

Unifrax gets \$1.2 million in tax breaks for \$18 million Town of Tonawanda project

Wins ECIDA approval for \$1.2 million support

BY: [Matt Glynn \(mailto:mglynn@buffnews.com\)](mailto:mglynn@buffnews.com)

Published: September 17, 2014, 11:31 AM

Updated: September 17, 2014, 07:32 PM

Unifrax Corp. keeps growing in the Town of Tonawanda.

The manufacturer plans to invest \$18 million to build and equip a new facility in a business park next to its current operations. The Erie County Industrial Development Agency on Wednesday approved \$1.2 million in tax breaks to support the project.

Unifrax makes high-temperature insulation products for customers, including the automotive industry. The company plans to create 25 jobs, paying an average of \$50,000 a year, at a new, 76,000-square-foot manufacturing plant in the North Youngmann Commerce Center. Unifrax plans to complete the project in August 2015, said David Ricketts, senior project manager.

Unifrax has been making polycrystalline fiber in Japan but said demand for the product now exceeds capacity. The company said it considered options such as expanding the Japanese plant or building a new plant at one of its other sites.

ECIDA approved incentives consisting of about \$980,000 in real property tax savings and about \$230,000 in sales tax savings to support the project.

Unifrax says \$4.2 million of its project's \$18 million price tag stems from new construction, while \$12 million is for manufacturing equipment.

Tonawanda Supervisor Anthony F. Caruana praised Unifrax for making a series of investments in the town, as well as for spurring development of the town's North Youngmann Commerce Center.

"The great news about that is we've had people come to us before we've even had a chance to advertise for (the business park), so it's a great effort for them," he said.

Unifrax's new project came before the board just one month after Unifrax won ECIDA support for a \$33 million project in Tonawanda that involved acquiring facilities on Fire Tower Drive that the company already leased, as well as building a new facility there and installing machinery and equipment. The agency approved \$1.27 million in incentives for that project.

Unifrax traces its roots to Carborundum and has undergone ownership changes over the decades. It is majority-owned by American Securities, a New York City-based private equity firm, and has more than 1,600 employees at operations around the world, including more than 360 in Erie County.

Separately, ECIDA is seeking a buyer to redevelop a cleaned-up industrial site on River Road in the Town of Tonawanda that was once home to Polymer Applications.

The 6.5-acre property is on River Road, near the Goodyear Dunlop Tires North America plant on Sheridan Drive. Polymer Applications' plant was nearly destroyed by a fire in 1988, which led to a shutdown of manufacturing operations.

Since then, the state Department of Environmental Conservation cleaned up the site via the Superfund program, and ECIDA hired contractors to demolish buildings there. In July 2013, the county foreclosed on the property due to past-due taxes and transferred it to the Buffalo and Erie County Industrial Land Development Corp., an affiliate of ECIDA.

ECIDA will distribute marketing materials about the property and wants proposals to acquire and

redevelop the site returned by Oct. 10.

email: mglynn@buffnews.com

Matt Glynn

Copyright 1999 - 2016 - The Buffalo News copyright-protected material.