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## REAL ESTATE

## **New Durant plant set to open Nov. 30**

by Marie Price

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OKLAHOMA CITY – Plant expansion and a new rail spur have put the capstone on the 200,000-square-foot Eagle Suspensions facility in Durant.

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Economic development director Tommy Kramer said the facility is now the largest vehicle leaf-spring manufacturing plant in the United States.

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The Eagle Suspensions facility, another economic development coup for Durant, involved moving the manufacturing arm of Dallas Spring from Ontario, Canada to southeastern Oklahoma. “They shut it down totally and moved the whole thing to Durant,” said Kramer.

Officials plan a grand opening ceremony Nov. 30.

Dallas Spring has distribution facilities in Lewisville, Texas, where it is headquartered, Middletown, Penn., and Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.

The Durant manufacturing plant now has more than 150 employees and Kramer said more may be added this winter. A 30,000-square-foot expansion was added last summer to the former Cornerstone Products

manufacturing building in Durant. Initially, officials estimated it might take Eagle Suspensions three years to ramp up to the 150-employee level, but it reached that goal more than 20 months ahead of schedule.

The company is also a Quality Jobs Program participant.

“They’re just busting at the seams right now, and blowing and going,” Kramer said.

He said workers at the plant manufacture about 65,000 pounds of leaf springs per day.

Kramer did not have dollar figures for the expansion, but in June 2006, economic development officials pegged the total investment in the launch of the new plant at \$10 million.

“It’s one of our top two or three manufacturing facilities, investment-wise, in Durant,” he said.

Tuesday, Kramer said the plant payroll runs about \$6 million a year.

“I hear all the time that “Made in America” or “Made in Oklahoma” is not good enough, and it’s being done in China and Mexico,” he said. “And guess what? It’s not true.”

Kramer said that almost two years ago the company conducted extensive research around the Dallas area, looking for communities that could offer a large enough building with rail connectivity.

“Durant, Oklahoma, was not even on their radar screen,” he said.

The existing facility, the promised rail spur and other incentives helped persuade them, however, and the move commenced in the summer of 2006.

Kramer said it took about 300 semi-trailer trucks to move the company’s equipment and inventory from Ontario to Durant.

“It’s a real, true made-in-Oklahoma product,” he said.

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