

Barton Business Park shell building ready for occupancy

40,000-square-foot space awaits tenant in light manufacturing

MICHAEL A. SAWYERS



Jeff Barclay, acting director of the Allegany County Department of Economic & Community Development, is confident a tenant will be found for the \$4.15 million shell building at the Barton Business Park at Rawlings, shown here on Thursday.

RAWLINGS — Forty-thousand square feet of spanking-new space at the shell building in the Barton Business Park await a tenant that is into light manufacturing.

Allegany County built it and Jeff Barclay, acting director of the Department of Economic & Community Development, is confident a renter will come and provide jobs.

"Our primary focus is the creation of jobs, not the sale of the building," Barclay said Thursday morning during a tour of the 200-by-200-foot structure on Barton Park Drive just downhill from the American Woodmark plant.

The county advertises the \$4.15 million building at alleganyworks.org, showcase.com and loopnet.com.

Barclay said the building, completed two months ago, has been shown twice and one firm continues to consider occupancy.

He said county funding of the building makes sense because private developers will not finance such construction in a market of this sort.

"There is not a great deal of available space in the 40,000- to 50,000-square-foot range in the county, much less space that is brand new," Barclay said.

The building is on 27.5 acres, has gas radiant heat and as much electricity as anybody will ever need, Barclay said. It is connected to the park's wastewater treatment plant.

Occupancy options include renting and leasing to buy.

"The majority of our industry is light manufacturing," Barclay said. "There are no new smokestacks."

Some of the construction funding came from lease revenue at other county-owned manufacturing buildings and from the sale of other structures.

Barclay said the county is so confident about the eventual success of the Barton Business Park shell building that thought is being given to a similar structure at the Frostburg Business Park where roadways are being improved.

Barclay said this approach to attracting tenants isn't new and was used as far back as the 1980s to bring manufacturers to the North Branch Business Park.

The eventual occupant is likely to be a company already in or near the county that wants to move or expand, Barclay said, suggesting Alliant Techsystems — a short distance away across the North Branch of the Potomac River in West Virginia — might need close, additional space.

"The private industry is just not willing to take the real estate risk of building speculative industrial buildings in our market," he said.

The county has already jumped through all the state permit hoops, especially those of the Maryland Department of Environment, Barclay said, that would otherwise delay occupancy by a private entity.

"Engaging in speculative construction allows the county the opportunity to market to companies that want to be operational more quickly than would otherwise be possible," Barclay said.

Follow staff writer Michael A. Sawyers on Twitter @CTNMikeSawyers.