

Huntley seeks to become next industrial hub

By Madhu Krishnamurthy April 2, 2014

Huntley is positioning itself as the next major industrial hub in the suburban market, eager to compete with towns such as Elk Grove Village and Carol Stream that have thriving industrial sectors.

The village is poised to launch a marketing blitz to promote its Huntley Corporate Park near the new interchange at I-90 and Route 47. The 200 acres of industrial land west of Route 47 is primed for construction with utilities and roads already in place.

“We’re one of the few communities that has this developed land with tollway visibility,” said Victor Narusis, Huntley’s business recruitment coordinator. “We have approximately six interstate miles (three on each side). We’ve really got something unique there.”

Narusis said the industrial park is ideally situated within a 30-mile radius of O’Hare International Airport at one end and Rockford on the other.

“We’re not the edge of anything ... we’re in the middle of it,” he said. “We are at the center of Chicago business. We’re trying to position Huntley as a low-cost Chicago alternative that so many look for.”

Roughly 40 acres of the village’s industrial park is occupied by large companies, including Rohrer Corp., a plastics packaging manufacturer; Inglese Box Co., the largest producer of pizza delivery boxes in Illinois; and FYH Bearings, a Japanese ball bearing manufacturer.

The village recently signed on Cargo Equipment Corp., a leading supplier of load securing equipment and supplies, that is relocating its Elgin headquarters to a planned 40,000-square-foot building within Huntley Corporate Park. That business is expected to open Aug. 1 and add 20 new jobs to the area.

Narusis said the village is gearing up to unveil five major industrial park projects, two of which will take up 1 million square feet each.

Location is key

For 20 years Huntley lobbied for a full-access tollway interchange at Route 47. It opened in November, a key to boosting economic growth and drawing businesses to the area.



Farmland to the west of Route 47 is listed for sale as part of Huntley's corporate industrial park. Huntley is positioning itself as the next major industrial hub in the suburban Chicago market.

Christopher Hankins | Staff Photographer

The roughly \$61 million all-electronic interchange was 50 percent funded by the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, and the balance from the state, the village and Kane and McHenry counties. The project involved six new ramps, rebuilding the bridge over I-90 and widening 1½ miles of Route 47. It is expected provide easy access for 66,000 vehicles per day along I-90, and 24,000 vehicles per day along Route 47.

Location aside, Narusis said land, labor and construction costs in Huntley also are far less than in other counties.

“Land cost is going to be at least 25 percent less than Cook County,” he said. “Labor costs are much less here than in Cook County, lower than Chicago and just about any other metropolitan city in the Midwest. What we’re trying to market is we’ve got the cost structure of a secondary Midwest market but all the benefits of being located in the largest market in the Midwest.”

The village has streamlined its application process so new buildings get approved for construction, on average, within 54 days of submitting final plans.

“Typically, it’s 90 days,” Narusis said. “We can get them in production a month and a half earlier than other communities.”

Niche market

Huntley officials say they are particularly keen on attracting foreign manufacturers seeking high visibility and having a strong U.S. presence.

The village was among 50 exhibitors, and one of only five municipalities, at the U.S. Department of Commerce’s SelectUSA 2013 Investment Summit in October in Washington, D.C. Nearly 75 percent of the participants were owners or representatives of foreign firms looking for a foothold in the U.S., Narusis said.

“We made incredible contacts not only with those firms but our own economic development contacts in foreign countries and foreign governments,” Narusis said. “We just can’t sit here and wait for it. It’s (about) targeting events like that where we can get that face time and establish those contacts. We have some great Japanese connections. We are really working to leverage that.”

Narusis said the Japanese firms were impressed with Huntley’s new interchange and its proximity to O’Hare Airport, which is 30 minutes away at non-rush hour. The village also is working with Korean, German and Chinese companies.

With all it has going for it, Huntley is still trying to develop a niche in the industrial market. Officials would like to see Huntley become a hub for advanced, precision manufacturing companies and technology firms.

In preparation for that, the village worked with ComEd to get high capacity electrical lines put in right along its major industrial areas, which will be attractive to technology companies trying to move huge amounts of data, Narusis said.



The Huntley Corporate Park entrance is at the intersection of Route 47 and Jim Dahmer Drive. The village is poised for a major marketing campaign to promote the industrial park, which fronts I-90.

Christopher Hankins | Staff Photographer

One of the major transcontinental fiber optic lines also runs along I-90, he added.

“Huntley is targeting companies that focus on innovation because it’s going to be those companies that grow and survive,” Narusis said. “Companies that are going to be that innovative need that access to fiber optics because they deal with large amounts of data.”

Officials also are soliciting data centers and call centers, as well as automotive suppliers due to the village’s proximity to Chrysler’s assembly plant in Belvidere.

Room for growth

Filling the corporate park is just the beginning.

Huntley has an additional 300 acres of undeveloped land zoned for industrial/commercial use east of Route 47 and the Huntley Outlet Center. Once the village’s 5-square-mile industrial area is developed and filled, it will have created 11,000 new jobs, Narusis said.

Meanwhile, the village has another 500 acres of undeveloped land south of I-90, acquired through annexation or boundary agreements with Pingree Grove, Gilberts and Hampshire. No plans currently exist for that area.

Officials are also ratcheting up marketing for the village’s retail sector — a roughly 2-mile, 100-acre stretch along the east side of Route 47 from I-90 to Kreuzer Road — with all the buzz around the new interchange and the industrial park. Those properties are developed but mostly unoccupied.



Several plants have made their home in the Huntley Corporate Park along Jim Dahmer Drive. The village is poised for a major marketing campaign to promote its industrial park near the new interchange at I-90 and Route 47. The 200 acres of developed industrial land west of Route 47 is primed for construction with utilities and roads already in place.

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In the long-term, Huntley plans to add between 5,000 and 10,000 residents to its current population of a bit less than 25,000 to support future industrial and retail growth.

Narusis said the village has little debt and no huge reserves, but added, as in years past, larger developments will help fund any future infrastructure needs.

“That’s how this all ties together,” Narusis said. “The interchange was a huge part of that. The village board has for the last 20 years been really visionary in looking forward. We are really very well positioned to accommodate that growth.”

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