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Halla Climate Control is looking to expand once again.

In its fourth major expansion since sinking roots in the city in 1989, the manufacturer of automotive air conditioning components is now involved in the purchase of property owned by the city of Belleville to build a new 100,000 square-foot facility.

The new structure would not be attached to the University Avenue central plant, rather, the new building would be constructed on a property at the south end of the Northeast Industrial Park.

Halla controller Michael Allen couldn't be reached Friday afternoon, but sources in the company and at city hall told The Intelligencer the company is working to buy an old property the city has been trying to sell for years.

Used as a municipal snow dump by the city's snowplows and dump trucks, the land parcel at Jamieson Bone Road and College Street East — south of the Sears Distribution Centre — appears perfect for Halla's needs.

Recent environmental testing was conducted on the property by the city to ensure that years of dumping snow — laced with road salt — did not contaminate the property. Sodium can be toxic at concentrated levels.

No purchase price was available Friday but sources said the city and Halla could make an announcement sometime next week. Sources said the cost of the new expansion could be as high as \$5 million.

The newest building would also mark the fourth such expansion by the company.

After moving to University Avenue, the company opened another facility across the street to add an additional 140,000 square foot manufacturing capacity.

A third 50,000 square-foot warehouse

was recently set up at the old Corby Distilleries in Corbyville to store raw materials and manufactured goods ready for shipment.

The fourth 100,000 square-foot facility to be opened will give the company space to handle ever-growing business with automotive giants such as Ford and General Motors.

Another expansion will not only bode well for the city economy, Halla's employee roster is expected to climb.

From an original 20 employees in 1989, the company's workforce has grown to roughly 770 workers with pods of 10 to 15 workers on each shift working together on the manufacturing lines.

Winner of the GM Supplier of the Year award in 1997 and 2000 — a feat attributed by company officials to Halla's engineering team — the company now provides a list of air conditioning parts to automakers.

The company once shipped air conditioning units from Korea and assembled them in Belleville.

Today, however, Halla produces steel and aluminum accumulators for all makes of Ford cars and trucks.

Workers at Halla told The Intelligencer today's success is closely guarded given fears in December 1997 when the city factory almost went belly up when its parent company, Halla Group, collapsed in South Korea after it defaulted on \$312 million Cdn. in loans.

The Belleville plant was shielded from the parent group's dismantling and creditors who moved in to file claims on a total of \$9 billion the company owed banks for its automotive and ship-building facilities. Ironically, after the news of the collapse of the parent company, Belleville's Halla plant prepared for its second major expansion.