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# Big benefits for Huntley one year after interchange opens

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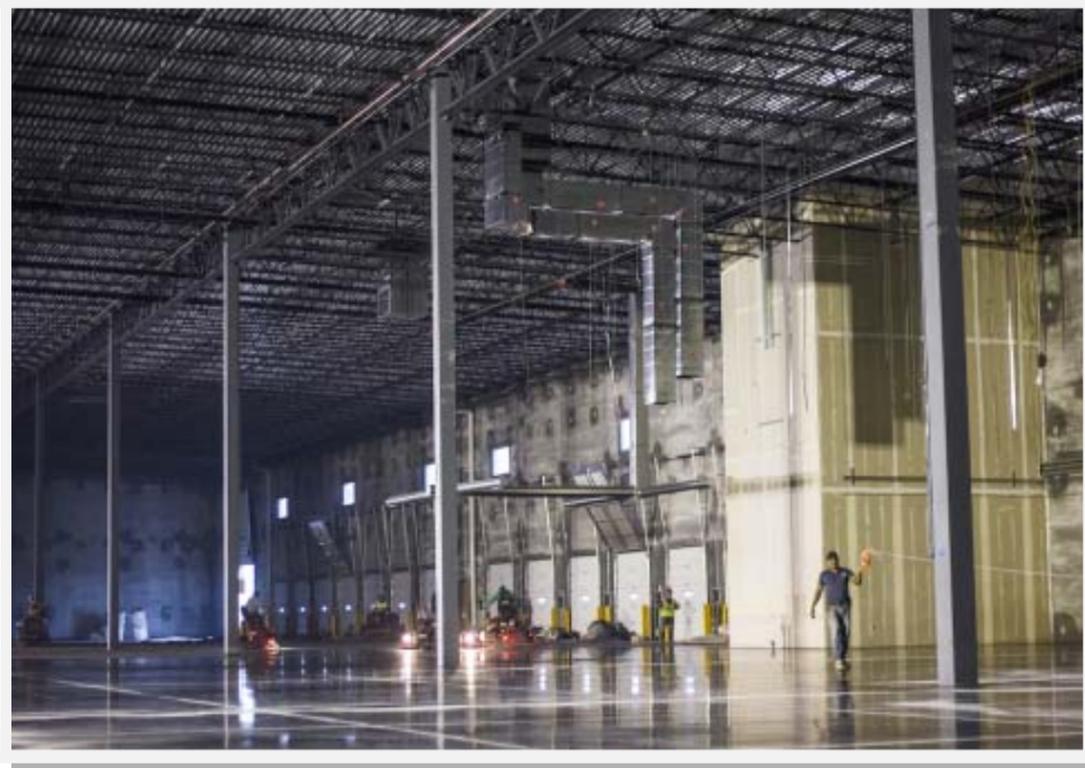
HUNTLEY -Addressing trustees before their budget vote last week, Village Manager Dave Johnson cautioned that Huntley may never again see the \$188 million companies invested into commercial and residential development during 2014.

The unprecedented investment from the private sector -greater than the last five years combined- has set a high benchmark for a village trying to diversify and expand its businesses.

But village officials believe they have the tools in place to try and replicate the success seen in 2014, a year after one of Huntley's linchpins to economic development opened to motorists near Route 47 and Interstate 90.

"With the interchange being open for one year, the return on investment has been so far, so good," Johnson said. "We've spent a lot of money on infrastructure. We've done our best to reach out and work with businesses.... We've been extremely proactive with working with the state of Illinois. Yes, we are on the path of seeing that return."

That path opened in early 2014, when the maker of Weber Grills approached the village in early January about a two-fold



Keeley Construction employees work to install and finish concrete flooring inside the Weber-Stephen Products' global distribution center Friday, December 12, 2014 in Huntley. The construction, which started in May, is planned to be completed by the end of January. The Weber project is the largest to date near the interchange of I-90 and Illinois Route 47. The 757,000-square-foot distribution center is estimated to create 500 jobs. Photo by Kyle Grillot kgrillot@shawmedia.com

expansion plan that would create about 500 jobs within Huntley.

Combined with construction starting on Centegra Health System's new hospital, Weber-Stephen Products' \$75 million investment to expand its manufacturing facility and build a new global distribution center near I-90 set the tone for a major year in the village.

In the months since the Weber project was announced, the village has seen four new retailers and restaurants open along Route 47, near Kreutzer Road. Officials also helped fill a few empty buildings closer to the interstate that had been vacant for years.

Life Spine Inc.'s decision this year to move its medical device operation from Hoffman Estates to Huntley occupied a 58,400-square-foot facility near the interchange that had been vacant for 15 years.

"We thought nothing could be more of a detriment than somebody coming here to try and invest into our community and they see vacant buildings," Johnson said. "One of our goals

this year was to get those buildings occupied."

With the interchange fully opened after decades of construction planning, officials are starting to see developers engaging in more advanced talks with the village, said Victor Narusis, the Village's business recruitment coordinator.

Staff from the village's economic development department in years past attended trade shows with manufacturers and retailers to try and introduce companies to a village located on the outskirts of the Chicago area.

"The interchange has helped us convert these introductory conversations into people looking at sites, Narusis said. "That's what the interchange has done for us".

Despite heightened development activity in 2014 the sluggish economy continues to play a dominant role as village officials see and hear companies struggle for favorable financing.

In the area immediately around the interchange the village has slotted hundreds of acres for small-to-

midsize manufacturers, various industries and technological companies.

Aside from the Weber and Life Spine projects, only Cargo Equipment this year completed a move closer to I-90, inside the Huntley Corporate Park.

Mike Gazzola, a broker for Entre Commercial Realty tasked with marketing the business park said the investment is slower than the

real estate company anticipated in the year since the interchange opened.

Focusing on small and mid-sized manufacturers, the company is considering lease and speculative building options for the park.

"I would like to see more [inquiries], Gazzola said. "We got the interchange. We've created the environment, but we have to see if the companies want to come out here ... I think it will take a little more time for the Route 47 interchange to continue to mature".

### By the numbers

Breaking down the \$188 million investment into Huntley in 2014:

- \$150.68 million in commercial & industrial development (roughly \$141million in new construction)
- \$37.66 million in residential development (roughly \$23.1million in new construction)

Source: The Village of Huntley

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