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The Rolls-Royce Crosspointe location in Prince George County will be expanding its facilities. Also, the manufacturer will be receiving a visit from U.S. President Barack Obama on Friday, March 9. FILE PHOTO

Rolls-Royce continues growth, county also sees positive numbers

By SARAH STEELE WILSON

Governor Bob McDonnell announced that Rolls-Royce is considering construction of a second advanced manufacturing facility at the Crosspointe location in Prince George County.

The proposed plant will manufacture advanced high-precision turbine blades for aircraft engines and will employ approximately 140 highly-skilled workers in addition to the 150 skilled

workers needed to staff the first plant, which is busy producing discs for airplane engines.

"The company's commitment to bringing quality, high-paying jobs to our citizens is reinforced by its consideration of the second plant at Crosspointe, and sends a very clear message that Rolls-Royce believes in the American worker," McDonnell said in a statement.

The aerospace giant initially

planned to build a second plant to manufacture bladed discs, or "blisks," for use in fighter jet engines. Those plans were put on hold when Congress voted to cut funding for the F136 engine that Rolls-Royce and General Electric were developing for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter planes in February 2011.

When the currently operational 180,000 square-foot, \$170 mil-

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lion disc factory opened in May, the company said it remained committed to constructing a second plant and was considering options.

If the second facility is successfully evaluated and approved, Rolls-Royce plans to break ground by the end of this year, with the pre-production operation starting in 2014.

"Our vision for Crosspointe is to create a hub of advanced manufacturing innovation, one that is based on partnerships with major universities, government and business — partnerships critical to the future of American jobs and the economy," said James M. Guyette, chairman, president and CEO, Rolls-Royce North America in a statement.

"This potential investment in the Advanced Blade Machining Facility would take us another step closer to making our vision for Crosspointe a reality."

The components that would be manufactured at the second plant will be used in Rolls-Royce's engine designs for the Boeing 787 Dreamliner, Airbus A380, and A350 XWB. The release said that Rolls-Royce is investing in the United States to make sure it can keep up with its \$96 billion order book, which has seen significant growth.

The announcement of plans for a second plant coincided with Prince George's announcement that the county was recently ranked number one in Virginia in percentage job growth

during the recent recession. The county's average employment has increased 25.85 percent since 2006. Translated into jobs, that percentage means 2,851, the county said.

Only five other Virginia communities added more jobs during the same period.

"Prince George County, Virginia will always be responsive to the business community and find new ways to assist in the entrepreneurial process," Prince George Board of Supervisors Chairman Henry D. Parker, Jr. said in a statement. "Solutions that help companies grow will continue to be a priority for our community."

In other positive news related to the Crosspointe area of

Prince George, the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing, which is currently under construction and plans to partner with Rolls-Royce, recently won the "New Workforce" category at the eighth annual Manufacturing Leadership 100 Awards.

The research-based collaboration between the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, Virginia State University and a network of international manufacturing companies including Rolls-Royce received the award for creating innovative ways to bring workers with new, in-demand skills into the workplace.

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