

Lonza Bioscience to add \$26M building, 80 new hires in Walkersville

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WALKERSVILLE -- Lonza Bioscience in Walkersville will be expanding with a \$26 million new building and 80 new associates.

The growing market for its cell therapy program spurred the expansion. The 44,000-square-foot building will house three Class 10,000 cell production sites and office space. The Class 10,000 designation requires specific clean room qualifications for the successful production of tissue cells.

The new building will be joined to the existing warehouse at Lonza with a two-level connector to allow for convenient movement of personnel, materials and products. Planning for the new building began in 2007, the same year Lonza acquired the bioscience division of Cambrex. Completion of the new building is expected in the fall of this year.

The Biggs Ford Road site was initially opened as BioWhittaker, but was later acquired by Cambrex. Lonza acquired Cambrex's division in 2007 for \$460 million. About 450 people are employed at the site, doing cell-based research, endotoxin detection and cell therapy manufacturing.

One of the key ingredients for the diagnostic kits made at the Walkersville facility is blood from horseshoe crabs. Each spring, a crew travels to the shore to gather small amounts of blood from the crabs. The diagnostic kits test for pyrogens, a naturally occurring bacterium that can cause shock, fever and even death in patients if not screened out of products.

Lonza, based in Basel, Switzerland, is one of the world's largest suppliers to the pharmaceutical, health care and life sciences industries. The company also has chemical, health care and nutrition divisions.

MedImmune, which has a manufacturing site in Frederick, is among Lonza's typical clients.

The design team for the new facility includes Baltimore-based architects ArchTech Design LLC and Kensington-based mechanical engineering firm Encon Group Inc., who together have worked on more than 20 different projects at the 11-acre Lonza Walkersville site.