

# As interchange work nears end, Huntley aims for business boom

By STEPHEN Di BENEDETTO Nov. 1, 2013

HUNTLEY – Once construction crews leave this fall, the top priority for Huntley is developing the area that surrounds the Interstate 90-Route 47 interchange with manufacturers and technological and industrial companies.

Crews are in the final stretch of building a full interchange at the location that will for the first time open Huntley's southern boundaries to commuters traveling from both the Chicago and Rockford areas.



(Lathan Goumas – lgoumas@shawmedia.com)

Once construction concludes within the next week or so, Village Manager Dave Johnson and his staff can put a nearly 20-year effort to make Huntley fully accessible to I-90 traffic behind them.

Huntley officials, who lobbied so long for an interchange, now will try to draw businesses to the area and turn their dreams of using the interchange for economic growth into a reality.

“We invested significant dollars to make the interchange a reality, and we believe the table is set now for positive economic growth and development in our community,” Johnson said.

That investment began in the mid-1990s, when the village started pursuing partners to support the construction of a full I-90 interchange at Route 47. By the mid-2000s, the village conducted traffic and design studies to enhance its interchange plan.

Officials ultimately secured financial commitments from McHenry and Kane counties to pay for half of the \$61 million construction project. The Illinois Tollway Authority and the state's transportation department would fund the rest of the project.

Construction started last spring. Gov. Pat Quinn helped village and county officials break ground on the project, and he commended Huntley for taking the lead and pursuing multiple avenues to build a full interchange.

The Tollway has since hailed Huntley's approach as the model for future interchange projects. The statewide recognition may be humbling, but for Johnson's staff, work on using the interchange to their advantage is just beginning.

The village's economic development department has the primary responsibility of luring small to midsize manufacturers, as well as technological and industrial companies, in the coming years to the immediate areas surrounding the interchange.

Johnson said the village already has seen an increased interest from businesses since Plote Construction was selected in March 2012 to build the interchange.

Huntley enticed LionHeart Engineering last summer to move its service facility from Woodstock to the Huntley Corporate Park, a business park near I-90.

Impact Plastics relocated from Elgin to Huntley, partly for better interstate access. General RV, located near Huntley's outlet mall along I-90, also is expanding its facility because of an anticipated spike in customers traveling from the interstate.

A diverse range of businesses around the full interchange, combined with Centegra Health System's proposed \$233 million Huntley hospital, could accelerate growth in a village that already has seen a population boom during the past decade.

"We are still challenged by the overall economic climate that makes many of these projects a challenge, but we are pushing ahead," Johnson said.