

Switzerland County Economic Development Strategy Update Newsletter

Belterra Plans Expansion

What's New:

- *Belterra Plans Expansion*
- *2006 Highway Projects*
- *Regional Workforce Board Formed*
- *Patriot Water Update*
- *Small Business Course is a Success*



Belterra Casino and Resort has announced their intention to add to their current hotel and spa. Pinnacle Entertainment, who owns Belterra, said it intends to use an issue of 6 million shares of common stock in part to add 250 rooms to the facility's hotel. Belterra currently has approximately 600 rooms. Pinnacle is in

the early phases of planning this project but staff says that it could include even more rooms as well as additional dining, parking and spa areas. The expansion would make Belterra's hotel the largest in Indiana and could enable the facility to accommodate larger conferences and events.



If completed, Belterra's planned expansion would make it the largest hotel in Indiana.

New Highway Projects Will Increase Switzerland County's Economic Development Capacity

Three large highway projects are currently underway in or near Switzerland County that will improve the county's logistical advantages as well as the quality of life of Switzerland County residents. The State of Kentucky is in the process of constructing a new highway that will connect the Markland Bridge to Kentucky Highway 1130 near the Kentucky Speedway and Interstate 71 near Sparta, Kentucky. The distance from the Markland Bridge to Interstate 71 will be approximately five miles. The road is expected to be completed by the end of 2006. The overall project includes the construction of two exit/entrance ramps at Highway 42 in Kentucky and improvements to Highway 42 in the area of the Markland Bridge.

Inside the county, two state highway projects will continue into 2006. Work continues on the Indiana Creek Bridge, west of Vevay. Indiana Department of Transportation Officials anticipate the bridge to be completed in the summer of 2006. Improvements to State Route 129 have been ongoing throughout 2005 and will continue into 2006. The work was begun on the Southern end of the highway and will continue south-to-north until completed in late 2008. While the road was closed through the summer of 2005, it has been reopened and will remain open until April, 2006, including a new portion at the south end of the highway. Work will continue throughout the winter and, in April, the road will again be closed until December, 2006. At that time, the road

will be re-opened and new sections of the highway will be available for use.



New highway improvements will make Switzerland County more accessible to travelers and business.

New Regional Workforce Board Formed



The Workforce Investment Board works to assess the skill needs of area businesses.

The Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation has been participating in the creation of a new Workforce investment Board for Southeastern Indiana. The board is responsible for identifying training and workforce skill needs in southeast Indiana and working with training providers to meet those needs.

Funding for the board's activity comes primarily from the United States Department of Labor as a

part of the 1998 Workforce Investment Act. At the state level, the board is overseen by the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, which offers additional worker training programs and administers Indiana's unemployment insurance program.

The Southeastern Indiana Workforce Investment Board is participating in the State of Indiana's *Strategic Skills Initiative*, which offers competitive grants

to identify and reduce workforce skills gaps, create new jobs, and increase Hoosier income.

The *Strategic Skills Initiative* calls for the board to develop a strategy to address short-term and long-term workforce skill shortages in the region. The board contains representatives of business and education as well as economic and workforce development.

Patriot Water Update

Some areas of the Patriot Water system could become capable of adding capacity by mid-summer 2006.

The Patriot Water Company is in the design-phase of a project that will increase their capacity and end the restrictions that currently face portions of Switzerland County. The project will be funded through the State of Indiana's Revolving Loan Fund, pending state approval of the design. The total cost of the

project will be over five million dollars and it should provide adequate capacity for growth to every area the system serves. The project includes the drilling of four new wells, the addition of one storage tank and several boosters and the enlarging of lines in several parts of the system. Standby power and other

security measures are being added to ensure the reliability of the system. The project is expected to be bid in March and begin construction by April, 2006. If construction begins on schedule, some areas of the system could be able to add capacity by early summer.

Small Business Course is a Success

Switzerland County's first NXlevel Small Business Training Course held its graduation on Thursday, December 1, 2005. Ten local entrepreneurs have been attending the course, jointly launched by Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation and The Switzerland County Tourism Board, to sharpen their business plans and receive assistance in developing their businesses.

The eight-week training session was conducted by The Southeast Indiana Small Business Development Cen-

ter. Classes began on September 22, 2005 and were held weekly at the Switzerland County Public Library.

The program was launched to help Switzerland County citizens get the information needed to start their own businesses or to make their current business more successful. The classes have included such topics as legal forms of business, finance, accounting, market research, marketing and advertising, and insurance, all taught by experts in their field.

Graduates of this program are eligible for services provided by the US Small Business Administration including

micro loan programs and other business assistance. Another round of courses is planned for 2006.



Graduates of Switzerland County's first NXlevel course