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Prime Location Intersects With Good Planning In Cameron

Positioned at the intersection of Route 36 and I-35 in northwest Missouri, the city of Cameron is known as the "Crossroads of the Nation." For City leaders, however, this is more than a nickname - it's an opportunity.

A Future-Focused Vision

Cameron's leaders have a history of visionary planning. For instance, an unused sewer district created two decades ago is now proving valuable for use in a 380-acre business park development.

"It's good planning," said City Manager Mark Gaugh. The City was thinking ahead to some sort of development. "It would take a lot of time and money just to get that sewer system in the ground, but now it's already there right across the street."

Currently in the master planning stages with Bartlett & West, the park has already attracted interest from two companies, due to the park's large parcels and proximity to Kansas City. The park has many features attractive to businesses, and Cameron intends to better position itself as a viable option for site developers working to find locations through the Kansas City Area Development Council and the Missouri Partnership.

"Cameron has good access to draw from a diverse workforce in the Kansas City region, easily within a 50- to 75-mile radius," said Darron Ammann, RLA, project manager for Bartlett & West. "This site can't get much more perfect because it's close to utilities, close to the interstate and offers large tracts to accommodate businesses with



The city of Cameron has approximately 10,000 residents. In the future there could be moderate population growth and the City plans to be ready.

immediate need or phased, long-term growth plans."

What's good for businesses will eventually be good for Cameron in terms of revenue to fund City infrastructure and amenities, added Steve Schultz, P.E., project manager for Bartlett & West.

"Cameron is well-positioned to create and keep jobs, attract workers from throughout the region and grow City revenue," said Schultz. "We see the business park as an integral part of that vision,"

Interstate Development

A decade ago, the City invested \$600,000 into better lighting at the heavily traveled intersection of Route 36 and I-35, foreseeing the commercial growth that is now manifesting.

"Nobody pulls over in a dark town unless you have to, so it's more inviting and you can see it from seven miles away," Gaugh said.

Most recently, two travel plazas invested heavily in their facilities, expanding truck parking to five times the previous space. Future plans include phased construction of a new truckers' lounge, convenience store and drive-through/dine-in restaurant service.

A new restaurant is under construction on the north side of Route 36, and several hotels and restaurants have shown significant interest in the area's remaining commercial tracts. Infrastructure improvements are on the horizon to ease traffic congestion, partially funded by a community development district partnership with the Missouri Department of Transportation. To manage traffic



Residential neighborhoods throughout town offer further proof of Cameron's commitment to improving quality of life. A few years ago, the streets were lined with dilapidated and abandoned houses, but an innovative City program works to replace those with new construction.

long-term, the City envisions future interchange and intersection improvements, offramp redesigns and at-grade intersection improvements.

Quality Of Life

Today, Cameron has approximately 10,000 residents. In the future, Gaugh said, there could be moderate population growth and the City plans to be ready.

"When you start talking about bringing in large industrial and commercial businesses, it translates into developing new single-family homes," said Tim Wymes, community development director. "A lot of people want to get out of city life and move somewhere quiet with affordable living. I think Cameron is the perfect location."

City leaders have become more attentive to recreational parks and trails, including upgrades to comply with the



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Americans with Disabilities Act. In one case, an inclusive playground resulted from a public-private partnership between the City and its residents.

Residential neighborhoods throughout town offer further proof of Cameron's commitment to improving quality of life. A few years ago, the streets were lined with dilapidated and abandoned houses, but an innovative city program works to replace those with new construction. The City receives ownership of the lots or offers a 50-percent split on demolition costs to property owners, when applicable. Either way, lots are ultimately sold to developers who oversee new residential construction, improving the curb appeal of the entire neighborhood.

"It's made a big difference in the appearance of town," Gaugh said. "We've seen many people near those houses fixing up their own property more than before, because they feel encouraged now."

Gaugh continues, "Before, we were losing revenue because the house is just sitting there, useless. When that lot is built upon, what happens? The property tax is back in effect, it's back in service with city utilities, and it means people have a place to live who move here to work and pay taxes. It's an economic development benefit and it's got a short payback time. It's a win-win all around."

Though Cameron's leaders certainly plan to keep the town small, they see big opportunity with commuting workers and passing motorists. With an innovative and visionary plan, they will leverage their prime location into a more prosperous future for the City and its residents.

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