



InSpec Group managers Ken Kaneko, left, and Joe Gallagher, right, stand inside Spartanburg Community College's Center for Business and Entrepreneurial Development on Monday. Their company will soon open its fifth office in the facility near Duncan.

Engineering firm hopes to strengthen Spartanburg's ties with Japan

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by [Trevor Anderson](#)

Spartanburg County's economic ties with Japan could soon get even stronger.

InSpec Group, a Portland, Ore.-based engineering firm that specializes in helping Japanese industrial companies develop new facilities in the U.S. and beyond, announced Monday it will open a new office near Duncan.

InSpec has been working closely with Japan-based carbon fiber manufacturer Toray on the company's new \$1.4 billion plant on 400 acres at Tyger River Industrial Park near the intersection of highways 221 and 290.

Joe Gallagher, assistant director of construction for InSpec, said the Toray project is the company's first endeavor in the Upstate. The plant's construction began in late 2015 and is nearing its second phase.

Gallagher said that during InSpec's time on the project it has identified the county as a "hotbed" for economic development, community support, and talent—three characteristics that make it a very "enticing" area for prospective companies.

InSpec hopes the Spartanburg office, which will be in addition to its headquarters and three satellite offices in Atlanta, Decatur, Ala., and Tokyo, Japan, will position the company to capitalize on growth in Spartanburg, the Upstate and the Southeast.

Gallagher said the company will start small — about four to five employees in a 400-square-foot space in Spartanburg Community College's Center for Business and Entrepreneurial Development, also known as its Tyger River Campus, at 1875 Highway 290.

But he anticipates the office will grow as the company, founded in 2002, adds to its portfolio of projects.

"As projects come in and our needs increase, we will grow," Gallagher said. "We don't want to grow too fast. We definitely want to take care of Toray."

Gallagher said he initially looked at placing the office in Greenville, but ultimately felt like Spartanburg was the right fit. He said there are already several heavy hitters in the Upstate in terms of engineering and general contracting firms.

"Competition helps spur excellence," he said.

Gallagher said the company wants to be a "bridge" between the U.S. and Japan.

InSpec offers its customers a comprehensive range of services, including site selection, engineering and design, procurement, and field management.

"InSpec is a well-known engineering firm," said state Rep. Mike Forrester, R-Spartanburg, and director of economic development for SCC. "They have done great work. We have really enjoyed working with them... I'm so excited they chose Spartanburg. They could have gone anywhere."

Forrester said in addition to Toray, the Upstate has had success in attracting Japanese companies. A short list includes Kobelco, which is just down the road from Toray, Suminoe Textile of America in Gaffney, and AFL Telecommunications, a subsidiary of Japan-base Fujikura Ltd.

“I think [InSpec’s announcement] speaks to our competitiveness as a region and our ability to attract Japanese companies,” Forrester said. “We’ve had great success and I think InSpec will be integral to our efforts going forward.”

SCC’s Tyger River Campus opened in 2006 in the former headquarters of One Price Clothing Stores Inc.

The 363,000-square-foot center has served as a launch pad for dozens of new and existing companies that have sought to begin, expand or relocate their manufacturing, distribution, and office operations in the county.

To date, the center has supported the creation of several thousand jobs and millions of dollars in economic investment.

For more information, visit www.inspecgroup.com.

