

New CenterPoint complex slated to open within year

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Construction of a new CenterPoint Properties shipping and warehousing center at Joliet that is projected to bring 5,900 construction jobs should begin in about a week, said Kevin Breslin, attorney for CenterPoint development projects.

Much site preparation work has been done, but easements granted by the U.S. Army on Monday were the "long overdue" key to the beginning of construction, he said.

One easement through the Army Reserves' Joliet Training Area will allow a critical connection to be made to the Union Pacific Railroad, which runs to the east from the site, he said.

The other will allow for construction of a three-quarter-mile road to connect CenterPoint Intermodal Center-Joliet to Arsenal Road on the south. That will send truck traffic to Interstate 55 and keep it out of other, more populated areas south of Joliet along Illinois Route 53, he said.

The 1,000-acre Union Pacific intermodal shipping facility "is tentatively scheduled to open for business sometime during 2010," he said. "The original target date was around the middle of summer next year."

Warehousing and industrial development "will follow immediately thereafter," he said. "Obviously that is determined by demand."

About \$600 million in construction is expected to proceed immediately, a CenterPoint press release said Monday. Of that \$400 million is the Union Pacific rail yard; \$200 million is in road, bridge and utility construction.

The entire 3,900-acre facility will include warehousing and industrial development, with total investment projected at \$2 billion, CenterPoint has projected. It is expected to create 6,900 to 7,400 long-term jobs when the facility is fully operational, with secondary jobs and economic development off-site.

The new development is just two miles north of CenterPoint's intermodal at Elwood, which shares the north-south Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad. The Elwood intermodal has created more than 2,300 jobs on the site since 2000 and an estimated 870 indirect jobs in Will County, according to a study commissioned by CenterPoint and released last year. CenterPoint has projected 8,000 jobs

eventually at Elwood.

"This project is going to be as big or bigger," said Breslin. Combined, he said, they will be "far and away the largest inland port in the country and possibly in the world."

Crete update

CenterPoint also is "moving forward with certain of the basic infrastructure and utility system work" on the proposed 1,000-acre intermodal and industrial park at Crete along the CSX/Union Pacific railroad mainline.

The company has yet to secure a class one railroad customer for the 300-acre intermodal portion of that \$500 million project, but is "still being very aggressive" to find one and is "moving forward with the basic infrastructure," Breslin said.

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