



Industrial park is seeking business projects

By Brock Letchworth
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A multi-county and multi-regional industrial park located in Pitt and Martin counties recently became the first of its kind to be certified by the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

Officials have started marketing LandsEast Industrial Park, located near Bethel in Pitt County and Parmele in Martin County, as they await the infrastructure that is needed for industries to re-locate there, said Kelly Andrews, associate director of the Pitt County Development Commission.

"We certainly feel the park has potential," Andrews said. "We aren't targeting anything too specific because we feel like it could be a good fit for several types of projects."

An idea for the 788-acre park began floating around eight years ago, Andrews says, but the collaboration between the counties officially began in 2005.

Andrews said the park is the only one in the state which cuts across two economic development regions — the Eastern (Pitt) and Northeastern (Martin).

The park features CSX rail access, and it is located within two hours of ports in Morehead City, Wilmington and Norfolk, Va. It is 90 minutes from the Raleigh-Durham International Airport and less than 30 minutes from the Pitt-Greenville Airport.

"The park is good for the economic health of both Pitt and Martin counties, and for our two regions," said Ed Dennis, Jr., board chairman of the Pitt County Development Commission. "We learned early on that mutual support and cooperation are crucial to our success."

Andrews said the park's designation as a certified site means that it is a premium business location that has undergone a rigorous pre-qualification process to ensure that it is ready for development. Certified sites also have secured commitments of support and performed an analysis of site development costs, environmental issues and utility services, she said.

Several projects have shown interest so far, Andrews says, but it likely will be at least 18 months before the infrastructure is complete and any of them could occupy the park.

The LandsEast Advisory Committee consists of equal representation from Pitt and Martin counties. Officials are still working out the details for tax revenue.

All acreage in the park qualifies for Tier 1 tax credits which allow \$12,500 per job created for qualifying businesses. Andrews said the number of jobs the park could produce depends on the type of industry it attracts.

"It could be a project that wouldn't provide as many jobs, but they would be higher-paying jobs," she said. "It really depends."

For more information about the LandsEast Industrial Park, contact the Pitt County Development Commission at 758-1989, the Martin County Economic Development Corporation at 792-2044 or visit www.locateincarolina.com or www.martincountyedc.com.

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