

IDC area's major economic force

The Gaylord Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) has been a major economic force in the community for 30 years.

The group's major project over its three decades of existence has been the Gaylord Air / Industrial Park along Dickerson Road.

The property is around half full at this point in 1990 with interest continuing to grow. Its 24 businesses generate an annual payroll of around \$4 million for the community.

An early major achievement of the IDC was negotiation with then-U.S. Plywood that resulted in the location of a manufacturing plant here in 1964. Today, Georgia-Pacific owns the operation.

In 1970, the IDC had the idea of using part of the airport property as an industrial park. The air/industrial park was created, and four years later a \$1 million grant from the Economic Development Administration was secured.

With the help of then-Gaylord State Bank and its president,

Harold Elgas, matching funds of \$200,000 were raised locally and construction began.

Utility, sewer and water hookups to service 160 lots were run and roads were built.

In 1975 the IDC began selling lots at 20 cents per square foot. Subsequently, the price rose to 40 cents per square foot on Dickerson Road and 30-35 cents for the interior lots.

In 1985, the IDC arranged for Dale Smith to act as broker for the properties, a position he still holds.

The industrial park continues to grow, with new entrants including L & R Well Drilling, J & P Heating, ADS Inc., H & S Mold and Motion Industries.

Established businesses, such as K-Byte, Roberts Boring and Brecheisen Diesel, have recently expanded their operations.

Ed Calkins, a former member of the IDC board of directors, said the IDC must continue to be selective in the industries it wishes to attract, while at the same time ex-

panding the industrial base of the community.

Calkins said the idea is to build a supporting industrial base for the community without adverse effect.

Jack Card, vice president of the IDC, said interest in the air/industrial park remains high, but changes could be made to attract larger businesses, including offering parcels in acreage rather than lots.

In addition, Card said, more educational opportunities would help provide a pool of trained workers for prospective industries.

The development of the Alpine Regional Education Center will help fulfill that need, he said. He added that the IDC is working with local educators to help tailor courses that would meet those needs.

Card said with a new Wal-Mart shopping center locating in Gaylord, he foresees the industrial park serving as a likely spot for the location of warehouses for suppliers or vendors.

Tourism bureau splits off from chamber

Since its creation November of 1986, the Gaylord Area Convention and Tourism Bureau has spent over \$250,000 to promote the tourism industry in the Gaylord area.

The bureau started out as a division of the chamber of commerce and the executive director of the chamber, Paul Beachnau, served as head of both bodies.

In the summer of 1989, bureau and chamber members decided that the two agencies were too much for one person to run and

that they would be better served with two separate directors.

In October, 1989, Bill Wishart was hired to be the new executive director of the chamber and Beachnau gave up his chamber duties to tackle the responsibilities of the tourism bureau full time.

In an area where over \$110 million is spent annually by tourists visiting the area, the tourism bureau is an important tool in promoting the area.

The bureau is funded by a 2 percent room assessment fee paid

by hotels and resorts that are members of the bureau.

The bureau spends most of that money on promoting the golf industry, skiing and other attractions in the area.

Future plans have the tourism bureau direct its efforts at promoting the area as a conference and convention center, Beachnau said.

Over 2,200 people in Otsego County are employed by tourism related industry and many more are employed in positions that are an indirect result of that industry.

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