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Accutek's \$2.5M renovation adds room to grow

Regional Development Guide

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By Amy Howell Hirt, Courier Contributor

Less than two years after a sizable expansion, the Accutek Testing Laboratory in Fairfield is growing again - with an eye on becoming a flagship lab space for Element Materials Technology.

Accutek, a provider of mechanical and metallurgical testing and weld services, was acquired last year by Element, which conducts materials testing, product qualifications and failure analysis for clients in several industries. Element recently began a \$2.5 million renovation of Accutek's 54,000-square-foot office and warehouse facility at 3701 Port Union Road. The expansion will allow the London-based company to consolidate its Sharonville and Woodlawn operations yet leave room for growth.

"The (Fairfield) location is significantly larger, both in building square footage as well as lot size for future expansion," said general manager [Matt Webb](#). "Element's goal is to grow alongside our customers, and this new location gives us room to do just that."

More specifically, the location is convenient for the company's key clients in the aerospace and medical device markets.

When Element acquired Accutek last July, president and CEO [Charles Noall](#) said the purchase strengthened Element's position within these sectors, which show "significant growth potential." With that in mind, a goal for the Fairfield facility is to become a center of excellence for medical device testing - one of the few in the world, said Accutek's director of corporate strategy, [Erin McCloy-Kutcher](#). The expansion will allow for consolidation without sacrificing valuable laboratory space.

In terms of daily operations, consolidation also will deliver increased efficiency for the company and its clients.

"It gives us the opportunity to streamline our operations and take advantage of multiple capabilities at our sites in a much more efficient way," Webb said. "For example, our sample preparation and testing facilities are currently operating out of two buildings. By bringing them under the same roof, we save valuable minutes on our turn times."

Most of the 7,500 square feet added to the building will be used as office space for Element Materials' regional financial operations. Some finance team members have already moved from the Woodlawn facility at 1245 Hillsmith Drive. A total of 70 workers will relocate to the site, as workspaces are completed over the next six months. Because the renovation and expansion involves currently unused space, operations will continue uninterrupted during construction, McCloy-Kutcher said.

Once the consolidation is complete, about 110 employees will be based at the site, and the company expects to hire additional employees as early as the second quarter of this year.

While it isn't a dramatic influx of jobs, considering Fairfield's workforce of 30,000, Fairfield economic development manager [Greg Kathman](#) said the positions – including scientists, engineers and technicians – are high-skilled and well-paying, and the physical expansion is a sign of the company's growing potential.

"We're looking at a facility that, just a few years ago, was mostly warehouse, and they're making it into office and lab space," he said. After moving into the building in 2010, in 2013 Accutec added 4,000 square feet for offices and converted 8,000 square feet of warehouse into lab space.

In terms of economic development, the expansion also is important for a city like Fairfield, which is mostly built-out.

Given that Element Materials has 44 facilities in the U.S. and Europe, Fairfield saw the need to incentivize the company's move to the city. Last December Fairfield City Council approved a property tax abatement.

The agreement provides a 75 percent abatement for six years, during which Element Materials will compensate the Fairfield City School District and Butler Technology and Career Development Schools.