

Henderson gets high ranking in shipping circles

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Gleaner staff

If your company wants to ship products to the U.S. population in the shortest amount of time, Henderson would be the single best place in the country for that facility, according to an independent study.

Henderson this year replaced Bloomington, Ind., as the best location for a single national distribution location in the analysis conducted by Chicago Consulting, a company that designs supply chains for manufacturers, distributors and retailers.

“It’s quite a newsworthy thing in our circle,” Terry Harris, managing partner of Chicago Consulting, said in a telephone interview Monday. His company has conducted the survey each year for more than a decade.

Henderson’s ranking will bring new-found attention to this area, Harris indicated.

“This is very well known in distribution and logistics and supply chain circles,” he said. “It’s published in a lot of trade and professional journals.

“We meet with economic development-type people quite frequently as a result of this thing and our other work in supply chains. It’s not a trivial matter,” Harris said.

Kevin Sheilley, president and CEO of the Northwest Kentucky Forward regional economic development organization, was thrilled with the ranking.

He wasted no time in spreading the word. The Chicago Consulting rankings were released last Thursday; by Thursday night, news of Henderson’s top rank had been posted on the Northwest Kentucky web site.

Distribution facilities have been on the minds of local economic developers for several years. The last company with 75 or more employees to be recruited to Henderson County was Columbia Sportswear’s distribution center in 2003.

And since shortly after Sheilley came here as economic development agent in mid-2005, Northwest Kentucky Forward has had logistics facilities as one of its five strategic areas of focus.

Being identified as the top location for a single national warehouse in the U.S. should catch the attention of distribution companies.

But Sheilley said it also will elevate Henderson’s standing among manufacturers and other companies that need to get products sent out quickly across the country.

“If your criteria is getting to people in a timely manner, this is it,” Harris agreed.

Sheilley has spread that message for years. Having it affirmed by a company with no ties to Northwest Kentucky Forward validates his claim.

“This is an independent group that has no obligation to us that looked at the information, at the statistics, that evaluated it and said, this is the place to be,” Sheilley said. “This is an outside expert confirming what I’m saying.”

Bloomington had been rated the single best location for three or four years, Harris said. The switch to Henderson was driven by higher-than-average growth in Southeastern states such as Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina, according to Chicago Consulting. Henderson is located an average of 804 miles from every single American, closer than any other location, and goods can be delivered from here in an average of 2.27 days, its study determined. The study doesn’t consider issues such as highway infrastructure, labor climate and proximity to airports. But proximity to people is crucial to reducing fuel costs, Harris noted.

“One of the most important things is cost,” Sheilley echoed.

More than any time during “the 15 years I’ve been in economic development, cost is everything,” he said.