



A sign advertising the shovel-ready status of an 80-acre lot north of Warren was unveiled Monday, July 31, by local and state officials including (from left) Jeff Souder, a member of the Huntington County Economic Development board; Mark Wickersham, HCED executive director; Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch; and State Sen. Travis Holdman. Just before the sign was unveiled, Crouch announced that the site had earned Prime Certification, the top level in the Indiana Site Certified program to designate sites ready for development. Photo by Cindy Klepper.

## Industrial site near Warren poised to become hotbed of development

A soybean field just north of Warren is poised to become the next hotbed of industrial development in Huntington County.

Standing under a tent at the edge of that field on Monday, July 31, Indiana Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch announced that the 80-acre site has been awarded Prime Certification by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs. That certification signifies that the site is ready for immediate development.

"Being prepared gives a community a powerful advantage," noted Mark Wickersham, executive director of Huntington County Economic Development.

The field, located along Ind.-5 about midway between the Warren town limit and the I-69 exit, is

owned by Dr. Harry Brickley. HCED holds an option on the property.

"This site has been a priority for the Town of Warren for nearly 20 years," said Warren businessman Jeff Souder, who represents the town on the HCED board.

The Prime designation is the top level in the Indiana Site Certified program and signifies that environmental and archaeological studies have been completed, utilities are available at the site and other tasks have been accomplished so that the site is ready for development.

It's the only site in northeast Indiana to hold Prime certification, Crouch said.

"This site, I can honestly say, will gain hyper attention from the development

community," Wickersham said.

The site has frontage along I-69 and Ind.-5 and is just a mile from the interstate's exit onto the state highway, Wickersham noted. It could be developed as one site or divided into two smaller sites. While there's no guarantee that an industry will build there, he said, its shovel-ready status will draw attention.

Wickersham, along with County Commissioner President Tom Wall, credited teamwork among local and state officials and departments in ticking off all the requirements to earn Prime designation.

"It's no wonder we're well positioned for a win here in Huntington County," Wall said in praise.

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## Industrial site **Cont. from Pg. 1**

ing the team effort.

Crouch noted that Huntington County has seen remarkable progress over the past decade. The county's unemployment rate has

dropped from 14.3 percent in June of 2009 to 2.9 percent in June of this year, she said. And the county's industrial occupancy rate has risen from 50 percent in 2009 to 98 percent

today, she said.

Wickersham said the past 10 years have seen 98 new projects, bringing \$300 million in new capital investment, in Huntington County.