



Regional Development Company Securing the Future for Lake County-based Munster Steel Co.

Written by Andrew Rowe on July 26, 2016

Munster Steel, the Hammond-based steel fabricator, was founded as the OCR Steel Company in 1957 by Mr. O.C. Robbins. Later, the OCR Steel Company incorporated as Munster Steel Co. which is now led by third generation ownership.

The company began by fabricating structural steel, steel parts and miscellaneous iron, and continues to fabricate steel for both building and bridges in today's market. In 2014, with the help of the Regional Development Company (RDC) and First Merchants Bank, Munster Steel moved into a new, state-of-the-art facility in Hammond.



“Munster Steel are very clearly a strong business,” said RDC President and Executive Director, Erica Dombey. “Many people assume that SBA lending is only for new businesses or businesses that ‘need’ credit enhancement. However, today’s business owners are very smart, and many of our borrowers choose the 504 to take advantage of the low, 20-year fixed interest rate.”

Munster Steel President, Jeanne Robbins, spoke about her experiences working with RDC.

“We had a positive experience working with the RDC,” said Robbins. “Nicole Zell met with us and spelled out what documents they would need in advance which provided for a very smooth application process. Laura Tavitas was very organized and helpful throughout the closing process.”

“The main reason why we chose a SBA loan was because of the fixed interest rate for a long term loan,” added Robbins. “It provided stability for future business decisions and budgets. Hopefully many other small businesses will be able to take advantage of the long term, fixed rate loans offered by the SBA.”

Robbins had been introduced to the RDC and the SBA Loans that they offer through First Merchants Bank and Vice President, Paul Orner.

“We have had a very positive experience working with Paul Orner and all the folks at First Merchants Bank,” Robbins said. “They have been very supportive of our expansion to Hammond and Paul is a relationship manager that truly is interested in Munster Steel’s operations and success.”

Orner, who has been working with the RDC for quite some time, detailed some of the benefits of using the RDC’s SBA 504 Loan Program and how the program was right for Munster Steel.

“I have been working with the RDC since its inception in 1994,” Orner said. “We have collaborated on many projects over those years, and they have always exceeded my expectations. They have the unenviable task of knowing and interpreting the “SOP,” the Standard Operating Procedures of the SBA, and they do a consistently excellent job. When they’re not sure about something, they do the hard thing and get an authoritative answer from the SBA itself. Service and responsiveness are also top-notch.”

“The RDC makes it not just possible, but easy, to utilize the SBA 504 program, which has many benefits for the both our clients and the Bank,” Orner continued. “As in the case of Munster Steel, which is a very well-established and financially strong company, the 504 program was an obvious choice to facilitate and ease their move from Munster to Hammond into a modern, newly-constructed manufacturing plant.”

“Munster Steel is a great illustration of “when to use the program.” They needed to build and equip a 130,000 square foot facility, and continue to operate and serve their customers during the eventual move and transition, which is in itself an expensive proposition on this scale. They wanted to maintain a solid working capital surplus, and also were keen to lock in the lowest rate for the longest period possible. The 504 program met all those objectives.”

Building relationships around the region and across industries has been one of the major factors in the success of the RDC and the 504 Loan program. For successful businesses like Munster Steel, and reputable financial entities like First Merchants Bank, partnering with the RDC has helped secure the future of their operations in Northwest Indiana for years to come.