the Air Capital of the World thanks to the expansion initiatives announced by Wichita-based Cox Airparts, LLC. and Balco, Inc.

Cox Airparts, a dedicated family-owned enterprise specializing in the repair and overhaul of aircraft electrical and hydraulic components, will embark on an exciting new chapter in March 2024. The company will break ground on a cutting-edge, 20,000-square-foot building and 13,000-square-foot mezzanine workspace at the Maize Industrial Park – a project valued at $3 million.

The expansion, exceeding seven times the company's current operations, is poised to bolster its expanding capabilities and accommodate its growing customer base.

"The expansion means a lot for our small business. We are a true definition of a family business, and we employ seven family members. This expansion is because of all the time and effort our family and employees have invested in the company. It truly is a team effort. We will be able to continue to grow and branch out into different areas of aviation," said Cox Airparts Owner Richard Cox.

The company, currently comprised of 11 full-time and 2 part-time personnel, has already added several new positions in

anticipation of its move to the new location in December 2024. It expects to employ 10 new people in the coming years and 20-40 in the next decade.

Similarly, Balco, Inc., a leading manufacturer of high-performance construction products, has nearly doubled its operations facility with its February 2024 move to a 70,000-square-foot facility at ICT 37 Industrial Campus at 37th Street and Broadway Avenue.

“Balco has been in business for almost 65 years and has always called Wichita home. This expansion will enable us to continue to grow our business and expand our operations, which will benefit our customers, shareholders and employees,” said Balco, Inc. President and CEO Ronnie Leonard.

The more than $6 million expansion project increases Balco’s production capacity by nearly 90 percent, allowing the company to meet growing demands while increasing its talented workforce. It anticipates going from 76 employees to nearly 90 in the next year.

The Allure to Expand in Wichita

“Wichita is a hidden gem in the Midwest,” Leonard shared. “It’s a great place to live, work and raise a family.”

Leonard, a Wichita native who has been with Balco for 27 years, said despite being recruited by other states she continues to choose Wichita.

“We are very fortunate to have an outstanding team of employees and we didn’t want to lose them, which would have been likely if we were to move outside the area,” she explained. “Balco manufactures life safety building products for the

commercial construction industry, and we ship products all over the world. Our worldwide customer base allows us to diversify our business. In that vein, it is important for Wichita companies to service a variety of industries to limit the impact of downturns in any one sector."

Cox Airparts continues to diversify its business, having acquired three companies' assets since 2020. It prides itself on being a part of the Wichita region's expansive aviation ecosystem, representing one of the area's more than 450 world-class suppliers.

"No matter where you go, you will run into a company that supports aviation in some way. There is a vast abundance of tribal knowledge to pull from here in Wichita. All the major manufacturers of aircraft components were and/or are in Wichita for general aviation aircraft. We do business all over the world and everything somehow, someway runs through our city," said Cox Airparts Co-Owner and Shop Manager Bryan Cox.

Cox credits the skilled workforce and robust aviation pipeline for the Wichita region's continued success.

"It is critical to keep what we do in the Wichita region because this is where all these parts were originally manufactured. We have top-notch machine shops to manufacture our parts," Bryan explained. "Wichita has a great pool of employees to pull from with mechanical backgrounds and we have easy access to Textron and other supply stores around the world because of our central locations."

Partnership's Role

The Partnership was pleased to have supported Cox Airparts and Balco in their expansions. The organization worked alongside the companies, connecting them with the appropriate leaders and assets to successfully drive economic growth in the region.

"We are greatly appreciative for all that Jonathon Goering and the Partnership did to guide us through this process," Bryan Cox said.

"The Partnership is a huge asset for our community, and it has been a pleasure to partner with them," Leonard shared.

Locate & Expand

If you are thinking about expanding or locating a business, the Partnership is here to help you find the information you need and the type of valuable insight such a decision requires.

We start working with you from the moment we become aware of your interest in the greater Wichita region, making sure we thoroughly understand what your company or client needs in order to thrive. The Partnership will help gather resources and information, contact and connect you with potential partners, and outline all opportunities related to your specific goals.

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