



THE PLAIN DEALER

Cleveland trying to bring Strongsville firm MCPc to lakefront Strongsville's MCPc eyes airport area

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Cleveland officials hope to entice a large suburban company to leave Strongsville and create a headquarters complex on property at downtown's Burke Lakefront Airport.

Executives with MCPc Inc. are talking with city airport and development officials about moving to the former Aviation High School. The company, which employs about 300 in offices across the country, provides information-technology services and products to businesses.

City leaders would not discuss the negotiations. But reports submitted to Mayor Frank Jackson in July show that tax incentives could be used to lure MCPc to Burke.

The move could be a score for Jackson, who last year pledged to keep the general aviation airport open and surround it with other development. But the move would sting Strongsville, said Gene Magocky, the southwest suburb's economic development director.

"What concerns me somewhat is that we talk about regionalism coming out of Cleveland, yet if this is an ongoing situation with the city enticing the company, it is disturbing," said Magocky, who said he was unaware of the relocation talks.

According to a July report to Jackson from Tracey Nichols, Cleveland's economic development director, the city was awaiting an estimate of the airport land's value so potential tax-increment financing could be calculated.

A TIF, as the incentive is often called, could use increased tax revenue from the new headquarters to pay down debt on the development.

MCPc has about 225 employees at three locations in Northeast Ohio.

Magocky said there have been talks over the years with MCPc executives about the company expanding at its Drake Road headquarters.

"It would be a tremendous loss," he said. "Those are all techie jobs, \$75,000 [a year] jobs."

Michael Trebilcock, MCPc's chief executive officer, declined to discuss specifics of his talks with Cleveland officials but said the Burke site is one of several relocation options.

"A few are in the county, a few are out of the county, and one is out of state," Trebilcock said. "I suspect that in the next three months, we will decide something."

Ricky Smith, Cleveland's airport director, only acknowledged that several companies have expressed interest in property at Burke since the mayor made redevelopment there a priority.

"We are exploring all of those opportunities; however, none of them at this point have come to fruition," Smith said in a statement.

Aviation High School opened in 1975 and at the time was thought to have the nation's only high-school-level aviation mechanics course. It also offered training in aviation electronics and air traffic control. Beset by financial woes, the Cleveland School District closed Aviation High in 1996.

The dilapidated building, most recently used as an overflow homeless shelter, sits on property that lakefront enthusiasts have long favored for redevelopment.

"There was this constant debate in terms of what Burke should be," said Councilman Joe Cimperman, whose ward includes the downtown airport. "What the mayor decided is to keep the aviation but develop around it.

"This is exactly the kind of development we want."

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