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Manufacturer bringing 100 jobs to area

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A sporting goods manufacturer is consolidating its distribution facilities in Middle Tennessee and bringing 100 jobs with it.

Wilson Sporting Goods Co. has signed a lease for 300,000 square feet in Rockdale Distribution Center II, a building being developed by First Industrial Realty Trust near State Route 840 in Wilson County.

Wilson, which makes equipment for sports including baseball, golf, tennis and basketball, is a subsidiary of Finland's Amer Sports Corp. The company already owns a 300,000-square-foot distribution facility in Nashville that houses equipment for team sports, while its golf distribution is in South Carolina and its tennis distribution is in Utah.

Dave Martyn, vice president of operations at Wilson, says the company is consolidating those facilities in Nashville and changing its distribution organization. After the realignment, the existing building will service mass-market clients such as Wal-Mart or Target, while the new facility - which was leased for 10 years - will be used to distribute inventory to sporting goods chains and small shops.

"We're going to design this facility around shipping small orders for those guys," he says.

Martyn says the company will add about 100 employees in Nashville between now and the end of the year, and that the facilities in South Carolina and Utah will close by the end of the year. Martyn says the company - which now employs about 160 people locally - doesn't plan to buy a second warehouse in Nashville. However, Rockdale II can be expanded to 575,000 square feet.

"The facility is attractive ... because it gives us the opportunity to expand," Martyn says.

ProVenture Commercial Real Estate's Randy Wolcott represented the tenant on the deal, while Douglas McDowell and Jeb Atkinson, also of ProVenture, represented First Industrial.

Other brands that are part of Amer Sports include Precor, which makes exercise equipment, and winter sports companies Salomon and Atomic.

Steven Preston, regional director at First Industrial, says the first phase of Rockdale will be completed in September, with final completion set for Dec. 1. The contractor on the project is T.W. Frierson.

Wilson's big lease is only the latest in the industrial market this year. Among other companies signing on for at least 300,000 square feet are Bridgestone, Hickory Hardware and Electrolux.

According to Nashville Commercial Real Estate Services, warehouse rental rates across Nashville average \$3.54 per square foot, but are beginning to rise with vacancy rates at 9.9 percent, their lowest in five years. In the East submarket, rates average \$3.73 a square foot.

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