

# Focus on the smaller

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For more than 40 years, a local non-profit corporation has worked behind the scenes to create a solid foundation for industrial development in Mt. Pleasant.

With the passing of Labor Day, that same group will begin work on a new, more refined development project that could push Mt. Pleasant farther into the

future of Michigan's economy.

The Mt. Pleasant Industrial Development Corp., along with Central Michigan University, the city of Mt. Pleasant and Middle

Michigan Development Corporation, plans to break ground in early September on a brand new industrial park informally called Project 20.

The new park will be unlike the old-style North and South Industrial parks

that required 10-15 acre plots of land for each company and focused on manufacturing and similar industries.

"In the other industrial parks, the sites are designed for large companies, ones that need five acres and larger," said MMDC President George Dunn. "The companies we are likely to attract are small and if they want to build a 6,000 square foot or 10,000 square foot building,

then a five acre plot is too big.

Project 20 will focus recruitment efforts on high-technology companies, such as those already working in the CMU Research Corp.'s Center for Applied Research and Technology.

"The last project the IDC was involved in was the original CART facility," Dunn said. "They've gotten into the technology side, which is where the community is driving itself."

IDC officials will invest \$250,000 to construct a 400-500 foot road on the land just west of the CME Mitsuba complex on Three Leaves Drive, plus landscaping, a retention/detention pond and a 6,000 square foot shell building. Isabella Corporation won the bid for road and infrastructure construction.

"This is just the first phase," Dunn said.

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"Eventually there will be as many as eight two to three acres sites."

A scarcity of state or federal grants to pay for the project is forcing the IDC to begin the project with a single building plus only part of the road and creating a park-like atmosphere.

Once a business has signed up to move into the first building, under a lease agreement with CMU, which leases the land under a long-term contract to the IDC, a second shell building will be constructed.

Creating a shell building, consisting of four walls, a roof and utilities, saves business owners roughly two months of construction time and also allows them to better visualize the end product, Dunn said.

"People are looking for stuff like this; people need to see a model," Dunn said. "It's curb appeal. When a company comes along and buys or leases, the IDC finishes and leases the building much quicker and at a much lower cost. Since the IDC is a tax-free entity, it enjoys favorable loan rates. That blend makes an attractive package for the end user."

The shell building will be a masonry structure not a steel pole building, Dunn said, which is what drove up the price. JBS Contracting of Mt. Pleasant won the building bid.

"This will be an attractive office-looking building,

but could be used for a whole array of technology-based companies," Dunn said.

The two other industrial parks in Mt. Pleasant are nearly filled to capacity, with only a single four-acre site left in Industrial Park - South, Dunn said. Industrial Park - North is 100 percent filled and occupied.

The choice of location for the project was not much of a choice, Dunn said.

"In my opinion, this is the only spot in the city for this kind of development," Dunn said. "It was beans and weeds when I got here in 1982. It's been a fun project to develop the whole 300 acres (including the CART and rest of the old University Park land); a crown jewel for the city. My concern is how can we stimulate development and make things happen faster in the city. How can we make the highest and best use of land."

The eventual goal is to attract a business that generates enough jobs to qualify the project for state bloc grants to help pay for the remaining infrastructure.

CMU officials are also contributing money to the project, Dunn said.

Although there are no signed contracts as of the first day of September, there are two businesses that are interested in occupying the first building, he said.