Following is an excerpt from the “Let’s Get Cracking” article from West Virginia Commerce Edge magazine issue 4. To see the complete article, visit [www.wvcommerce.org](http://www.wvcommerce.org) and click on the Edge magazine icon.

Let’s Get Cracking

A global petro-giant lays plans to turn West Virginia gas into gold.

Under the surface lies a bounty of natural gas almost unimaginable only a few years ago: the Marcellus Shale. Since 2005, a period of furious drilling has brought the state nearly $10 billion in economic activity. Thanks to the shale-gas boom, the United States now leads the world in natural gas production. And of the seven major U.S. shale plays, the Marcellus is the most productive. Buoyed by production from the Marcellus and the less-developed but equally promising Utica Shale, West Virginia now generates more than 500 billion cubic feet of natural gas per year.

Where does all that gas go? Lately, that question consumes the workdays of the state’s economic policymakers.

“We have huge recoverable gas reserves in the Marcellus and Utica,” says Keith Burdette, Cabinet Secretary for the state’s Department of Commerce. “That gas is going to support thousands of good construction and manufacturing jobs. . . This is West Virginia gas. The jobs it creates should be West Virginia jobs. We have a narrow window of opportunity to make these gas reserves the foundation for generations of stable prosperity for our kids and grandkids.”

That foundation for long-term prosperity is beginning to take shape. In a bend of the Ohio River near Parkersburg, some 75 miles southwest of the Marcellus’ epicenter, a global giant is looking to put down West Virginia roots. Last November, the Odebrecht Organization, a Brazilian conglomerate whose businesses range from construction to defense to petrochemicals, announced the Parkersburg location as its site of choice for an enormous new ethane cracker plant. The proposed cracker would establish West Virginia as a nub not just for natural gas production but also the more sophisticated business of transforming natural gas into consumer and industrial goods.

“Let’s Get Cracking” also includes:

* Proposed cracker complex is “a venture of epic proportions.”
* Basics of economic and manufacturing potential explained
* Plans for ASCENT ( Appalachian Shale Cracker Enterprise), the proposed petrochemical complex near Parkersburg, West Virginia

For the complete article, visit [www.wvcommerce.org](http://www.wvcommerce.org) and click on the Edge icon.

The International edition also includes:

* The Smart Money’s Heading for the West Virginia Hills

Global leaders place their bets on the Mountain State

* Big Planet, Big Opportunity

West Virginia businesses tap the potential for cross-border trade

* Global Business Gets Personal

West Virginia leaders forge business relationships around the world

* The Japan Office Looks Ahead to its Silver Anniversary

An elite team keeps jobs and investments coming to West Virginia

* Old World Craftsmanship Finds a New Home

Why Europe’s manufacturing elite are flocking to West Virginia

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