

■ SOAP MAKER KUTOL

Sharonville eyes last site to develop

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The expansion of fast-growing soap manufacturer Kutol Products will help the city of Sharonville kick off development on its last large parcel of vacant industrial ground.

The Madeira-based company will spend \$8.7 million to build a new 150,000-square-foot manufacturing facility and buy 17 acres on Commerce Blvd. near the Interstate 275 Mosteller Road exit. Space will be available to add another 100,000 square feet pending the firm's expected growth. It has added 15 to 20 percent in revenue each of the last six years, said Kutol president Joe Rhodenbaugh.

The rest of the land will be sold to developers Cincinnati Commercial Contracting and Cole Realty

Associates, which recently were awarded preferred developer rights by the city. They promised to build as much as \$35 million in office/warehouses for companies that could employ as many as 600 workers, said Tammy Riddle, economic development director for the city.

"The city is mostly a built-out community. Having the ownership and ability to develop that size parcel will create a great source of economic opportunity for the city," she said.

The 47-acre parcel only recently became available for development. It had long been used by the U.S. Department of Defense for the storage of metals and ores needed for military manufacturing purposes. For the last year and a half, the land has been vacant. The General

Services Administration, which manages federal land and real estate operations, decided late last year that it was excess and began a process to dispose of it. The city has offered the government \$1.7 million for the land and expects to close by the end of the year.

John Westheimer of Cincinnati Commercial Contracting spent two years with Kutol trying to find a good location for its new headquarters. It hoped to land within 10 miles of Madeira and to have enough room to grow again.

And that was before the swine flu pandemic pushed orders for its institutional and industrial soap and sanitizer products through the roof. In the last 45 days, Kutol has received four times its normal volume of orders.

"There is a new paradigm in

hand washing," Rhodenbaugh said. "Every soap manufacturer is stripped of their capacity."

Kutol received a five-year, 45 percent tax credit from the state for creating 36 jobs and keeping 128. The county offered it a 10-year property tax abatement for staying within its borders.

Westheimer and Steve Cole, of Cole Realty, hope the Kutol deal will encourage other tenants. They've negotiated with neighboring landowners to build a new road to improve access to the site, and have pads for six more buildings, all with extra land for expansion. Cole said they've been in talks with three interested companies.

"The huge draw is the location in a dense urban area, an already established industrial park," he said.