

SHAW LOCAL

Gotion expects to add 450 jobs by end of 2025

Gotion meeting demands; opposition remains

[Lee Provost](#)

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Workers complete a step in the assembly line at Gotion Illinois in Manteno on Oct. 1, 2025. The battery manufacturing plant has plans to expand its workforce to 450 jobs by the end of 2025, with the goal of reaching 1,400 jobs in 2026. (Tiffany Blanchette)

Big things have happened in Manteno since the former Kmart warehouse property was purchased by the Chinese-based company, Gotion High-Tech.

Even bigger things are set to happen within the next calendar year.

Plans are in place for a sharp increase in energy-storage system manufacturing at Manteno's Gotion Illinois plant, meaning its workforce would more than triple in 2026.

The planned increased production for these commercial-scaled, energy-storage units would drive employment at the South Spruce Street plant to upwards of 1,400, making it Kankakee County's largest manufacturer, likely surpassing CSL Behring.

Wages at the site would cover a wide range – based on the job, experience and education – ranging from a low of \$24 an hour to as much as \$42, plus benefits.

The 100,000-pound power units, which can range from \$500,000 to upwards of \$700,000, are being constructed for large companies the stature of ComEd. The units are powering the workforce growth at the 153-acre complex on the village's western edge, immediately west of Interstate 57's 322 interchange.

Gotion believes it is only scratching the surface of what can ultimately take place in Manteno.

The company has since purchased additional property near the plant, including the Kmart property. Gotion has bought nearly 700 acres in the Manteno area.



Workers tend to Pack Line A at Gotion Illinois in Manteno on Oct. 1, 2025. The battery manufacturing plant has plans to expand its workforce to 450 jobs by the end of 2025, with the goal of reaching 1,400 jobs in 2026. (Tiffany Blanchette)

Mark Kreusel, Gotion Illinois' vice president of manufacturing and general manager at Manteno, recently explained the company is only getting started here inside the 1.5 million square feet of usable, under-roof manufacturing space.

Even though the company had come into Illinois and Manteno touting production of batteries to propel anticipated, rapidly growing battery-powered vehicles, the site is currently focused on commercial and residential energy storage units.

"We have car batteries [production] here, but we are not doing that now," Kreusel said. "We will make what the market demands."

Simply put, he said, demand for energy storage units in the United States is what is driving production at the complex, which currently employs 300 workers on an eight-hour, five-day-a-week production schedule.



Mark Kreusel, Gotion Illinois' vice president of manufacturing and general manager at Manteno, talks about the components in an energy storage system during a tour on Oct. 1, 2025. (Tiffany Blanchette)

While a growing workforce teams up with robotic technologies, not all are pleased with what is happening at the former Kmart distribution warehouse,

which closed in 2017 and had remained vacant until Gotion acquired the site for \$137.4 million in late 2023.

The company received a state incentive package of \$536 million to aid the development.

In all, the total investment for Gotion in Manteno is expected to be \$2 billion. The Manteno site is being targeted as the company's U.S. hub.

'Gotion go away'

Even though the company remains committed to a workforce anticipated to reach 2,600 within five years – which would make it Kankakee County's largest manufacturing company dating back to the 1970s when Roper Manufacturing and other companies were helping fuel the region's economy – all are still not pleased.

One of Gotion's chief voices of opposition to the growing development is Manteno Mayor Annette LaMore, elected in April.

LaMore remains adamant that Gotion is a major environmental concern. She also remains strongly opposed to foreign investors – and those from a communist country – buying United States property.

The Gotion plant, LaMore said this week, "puts the town in a precarious position. I don't think dangerous chemicals this close to a town is a good idea."

Any spill, any accident, she said, could have harmful or serious consequences for Manteno and its nearly 10,000 residents.

LaMore was part of the Concerned Citizens of Manteno, the group that filed suit against Gotion and the village of Manteno regarding environmental and zoning concerns related to the Manteno site.



Members of the Concerned Citizens of Manteno, including now-Mayor Annette LaMore, left, listen to proceedings on Jan. 15, 2025, during the hearing for its case against Gotion, the battery manufacturer opening in Manteno, at the Kankakee County Courthouse. About 25 people from the group were in attendance for the hearing. (Tiffany Blanchette)

A motion by Gotion and Manteno to dismiss the lawsuit was largely rejected by Kankakee County Circuit Court Judge Lindsay Parkhurst. The next court hearing for the case is set for Feb. 4.

“People are concerned with safety,” LaMore said. “They will win in court. This [development] was brought here by JB Pritzker. I would like to see an American company come in here. China is an adversary of the U.S.”

LaMore said she would like to see Gotion go away.

LaMore noted she toured the plant this summer, along with some village board members. The location has gone through a major transformation, she acknowledged.

“I know they have put a lot into this plant, but it is taxpayer money,” LaMore said. “I did not come away [from the tour] thinking this is a good thing.”

Hiring local

Gotion's officials have stated more than 90% of the Manteno location hires are local, and that trend is expected to continue. In short, Kreusel said the plant will employ workers from this area, not imports from China as some people have speculated.

Another chief issue that is simply unfounded, Kreusel said, is concerns regarding a plant hazard involving chemicals. He described the plant as being overbuilt in terms of potential issues such as a fire or a spill of some kind.

He noted the site's battery production involves lithium iron phosphate (LFP) batteries, which are considered more non-combustible than other lithium-ion chemistries.

These batteries are growing in popularity for vehicle use, stationary utility-scale applications, and backup power sources.

"These are much safer and much harder to ignite," he said. "These batteries have an ignition point of 500 degrees Celsius, or 932 degrees Fahrenheit, meaning the likelihood of igniting is remote at best."



Gotion utilizes lithium iron phosphate (LFP) batteries, which are considered more non-combustible than other lithium-ion chemistries and are less prone to thermal runaway propagation, which is what can lead to catastrophic system failure, fires or explosions. (Tiffany Blanchette)

He noted the natural resources for LFP production – lithium, iron and phosphate – are plentiful.

"This location is safer than it was under the previous ownership," Kreusel said. "The fire standards are much safer."

He noted plant leadership has worked hand in hand with the Manteno Fire Department and "they have checked up on us. This site is up and beyond" 2024 safety codes.

"I want this to be a gold star manufacturing plant, not just for this industry, but all industries. We are prepared to react to anything."



Fire extinguishing systems, including this station prepared with F-500 Encapsulator Agent technology, which is a fluorine-free, biodegradable foaming agent designed to rapidly extinguish lithium-ion battery fires, are placed throughout Gotion Illinois in Manteno as seen on Oct. 1, 2025. (Tiffany Blanchette)

Of course, this is the hope of many, including Angela Morrey, the interim president and CEO of the Economic Alliance of Kankakee County, the organization which worked to bring Gotion and its jobs here.

Jobs are needed

Morrey has certainly heard the criticisms related to Gotion, but she also knows Kankakee County needs primary jobs, especially in light of recent job losses in Momence.

"They are looking long term. This is advanced, high-tech manufacturing. We are very fortunate to have them here," Morrey said this week. "This comes at a time when our community needs jobs. We have people suddenly out of work."



Workers prepare an energy-storage unit at Gotion Illinois in Manteno on Oct. 1, 2025. About 25% of the workforce at the battery manufacturing plant is female, according to Gotion's Public Relations staffer Andy Wheeler. (Tiffany Blanchette)

Morrey visited China, along with several other Kankakee County leaders, to tour Gotion sites. She said nothing has changed from what the company said then to what they have done thus far.

"This company offers such great potential. At the end of the day, we've had employers leaving and we now have one investing and hiring," she said.

Communities can die, she said, waiting for the absolute perfect fit.

"We could have just left it [the Kmart site] sit there. But we have to look at things in different ways. We need to be open to possibilities," she said.

She then concluded:

"Can we turn jobs away? If we want our community to thrive, we have to give people the opportunity to work."