

'Super park' for development certified in Cedar Rapids, Marion

Projects already underway in newly-certified Marion industrial park



Work continues in the production area of ELPLAST America, a Poland-based plastics manufacturer, as part of the Marion Enterprise Center on Partners Avenue on Monday, July 13, 2015. The center is a 184-acre industrial park ready for development to draw large manufacturers to the area. (Liz Martin/The Gazette)

George C. Ford, The Gazette

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Two business parks in the Corridor — including Iowa's first industrial “super park” in Cedar Rapids — were certified Monday as “development-ready” by the state.

The Iowa Economic Development Authority created the certified site program to make project-ready parcels available for companies wanting to get new facilities built and occupied in a fairly short period of time.

“Companies today are under even more speed-to-market pressures,” said Dee Baird, president and CEO of the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic

Alliance. "This certification provides assurance to a company that it will have a minimum development schedule on this land."

The Cedar Rapids Land and Air Super Park off Wright Brothers Boulevard SW has 582 acres zoned for agricultural, aviation, industrial and public projects. The park includes 483 acres of airport-owned land and 98.65 acres off 18th Street SW owned by T&M Land Ventures LLC.

"The super park completes the spectrum of economic development options in Cedar Rapids," said Mayor Ron Corbett at a news conference Monday.

"Having 500-plus acres of land enables us to compete for national or even global opportunities."

To be certified as a super park, a site must have at least 500 acres and meet eight criteria including the ability to provide a million gallons of water per day and 32,500 million cubic feet of natural gas per month within nine months, immediate access to rail, and be within 5 miles of an interstate.

Marty Lenss, director of The Eastern Iowa Airport, said the proximity to the airport also will help attract companies.

"According to a state air service study, access to a commercial airport is a top-three issue in business relocation and expansion decisions," Lenss said. "A parcel of this size with all the access it provides sets this apart from many of our competitors."

Parcels of the airport land portion of the industrial park will be available for lease under Federal Aviation Administration guidelines. Seattle-based Nordstrom leases land at 18th Street and 76th Avenue SW for a fulfillment center.

The other site, the Marion Enterprise Center, is a 184-acre office and light industrial park off Highway 151 east of Highway 13 near the Marion police station.

Nick Glew, president of the Marion Economic Development Corp., said Marion Economic Development Co., a subsidiary of MEDCO, has invested \$5.5 million to install utilities and prepare the park for development.

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“The Marion Enterprise Park is designed to bring larger parcels of shovel-ready ground to the marketplace,” Glew said. “This park was developed to position our community to competitively respond to business opportunities that will bring new capital investment and new jobs to Marion.”

Glew noted that state certification of the Marion Enterprise Park occurred after two business have begun construction.

ELPlast America of Zory, Poland, broke ground in October 2014 for a \$6 million, 30,000-square-foot building that will be the company's North American manufacturing headquarters. The company, which will initially employ about 30 people making resealable bags, is expecting to occupy the facility in the fall.

Legacy Manufacturing also broke ground in October 2014 for a \$10.4 million 130,000-square-foot office, manufacturing and warehouse facility. The privately held company makes automotive and industrial products.

“This site allows expansion up to 320,000 square feet,” said Matt Weems, Legacy vice president of marketing. “We feel that we have a permanent home for our company.”

Weems, whose company first moved to Marion 20 years ago, said the new building will help retain 45 jobs and create 15 additional positions, He said the company will be able to bring certain manufacturing tasks back to the Marion plant that currently are performed abroad