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Clinton ready to welcome prison employees

John David | Reporter
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CLINTON, Iowa - Since the Thomson Correctional Center seems to be the front-runner to land hundreds of jobs and Guantanamo Bay prisoners, surrounding communities are bracing again for the benefit. That's the case in nearby Clinton, Iowa, where housing could get a jump start.

It could be the future of real estate in Clinton. With 277 lots available for building, Mill Creek Crossing is about a 20 minute drive from the Thomson Correctional Center. In coming months, it will be ready to house potential prison employees and their families.

"That would have a major impact on requiring new development, new construction and any existing homes that are on the market right now," said Matt Brisch, a realtor with Howe & Jefferies in Clinton.

Clinton developers already knew about the promise with the prison. Nearly a decade ago, they built a subdivision that was designed for commuters. While the jobs didn't come then, there's renewed hope now.

"I think there are developers that probably have land already plotted out for houses," said Clinton Chamber of Commerce President Julie Allesee. "Some will take additional looks."

In addition to building new homes, there's also a chance to revitalize portions of downtown Clinton. That's exciting for a community looking for development projects.

As crews aim high to place decorations, the holiday season seems to arrive early. Clinton is finding new uses for older buildings. All 19 apartments are filled in the century-old Armstrong Building. Residents also rent downtown in another landmark structure, the Van Allen Building. And there could be more on the way. Ashford University is exploring ways to develop downtown housing as well.

"Rehab those upper level housing residences, and you get a conglomeration of folks downtown," said Steve Ames, president of the Clinton Regional Development Corporation. "That just feeds very positive things."

Since Clinton is a regional retail hub, prison jobs would add to the revenue. Guzzardo's Hallmark recently made its own facelift downtown. The longtime store is ready to welcome new shoppers.


"Anything to boost the economy is a positive for us," said Guzzardo's Manager Kate Littrell. "I think it's going to be a good thing."


With construction on the move even in November, this city is ready to roll out the welcome mat if and when the prison jobs arrive.


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