

## Lenox announces \$2.5 million expansions

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BY Karen McConkey 

*Staff Writer*

The Lenox Company will add 100 jobs and spend \$2.5 million to expand its plant in Kinston, which will have the distinction of being the only Lenox manufacturing facility in the United States.

"Happy New Year," Mark Pope, Lenoir County's economic development director, told county commissioners as he made the announcement Tuesday.

As an incentive for job creation, the county will pay Lenox \$60,000 over three years. That figure is based on a formula that pays a stipend for each new full-time job Lenox creates through expansion.

Lenox Plant Manager Paul Leichtnam said the company hopes to start construction by early February.

"We're thrilled about being able to expand," Leichtnam. "It's job security for all of us and it certainly adds to the overall well-being of the local economy."

The company plans to hire 70 employees in 2006 and 30 more in 2007. Plans are for the company to build a 30,000-square-foot storage building on its 40-acre site at 1800 Dobbs Farm Road.

Lenox, a division of Department 56, closed its Pomona, N.J., plant Nov. 14 and is moving the additional equipment here to manufacture both bone and fine ivory china.

Lenox started here in 1989 with a 40,000-square-foot shell building and built an 110,000-square-foot plant the next year to manufacture high-quality fine china. Lenox invested \$22 million to equip the plant with the most up-to-date china making machinery. Ten years later, the company added 7,000 square feet to accommodate another expansion, then added another 50,000 square feet in 2002 to reach its current size of 218,000 square feet

Lenox Incorporated was sold to Department 56 in July for \$190 million. Department 56 is a designer, distributor, wholesaler and retailer of high-end collectibles and giftware.

"It's a great way to start off our year, adding more jobs for our residents and seeing our county grow," George Graham, chairman of the county board of commissioners, said.

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Lenox's value to Lenoir County

n One of top 20 taxpayers: \$177,025 paid in 2004

n Current value: \$22, 267,233.

n \$2.5 million expansion equals a 10 percent increase in value

Source: Darryl Parrish, Lenoir County Tax Department Director