

Preparation work at business parks nearing completion
By Amy A. Thompson, Clarion News writer

MONROE AND BEAVER TWPS. - The Clarion County Economic Development Corp. and a private developer are reporting two business parks in the county are in the final stages of infrastructure construction and are close to the ultimate goal of bringing hundreds of jobs to the area.

Trinity Point at Monroe located south of exit 62 off Interstate 80 and the Clarion County Commerce Center located 1.5 miles from exit 53 off Interstate 80 have been in the works for the past few years.

Trinity Point at Monroe

Trinity Point at Monroe is in the final stages of infrastructure construction in preparation for the construction of the Biotechnology Business Development Center which will begin in the spring of 2007, said Tim Reddinger, Trinity Point general partner.

In addition to the biotechnology center, Reddinger said there are two to three more building projects which will be under construction next summer. However, Reddinger cannot yet reveal what those projects will be.

Another project on the books, tentatively, for next year is the construction of the Pennsylvania State Police Communication Dispatch Center .

Reddinger said there are two roads which are under construction including Monroe Woods Drive and Southview Road . Contractors also are completing East Trinity Drive .

Other infrastructure projects underway at the Trinity Point site include a fiberoptic remote terminal which will be located just past the entrance of Trinity Point by Tractor Supply. Verizon is installing the fiberoptic remote terminal.

Pennsylvania American Water is installing all water lines and National Fuel is installing gas lines.

In the area of a waste water collection and sewage treatment system, Monroe Township awarded both bids to Kukurin Contracting, Inc. of Export. The contractor has not yet received a directive to proceed.

"Everything (infrastructure wise) should be complete - we're estimating – in six months," Reddinger said.

The Trinity Point project also entails improvements to State Route 68. The state Department of Transportation will form State Route 68 into four lanes which will travel down to the intersection with a turning lane and a traffic light.

Reddinger said he believes PennDOT will bid out the State Route 68 project in April or May.

In order to complete all infrastructure within the six-month time period, Reddinger believes there will be four or five contractors on site at all times.

Trinity Point proposes to bring in 1,600 new jobs starting with between 200 and 300 new jobs during the next five years.

Reddinger said not only will the number of jobs influence the area but so will the new infrastructure. Once the infrastructure is complete there will be a ripple effect, Reddinger said.

Reddinger said a prime example is new sewage system, which can be expanded into Monroe Township . Many of the homes in Williamsburg have had on-lot septic systems which have been malfunctioning.

Another ripple effect is in the three-phase electric supply now available on the south side of Interstate 80, Reddinger said.

In addition, Reddinger said the residents of Williamsburg are likely to benefit from the slower traffic along State Route 68 once the traffic light and additional lanes are installed.

Throughout the development of Trinity Point, Reddinger said a major challenge has been the lack of infrastructure present in the area and finding the funding to cover the cost of building the infrastructure. "That's been the toughest part," Reddinger said of the infrastructure funding.

Developers also have had to wade through the red tape of Pennsylvania regulations which Reddinger calls "some of the toughest in the nation."

However, Reddinger believes the process has brought out the best in its local officials. Reddinger credited Monroe Township supervisors, Clarion County commissioners, the Clarion County Economic Development Corp. and Clarion University of Pennsylvania with enabling the process of making the knowledge-based park a reality.

"They've been great to work with," Reddinger said.

Clarion County Commerce Center

The Clarion County Commerce Center is close to having its entire infrastructure in place and being "pad ready."

CCEDC Executive Director Brad Ehrhart said Kribbs Road is complete and contractors are finishing water and sewage lines.

Ehrhart said gas lines are coming into the site and the park should have electric and telephone lines by spring 2007.

Ehrhart said the park has received some inquiries from companies from Cleveland , Ohio , and Pittsburgh . However, Ehrhart notes the park could also enable businesses already in the area to stay in the area.

Unlike Trinity Point, the focus of Clarion County Commerce Center is on light manufacturing, Ehrhart said.

Ehrhart said the biggest challenge the CCEDC encountered in developing the park has been educating potential companies about the area's many resources, one of which is the available workforce.

Ehrhart said although there are 40,000 people in the county, when a 30-minute radius is considered the available workforce is approximately 103,000 people.

A large reason is because of Interstate 80 which makes travel to the commerce center possible.