

Clinton plans for Thomson prison opening

Steven Martens | Posted: Tuesday, February 23, 2010 2:00 am

CLINTON, Iowa — The proposed sale of the nearby Thomson (Ill.) Correctional Center to the federal government for use as a federal prison is expected to bring 3,800 jobs to the area in the first four years. Clinton Mayor Rodger Holm said Monday the city is taking steps to make sure residents and businesses are ready to adapt to the changes the Thomson prison opening would bring.

Holm said plans are under way to hold meetings with local real estate agents, developers and contractors to discuss the development of new housing, and a meeting with local bankers to discuss funding housing development.

Holm has asked Mike Reynolds, the city's director of community development, to go over the city's master plan to identify the areas of the city where development should occur and asked the Public Works Department to study the logistics of running utility service to those areas.

Holm said goal of the meetings is to make sure Clinton is ready to handle the influx of new residents and increase in demand for housing if the Thomson prison is fully opened.

The prison was built by the state of Illinois in 2001, but has remained nearly vacant because the state lacked the money to open it.

Gov. Pat Quinn announced a plan in November to sell the prison to the federal government for use as a federal prison and to house terrorism suspects currently housed at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.



Steve Howes of Howes & Jefferies Realtors in Clinton said the city is in need of multi-family housing. He said there have been no new apartment buildings built in Clinton in 30 years, in part because the rental rates in the area are so low it wasn't economically feasible to invest in building new units.

Howes said the city is "behind the eight-ball" in its planning process because the prison is already built and by the time the final green light is given to the project, there will be little time to build new housing before the prison opens.

"We may need to speed up our process," Howes said.