

Business

Maker of white pigment planning Tonawanda plant employing 100

BY: [David Robinson \(mailto:drobinson@buffnews.com\)](mailto:drobinson@buffnews.com)

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A Cleveland company that produces the white pigment used in paint, plastic and other products is planning to open a \$130 million plant that is expected to employ more than 100 workers on River Road in the Town of Tonawanda.

White Rock Pigments, which had been looking at sites in Lackawanna, instead selected a 50-acre site at 4000 River Road to build a 140,000-square-foot plant on a former brownfield.

The plant is expected to create 101 new jobs within a year of its opening, now scheduled for August 2016.

To support the project, the company was granted 2.5 megawatts of low-cost hydropower – enough to serve 2,000 to 3,000 typical homes – from the New York Power Authority, along with \$2 million in tax credits through the state's Excelsior Jobs Program.

"WhiteRock Pigments' new plant will be a major boon to the Tonawanda area, with a fresh infusion of new jobs and capital," Kenneth Adams, the president and CEO of Empire State Development, said in a statement.

WhiteRock makes titanium dioxide pigment, which is used to provide whiteness and opacity to products ranging from paint and plastics to paper, ink, food, medicine and toothpaste. It uses an environmentally friendly manufacturing process for producing titanium dioxide that was developed by those companies over the course of 15 years, at a cost of more than \$45 million.

The company expects to spend \$45 million building the new factory, with \$85 million going toward equipment, machinery and its installation, Power Authority officials said.

WhiteRock also considered sites in Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee for the factory and had been seeking low-cost electricity from development agencies in some of those areas.

The company had been awarded 2.1 megawatts of ReCharge New York power in December 2013 for a smaller project that was envisioned for Lackawanna. WhiteRock will give up that allocation of power in exchange for the larger block of electricity approved this week by the Power Authority's trustees.

The block of low-cost power is about 30 percent smaller than the allocation of 3.47 megawatts that the company had been seeking.

email: drobinson@buffnews.com