

# Construction to start on \$223M Springfield plant, hiring 400

Silfex, a company that has pledged to invest \$223 million to expand to Springfield, is ramping up hiring and will soon begin construction.

The company, based in Eaton, has pledged to **create about 400 jobs in Springfield** over the next several years. On Tuesday, company officials hosted a project preview and open house at their new property on Titus Road.

The site is now a vacant 350,000-square-foot warehouse near the PrimeOhio Industrial Park that previously housed the former Thirty-One Gifts plant. But by January, Silfex will have converted it into a high-tech manufacturing plant that makes silicon products for a variety of markets.

“We’ve had a long wait getting started and we’re looking forward to putting a shovel in the ground and becoming a contributing member of this community,” said Don York, the plant manager for Silfex’s new Springfield site.

The majority of the company’s operations will be up and running by Jan. 1, York said. But he said his goal is to move that process ahead of schedule if possible. Some construction could begin as early as next week.

Silfex is working with OhioMeansJobs and the Chamber of Greater Springfield to find qualified workers. Jobs available will include CNC machinists and operators, crystal growing technicians, engineers, and administrative and support staff.

To fill those positions, Silfex plans to host career fairs, recruit local workers with experience in manufacturing and partner with entities like Clark State Community College and Wright State University to attract skilled employees. It plans to host a job fair in Springfield in April.

Clark County's workforce was one of the key reasons Silfex picked Springfield out of roughly a dozen finalists, said Kit Armstrong, general manager of Silfex, a division of Lam Research.

"Springfield hit all the right buttons," Armstrong said.

The city wasn't initially near the top of the company's list of finalists, said Mike McDorman, president and CEO of the Chamber of Greater Springfield. But local leaders provided research that showed the region's workforce was awash in skilled workers with experience in manufacturing in a variety of other industries.

"We know we're a great location," McDorman said. "We just needed to market and sell it differently and we are now."

Silfex was founded in Preble County and builds silicon components for everything from computer processors to cell phones to cars. The firm also grows silicon crystals at its existing plant in Eaton and will perform similar functions in Springfield.

The industry is seeing rapid growth, Armstrong said. Silfex has roughly doubled its workforce since 2014 and is on track to double again by 2020. A new plant in Springfield made sense because of its proximity to the manufacturer's main location in Eaton, he said.

The electronics industry is a roughly \$2 trillion business, Armstrong said, and semiconductors are a \$409 billion business annually. Silfex products are typically used in Lam Research equipment to produce semiconductor chips, he said.

"You can think of our parts as razor blades to a Lam razor," Armstrong said.

Springfield has a long history in manufacturing, said Tom Franzen, assistant city manager and director of economic development. But the kind of products Silfex produces are different from the city's traditional manufacturing base that includes automotive and other industries more prone to boom and bust.

“It’s an additional reason why we’re optimistic about the impact this is going to have on our economy going forward,” Franzen said.

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By the numbers:

350,000 square feet — Estimated size of Silfex’s Springfield facility

\$223M — Company’s expected investment in Springfield

400 — Employees to be added at Silfex Springfield plant

2006 — Year Lam Research acquired Bullen Ultrasonics

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