



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – March 24, 2026

**Associated Wholesale Grocers Announces \$110M Investment in Pearl River Facility**

*Major upgrade enhances automation, workforce development, and regional supply chain stability*

**PEARL RIVER, La.** — Associated Wholesale Grocers, Inc. (AWG), which serves as a key link in the supply chain for independent grocery stores, has announced they will invest \$110 million to upgrade its Pearl River distribution facility, reinforcing the company’s long-term presence in Louisiana while enhancing product movement across the Southeast. The company will retain 372 current positions at its facility, reflecting an annual payroll of \$23.7 million with an average annual salary approximately 9% above the average wage in St. Tammany. The project will support the human capital investment in automation and advanced technology roles while strengthening long-term operational stability.

“Associated Wholesale Grocers’ investment demonstrates how technology is strengthening essential industries in Louisiana, with existing employers continuing to invest in and modernize their operations,” Louisiana Economic Development (LED) Secretary Susan B. Bourgeois said. “By integrating advanced systems into a key food distribution operation, the company is improving how essential goods move through the region while creating upskilling pathways for their workers to grow alongside industry advancements.”

The project will install advanced automation within the facility’s ambient section, improving the selection and movement of grocery products to enhance order accuracy and service reliability. The upgrades will support current operations and future growth while strengthening the facility’s ability to operate during severe weather conditions and maintain consistent service for independent grocery retailers. The modernization of the Pearl River facility represents a shift toward the distribution of the future, where advanced automation enhances productivity, reduces downtime, and improves worker safety.

“AWG is excited to partner once again with St. Tammany Parish and LED on this exciting new project within our Gulf Coast Division Support Center – our network’s largest conventional grocery division,” AWG Executive Vice President, Distribution and Logistics Richard Kearns said. “With the assistance of St. Tammany and LED, AWG has chosen to make a strategic investment of over \$110 million in our current Gulf Coast facility.”

As the nation’s largest cooperative food wholesaler, AWG serves more than 1,100 member companies and 3,500 locations across 33 states. Its Pearl River facility anchors the company’s Gulf Coast operations, supporting a multi-state distribution network that plays a critical role in keeping essential goods moving throughout the region.

“We congratulate AWG on this investment and look forward to their continued contributions to jobs and a strong, reliable food supply across the Gulf Coast region,” said Pearl River Mayor, Joe Lee.

While AWG celebrates its centennial year, this expansion reinforces a decades-long commitment to St. Tammany and the Pearl River community. They have remained an engaged corporate citizen, continually reinvesting in their local operations while supporting long-term economic growth and stability for the region.

“Associated Wholesale Grocers has been a wonderful neighbor and partner to St. Tammany Parish and its citizens,” said St. Tammany Parish President, Mike Cooper. “I congratulate them on this \$110 million investment in their Pearl River-based distribution facility, which will streamline operations to serve 3,500 grocery stores nationwide.”

The investment will also support the evolution of the local workforce, creating opportunities for employees to transition into technology-driven roles. As automation is integrated into operations, the facility is expected to generate STEM-related career pathways, further strengthening St. Tammany’s talent pipeline and economic competitiveness. Construction is expected to begin in January 2027, with installation of automation systems in April and operations beginning in November 2027.

“As a long-standing business partner in Pearl River, we’re thrilled with Associated Wholesale Grocers’ decision to reinvest in St. Tammany,” President and CEO of St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation Russell Richardson said. “This investment strengthens our region’s supply chain capabilities while creating high-wage STEM-related jobs and advancing a safer, more resilient distribution environment for the future.”

To secure the project in Pearl River, the state of Louisiana offered Associated Wholesale Grocers an incentives package that includes a grant from LED supported by Cleco regarding the retention of the facility through infrastructure updates and equipment modernization.

“AWG’s new automation investment in Pearl River is a strong vote of confidence in our region,” said Eric Schouest, Cleco’s Vice President of Marketing & Government Affairs. “As their long-time electric provider, Cleco is proud to support a project that boosts energy efficiency and helps lower costs for the local grocers who keep our communities thriving.

“We also appreciate the collaboration with LED, St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation, and site selection consultant J.M. Mullis Inc., whose work ensures continued growth in Southeast Louisiana.”

Regional partners say the investment further reinforces St. Tammany’s role in the Gulf South’s growing logistics and distribution network.

“Associated Wholesale Grocers’ expansion highlights the region’s role in keeping goods moving nationwide and St. Tammany Parish’s growing distribution corridor, supported by interstate access and strategic logistics advantages,” President and CEO of Greater New Orleans, Inc. Michael Hecht said. “With this investment, AWG is doubling down on a location that delivers on what companies

need to succeed. The company will also retain hundreds of quality jobs with meaningful wages, providing strong career opportunities for local residents.”

Louisiana companies can register their business at [SourceLouisiana.com](https://SourceLouisiana.com) to enter the pipeline for contract and vendor opportunities with development projects statewide.

To learn more about Associated Wholesale Grocers, visit their website at <https://awginc.com/>.

### **About St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation**

As the economic development organization for St. Tammany, St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation (St. Tammany EDC) serves as the comprehensive resource center for business services throughout the parish. St. Tammany EDC’s services include business retention, site selection, workforce development, research and data services, state and local incentives, business attraction, talent retention, certified site development, relocation support, and marketing St. Tammany. Since the organization’s launch in 2018, St. Tammany EDC facilitated business expansion and attraction announcements representing over \$431.68 million in capital investment and 3,482 new and retained jobs in St. Tammany Parish. For more information about St. Tammany EDC, visit [sttammanyedc.org](https://sttammanyedc.org).

### **About Associated Wholesale Grocers, Inc.**

Associated Wholesale Grocers, Inc. (AWG) is the nation’s largest cooperative food wholesaler to independently owned supermarkets, serving 1,100 member companies and 3,500 locations throughout 33 states from 9 wholesale division support centers. Consolidated sales for AWG in 2024 were \$12.1 billion. In addition to its cooperative wholesale operations, the company also operates subsidiary companies that provide certain real estate and supermarket development services, and pharmaceutical products. For more information, visit [www.awginc.com](https://www.awginc.com).

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