

# Owens' lobbying efforts bore fruit

## Former governor persuaded bottler to be in Windsor

By John Rebchook  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

Back in 2004, then-Gov. Bill Owens got wind that Owens-Illinois was seriously considering Wyoming as the site for its \$130 million bottling plant.

He knew that Wyoming could throw far more money at the bottling giant for the economic plum than Colorado could ever afford.

"So I pitched Budweiser directly and called Augie Bush," chairman of the St. Louis-based Anheuser-Busch company at the time.

"One of the great things about being governor is that everyone takes your call," Owens recalled this week.

It was one example of the behind-the-scenes wheeling and dealing by Owens to help land clients at the Great Western Industrial Park in Windsor.

Owens also sent David Solin, his economic development director, to Denmark in 1999 to try to persuade Vestas to open a factory in Colorado.

The Vestas deal at Great Western was brought to the one-yard line under Owens' watch, and Gov. Bill Ritter scored the economic development touchdown in the first few days of his term in January 2007.



Owens worked behind the scenes to draw companies.



**Red-hot bottles** come out of the forming machine at the Owens-Illinois glass bottle plant in Windsor. When the bottles are formed, they are heated to about 2,100 degrees.

DARIN MCGREGOR/  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN  
NEWS/2007

"Like Gov. Ritter is doing now, we were pitching companies all the time," Owens said. "You throw a lot of lines in the water, and sometimes you get a bite. Not just for this park. I might have been trying to convince a company to locate from San Francisco to the Denver Tech Center or hopping on a plane to help bring a company to Aurora."

But reaching out to August Anheuser Busch III, better known as Augie, was one that really stands out.

Anheuser-Busch, parent of Budweiser, has a giant brewery in Fort Collins, and Owens knew that would be the major client of the Owens-Illinois bottling plant that was the initial

company in what is now known as the Great Western Industrial Park in Windsor.

"I think I called Augie at the suggestion of Pat (Broe)," the principal of the Denver-based Broe Group, a privately held company that is the parent of the park and the railroad, that serves it.

Owens suggested to Busch that Windsor was a better fit than Cheyenne for the plant.

"I told him I know that Owens-Illinois is looking at Wyoming, but you've got that wind up there," Owens said. "Can you imagine all of these trucks filled with glass being blown around? And do you really want to have all these trucks backed up for days, because I-80 (that connects to Interstate 25) is closed because of blowing and drifting snow?"

He also said it is more economical and efficient to have

trucks travel only 20 miles or so from Windsor to Fort Collins instead of coming all the way from Cheyenne. An added bonus: shorter commutes mean less pollution and truck traffic in Colorado, Owens noted.

Broe and Owens are close friends.

"The thing about Pat is that he really isn't a real estate developer; he is a business developer," Owens said.

The former governor said that Broe's business acumen ranks him with other Colorado business leaders, such as the late George Wallace, founder of the Tech Center, and entrepreneur Philip Anschutz.

"I think at one time, between Vestas and Owens-Illinois, Pat's efforts accounted for 10 percent of the net new jobs created in Colorado," Owens said.

The press-shy Broe declined to comment for the record.

But Alex Yeros, a managing director with the Broe Group, said that both Owens and Ritter have been a delight to work with. "We've been blessed to have two governors that have this unique ability to open doors for business to come to Colorado," Yeros said.