



White Oaks 'showcases West Virginia'

By Jessica Legge
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"We all are going to value and prosper from this project," Gov. Joe Manchin said during the groundbreaking ceremony for "North Central West Virginia's Premier Planned Business Community."

On Wednesday afternoon, High Tech Corridor Development LLC invited officials to the construction site of White Oaks in Bridgeport to break ground and announce the businesses coming to the new community.

"I'm excited about White Oaks because I feel it showcases West Virginia," Manchin said.

White Oaks, located off exit 124 (Jerry Dove Drive) of I-79, is adjacent to the United Hospital Center, which will open in 2010, and near the FBI Center. The planned business community will feature retail, office, health, lodging and dining facilities.

Woody Thrasher of Thrasher Engineering, Jack Keeley of Ground Breakers, and Dean Ramsey of West & Jones are partners in High Tech Corridor Development LLC, which is the development company for the project.

"We think this is going to be good for the community and good for generations to come," Keeley said.

The business associates knew they wanted to do something that had a meaningful impact on the area, said Thrasher, managing partner of the group.

"Our goal for White Oaks is economic vitality for West Virginia," he said.

Thrasher said the core idea of the business park is to create a place where businesses can locate and have "ready sites to go." The businesses that have already committed to come to White Oaks include Steptoe & Johnson, Huntington Bank, First Central Bank, Exxon, Arby's, Wachovia Securities, and Staybridge Suites, which is a division of Holiday Inn.

"We think it is going to be the finest business park in the state of West Virginia," Bob Steptoe, current CEO of Steptoe & Johnson, said.

Steptoe & Johnson, the first corporate client in the business park, expects to occupy its 75,000-square-foot office building in September of 2010.

Thrasher Engineering "worked tirelessly" on the plans for the project, and many other businesses and groups have been involved in the process, Thrasher said.

"Every step of the way, we've had tremendous support," he said. "We appreciate all the support the city (of Bridgeport) has given."

Bridgeport Mayor James Christie said White Oaks is one of many exciting things happening in this fast-growing area of the state. The White Oaks project will benefit Bridgeport, Harrison County and the surrounding areas.

The county is striving to move forward in the best interest of the community, Harrison County Commission President Ron Watson said. The commission feels very privileged to be a part of the White Oaks project, he said.

"I think Harrison County is becoming progressive," Watson said. "This is awesome."

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