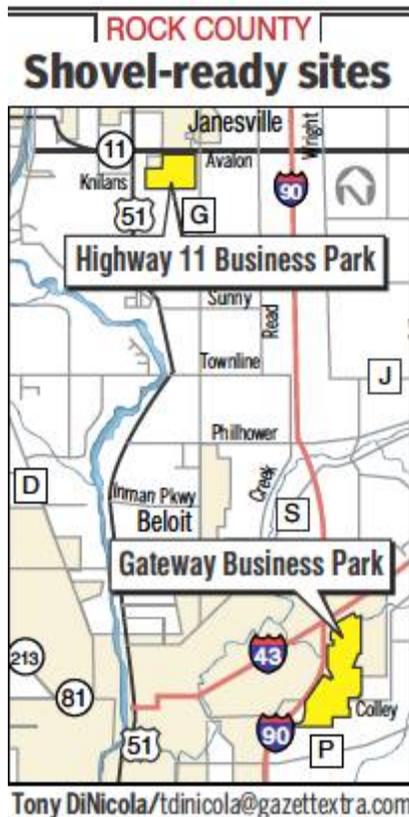


Rock County 5.0 Certifies Two Shovel-Ready Sites: Designation Should Help Speed Up Development

By [JIM LEUTE \(Contact\)](#) – December 1, 2010



Two sites in Rock County are the first in Wisconsin officially certified as shovel-ready for prospective industrial and distribution development.

Rock County 5.0, a public/private economic development initiative, paid the tab for a well-known site selection consultant to certify the 224-acre Highway 11 Business Park on Janesville's south side and the 230-acre Gateway Business Park in Beloit.

"I wouldn't call it a trend around the nation, but I would say it's a trend among cutting-edge communities," said Bob Ady, president of Ady International, which partnered with Austin Consulting on the certification. "The whole point is to differentiate yourself, and this certification dots all the I's and crosses all the T's to help the community do that."

Ady-Austin reviewed more than 200 variables at each site and compiled a “shovel-ready report” that addresses ownership, property, transportation, utility, environmental and community issues.

The idea is to eliminate any barriers that might dissuade a company from locating in one of the two sites.

Because Rock County 5.0 has done the certification work, prospects could start construction in as few as 30 days and avoid a six-to-eight-month delay while they pay someone else to certify the property. Speed to market is a critical component in today’s economic development circles. So, too, is risk minimization.

“In doing this, we covered every living, breathing or dead thing that could be an issue,” Ady said. “When we certify it, there will no surprises. “The last thing a company wants to do is wade in and then find there are fatal flaws. Site selection is really all about elimination, and any issues that come up help companies eliminate sites. Being certified means they won’t come up.”

Diane Hendricks, owner of several companies based in Rock County and a co-chair of Rock County 5.0, said that’s important. “The detailed front-end analyses and preparation completed by a designated shovel-ready site can literally reduce the property diligence process by several months,” Hendricks said.

The certification uses the same methodology that prospects would use in evaluating a potential site. “If Company X is evaluating two otherwise comparable sites, the shovel-ready designation will easily elevate our sites to the top of the list,” said James Otterstein, Rock County’s economic development manager.

Individually, prospective companies could spend \$15,000 or more to determine that a site is shovel-ready, he said.

Rock County 5.0 spent considerably more than that to certify the two sites, a cost that won’t be passed on to prospects. But the real value, Otterstein said, is that companies know that at either of the two sites would be free of problems and ready for construction in short order.

“Ady is recognized as the leading site selection company, certainly in the United States, and really developed the niche in the industry,” Otterstein said. “Austin has a huge portfolio and is right up there, too. “While there are probably a half dozen or so of these consulting firms doing the certification, we think we’ve gone with the best.”