

# Chasan Grows As Hub For Business And Industry

By Mansi Boegemann Sun Intern Oct 20, 2018



Starr Ottinger worked at Magnavox for 20 years before becoming the operator for the Chasan Industrial Complex three years ago. Sun Photo by Mansi Boegemann

There are only two things about the old Magnavox plant on Snapps Ferry Road that have not changed: Ricky Shepherd and the building itself.

"I started working at Magnavox right out of high school at age 17," said Shepherd, the facilities manager for Chasan LLC. "I got promoted, and I will have worked here for 40 years come June."

The Magnavox plant now goes by another name. The Chasan Industrial Complex is 1.1 million square feet, with 99 percent of the building leased out to 13 different companies. Shepherd is responsible for maintaining utilities in the complex, as well as managing sales.

"That's very rare," said Marlin White, the vice president of operations for Chasan LLC. "You go to any other company and those responsibilities are not intertwined. He has knowledge of the people, the businesses and extensive knowledge of the building itself, right down to every riser in the warehouse."

Charles White, Marlin's father, is president and CEO of the company. He began to see exponential growth in 2013, when the industrial complex became a multi-tenant facility and began the process of branding. Among these tenants are Premium Waters Inc., HSN, Forward Air and Landair. An additional seven companies are housed in other buildings across Greeneville, totaling 20 companies over 1.65 million square feet.

"They all come from local connections, local people and local companies that really want to see us be successful and the old Magnavox building to be successful as well," said Shepherd.

After the plant stopped manufacturing televisions, Bush Beans utilized the space for a time before Chasan took over and welcomed its first tenant, Premium Waters Inc. By 2013, the company began to see a tip in the scales where they were being sought out for tenant space.

"We're not a super aggressive marketing establishment anymore," said White. "If somebody comes to us we'll jump on it if it's the right fit, but we're not advertising nationally yet."

Shepherd has turned down four tenant opportunities in the past month because of the lack of available space. However, he is always sure to connect businesses with other potential locations.

“Before we turn them out of Greeneville or Greene County we will try to house them with somebody else whether we have anything to do with them or not,” said Shepherd. “If there’s something available we try to tie that loop together because oftentimes these people have helped us out at one point.”

## PHILOSOPHY

Within the Chasan Industrial Complex, employees work in a variety of different capacities. The size of the facility is the largest in East Tennessee, meaning that companies do not necessarily have to be spread out across multiple properties. Amsee Ltd., for example, has roughly 70 employees, all of which work in the complex.

“As a whole you’ve got anything from a fully functional corporate office like LandAir, to a full-fledged manufacturing industry over here at Amsee, to people in HSN who are unpacking bulk shipments, to a temp office at Kelly Services,” said White. “It’s unique in the sense that you’ve got all types of workers in the same building at the same time.”

According to Shepherd, the businesses don’t just stop there. Because of Chasan, businesses have additional employees who are willing to chip in.

“If there’s equipment down, we loan it to them to get them through the crunch,” said Shepherd. “We go above and beyond for them. Our services are why these people like us and why we think our tenants will be here for a very long time.”

## UPDATES

In order to accommodate their tenants and potentially acquire more, the Chasan Industrial Complex has undergone multiple renovations in the past year. Up until 2018, 24,000 square feet of the complex was unusable because of some leftover TV equipment. All of the equipment was removed to provide more tenant space. Chasan is also in the process of constructing three new loading docks next to the newly renovated Chasan LLC corporate office.

“There’s nothing in this building that’s been untouched,” said Shepherd. “It’s a sad day to see a TV business die away but in other cities a building like this would fall away. But because of the large investment that Charles White and family did in the Greeneville Greene County area, this building was brought back to life.”

Chasan LLC has added 98,000 square feet of property off of Industrial Road as well. On the property are two buildings that currently house Bossard North America Inc. and Imery’s Fused Minerals. The space is currently under study.

“We have a future development here but not even a timeline of what or when it’s going to happen,” said Shepherd. “We’re not going to jump out and build something without a plan in mind, but we’d like to balance this and do something with a manufacturing tenant because it brings in a lot of jobs.”

## AUBREY’S

While Chasan itself only has five associates, there are over 500 employees who work for the company’s tenants. White expects this number to increase by 70 or 80 people as with the finalization of the purchase and construction of Aubrey’s Restaurant next to the AMC Movie Theatre.

“We don’t really want to be in the long term food business,” said White.

Randy Burluson, the owner and operator of Aubrey’s, developed a relationship with Chasan CEO Charles White in the early 2000s. Wanting to expand the business, Burluson asked White for help with opening an Oak Ridge location in 2012.



"Dad helps fund it, finance it, build it and then after a period of years, Randy buys it back from Chasan," said White.

There are now 10 Aubrey's locations across East Tennessee, and the newest facility in Greeneville is expected to open in mid-March or early April.

"A lot of people want to know about us but we want people to know about Aubrey's," said White.

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