



Economic Development is a Team Effort

By Jennifer Scott, CAEDA

Successful economic development is truly a team effort. New infrastructure, businesses and workforce training programs all involve multiple private and public parties to bring them to fruition. Recently the Wyoming Business Council (WBC) hosted the *Converse Natrona Economic Building Blocks Presentation*, highlighting development projects in the Central Wyoming region. The event demonstrated how economic development involves many dedicated people and showed the success of several local projects. “The theme for today is leadership and partnership,” said Bob Jensen, CEO of the WBC. Economic development “is not just about business parks” he added. “It’s about people living and working in towns that they can be proud of and providing for their family.”

The program focused on the ways WBC funds have been invested in Converse and Natrona Counties. The event itself was held at one of the featured projects, the WCA McMurry Training Center. In February 2007, the State Land and Investment Board gave final approval for the \$3 million grant for the new building, the result of a partnership between the WBC, the Economic Development Joint Powers Board (EDJPB), the Casper Area Economic Development Alliance (CAEDA), the Wyoming Contractor’s Association and the Construction Careers Foundation. The revenue generated from the lease and purchase option goes directly back into other development projects in Natrona County. The facility provides critical workforce training for the construction, transportation and energy industries, and contributes an estimated \$5 million per year to the Casper area economy. “It’s a win for all involved,” said Bruce Brown, General Manager of the McMurry Training Center. Referring to Salt Creek Heights as a “poster child for cooperation between the County, BP, the City, CAEDA and the Business Council,” Shawn Gustafson of WLC Engineering explained how the area was transformed into a business park. The receipt of a \$592,028 Business Ready Community Grant provided streets, sewer and water to the former oil refinery site. Salt Creek Heights now has two tenants and is being actively marketed by CAEDA. Other featured projects in Natrona County included CTRAN, the Casper Area Business Incubator, Cole Creek Industrial Park and PolyPipe.

Converse County also has been involved in several exciting projects. Joe Coyne, Executive Director of the Converse Area Development Organization (CANDO), discussed the new Douglas Business Park with anchor tenant Turbine Cubs of Wyoming, an aircraft manufacturing facility. “We hope to create an industry cluster with this asset,” Joe told the crowd. Glenrock has also been pursuing programs to generate economic growth, such as the revitalization of the old Commerce Block Building. Thanks to a \$1.5 million WBC Business Ready Community Grant, the historic building was renovated in 2007. According to Kathy Patceg, Glenrock Planner and Community Development Coordinator (GEDC) “the building was vacant for about 20 years and now it once again houses businesses, including Reliant Federal Credit Union.”

It’s not just larger cities that have benefited from WBC Community Development Grants, but less populated



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towns as well. “Programs like this are fabulous for small communities like Bar Nunn, Evansville and Mills,” said Phil Hinds, Mayor of Evansville. “We just don’t have the funds on our own.” Recent projects in these communities include the Mills Senior Center, the Evansville Community Center and the Bar Nunn Industrial Area. These are just a few local examples of how entities working together can make a positive economic impact in a community. CAEDA is proud to partner with the Wyoming Business Council to help make these and other projects a reality.



The building blocks of economic development, courtesy of the Wyoming Business Council