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Marias Tech announces \$3M expansion

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Tech company reinforces commitment to Covington

By Sam Wildow - Miami Valley Today



Provided photo Marias Technology, currently located at 25 E. Wright St. in Covington, announced plans for a \$3 million expansion on Thursday to be located in downtown Covington.

COVINGTON — Marias Technology, which provides software testing and system implementation services, announced a \$3 million expansion to their facilities in downtown Covington on Thursday afternoon.

President and CEO Chris Haines of Marias Technology announced the construction of their a 26,000-square-foot, three-story building that will be located in downtown Covington, adjacent to their

current building. They also plan on hiring a minimum of 10 new people each year going into the future.

As part of their upcoming construction, Marias Technology acquired seven buildings that face High Street that are to the west of their current facility. They plan to demolish six buildings that were deemed not salvageable. Their new facility will include retail space on the first floor for a new coffeeshop called Glacier View Coffee that they will also own and operate, and Marias Technology will occupy the second and third floors.

"We've been fortunate at Marias to have quite a few years here of pretty steady growth," Haines said.

He said that Marias Technology, which is 100 percent owned by the Haines family, has been in business for a little over 10 years and they currently have approximately 46 employees, and they have seen growth in both their staff and in their customers. The insurance companies they work with range in size from \$4 million to over \$5 billion in writings and are located throughout the U.S., he said.

As a result of that growth, they needed additional space. Haines said they were faced with the difficult decision of whether to build onto their current location, building a new space in Covington, or seek property in another town, which might have been closer to the interstate and the airport.

In the end, they chose to invest in Covington.

"We're Covington people. We're a Covington family, and we really wanted to do something here, if possible in town. That was very important to us," Haines said.

Haines also said they chose not to seek a tax abatement as part of this expansion. He explained that they chose to do that with the purpose of giving back to the community and helping to revitalize the downtown as the village of Covington is currently looking into creating a Downtown Revitalization District. If the village adopts that plan, then a portion of their property taxes will go into a revolving loan that will be available to as low or no interest loans for improvements to businesses and properties in the downtown.

"We are very fortunate that Marias is in a place where we can be doing this. We're growing. We're increasing our employee count, customer count, but with all that being said, we wouldn't even be considering this project in Covington if it wouldn't be for the current state of the village," Haines said.

"A lot of that is due to the leadership of our Mayor Ed McCord, our village administrator Mike Busse, all the members of the council ... and every employee that works for the village. They do great things for us."

Haines also recognized the Covington school district, saying that Covington has "very solid, modern schools," thanks to the school board, Superintendent Gene Gooding, and all of the school district's employees. He also commended Covington Fire and Rescue and the Covington Police Department for keeping Covington a safe place to live.

"We are just really happy to be able to be doing this," Haines said. "We know that the burden of those services fall on the taxpayers of Covington, and we appreciate the fact that they share our enthusiasm to move the village forward while not trying to lose the small town charm that makes Covington what Covington is."

Haines said that Marias Technology has worked with their architect for the project, Candace Goodall of Troy, and the village of Covington to design a facility that keeps that small town charm. The goal of the design of the new facility was to match the essence of the downtown. With the addition of their new coffee shop, Glacier View Coffee, they will also offer seating inside and outside as well as Boston Stocker products along with a drive-thru with entrances and exits off of Wright Street.

The incorporation of Glacier View Coffee was for the benefit of their employees and other residents of Covington so the downtown would not lose retail space. Haines also explained that the name to tie into their theme with the name Marias as the Marias name comes from Marias Pass, a railroad pass over the Rocky Mountains that forms the southern border of Glacier National Park.

Marias Technology will also be investing in improvements to their current facility, which was built in 1869, on Wright Street. They will also be keeping the southernmost building, referred to as the Dime Store, to be used as overflow from their current building while the new facility is under construction.

Haines said that they expect the demolition of the other six buildings will take place over the winter, and then they will breakground on the construction of the new facility sometime between March and May of 2020. They expect to be occupying the new facility by the end of 2020. The cost of the acquisitions, demolition, and construction is estimated at approximately \$3 million.

Choice One Engineering has handled the survey work for the project and will continue to advise on the project. Greenville Federal is financing the project.