

Press Release



New Development & Vision for Economic Growth in Pike, Calhoun and Surrounding Counties

October 8th, 2017

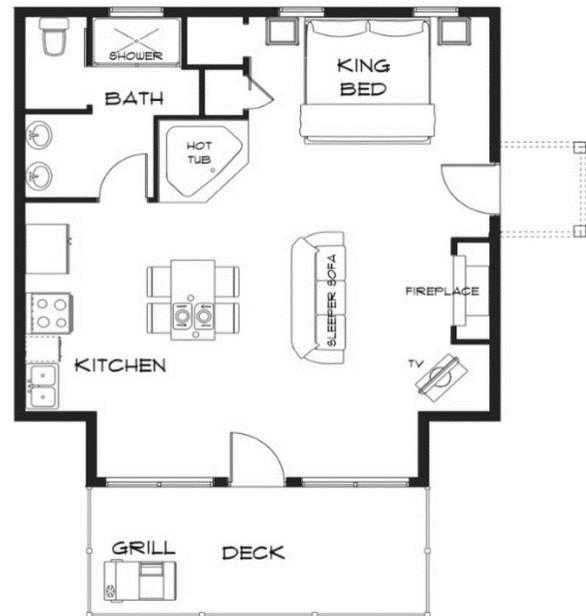
Harpole's Heartland Lodge & Resort is excited to announce the construction of four new luxury cabins! Along with these new cabins comes a new vision for tourism and economic growth that would impact Pike, Calhoun and surrounding counties in West Central Illinois!

The focus of these self-contained cabins is to bring more tourists into the region on a year-round basis and to have them spend money in our communities. Some will invest in our communities by purchasing land, building their own cabins/homes, and starting new businesses along with other development.

Guests staying at these cabins will be encouraged to visit local attractions, events, stores, and restaurants. Along with weekend getaways, longer vacation stays will be promoted. The cabins will serve as a "home base" for vacationing guests. Along with our local county attractions, activities within an 80-mile radius of the resort will be promoted.

These cabins continue Harpole's Heartland Lodge's goal of making Pike County, Calhoun County and West Central Illinois a better place to live and visit through increased tourism. They will help build on the recent trend of tourism, driving economic growth for the region. The following are some of the positive impacts these cabins could provide to the local economy:

- 1) An estimated 2,200 new tourists visiting Pike & Calhoun Counties annually and staying at these cabins alone.
 - a. Some visitors may decide to return and invest in the community.
- 2) Visitors will be encouraged to shop at our local restaurants, grocery stores, and retail establishments.
 - a. Visitors from **these cabins alone** will inject over an estimated \$1,000,000 annually into our local economy. (This includes gas, food, and shopping in our community along with money spent directly at Heartland Lodge and its multiplying effects to the local economy.)
 - b. Estimated potential annual sales tax generated - \$51,435.50.
- 3) Estimated lodging tax generated annually:
 - a. Local - \$8,760 (Used to help increase additional tourism in Pike County.)
 - b. State - \$13,140
- 4) New jobs will be created at Heartland Lodge.



- a. These cabins will create new jobs and will help to sustain current jobs. As a result of our tremendous growth, and expected future growth, we are currently hiring for several positions. Visit www.HeartlandLodge.com/Team for more information or call 217.734.2526.
- 5) New business opportunities could be created for those in our community that will cater to cabin guests. Massage therapists, photographers, in-cabin chefs and meal providers are just a few of the potential opportunities.

These cabins complement the recent addition of Heavenly View Cabin (1,500+ guests annually) and the new ATV/OHV Park (4,000+ annual visitors), in addition to Sunset Valley Lodge (4,200+ annual visitors), and the Original & Prairie Ridge Lodges (10,000+ annual visitors). In 2017, the entire Heartland Lodge Resort will attract over 20,000 visitors from all over the world to Pike & Calhoun Counties, injecting millions of dollars into our economy, impacting local restaurants, grocery stores, and retail establishments.

The entire team at Heartland Lodge is dedicated to making our community a better place to live and visit. It is a vital part of our core values and what motivates us to work hard every day.

History Behind Each Cabin Name

The name for each cabin was thought about with care and love.

Gerald's Cabin – Gerald Shonhart was the builder of our three main lodges. We promised Gerald when we/he built our private cabins, the first one would be named after him. Unfortunately, Gerald passed away several months ago but his legacy of what he built here will live forever.

Aunt Bert's Cabin – Bertha Harpole is Gary Harpole's late grandmother. Her friends and family called her Aunt Bert for short. When the resort began, Bertha made scrapbooks for Gary and he enjoyed many homemade meals at her house while visiting her.

Uncle Buck's Cabin – Earnest Pruitt is Gary Harpole's late grandfather on his mother's side. His friends and family called him Uncle Buck. Heartland is located next to the farm where Earnest raised his family. This farm is what helped inspire Gary to build Heartland as he always enjoyed visiting this beautiful country and he knew others would as well.

Bobby's Cabin – Bobby Pruitt is Gary Harpole's late uncle that he never had the pleasure of meeting. When Bobby was a very young boy, something spooked his trusted horse on his way to school. Bobby did not survive the accident.

New Vision – New Economy

The addition of these new cabins is hopefully the first phase of more to come that will help spark a new economy and help boost the region. If more cabins are built, more people will come. The more people that come, the more they will spend in our community. This could help create new businesses and sustain the existing ones. It may also inspire others to build their own lodges, cabins, B&Bs, etc. to accommodate the additional tourists. The more rooms that are available in the community will make our area more attractive for larger events to be held here.

When these cabins reach their occupancy goals, additional cabins will be built. This cycle will continue until we reach a level that no new cabins are needed. The potential is unlimited. We may only build these four cabins and be done or we may be building cabins for the next 20 years. The more people in the community who share the vision and work towards this common goal, the more likely it will become a reality.

The new cabins can be the incentive that brings people to our area. Once guests are here, we need to sell them on our community. One of the goals is to get as many as possible of these new visitors to the counties to invest in our area. Some visitors may want their own land and may build their own new cabin or housing. The more we can encourage this, the more it could grow our tax base and provide relief to current property owners. Many of these new

developments could be hundreds of thousands of dollar weekend and vacation homes. Currently we are losing permanent residents who can afford these homes to more populated areas. This will help replace that void.

There are many new economic “branches” that can sprout from this new economic “tree” if it reaches its full growth potential.

People Who Made This Project Possible

This project would not happen if it weren't for the many who have worked hard to make it possible:

- God – without his blessings, nothing is possible.
- Our team at Heartland Lodge is the reason behind Heartland's success and growth. Without them, none of this could happen.
- Shawn Rennecker, Economic Development Director, Illinois Electric Cooperative, has worked very hard and was critical in putting the location of these new cabins in the W.I.E.D.A. Enterprise Zone along with working with U.S.D.A. for a rural development loan. Without these two components, this project would not have worked.
- Brenda Middendorf, Pike County Economic Development Corporation has sat in on many meetings with Shawn Rennecker and Gary Harpole. She has done everything possible to make this project a reality.
- Taxing Bodies - Spring Creek Fire & Township and Bay Creek Water District who all voluntarily joined the Enterprise Zone along with the other taxing bodies who were already part of the Enterprise Zone.
- Farmer's State Bank – Without FSB, Heartland would not be where it is today and this cabin project would not be a reality.
- Contractors/Suppliers–The contractors and suppliers who are part of this project gave generously because they see the vision that this development has on our community.
- Andy Borrowman & members of the Pike County Board – Andy and many members of the board have been supportive of this project from its inception.
- Kaye Iftner – Pike County Chamber of Commerce – Kaye has done everything possible to help the lodge.
- Citizens of Pike & Calhoun Counties – The support and encouragement of the many citizens of both counties has motivated us to continue growing and helping improve our communities.

Twenty-two years ago, we started Heartland Lodge with the vision of promoting our scenic beauty to attract visitors, similar to how Colorado promotes its mountains and Florida promotes its beaches. We need to use what God has given us to do the same. Similar cabin projects have been successful in other parts of the country and we have also seen similar growth and investment with hunters coming to the area. The outdoor recreation market is much larger and has more potential than hunters alone. Hunting was the first step, now a new step and vision has begun.

To learn more about the new cabins, visit www.HeartlandLodge.com/Cabins.

If you have any further questions or would like more detail on this new development and vision, please contact Gary Harpole at 217.734.2526 or Gary@Heartlandlodge.com.