In April 2017, Dollar Tree, Inc., announced it had selected Warrensburg, Missouri, for its newest facility and the site of the company’s 23rd distribution center in the U.S. Currently under construction, this Dollar Tree distribution center will source merchandise for 850 Dollar Tree retail stores located across the Midwest. The announcement marked the culmination of years of preparation, months of teamwork in the true spirit of cooperation and just the beginning of a long-term commitment to support Dollar Tree as they achieve their business goals in the Warrensburg area.

Located on Route 13 and NE 200 Road, the distribution center will be the first to occupy Warrensburg’s new industrial park, Brady Commerce Park. Dollar Tree’s 1.2 million-square-foot facility will cover approximately 27 acres under roof. The proposed project will employ 375 people within three years and invest nearly $110 million in the community. The proposed site plan is designed to accommodate future expansions. At peak, the facility anticipates 150-200 inbound/outbound trucks per day. Dollar Tree currently operates more than 14,300 stores across 48 states and five Canadian provinces.

A project this size could not have been successful without planning and teamwork from the city of Warrensburg and other partners like Missouri Partnership, an organization designed to increase the visibility of Missouri as a globally competitive business. Clint O’Neal, Missouri Partnership’s vice president of business recruitment, recalls that Dollar Tree, then only known by a code name of “Project Domino,” had requirements before Warrensburg would even be considered for a site visit.

“They had criteria they were looking to meet all in one community,” said O’Neal. “They sought a community with a large industrial site, an available workforce, a favorable business climate and leadership that could get the job done.”
Identifying, developing and marketing a large industrial site takes years of commitment from all partners involved. The vision of Brady Commerce Park as a future location to create jobs and investment began a decade ago with discussions between the property owner, Johnson County Economic Development Corporation (JCEDC), the city of Warrensburg, utility providers, and other state and local partners. Little by little, year after year, small steps were taken to bring the Brady Commerce Park vision to reality.

One of these pivotal events took place just months prior to the first Project Domino visit. At this time, all the state, regional and local economic development teams participated in a “mock prospect” visit led by Missouri Partnership, KCP&L, and Ady Advantage. From that moment, there was high confidence in Brady Commerce Park and the ability for Warrensburg to come together to make a significant project happen, all in a short window of time.

“Most successful local economic development teams include resource representatives from around the state and local region who are brought together in advance and have plenty of opportunities to practice as a group for a future project visit,” said Tracy Brantner, CEcD, executive director for Johnson County Economic Development Corporation (JCEDC). With only one opportunity to practice during the mock prospect visit, the Warrensburg team lacked practice time but made up for that in the high level of trust and expertise. This proved to be especially important because the site selection timeframe for this project was extremely truncated. What would have normally been at least a 12-month site selection timeframe was successfully completed in less than half the time and over the Christmas holiday season.”

During the cold months of winter and into spring, sometimes on short notice and over a major holiday, the city of Warrensburg would be informed they were going to be visited by the company. For each visit, a large team in Warrensburg was coordinated to spring into action and answer the call. This often included the city utilities, school superintendents, area employers and local leaders who were ready and willing to learn what the company needed and explain what Warrensburg was able to provide. Clint O’Neal also recognized the impact of the strong teamwork and leadership that made this project possible.

“The Dollar Tree project puts Warrensburg on the map as being a community that’s been validated by a top Fortune company,” said O’Neal. Dollar Tree is currently ranked 136 on the Fortune list, a ranking that positions Dollar Tree higher than other recognizable companies like Southwest Airlines and Marriott International.
After multiple visits, it was clear the team in Warrensburg had the type of cooperation that would work for the future home of a Dollar Tree distribution center.

“Dollar Tree is a large and growing organization,” said Dollar Tree Chief Executive Officer Bob Sasser. “We have been very impressed with the business-friendly approach that the state of Missouri, Johnson County and the city of Warrensburg have provided. This project demonstrates our commitment to western Missouri by creating hundreds of jobs in the region. We are proud to become a bigger part of the local community.”

The new facility has potential to spur more growth. “After all these years of planning and expense, Dollar Tree’s distribution center will be the catalyst for the development of the new park that will significantly change Warrensburg’s economic future,” stated Brantner.

City Manager Harold Stewart agrees and sees much potential in Warrensburg following the Dollar Tree announcement. “The immediate benefit is having 375 new jobs over the next few years,” said Stewart. “This is a great opportunity to have good wages, good benefits, and work for a company that takes good care of its employees. For the future, it puts a lot of infrastructure in place in the City’s newest industrial park: roads, water, sewer and electricity; all those types of things for future development.”

Stewart knows this project isn’t a one and done kind of deal. “Yes, we can do these types of projects; yes, we can compete,” he said. “We aren’t done, we’re continuing to work hard to ensure that Warrensburg has a bright future. Brady Commerce Park is a large component of that effort.”

“We have known for some time that Warrensburg’s Brady Commerce Park has great potential for future economic development,” said Bill Gabel, presiding commissioner of Johnson County. “I don’t think there was anyone who wasn’t on board with this project. With the joint efforts of all involved, Warrensburg was able to remain at the top of the list.”

Warrensburg won’t be the only one to benefit from the new distribution center. Gabel says; “I think it is not only good for Johnson County and Warrensburg area, it’s good for the entire region.”

“The city of Warrensburg is well-positioned to continue the positive momentum currently taking place in the community,” Warrensburg Mayor Bryan Jacobs said. “Businesses are choosing Warrensburg, more jobs are being created that will ultimately lead to increased revenue for the City. While we have long known the great assets Warrensburg holds, we are excited that Dollar Tree saw the great opportunities as well.”

Richard Lloyd, president of Johnson County Economic Development Corporation, also notes the positive domino effect this project will have in the area; “We are excited that it has brought local employees onto the job (construction) site and the multiplier effect is going to continue even after the distribution center opens.” Some of the great local assets include top notch local contractors who, after fierce national competition, have been selected to work on different aspects of the Dollar Tree project. Some of these local companies include: ALL PRO Electrical, Capital Materials, Emery Sapp & Sons and Fischer Concrete. These companies are a big reminder of the larger impact this project will have on Warrensburg and the region. By investing in the area, Dollar Tree is investing in the local companies and people as well. Equally, the city of Warrensburg and its economic development stakeholders are committed to a long and successful partnership with Dollar Tree as the company achieves its business goals. “The Dollar Tree distribution center is the largest single private project in history for this region and the fifth largest investment for the state of Missouri in 2017,” said Stewart. “Our commitment to Dollar Tree does not end with this announcement; it is only beginning.”

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