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Thursday, July 31, 2008

Fayette Business Park road opens

03/26/2008
Updated 04/03/2008 12:06:04 AM EDT

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Seven years ago, former Fayette County Commissioner Sean M. Cavanagh told U.S. Rep. John P. Murtha, D-Johnstown, that the county's top economic development priority was the Fayette County Business Park.

Last week, Murtha presided over a ribbon cutting for the Matthew Drive Extension that runs three-fourths of a mile through the park, providing access to its \$54 million Fayette Crossing Project, which includes a new Wal-Mart Super Center.

Murtha, who steered \$1.4 million in federal funding toward the aforementioned road, said, "This is what America is all about. I appreciate everybody and what they've done. I'm really amazed."

For the longest time, the former county home property sat undeveloped, largely because of a lack of vision for what it might become.

A prior board of commissioners, which included Cavanagh, former Commissioner Ronald M. Nehls and current Commissioner Vincent A. Vicites, took the bold and unprecedented step of taking out a \$12 million bond, which included funds for helping develop the site. They also transferred ownership to the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority, giving that agency a mandate to develop the property.

Since then numerous businesses and agencies have moved into at the park, including an engineering firm, doctors' offices, CareerLink, a motel, an Italian restaurant and the county Mental Health/Mental Retardation Agency.

Critics may point out that no big factory-type enterprise has sprung up on the grounds, but in today's ultra-competitive job environment, any development or expansion is worth counting.

Vicites says that approximately 100 acres remains for development, so Phase 3 of the plan must be implemented to realize the site's full potential. While that happens, the county commissioners and the county redevelopment authority should be looking at potential new sites for development.

As the seven-year odyssey of the Fayette County Business Park proves, it's never too early to start implementing a plan, especially when costly road, water and sewerage projects are a prerequisite for growth.

Updated 04/03/2008 12:06:04 AM EDT
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