

# New businesses, new jobs

By LINDSEY MAAS

**J**OB creation is a key to maintaining a viable and vibrant community. Over the years many rural Iowa communities have developed industrial parks as one way to retain and attract new businesses.

Since 1985 the Iowa Area Development Group working with local rural electric cooperatives have assisted with the development of 88 such parks in 71 communities across Iowa, creating homes for more than 170 businesses.

"In recent years many of the downtown areas in rural towns have been revitalized for purposes other than manufacturing," says Rand Fisher, president of the Iowa Area Development Group. "Today, companies and community leaders prefer to have industrial projects and complexes located on the edge of town where highway access is easy, and there's plenty of room to grow and expand."

USDA Rural Development has awarded more than \$10 million in loans and grants to assist communities in developing industrial parks in Iowa. "Improving economic opportunities in rural America is a leading emphasis of USDA," says Tim Helmbrecht, acting state director for USDA Rural Development in Iowa. "Helping create industrial parks is just one way our agency is helping to promote growth in rural communities."

## Attracting new businesses

Industrial parks require a lot of time to develop and often involve several years of discussion, planning and construc-

## Key Points

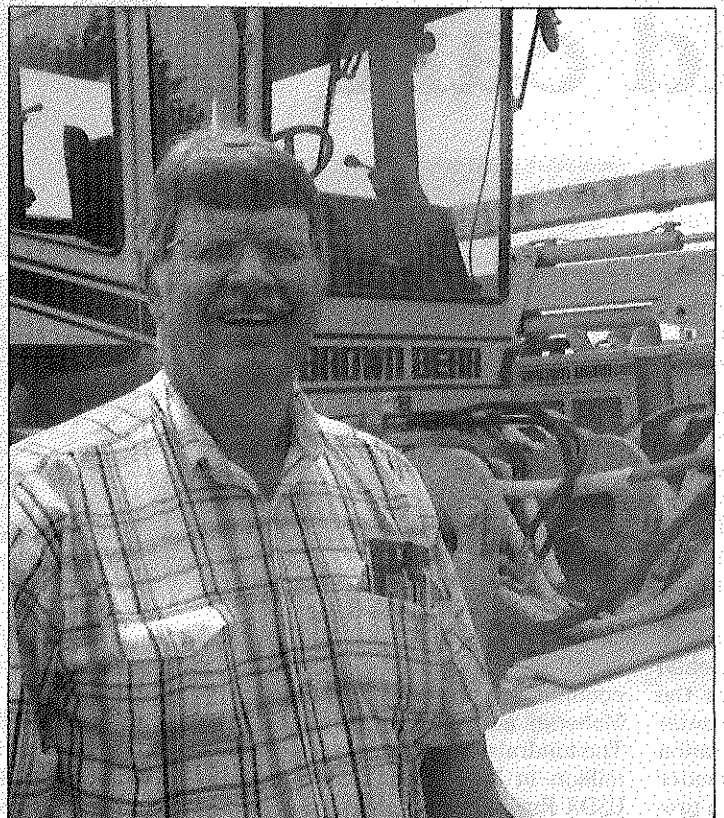
- Iowa Area Development Group, electric co-ops unite in work.
- The groups helped develop nearly 90 industrial parks.
- USDA funding assists areas with industrial parks.

tion. Many times just creating the roads and utilities for an industrial park is not enough to attract businesses to rural Iowa. Speculative buildings may also need to be built.

One group that strongly believes in the concept of speculative buildings is the Adams Community Economic Development Corp., or ACEDC, at Corning in southwest Iowa. With a countywide population of 4,400 people, Adams County has the fewest residents of any county in the state. And Corning, a town with just 1,800 residents, is Iowa's smallest county seat.

In 1976 ACEDC developed the Blue Grass Industrial Park two miles outside of Corning on Highway 34. "People still ask us why we built on this site and not on the immediate outskirts of town," says Gary Thompson, a founding member of ACEDC. "I tell them it was a very easy decision. We had two requirements for a site. It needed to be outside a floodplain and it needed to be near a rail line."

Three of the buildings in the park are currently occupied by Precision Pulley and Idler, an industrial pulley maker, while another is occupied by auger and specialty machine manufacturer Brown Bear Corp. Both manufacturers are located in speculative buildings that drew them to the park for various reasons.



**CREATING JOBS:** "Industrial parks bring jobs and an economic boost to rural Iowa," says Cliff Mann, treasurer of Brown Bear Corp., an equipment maker located in Blue Grass Industrial Park at Corning.

"Offering speculative buildings is really our advertising," says Beth Waddle, executive director of ACEDC. "They attract people to the area. Then it is our job to win them over by showcasing the rest of our community."

## Park creates 70 jobs

Between these two companies 70 jobs have been created in the 125-acre Blue Grass Industrial Park, which helps bring economic prosperity to Corning and the surrounding area. "We are a smaller community, but we pride ourselves on getting things done," says

Donna Hogan, ACEDC board president. "More than 200 volunteers serve on boards in the community. Our enthusiastic volunteers make it possible to create such things as our art center, Great American Main Street, new aquatic center, and of course, our industrial park."

Blue Grass Industrial Park continues to grow and now includes six buildings totaling 263,000 square feet. Two buildings have space available, including a new 22,500-square-foot speculative building.

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