

# Claremont On Track For 2009

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Claremont will be focusing much of its attention this year on new rail lines for Poppelmann Plastics USA.

"That will be one of our major projects this year," said Claremont Mayor Glenn Morrison.

The city has spent more than five years working with the German company, which opened its 60,000 square-foot facility in Claremont's industrial park in May 2007, said Morrison.

Even before the company started construction, he said there was an agreement that Claremont would provide rail lines to the facility to ease transportation of raw materials and goods.

Morrison said the rail lines were delayed initially due to the cost. This year, Claremont will spend \$1.8 million to fulfill the original agreement.

The construction contract will be awarded to Tarheel Railroad at Monday night's Claremont City Council meeting. The Winston-Salem-based company specializes in the construction of railroad spurs, or extensions.

The project is expected begin within the next two months and be complete by the end of 2009.

Marketing the city's industrial park continues to be another important emphasis for Claremont, Morrison said. The Claremont International Industrial Park is already home companies like Draka, Rock-Tenn and CertainTeed, but there's plenty of room for more, he said.

The city has hundreds of areas available for development in the industrial park, which sits off U.S. 70. Niagara Ventures completed a 48,000-square-foot industrial shell building last summer that is ready for a company to move in. There is also a 410,000-square-foot building left vacant by another business.

"We're always looking at economic development with the (Catawba County) EDC (Economic Development Corp.)," said Morrison.

He said city official recently traveled to Raleigh with representatives from Niagara Ventures to meet with people who attract industries to the state. Morrison said the city receives three to four inquiries about the industrial park each year.

The industrial park is also a major component of Claremont's tax base. During work days, the city's population grows from 1,093 people to 3,000, thanks in large part to the jobs offered through businesses located in the park.

"We hope it will attract more businesses and create more jobs for Catawba County," Morrison said.

The city is also finalizing plans to tie Claremont's sewer lines into Hickory's new wastewater facility being constructed in Catawba. Morrison said it will provide Claremont with the capacity it needs to grow. That project will take about two years to complete.

Morrison said the city also plans to continue with beautification upgrades throughout Claremont. He said they have already made improvements to street lighting within the city and would like to do more.

Overall, he said the key goals are to be conservative and cautious in regards to funding projects during a troubled economy.

Any money from President-elect Barack Obama's proposal for the creation of jobs by funding infrastructure projects would be helpful, too, Morrison said.

He said that's another reason the city is moving forward with plans for sewer improvements this year, as opposed to waiting.

"We are going to be prepared if the money is available," he said.

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