

SUBURBAN

Brandon Materials triples capabilities with move north of Corson

By Randy Hascall
Sioux Falls Business Journal

BRANDON — A 44-year-old ready-mix concrete plant has moved from Brandon to a site north of Corson where it can triple its production.

In turn, the Brandon Materials Co.'s vacated location will become available for redevelopment, most likely for houses.

Manager Mark Thompson said production capability was one of several factors that led to the move. The new plant along Highway 11 is able to produce 300 cubic yards of concrete an hour.

The company also had depleted its resources at its old location, known as

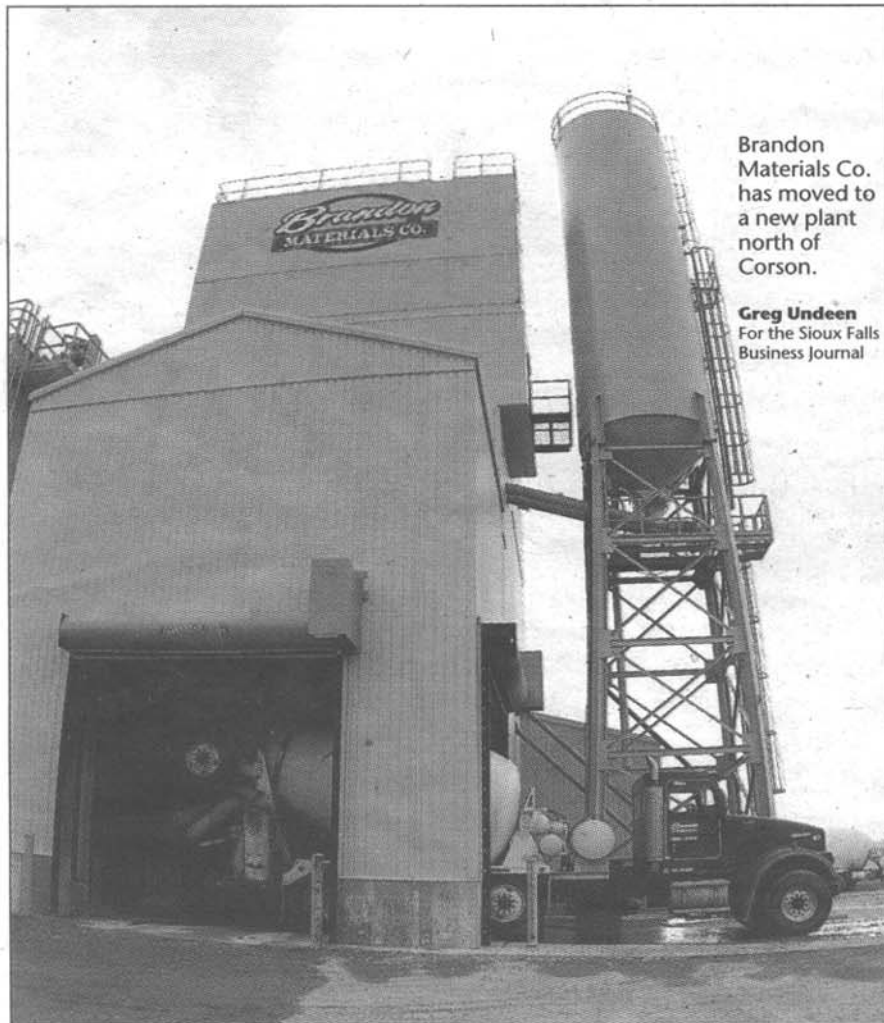
the Aspen plant because that's the name of the boulevard that runs past it.

The new location is in an industrial area, has plenty of space and is near a BNSF Railway line. The new facilities allow concrete to be mixed in large quantities before it is put into trucks, which improves quality control.

"It's going to be better for the community and better for all of us," Thompson, 50, said. "It's way more modern."

The old location also was a cause of safety concerns because it was near a child-care center and swimming pool in a residential neighborhood. Children often were walking along the

See **MATERIALS**, page 7



Brandon
Materials Co.
has moved to
a new plant
north of
Corson.

Greg Undeen
For the Sioux Falls
Business Journal

MATERIALS: Founder given last honor

Continued from page 6

route used by the ready-mix trucks. "One of the biggest keys is safety. The city kind of grew up around Brandon Materials, and it became a safety problem," Thompson said. "That was one of my nightmares."

Mark Gisi, a Brandon Materials dispatcher, said the new location is a big improvement and echoed Thompson's comments about safety.

"It's a much better facility," said Gisi, who has worked for the company 12 years. "More than anything, there's no more worrying about children on the street. That's a load off my mind."

The old location is being reclaimed to its natural state and could be turned into a residential neighborhood. Thompson said no specific plans have been made.

City Administrator Dennis Olson said he has seen a conceptual plan that shows homes and condominiums on the land and a city park around the 12.5-acre pond. No one officially has talked to the city about creating a park there.

Regardless, Olson sees the move as positive for the company and the city. "It's good for everyone," he said.

HISTORY OF BRANDON MATERIALS

1962: The company is started by Clif Cronkhite and Roger Anderson and named Brandon Ready Mix. Cronkhite soon takes it over.

1983: Cronkhite retires and sells the company to Dick Lundin of Mankato, Minn. He renames it Brandon-Tea Ready Mix.

1984: Mark Thompson, a Brandon Valley High School graduate who has worked at the plant since 1974, becomes manager.

1992: Sweetman Construction Co. of Sioux Falls buys the company and renames it Brandon Materials Co.

May 24, 2006: Brandon Materials starts doing business at a new site along Highway 11 north of Corson.

June 29, 2006: Telkamp House Moving of Brookings moves the shop building to the new location.

August 2006: The rest of the old plant is being demolished, with the material to be ground and recycled.

Olson said company officials were always responsive to neighbors' complaints about noise, dust and traffic even though the plant existed long before homes were built in the area.

"You can bet all the cement in the houses of those who complained came from there," Olson said.

The relocation won't result in any loss of sales tax revenue because sales tax is charged at the point of delivery, he said.

When Brandon Materials mixed its last cubic yard of concrete at the old plant recently, it asked the company's founder to ride along on that delivery to a Sioux Falls home-construction site. Clif Cronkhite, 84, was happy to oblige.

"People ask if it makes me feel bad," Cronkhite said. "No, it really doesn't. I can look back at all the good things. We had a lot of good employees who deserved credit."

Cronkhite, a De Smet native and former Marine pilot, started the company in 1962 when he realized there was a need for a local plant. A local resident let him use his land free in turn for Cronkhite promising to keep away deer hunters who liked to sight their rifles on that property.

Cronkhite bought his first two ready-mix trucks - one which was wrecked - with two paychecks, a boat and a motor. He hired Elwood Halverson, who still lives in Brandon, as his first driver.

"The word around town was that I was crazy," Cronkhite said. "They said there would never be a need for it."

But Brandon grew and so did the need for concrete. With the population jumping from 669 in 1960 to more than 7,200 today, construction soared.

Thompson has worked for the company since he was 18. He started out cleaning and maintaining trucks, then moved up to driving and welding.

"He (Cronkhite) put me to work. It wasn't real favorable work," Thompson said. "I stayed with him until he retired."

Today, he's in charge of Brandon Materials' 22 employees at a new plant that he said will serve the company for many years to come.