

LANCASTER NEW ERA

Copyright© 1992 Lancaster Newspapers, Inc. All Rights Reserved

METROPOLITAN ★★

LANCASTER, PA., OCTOBER 7, 1992

Suburban Cable planning move to South Duke St. site

by **Tim Mekeel**
New Era Staff Writer



New Era Photo by Marly Heisey

Phillip Ressler, general manager of Suburban Cable of Lancaster, stands outside of the firm's new home, the Quality International Components building on South Duke Street.

In a major boost for the city's southeast area, Suburban Cable of Lancaster intends to buy a South Duke Street building and move its operations there.

The \$1 million project would shift 75 jobs to the 1131 S. Duke St. structure now occupied by Quality International Components Corp.

Quality International, which opened the building in 1989, is searching for a new facility in the city.

"We'll definitely be an anchor business. We'll stay there and we're committed to grow there," said Phillip B. Ressler of Suburban Cable.

Suburban Cable has been headquartered at 528 W. Orange St. since 1975, when predecessor Cable Associates went there from South Queen Street.

But the cable television firm has outgrown that 12,000-square-foot building, forcing it to lease space elsewhere in the city and county.

"We need this project. We can't continue to expand in our current location," explained Ressler, Suburban Cable's general manager.

Suburban Cable is the county's largest cable system, with satellite offices in New Holland and Columbia. The company has more than 73,000 subscribers.

The city Zoning Hearing Board approved a use variance for Suburban Cable on Monday. The 15,000-square-foot Quality International building is zoned for manufacturing.

Ressler hopes to settle on the purchase in the next 30 to 60 days. Handling the transaction are Wendell B. Stockdale of Commercial Industrial Brokers and Edwin Miller of Progressive Associates.

Following the acquisition, costing more than \$800,000, Suburban Cable will invest another \$200,000 in interior renovations – installing partitions, drop ceilings and carpet.

"The building itself is conducive to us as it exists," said Ressler. But the key is, we'll also have the ability to expand as our business needs to. This is a move for our future."

The Duke Street property has easy access to major roads into the city and suburbs, said Ressler. With five acres, Suburban Cable also could enlarge the building or parking as business requires.

Starting in early 1993, Suburban Cable plans to consolidate its 30-employee construction crews there, now based in a leased building on Beaver Street and elsewhere.

I have converters stored in Columbia, and amplifiers and cable reels in New Holland. What we're trying to do is get all that operation under one roof. It will be much more efficient," said Ressler.

Gradually, over the following months, Suburban Cable would transfer other activities to the new building. These 45 workers should be completely moved in by fall 1993.

"We want to do it in a timely fashion but it has to be coordinated. We can't close. It will be a massive undertaking, and it has to be done right, so we don't hamper our customer service," said Ressler.

The project would not cause the company's rates to rise, said Ressler, noting that federal legislation to re-regulate the industry is a much greater threat to prices.

Suburban Cable is in the process of having its Orange Street building appraised, then would offer it for sale. The building, erected in the 1870's, has a colorful history.

Over the years, it has been used as a farmers market, roller rink, and car dealership, said Ressler. It stood vacant for years until Cable Associates acquired it in 1975.

This building has served us well, but it is not conducive to our future needs," said

Ressler. "Right now, I have no parking available. If I brought in everybody who works for us, I'd have gridlock."

Founded in the mid-1960's, Cable Associates was acquired by the Pottstown-based Lenfest Group in 1988 and renamed Suburban Cable.

Under Lenfest, Suburban Cable expanded aggressively. In four years the company bought TV Cable (New Holland), HighView Cable (southern Lancaster County), and TCI of Pennsylvania (Columbia and Quarryville).

The company also has converted to fiber optic transmission lines, invested some \$15 million to rebuild its entire system and strengthened customer service.

Plans for the Quality International building were unveiled in 1988, with the company taking occupancy in 1989. The one-story masonry structure is owned by GN Associates, a partnership of local developers Barry Newhart and Julius Goldfarb.

An electronics manufacturer, Quality International produces printed circuit boards, power supplies, and cable and wire harness assemblies. Originally, a major customer was to be International Signal & Control, but the collapse of the fraud-riddled ISC proved a major setback for the young firm.

Earlier this year, Quality International president Robert J. Booker said his firm was "struggling" in part because it was leasing a building sized to handle ISC contracts – which never materialized.

A lack of capital also has hampered the 15-employee firm's ability to pursue business opportunities, Booker said.

Booker said today he "couldn't be happier" with the impending sale. "This improves our balance sheet significantly. It gives us an opportunity to survive and prosper."