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## Pella jobs will aid regional economy

Thursday, February 24, 2005

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A new window and door manufacturing plant in Macomb will provide needed jobs and investment in that western Illinois community. Pella Corp., the Iowa-based manufacturer, said Monday that it will build a factory there employing 250 people. That figure could double by 2008. The paychecks from the workers will recycle throughout the community many times over. And the plant could draw other suppliers and investment.



Company president Mel Haight said Macomb won out over 50 other communities largely because of its pool of skilled labor and its high-quality educational system. For years, business-recruiting firms have been saying an area's work force and schools are critical to attracting new jobs. As home to Western Illinois University, Macomb had an educational leg up, but we have to believe Haight also looked into the local public school system, as well.

It would be naive, however, to suggest those were the only two factors in the decision. The state chipped in with \$7 million in incentives for tax credits, sales tax exemptions, sewer improvements and job training. The local economic development agency is buying much of the 48-acre site and giving it to Pella. And in recent years the state has built a four-lane highway - Route 67 - leading to the north and is planning another eastward to Peoria - now called Route 336.

It's unfortunate that taxpayer-funded assistance so often seems to be the price of economic development these days. We appreciate that those who get jobs at the new factory or indirectly come to depend on Pella paychecks will be glad that the state was able to put this deal together. Nonetheless, let's hope that state and Macomb officials got safeguards to protect taxpayers' investment here. Too often we've seen firms get public incentives to expand or

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relocate, not deliver on their job-creation promises and later pull out of the area altogether.

As for the highway connections, they are not to be underestimated in an area once called Forgottonia. Without a modern road system, neither Pella nor any other manufacturer would have an efficient way to transport product from the plant to the customer. Those who would object to Route 336, in particular, would do well to remember that. Jobs are critical, and west-central Illinois needs more of them.

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