

Pierre's Ice Cream Co. wants to expand Cleveland operations

By **Kathie Kroll**

September 01, 2009, 6:12PM



Plain Dealer file

Denita Hollimon oversees the machines churning out containers of Pierre's French Vanilla Ice Cream, the company's best-selling flavor, in this 2007 photo. Pierre's current Euclid Avenue factory can make 14,000 gallons of ice cream a day, but the company hopes to grow even bigger.

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- **Pierre's Ice Cream Co.** wants to double its capacity to churn out its popular ice cream and other frozen treats.

The 77-year-old Cleveland company, the last ice cream maker still based in Cleveland, has submitted plans to the City Planning Commission's Euclid Corridor Design Review Committee to build a 35,540-square-foot factory adjacent to its corporate headquarters and warehouse at 6200 Euclid Ave.

Pierre's Ice Cream Co.

Business: Makes more than 235 varieties and sizes of ice cream, sherbet, frozen yogurt, sorbet and novelties sold under the Pierre's brand and about 125 varieties and sizes for private labels. Also distributes over 400 national brand items including ice cream, frozen pizza, entrees and side dishes.

Founded: 1932

The committee will review the plans at 8 a.m. Thursday before sending them to the City Planning Commission on Friday.

The proposed \$6 million expansion would feature state-of-the-art, stainless steel ice cream-making equipment, ingredient storage and mixing rooms and an automated flash-freeze hardening system to freeze the ice cream for shipping.

Designed and built by Ray Fogg Building Methods Inc., the factory would replace the current production facility that dates to the early 1920s, said spokeswoman Laura Hindulak.

Pierre's, the lone survivor among the hundreds of family-owned ice cream parlors that once dotted Cleveland, remains one of the most popular regional brands in a category dominated by national brands, according to local grocers and restaurant owners.

"Our hope is to be able to grow the business," she said. "Many pieces still need to fall into place, but if we can get this project completed, having the tools and capacity to serve our customers better will give us a competitive advantage in the industry."

If the plans are approved, Pierre's wants to start construction immediately and finish the building within a year.

The existing factory, located more than 600 feet away from its other buildings, requires trucking the ice cream from the machines over to the distribution center.

Combining the operations under one roof would help Pierre's become more efficient, better compete with other ice cream companies and keep jobs in Greater Cleveland, Pierre's said in its application.

Pierre's plans to make the addition energy efficient, with energy-saving processing equipment, insulated walls, skylights, motion-controlled lights and other features.

"Euclid Avenue has a diversity of businesses, institutions and manufacturing companies, and it's really critical for us to do everything we can to preserve manufacturing jobs in the City of Cleveland," said Jim Haviland, executive director of MidTown Cleveland Inc.