

Going with the flow

By Tara Marion

DVK Construction in Caledonia will begin work mid- to late 2005 of Flow-Rite **Controls's** new 45,000-square-foot manufacturing plant in Byron Township.

The new facility will be built on six acres acquired by the manufacturer in the Dan Koster Industrial Park, which is already home to several other businesses including **Frito-Lay Inc.**, **Fliers Underground Sprinkler System Inc.**, **Greystone International Inc.**, **Gypsum Supply Co.**, **Thermal King Inc.** and a BP gas station and convenience store.

Flow-Rite Controls's new facility will replace the one that is currently leased in Grand Rapids.

"They've been a tenant in a building, but through their growth, they needed a facility of larger square footage, and they wish to own it," explained Bob VanKalker, DVK president and owner.

The company, a plastic-injection producer of specialized valves and assemblies for medical, agricultural and recreational systems, has a current lease that is not due to expire until sometime in 2006. That is why construction was not set to begin until mid to late 2005, VanKalker said.

DVK expects to complete the new Flow-Rite Controls building approximately one year after ground breaking on the project.

The contractor and Flow-Rite Controls are approximately two-thirds of the way through the planning phase on the project.

"They seem to be very methodical about making sure they have everything just exactly the way they want it," VanKalker said. "They want to get the design of the entire building done before they have to feel rushed."

The current design for the new facility is about two and a half times larger than the existing one. The increased size will provide separate areas for manufacturing, assembly, shipping and receiving, a laboratory for research, development and testing, offices for sales and administrative staff and some unique architectural features.

"The property they've purchased also has room for growth in the future if so needed," VanKalker said.

The manufacturer's main entrance will create a sense of flowing with a barreled roof that will run the entire length of the office area. The design of the roof will allow borrowed light from the outside to enter the building.

The focal point of the new lobby though will be a cascading waterfall in front of a backlit sign with the manufacturer's name.

DVK will also incorporate some curved walls into the office areas to create a soft, flowing feel.

“It’s going to be pretty neat,” VanKalker said. “They want it to be about what they do – to try to weave the day-to-day type of business that they do into the theme of the design.”

Waterfalls will not be limited to the enjoyment of guests entering the building, however. DVK is working to incorporate additional ones into the landscaping plan, including in some exterior courtyards.

Functional aspects of the landscaping plan include a parking lot for approximately 70 vehicles.