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## PulverDryerUSA moves into Springfield, plans hiring

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What might have been an economic blow to Springfield is turning into a boon, local leaders say.

The recent occupation by PulverDryer USA of the former Robert's Packaging Inc. building at 126 Avenue C is becoming a shot in the arm for the community, said Springfield City Manager Franklin Peterson.

The century-old, 100,000-plus-square-foot structure was vacant only briefly before it was purchased a few months ago by the company, formerly based in Comstock.

Now the building is to become the company's world headquarters, and hiring there is expected to increase in the months ahead. The building also will house the company's manufacturing operations, as well as research and development facilities.

Lakeville, Minn.-based Ryt-way Industries LLC acquired the packaging company in late 2010 and chose to move its operations, according to Peterson and information at [www.rytway.com](http://www.rytway.com).

"We knew we had the potential of having a 100-year-old building standing vacant for a long time," Peterson said. "We were putting together a plan to deal with that, and it just worked out that PulverDryer was interested. So, we did everything we could do, in the hope that they would stay interested."

Peterson said PulverDryer's site-selection team found the building through a realty agent.

"It was priced to sell, and they liked the site," he said. "So, it was a matter of a few months rather than years, thanks to the circumstances."

Peterson said he and Tom Matson, Springfield's public works director, worked together to smooth over any concerns regarding utility and telephone services -- something PulverDryer CEO Lee New says he appreciates.

"They didn't waste any time," New said of Springfield's leadership team. "Those guys were a good group of people to talk to. They were right there, figuring out any way they could to help.

"We thought Springfield had a fair tax base versus some of the other locations we looked at," New said.

PulverDryer designs and manufactures machinery that pulverizes and dries solid waste -- including municipal sludge -- for conversion into various energy-producing forms, including electricity and fuel pellets, New said.

New, one of the company's original stockholders, bought out the other Singapore-based stockholders in early 2010 and took over the company, he said.

"We put \$40 million into developing this technology," he said, saying the company currently has 18 employees and hopes to increase that to 50 to 70 employees within the next 12 months, with possibly more in the next five years.

Much "depends on what's going to happen between now and the end of the year," he said, citing deals with other companies internationally.

PulverDryer has operations in Belgium and Korea, and New said he hopes to hire a project manager "who's fluent in Korean and English." In the short term, he said, the company intends to hire "engineers and project managers for all phases of manufacturing."

"Things are going to take off," New said, citing a new process that can reduce the amount of water in municipal sludge before it is put through a PulverDryer process.

"Its greatest return could be as a diesel fuel," New said, adding that he is working to create an alliance among the companies that would be needed to bring about that combined technology.

According to the company's website at [www.pulverdryerusa.com](http://www.pulverdryerusa.com), materials processed by PulverDryer include such inorganic substances as soft-rock minerals, coal, gypsum wallboard, metals and raw kaolin and attapulgite clays, as well as such organic substances as animal manures and bone, sewage and paper sludge, plant fibers and products, including corn and wood, food-processing wastes and olive, canola and fruit pulps.

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