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many voices, one Kent

Kent City Manager Dave Ruller

- [Home](#)
- [City Finances Study](#)
- [Council Communications](#)
- [Contact Me](#)
- [Dave on YouTube](#)
- [Kent Economic Development](#)
- [Citizen Action Center](#)
- [Capital Projects In Kent](#)
- [Kent Whitewater Park](#)
- [Kent Strategic Plan](#)

Kent's Newest Corporate Addition Making Headlines in Crains Business Magazine

[back to blog](#)

AUGUST 29, 2008

There's no better way to start off the work week than opening the newspaper to read the words FIRM EXPANSION and KENT used in the same sentence. That's how I started off my week last week and I've been smiling ever since. I'm a pretty optimistic guy by nature and it doesn't take much to keep my Irish eyes smiling so you can imagine the jig I was dancing in the office (behind closed doors) to read about the 35 new employees that Cambria has already hired with hopes of growing that number to 80 employees as they get the plant up to speed. In City Manager circles we spell relief N-E-W J-O-B-S, so this story was music to my ears.



Quartz popularity drives Minn. firm's Kent expansion

Countertop maker cites wealth of available employees as factor in locating plant here

By Dan Shingler, Crains Cleveland Business Magazine
4:30 am, August 4, 2008

Despite a national slowdown in new housing starts and sales of existing homes, a company that makes quartz countertops is expanding in Kent.

Cambria, a privately held company based in Eden Prairie, Minn., has opened a \$4 million, 75,000-square-

foot manufacturing plant in the town, said Peter Martin, the company's director of marketing and core city sales.

The plant began production last month and will cut Cambria's countertops so they can be distributed through affiliates across Ohio and in Western Pennsylvania, Mr. Martin said.

The company so far has hired 35 full-time employees, including 30 production workers, all of whom receive health care and 401(k) benefits, he said. Production workers are paid wages of \$14 or more, depending on experience, he said.

Thus far, Cambria has secured relationships with 12 installation companies that sell and install its countertops. That's enough work to keep the plant busy already, Mr. Martin said.

"They're cutting about 12,000 square feet of Cambria (countertops) per month," he said.

Mr. Martin said Cambria's plans for the plant include increasing the number of employees to 80 and boosting production hours from one shift to three in the next few years. He said one reason the company chose Northeast Ohio for the new plant was because the area had a large number of potential workers who were good with machines and could be trained easily at a Cambria site in Indianapolis.

"We've had a lot of success finding good, quality employees in the area," Mr. Martin said.

The company makes its countertops by taking quartz from mines in Quebec and then forming it into solid slabs with the aid of a binding resin. The finished product is 93% quartz and 7% resin. It can be colored into nearly any shade or hue, he said.

Cambria had sales last year of about \$100 million. It has been able to continue growing in the face of the nation's housing crisis, in part, because it's gaining share in the market for countertop surfaces, Mr. Martin. The company, which does not make public its detailed financial information, expects revenues to rise by 5% to 10% this year, he said.

"That's slower than in previous years, but we're certainly still seeing growth," Mr. Martin said. "One reason is that the popularity of quartz is still on the rise."

A vote for consistency

Cambria countertops sell for about \$70 per square foot. On a price basis, that's comparable with mid- to high-grade granite countertops, said Abigail Root, a designer at Beachcliff Cabinet and Design in Rocky River.

Ms. Root said, based on her observations, that quartz is gaining some market share, particularly against its top competitor, granite.

"They're becoming a little more popular, because of the consistency of color," Ms. Root said.

Unlike granite, quartz countertops have consistent patterns, Ms. Root said, so there are no surprises when an actual slab of quartz countertop shows up at a consumer's home for installation. She said many customers also prefer quartz because it is nonporous and does not require sealing, like granite does, and because the number of available colors is greater with quartz.

With high-end kitchens, though, some other surfaces are gaining even more popularity, said Carmel Conlin, co-owner of Conlin Design & Workshop in Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood.

More of Mr. Conlin's customers are opting for countertops made of concrete, which she said is probably the surface that's registering the biggest gains in popularity among consumers building luxury kitchens.

Nonetheless, Mr. Martin said Cambria is counting on continued growth in its market share and also hopes to see business increase further when the housing market stabilizes.

Toward that end, the company has been advertising heavily in the Cleveland area.

It also is partnering with the Cleveland Indians for promotions at Progressive Field, where it has installed countertops in the women's restrooms and on the main concourse behind home plate.

Also filed in: [Economic Development](#)

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Excessive SPAM has forced us to suspend posting comments on the blog but I still want to hear from you so please email your comments to me at RullerD@kent-ohio.org. Sorry for the inconvenience.

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**PORTAGE COUNTY SOLID WASTE
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**



William Steiner--Director

DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS:

**Maureen T. Frederick
Chuck Keiper
Christopher Smeiles**

July 18, 2008

Mr. David Ruller
City Manager
City of Kent
215 East Summit Street
Kent, Ohio 44240

Dear Mr. Ruller,

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the citizens of Kent for an exceptional job of recycling 3,127,760 pounds of materials in 2007. The Portage County Solid Waste Management District has established a goal of increasing the participation of the Recycling Program throughout the county. When more residents participate, the District is able to increase revenues through the sale of more recyclable materials. The increase in revenue allows the District to keep rates lower for the curbside service. A recent study conducted by the District indicates the participation rate at 70.14% for the City of Kent. Both the pounds of materials recycled and participation rate are the highest in the County. I would like to meet and discuss methods of increasing this rate even higher.

The Portage County Solid Waste Management District will continue to strive toward providing an exceptional level of service to the residents of the City of Kent. It is the District's honor and pleasure to provide the recycling service.

Please call me at your earliest convenience to discuss the plan to increase the participation rate in the City of Kent.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William G. Steiner, II".

William G. Steiner, II
Director
Portage County Solid Waste Management District