

## Stealth toilets to be made in Kokomo [Kokomo Tribune, Ind. :: ]

Jan. 12--A toilet that uses half as much water, and yet still won't clog?

That's what they're about to start making in Kokomo at the old Gerber Pottery plant on the city's north side.

This week, Charleston, S.C.-based Niagara Conservation reiterated what Kokomo residents have known for months: the most modern, ultra high-efficiency toilets available on the market will be American made in 2015, and produced at the refurbished plant now renamed Patriot Porcelain.

Company officials Tuesday said they'll be manufacturing an entire line of ultra high-efficiency toilets [UHETs] at the Kokomo plant, as part of a plan to expand an environmental rebate program the company offers.

The program, called Green City, allows residents in participating cities to pay off the up-front costs of installing water-saving toilets, shower heads and aerators gradually on a municipal utility bill.

Because participants are seeing a reduction in their water bills at the same time they're paying back the installation costs, the result is usually a big reduction in water usage without increased costs for the property owner.

"For nearly 40 years, Niagara has been a family-owned, forward-thinking company on the cutting-edge of water conservation," Bill Cutler, Niagara Conservation's president and CEO, said in a press release Tuesday. "Our decision to further develop our toilet line and invest in a new plant allows us to continue to be an industry leader in manufacturing innovative water and energy-saving solutions, while our growing Green City program allows us to provide utilities and other businesses with a turnkey, water-saving solution for their customers."

Niagara's line of toilets, under its Stealth brand, includes both .8 gallon-per-flush units, and dual units which flush at .5 gpf and at .95 gpf. Company officials said they intend to have both units manufactured in Kokomo.

The units are available through licensed installers (anyone interested can go to [www.niagaraconservation.com](http://www.niagaraconservation.com)), and the .8 gpf units cost about \$260 on Amazon.

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# Bloomberg Businessweek

Patriot Porcelain president Jeff Van Weelden said the company will hold hiring fairs later this year, dates and times TBA, to staff the plant. About 20 full-time workers are already hired on, and have been busy for weeks renovating the existing infrastructure at the plant at the corner of Main and Fischer streets.

New equipment should start arriving in early spring, including machines which will allow the workers to pressure cast the bowls and tanks for Niagara, and for at least two other brands which will be contracting with Patriot.

The plan is for Porcelain to have 140 workers making vitreous pottery 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at the plant, producing about 425,000 pieces of product a year. Patriot plans to bring in 10 new presses and about 13 robots, along with 1,000 feet of conveyor belt, turning a plant which was formerly a labor intensive, highly "hands-on" operation into a much cleaner, more automated plant.

The 330,000 square foot facility will use the former pottery's kilns, which have been maintained since the closure, said Brian Fiala, vice president of administration at Gerber Plumbing Fixtures, and a board member of Patriot Porcelain.

Van Weelden said the infrastructure remaining after Gerber closed seven years ago was essential to the project, which will create what he said is the first sanitary pottery plant to start up on U.S. soil since the major manufacturers like Gerber moved their manufacturing overseas.

Building the plant from scratch would have cost another \$32 million, Van Weelden said, far too much to make the project financially feasible.

Gerber and Niagara, both wholesalers, have already contracted to purchase toilets from Patriot over the next five years.

Fiala said Gerber has a contract to purchase at least 300,000 units a year, all of which will be sold to commercial plumbing distributors. Patriot officials expect to make 100,000 units a year or more for Niagara.

The Stealth line could be the future of toilets as water costs continue to rise. In 1995, the federal government mandated all new toilets had to use a maximum of 1.6 gpf, and many toilets commercially available now use 1.28 gpf. That's the best water usage number available, apart from dual flush toilets, at the local Menards and Lowe's stores.

The Stealth toilet uses a mechanism which pressurizes a trapway after each flush, and the air in that trapway is used to create a siphoning effect for the next flush. The siphoning effect boosts the effect of the water in the bowl, allowing a smaller amount of water to do the work of larger volume toilets.

"I don't know why someone didn't think of it sooner," Patriot's attorney, Dow Dellinger, said.