

Open for business, Farwell Enterprise Park waits only for tenants

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The roads have been paved, utilities are in place and ground has been broken.

The only thing Farwell Enterprise Park needs is business.

Developers continue to aggressively market Clare County's Renaissance Zone to companies and offices wishing

to take advantage of the tax-free luxury the park offers.

There have been inquiries, but finding businesses ready to set up shop takes time, said Kathy Methner, marketing director for Middle Michigan Development Corp., which is handling the project.

Mt. Pleasant's Industrial Park, which is not located on a tax-free zone, has taken more than five years to attract the

clientele it has today, she said.

So it's only a matter of time for Farwell.

"It's an ideal location," Methner said of the park, "and it's tax free."

Methner isn't concerned that the state's current manufacturing and industry doldrums will affect the attraction of tenants to the park.

Farwell celebrated the groundbreaking of the state-

and federally-funded park in July and is hopeful it will give the area's struggling economy a boost.

Similar tax-free Renaissance Zones, which the state began implementing in 1997, have already had drastic positive effects on nearby communities.

To date there have been more than 130 jobs created in Ithaca since South Ithaca Industrial Park became one of

the state's first tax exempt zones.

"Those jobs have been created directly because of the industrial park," said Brad Heffner, Ithaca city manager. "We wouldn't have been competitive without that designation."

The Ithaca site was one of the first 15 areas to get a state tax exemption, Heffner said.

At that time, it was easy to

attract businesses because the exemptions were not only attractive, but unique.

The addition of about 45 new tax-free sites in the state over the last few years has created competition amongst communities to attract businesses, he said.

The Ithaca site currently has four tenants.

Despite challenges, the

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search for businesses to locate to Farwell Enterprise Park is going well, Methner said.

She expects that inquiries will turn into new businesses soon.

The 66-acre Enterprise Park is near both US-10 and US-27 in Farwell.

Businesses who choose to locate at a Renaissance Zone will enjoy 15-years of state tax-free operation in addition to other possible tax credits.