A “Step Ahead”

The city’s planning consultants foresee proportionately fewer future jobs in manufacturing and more in the professions, sciences, technical fields, social services, real estate and health care in the coming years. Health care is already a conspicuous growth industry. Bedford has two hospitals, both “critical access,” a special category of rural hospitals qualifying for extra Medicare reimbursement and limited to 25 beds each. St. Vincent Dunn Hospital has about half the employees of Bedford Hospital, which is affiliated with Indiana University Health. President Brad Dykes said it has increased its staff by 10 percent over the past 10 years. Bedford’s unemployment rate hovers a point or so above the national average. But Jack A. Kenworthy, president of Bedford Federal Savings Bank, noted that it dropped by 1.3 points over the past year. That decline, along with the new jobs at the East Gate Business & Technology Center and the promise of more still at the GM plant, shows that the local economy is improving, he said.

McCracken acknowledged challenges ahead. “We’ve got to replace what we’ve lost and grow with the new and emerging,” he said. At the same time, he saw an advantage in the area’s early and rough experience with the recession. “We’re a step ahead because we started facing challenges before everybody else,” he said. [1]

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