

Sinclair gears for growth

Mason land deals will allow college to fulfill building plans

BY JON NEWBERRY

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Dayton-based Sinclair Community College has big plans for Mason and recently acquired 20 more acres targeted for future expansion of its Courseview Campus Center there.

The \$2 million July 16 transaction followed the foundation's purchase in June of Stress Engineering Services Inc.'s adjacent office building and two smaller land deals that closed in May and June.

The property acquisitions by the Sinclair Foundation will enable the college to follow through on its long-term building plans in Mason as anticipated demand for its education and training services grows.

Martin Russell, Warren County's director of economic development, said Sinclair is addressing multiple needs – new high school graduates seeking to enter the workforce for the first time, displaced workers who need retraining and business and industry partners looking to train current employees.

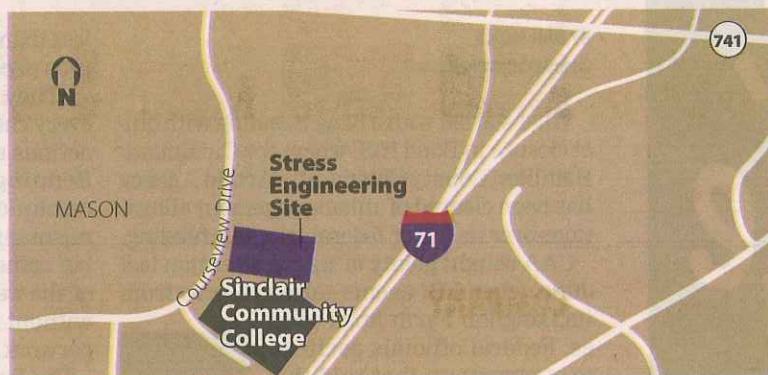
"The governor's office is really trying to bring the business community and the education community together to fill a gap they had been missing," Russell said. "They (community colleges) want to build things to meet business needs."

Nationally, community college enrollments grew by 20 percent between 2007 and 2011, although it has since leveled off, said Norma Kent, spokeswoman for the American Association of Community Colleges in Washington, D.C.

Community colleges have traditionally worked with business and industry, and there's lots of demand for training services, she said.

Altogether, Sinclair's four property deals totaled about 33 acres and \$4.5 million. All of the parcels are on Courseview Drive off Kings

\$4.5 MILLION INVESTMENT



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Sinclair Foundation's four purchases in Mason have totaled about 33 acres.

Mill Road.

They're tied to the college's long-term growth plan in Mason, said Adam Murka, spokesman for the Dayton-based community college. The acquisitions were made by the Sinclair Foundation, not the college itself, and none of the funds came from a Montgomery County tax levy that supports the college's main campus in Dayton, he said.

"Warren County is one of the fastest growing areas of the state. We have to grow along with the community," Murka said.

MORE LAND NEEDED IN LONG TERM

A six-phase Vision 2035 plan for the Mason campus calls for eventual expansion to as many as 10 buildings on 75 to 85 acres to accommodate up to 10,000 students. So more land will be needed, but the timing is flexible, Murka said.

"A lot of this is market-driven. The growth will happen organically," he said.

The school currently has about 1,400 students and occupies a single 18,000-square-foot building. The addition of Stress Engineering's facility next door boosts it to 35,000 square feet, consistent with the sec-

ond phase of the plan.

By comparison, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College has more than 10,000 students currently enrolled. Gateway Community and Technical College had almost 5,000 students at its four campuses in Northern Kentucky last fall. All three of the schools have similar missions.

Stress Engineering, meanwhile, owns eight acres off Western Row Road at Interstate 71 and is building a 46,000-square-foot office and lab facility to accommodate growth, said office manager Kate Harvey. It still occupies the facility it sold to Sinclair for \$1.3 million. The company expects to move this fall, she said, declining to discuss other details.

The Houston-based engineering and consulting firm has about 55 people in Mason. The company opened a Tri-State office in 1991.

Stress initially announced its planned expansion and relocation, aided by tax incentives from the city of Mason, in 2008.

Dayton-based Tipton Development & Construction is building the Stress Engineering project. It also built Sinclair's Courseview center that opened in September 2007.