

Certified status to aid Purchase park

Wednesday, April 01, 2009

MAYFIELD, Ky. — Adding one word to the description of the Purchase Regional Industrial Park should elevate its status for companies looking for a site for a new plant.

It is now a “certified” megasite.

The 2,200-acre park in north Graves County near the McCracken County line earned the certified designation from McCallum Sweeney Consulting because it has in place or commitments to provide the utilities and infrastructure necessary for development. The designation was formally announced Tuesday at a press conference in Mayfield.

McCallum Sweeney is a nationally recognized industrial recruiting firm that helped the Tennessee Valley Authority develop its megasite certification program. The firm over the past five years has approved fewer than 10 sites for that designation, said Ed McCallum, principal partner in the firm.

The industrial park board paid McCallum Sweeney to review the site and help it meet the certification criteria, said Bill Beasley, president and CEO of the regional industrial park. The board did not reveal the consultant’s cost. The South Carolina firm also serves as the park’s recruiter to help find a developer.

“The reason we have certified so few sites is that it takes a lot of work and isn’t easy,” McCallum said. “It means that this site is shovel ready.”

Local officials hope the site attracts a large industry that would employ more than 1,000 workers. McCallum said it is perfect for an auto manufacturing plant, alternative energy production plant, steel or other type of mill, or other capital-intensive manufacturing operation.

A certified site is important to industries because it means they won’t have to spend time conducting studies and seeking commitments for utilities, McCallum said. He said that while utilities such as gas, water and sewer may not be at the site, it means there are firm commitments to quickly provide them for a developer.

He said megasites are easier to get on a company’s short list for consideration.

“I won’t guarantee you that next week we are going to have a project, but I will guarantee you that when a big major project comes along, you won’t be eliminated because you didn’t do your homework,” he said.

“You won’t have to spend time filling out questionnaires or answering basic questions about the site,” McCallum said. “You can spend your time on something more important, and that’s closing the deal.”

McCallum praised officials for their continued effort to prepare the site for development, although the economy is down and industrial expansion is limited.

“While everyone else is sitting on a log and bemoaning what’s going on in the economy, you guys are doing what needs to be done,” he said. “When the economy turns around, and it will turn around, the communities that win will be those that are getting ready now.”

Adam Edelen, chief of staff for Gov. Steve Beshear, also praised officials of the eight counties of the Jackson Purchase for their cooperative effort to develop the park. Successful economic development not only helps one county, but nearby counties and the entire state, he said.

“You are showing that western Kentucky is open for business,” he said.

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