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Posted: 10:00 a.m. Thursday, April 25, 2013

Western States expanding production

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By Chelsey Levingston

Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — The Western States Machine Co. is a comeback story.

Western States makes centrifuges — machines that separate liquids from solids — used by the sugar, chemical and pharmaceutical industries.

The company is investing approximately \$6.5 million to buy 11 acres and build a new 76,000-square-foot manufacturing and office facility in Fairfield at 625 Commerce Center Drive. The plant is scheduled to open this year.

In a tax agreement with Fairfield, Western States has agreed to create at least 24 new jobs within three years from when the project finishes. It currently has about 68 employees.

Western States is moving to Fairfield from Hamilton because it has run out of space and a 10-year lease on its current Hamilton location is expiring. The new offices also give the company capacity to add more business, said President and Chief Executive Officer David Douglas Buckner, in a 2012 interview. The extra space will allow the company to add in-house manufacturing of parts previously contracted out.

That's a big feat considering the company nearly closed at the turn of the last decade.

Struggling with outdated equipment and facilities, and high costs, Western States had stopped manufacturing centrifuges in December of 1999. It sold buildings in Hamilton at a former location and leased office space, becoming a sales and design only operation.

"It made sense to do that at the time," Buckner said.

But the more they continued to do design and sales, and as business picked back up, it became clear there wasn't the same level of production quality. In 2009, Western States started manufacturing baskets again. By the end of that same year, it had brought shipping and receiving, inventory and final assembly functions back in house.

The decisions to get out of manufacturing and then to get back into it later on saved the company, Buckner said. Western States is the only remaining U.S. centrifuge maker for the sugar industry.

"The sales growth is mostly on the sugar side of the business," he said. "We see growth potential internationally."

The Western States Machine Co.

What: Makes centrifuges (machines that separate liquids from solids) used by sugar, chemical and pharmaceutical industries

Where: Moves in 2013 to 625 Commerce Center Drive, Fairfield

Phone: 513-863-4758

Chief Executive Officer: David Douglas Buckner

Website: www.westernstates.com

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