



## Serving Clark County, Washington

Growing on \$1 - Dollar Tree Center Busy in Ridgefield

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RIDGEFIELD - Each day, 19,000 cartons of soap, cat litter and numerous other goods destined for Dollar Tree stores in the Pacific Northwest arrive at the company's Ridgefield distribution center.

Each day, employees ship 19,000 boxes to 90 Dollar Tree outlets in Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

The pace will only quicken as the holiday season approaches. By September, the center's 100 employees will process 32,000 incoming cartons and ship 29,000 parcels daily.

Oh, and by year's end, the Ridgefield site will be supplying 116 stores.

Those numbers explain why the company is also undertaking plans to automate the flow of goods through the 663,000-square-foot building, which is big enough to hold more than 11 football fields. A system of conveyor belts and automated lifts will move boxes from a massive racking system to loading bays by 2005.

Before the pace really quickens, Dollar Tree officials will celebrate the official grand opening today, even though operations have been under way since February. A host of government, economic development and selected dignitaries will tour the \$40 million plant, which is considered a cornerstone for Ridgefield's economic transformation away from its rural economy.

The project was also the first for Union Ridge, a 320-mixed use development just off Interstate 5.

Peter Colby, general manager for the distribution center, said the opening has gone smoothly and surpassed projected goals, especially since the Northwest stores are typically 20,000 square feet, compared with stores on the East Coast that are 10,000 to 15,000 square feet.

Colby also emphasized that even with automation there will be no jobs lost. The system will, however, improve productivity.

Dollar Tree built the distribution center to increase efficiencies as the company continues to expand its presence in the West. Stores in the Pacific Northwest previously received merchandise from a California facility.

The Virginia-based company competes in a retailing niche experts call extreme value retailers, where merchandise rarely exceeds \$1. Dollar Tree is true to its name with every item costing \$1.

Jim D'Aquila, an analyst with the national research firm The Mercanti Group in Minneapolis, said Dollar Tree positions its distribution centers as the backbone of the company as it supplies stores that burn through merchandise at almost twice the rate of similar retailing operations.

Shoppers say the appeal of Dollar Tree is the clean stores and variety of name-brand goods. And of course the price.

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Update

Previously: Dollar Tree opened its Ridgefield distribution center in February.

What's new: The facility, which serves 90 stores in Washington, Oregon and Idaho, celebrates its grand opening today.

What's next: Company officials expect to have the center automated by 2005.

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