Industrial Parks and Sites

In general, industrial sites and parks are those targeted to meet the needs of manufacturers, ranging from basic to light industry or high tech, warehousing and distribution, and research and development. Beyond the "must haves" outlined in the introduction to this module, the site requirements of manufacturers will vary according to such factors as type of product, production process, worker skills needed, product delivery methods, and location of major customers and suppliers.

Warehousing and Distribution: Companies seeking to locate their distribution facilities begin by identifying the region that makes the most sense in terms of where their customers and suppliers are located. Once a region has been identified, other site factors will come into play, in particular available labor, tax structure favorable to shippers, and overall favorable business costs.

The importance of proximity to suppliers is particularly true for just-in-time manufacturing environments, where companies maintain minimal inventory and require suppliers to deliver frequently and quickly. In the auto industry when a manufacturer locates in a community, suppliers are not far behind. Witness the example of Honda Motor Company in Marysville, Ohio, with many suppliers locating on suitable sites in small towns within a two-to-three hour truck haul from the main plant.

The type of industry and how it chooses to move its product determine the type of transportation network that a company will need. The relative cost and speed of delivery of the different alternatives will be weighed against delivery-time needs and value of the product. The vast majority of manufacturers, no matter what they produce, will want access to the interstate system for tractor-trailer hauling of products. Beyond that, manufacturers who use bulky raw materials, such as refractory producers who use bulk minerals, or those who use containerized shipping for eventual export, may require rail service on site.

Barge transportation is the least expensive form of transportation, and it is needed by some producers of bulky, low-value products such as coal and ores. Companies producing time-sensitive products that need to reach the market quickly or that produce smaller, highly value-added products, will seek excellent highway access and proximity to airports for air cargo transport services.

Retail Sites

Many communities are interested in commercial sites. These can be sites for individual users, like mass merchandisers (i.e. Wal-Mart) or strips of several shops with one or more anchor tenant. Some rural communities with highway access and nearby population centers are prime locations for retail outlet centers. If communities have the right location and amenities, they should consider the potential benefit of commercial development.