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Graeter's building new plant

By John Eckberg • jeckberg@enquirer.com • March 5, 2009

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Graeter's ice cream is going national, company officials promised Thursday, after announcing that an \$11 million plant will be built in Bond Hill after a year-long search for sites.

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The plant will bring 30 new jobs to Cincinnati, city officials said, and retain 60 existing jobs.

"I want to offer a big thank you to the people of Cincinnati for making this possible," said Richard Graeter, president and chief executive of the ice cream company that was founded in 1870 and plans to quadruple production by this time next year. "It's the happiest day of my life."

A deal to bring the new plant to Paddock Road in Bond Hill has not been finalized, Graeter said after a press conference at the Fountain Square Graeter's flagship store, but he expected details to be resolved soon.

Negotiations continue with Ohio officials over a job creation tax credit and city council must sign off on incentives linked to the city-owned land.

City manager Milton R. Dohoney said the city has offered two incentives: a 4.5-acre parcel worth \$450,000 and a 20-year construction loan of \$10 million that has an interest rate of 2 percent for two years and 4 percent for the following 18 years.

The value of those incentives was estimated at \$3.3 million.

Graeter was heavily courted by officials in Kentucky and Indiana - states that hoped to poach a Cincinnati corporate jewel.

The year included a tour of potential sites in Northern Kentucky with Corporex founder William P. Butler and negotiations with Lawrenceburg city officials, who had matched the Cincinnati and Ohio offers.

But Graeter said that in the end, the project, designed by Hixson Architecture Engineering Interiors, belonged in Cincinnati.

"For 139 years, Cincinnati has been able to taste this great ice cream," said Cincinnati Mayor Mark Mallory. "We are glad to see this deal come together."

The ground-breaking for the 28,000-square-foot plant could occur as soon as April, and by January 2010, Graeter's hopes to be producing ice cream at the site.

The existing plant on Reading Road, built in 1934, will produce candies and baked goods. Corporate offices will move to Bond Hill.

The ice cream company produces French Pot ice cream, Graeter said, and nothing is going to change about that.

The new plant will have a larger freezer, loading dock and blend room but with the same recipes that have made the ice cream a favorite of celebrities like Oprah Winfrey and Sarah Jessica Parker.

Graeter said the company will be able to produce enough ice cream to load up freezers in hundreds of grocery stores owned by Cincinnati-based Kroger Co. or affiliated stores.

Last year Graeter's began selling ice cream in Greater Denver through a Kroger King Soopers division.

"I soon got a call from the Houston president of the Kroger division there, whose son had bought Graeter's in Denver," Graeter said.

"He wanted to know when he could get it for his stores so Houston/Dallas Krogers will be the next market for us - sometime later this spring."



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A rendering of a new Graeter's ice cream manufacturing plant in Bond Hill.



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Cincinnati Mayor Mark Mallory, left, speaks with Graeter's President and CEO Richard Graeter as the company announces it will build a new plant in the city.

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