



Our mission is to encourage economic development and growth and improve the business conditions of the Falls City area.

FALLS CITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GROWTH ENTERPRISE
 VOLUME III ■ 2011

**Wilderness Falls Groundbreaking
 Scheduled for July 22**



*27-acre Residential
 Development Master Plan
 Developed by Engineering
 Firm Olsson Associates*

(Go to www.fallscityedge.com/27-acre/masterplan.aspx to view larger image »)

Excel Development Group will break ground on its \$3 million dollar Wilderness Falls senior housing project on July 22. Eight duplexes will be built—fourteen will be two-bedroom units and two will be three-bedroom units. The plan also calls for the development of pre-sold market-rate homes to be built in two phases. Lt. Governor Sheehy is scheduled to attend the groundbreaking event.

The senior housing project is part of the master plan for residential development of a 27-acre site near Community Medical Center (CMC) unveiled last month at an EDGE *Lunch and Learn*. The plan was developed by Lincoln-based engineering firm Olsson Associates. EDGE worked in partnership with CMC to develop the plan.

The master plan is in accordance with the [2010 Falls City Housing Study](#). According to the study, the housing target demand in Falls City by 2015 is

81 housing units. The study specifically indicated the need for senior housing, moderate income workforce housing and single-family residential development.

Over 60 people attended the *EDGE Lunch and Learn* sessions held on April 26 to hear more about this new housing development. Miller Monroe Company has been selected to represent new home sales. Owner and EDGE Board Member Steve Kottich presented the master plan and discussed the market rate homes and the types of upgrades that will be available to future home owners.

“It’s exciting to see EDGE’s efforts in spearheading new residential development in Falls City come to fruition,” said EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer. “In collaboration with the City and private sector organizations we are tackling the plan of action outlined in the Housing Study to attract new investments and residents/workers to the Falls City area.”

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Local Leaders Developing Plan to Make Richardson County the Healthiest

Falls City has made significant strides in recent years to enhance the area's quality of place, including investing in the health and well being of its residents. Some of the most recent public and private investments have been a new \$21 million dollar hospital, new walking/biking trails, state-of-the-art high school track and field stadium, new aquatic park and a new library and arts center. Falls City EDGE has also worked to build upon the area's healthcare knowledge and expertise, attracting new healthcare businesses, services and professionals to the community, including Personal Care, Inc. (PCI) owned by physical therapist David Nachtigal and his wife Laurie.

Milken Institute economists Ross DeVol and Armen Bedroussian state in their research report, *An Unhealthy America: The Economic Burden of Chronic Disease Charting a New Course to Save Lives and Increase Productivity and Economic Growth* that more than half of all Americans suffer from one or more chronic diseases. The report quantifies the staggering costs for the national economy, and to employers, of failing to address the rising costs of chronic disease. National economic performance is closely tied to the U.S.' ability to maintain the best-educated, most highly trained and healthiest workforce. They conclude that good health is an investment in economic growth.

Good health is an investment in economic growth.

-Economists Ross DeVol and Armen Bedroussian
The Milken Institute

"EDGE clearly understands the connection between building a stronger, more prosperous economy and promoting a healthy living environment for workers and families," said EDGE Executive Director Beckie Comer. "That's why we support the efforts of a group of community leaders developing a strategy to make Richardson County one of the healthiest counties in the nation."

"Healthy people are vital to the future of our community," commented Nachtigal, one of the community leaders working on the plan. "Healthy adults pave the way for our children to be healthy. Our vision is a community that totally supports optimal health. This means restaurants that provide healthy menu options, businesses that offer products and services that promote health, corporations that incent healthy employees and civic leaders that push for programs that are supportive as well."

Nachtigal and health coaches Bob and Phyllis Doyle, Brenda Guilliams, Linda Santo and Debbie Shefferd are bringing Dr. Wayne Scott Andersen's Take Shape for Life and Habits of Health systematic approach to weight loss and optimal health to the Falls City area. The lifestyle program teaches individuals who want to create optimal health to accomplish that goal by replacing daily habits that lead to a state of "unhealthy" or disease with habits that lead to a healthier state. The program incorporates all facets of life including nutrition, exercise, quality sleep, managing stress and connecting with community.



Habits of Health Coaches
Left to right: Linda Santo, Phyllis Doyle, Bob Doyle, Debbie Shefferd and Brenda Guilliams

The success of the Habits of Health program is driven by an outstanding support system, which is anchored by weekly meetings led by Bob Doyle and hosted by Nachtigal at his fitness center facilities in Falls City and Hiawatha, Kansas. Beyond the weekly meetings, which are free of charge and open to the public, the health coach plays a vital role and helps the client connect to a large bionetwork of healthy people, both online and in the larger community.

For more information on the program and the healthiest county plan of action, please contact the following coaches:

- Bob and Phyllis Doyle at www.voyageofhealth.com
- Brenda Guilliams at www.journeytowellness.tsfl.com
- David Nachtigal at 402-245-4606
- Linda Santo at www.thegoodlife-linda.tsfl.com
- Debbie Shefferd at www.inspiredtobehealthy.tsfl.com

EDGE Hosts Falls City Public High School Alumni

On Saturday, June 25, EDGE, in cooperation with the Chamber/Main Street groups, hosted a hospitality event for Falls City Public High School alumni. The event provided an opportunity for alum to learn more about recent economic development and community projects. Bus tours were conducted showcasing Falls City's business and quality of living amenities, including the new senior housing development, aquatic park, library and arts center, the newest lodging accommodations, Community Medical Center, the industrial park and much more.



“The alumni event and other direct marketing to our high school graduates offer an opportunity for EDGE to remind current and former residents of the excellent education and great quality of living we have here in Falls City,” said Beckie Cromer, Executive Director. “We encourage alumni to stay connected by signing up for our e-newsletter at www.fallscityedge.com/eNews.aspx.

New Restaurant Opens on Main Street

LaCarreta Mexican Restaurant opened its doors on May 26. The restaurant is located at 1516 Stone Street and is open daily from 11:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., serving authentic Mexican food.

“We were pleased to provide location assistance to the owners of LaCarreta,” said EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer. “Attracting the new restaurant created six new jobs, brought new residents to the community and adds to the vibrancy of the downtown redevelopment area.”



Nebraska ranks in the top 10 states in which to do business, according to CNBC's fifth annual "[America's Top States for Business](#)" study. Overall, Nebraska ranked 10th in the study, which looked at ten categories of competitiveness, moving up from 13th place in 2010. The state ranked 5th in the categories of business-friendliness and economy (economic health and growth) and 6th in cost of living.

\$350,000 Awarded for Phase II Downtown Revitalization Project

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development has awarded \$350,000 dollars to the Main Street Falls City organization in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for the Phase II Downtown Revitalization Implementation efforts. This grant represents one more positive step towards the revitalization of the designated Downtown Historic District in the community. The funding, as well as that approved by the City of Falls City, will allow the District's new streetscape plan to begin its initial endeavor to provide a safer pedestrian and customer experience on the streets and sidewalks of Falls City's downtown, while also incorporating a beautification project.

This first phase of the project will address the streetscape of Stone Street from 17th to 18th Streets, across from the Courthouse, and 17th from Stone to Harlan Streets. The preliminary planning will begin as soon as the funding is released, with actual physical construction beginning in the spring of 2012.

[To learn more about the Falls City Downtown Revitalization Plan, visit the Falls City Chamber of Commerce/Main Street website »](#)

Peru State Hosts Southeast Nebraska Career Fair

[Peru State College's](#) (PSC) Career Services Offices hosted a Southeast Nebraska Career Fair on April 12. The Career Fair was designed to give PSC students and people across southeast Nebraska an opportunity to meet with representatives from large and mid-sized firms and government agencies to discuss current and anticipated employment openings for full-time, part-time or summer employment, as well as internship positions. Approximately 220 attended the event, including 175 students.

“In these challenging economic times, our students and the general public found it encouraging that many employers are interested in hiring,” said PSC Coordinator of Cooperative Programs Alice Holtz. “Employers were impressed with our students’ questions about how to better prepare themselves for the job market. And students felt employers were very helpful in giving suggestions on pursuing employment and internship opportunities.”



[Staffing Services, Inc. \(SSI\)](#) was one of 39 firms and government agencies that attended the event. SSI recently opened an office in Falls City and works with several area employers to provide temporary and permanent staffing solutions.

EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer attended the event in collaboration with the Southeast Nebraska Partners for Progress (P4P) Regional Group. “The Career Fair was a great opportunity to visit with students and others about employment in Falls City,” said Cromer.

EDGE Marketing Activities Update

EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer participated in the most recent [Community Venture Network \(CVN\)](#) event held in Minneapolis, MN. She heard presentations from eight start-up and early-stage businesses about their company and products. Follow-up conversations have been held with businesses that indicated an interest in the Falls City/Richardson County area and location information has been provided to them.



CVN was formed for rural communities and expanding companies in 1991 in an effort to bring high growth businesses together with economic development professionals seeking to attract business expansions and relocations to their community.

Emerging growth businesses find that the reduced operating costs, lower labor rates, attractive financing programs and unified community support found in *outstate* communities provide the maximum opportunities for successful business growth. Too often, however, the community and the business never find each other. CVN assists in bringing together communities with prospective entrepreneurial firms.

CVN conducts active outreach programs to identify these emerging businesses and to educate them on the benefits of seeking *out state* locations. The types of companies participating in CVN include:

1. *“Development Stage” Companies:* Companies with existing product lines seeking expansion capital.
2. *Business Acquisitions:* New business owners seeking additional equity or expansion capital to complete the purchase of successful, existing companies.
3. *Spin-Offs/Business Expansions:* Current divisions of ongoing companies that are available for sale that might constitute a business opportunity for CVN members' existing business base.

“The CVN event was a great opportunity for EDGE to network with entrepreneurial firms,” said Cromer. “We are working aggressively to address the site location needs of the businesses that expressed an interest in our area to generate new investments and jobs.”

NIFA Announces New Business Incentives

The Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) is accepting applications under the Asset Modernization Initiative which offers financial incentives to encourage small manufacturing, agricultural processing or food processing companies to invest in modernizing their assets. The incentives are available for eligible investments made by existing Nebraska for-profit companies. The Initiative is designed to assist small businesses (those with fewer than 100 employees), increase market share or target international markets by improving productivity.

The 2010 Battelle report “[Competitive Advantage Assessment and Strategy for Nebraska](#)” noted the need for financing tools for manufacturing modernization, expansion and technological advancement. NIFA is implementing two programs under the Initiative: the Modern Asset Grant (MAG) and the Capital Access Program (CAP).



The MAG offers a direct grant in an amount up to 6 percent of eligible basis for the acquisition of new or used machinery and equipment used in a manufacturing, agricultural processing or food processing business. The maximum MAG award amount is \$30,000 dollars per eligible business.

The CAP encourages lenders to make loans to qualifying businesses by establishing a loan loss reserve pool for loans originated by the participating lender. The borrower and lender each make a contribution into a loan loss reserve account established by the Lender and NIFA matches the contributions in an account established by NIFA to create up to a ten percent loan loss reserve on the loan amount. NIFA will also provide an additional bonus reserve of up to two and half percent of the first \$500,000 dollars in loans enrolled by the lender. The loan loss reserve is available to the participating lender for recovery of any losses on any loan they have enrolled in the CAP. The maximum contribution by NIFA to the loan loss reserve is \$25,000 dollars per eligible business.

A total of \$1,000,000 dollars has been set aside by NIFA for the first year of the Initiative beginning July 1, 2011 and an additional \$500,000 dollars for a second year. NIFA expects the Initiative to stimulate investment by participating businesses in modernizing their fixed assets between \$10 and \$30 million dollars on average each year.

More details about the Initiative and each program, including the application forms, are available on NIFA’s website at www.nifa.org »

[Visit the EDGE website to learn more about the profitable advantages of expanding your business in Falls City/Richardson County »](#)

Business Appreciation Week

In May during National Business & Industry Week, the EDGE team delivered cookies to 48 area businesses in a show of appreciation for the outstanding contributions they are making to the health of the local economy.

“We look forward each year to taking the time to thank our employers for the investment they have made in our community and for the jobs they have created for area residents,” said Beckie Cromer, EDGE Executive Director.

[Visit the EDGE website to learn more about Falls City’s leading employers »](#)



EDGE representatives Debbie Witt and Carla Rhodd deliver cookies to Richardson County Bank & Trust President Dana Rathje

Governor Heineman Signs Talent & Innovation Initiative Bills into Law

The Nebraska Legislature passed and Governor Dave Heineman signed the final measures of a four-part legislative package into law, the Talent and Innovation Initiative, which is aimed at advancing business innovation and strengthening workforce recruitment efforts in Nebraska. DED will implement the Initiative programs contained in the bills.

Based on 2010 recommendations made in a comprehensive review of Nebraska's economic climate by the Battelle Technology Partnership Practice, the Talent & Innovation Initiative was developed to better leverage existing funds and enhance momentum in developing industries positioned to benefit from technology and innovation.



LB 386, the Nebraska Internship Program, introduced by Sen. Lavon Heidemann of Elk Creek, takes effect June 1. It is a partnership with Nebraska businesses to create new internship opportunities for college and university students. Funded with \$1.5 million dollars a year in job training funds, and matched by eligible companies, the program will create opportunities for 500 to 750 juniors and seniors studying at four-year institutions or students in their second year at a Nebraska community college to gain job experience. Awards will be made on a first-come, first-serve basis to companies creating new internship opportunities, which are capped at 10 per business. Internships will pay at least minimum wage and range from 12 week to year-long programs.

LB 387, the Business Innovation Act, introduced by Sen. Galen Hadley of Kearney, is intended to help businesses develop new technologies to enhance quality job opportunities in the state. It will provide competitive grants for research at Nebraska institutions, new product development and testing, and help expand small business and entrepreneur outreach efforts. It will expand grant opportunities within targeted industries to help businesses providing matching funds with prototype development, commercialization and applied research in the state and provide assistance for microenterprise projects. The law takes effect Oct. 1.

LB 388, the Site & Building Development Fund, introduced by Sen. John Wightman of Lexington, takes effect Oct. 1 and is intended to help increase industrial and commercial sites available and ready for business development. Communities will provide matching funds toward projects that can involve demolition, new construction and rehabilitation. State funding will be focused on land and infrastructure costs with 40 percent of funding available to non-metro areas.

LB 389, the Angel Investment Tax Credit, introduced by Sen. Abbie Cornett of Bellevue, is effective for the current tax year. It encourages investment in high-tech and other startup enterprises in Nebraska by providing refundable state income tax credits to qualified investors investing in qualified early-stage companies. Capped at \$3 million dollars annually, the program requires a minimum investment of \$25,000 dollars for individuals and \$50,000 dollars for investment funds. Eligible small businesses must have fewer than 25 employees, with the majority based in the state.

[To learn more about the Initiative and Small Business Innovation Act, visit the Nebraska Department of Economic Development website »](#)

Richardson County Total Property Value Increases

According to the Nebraska Department of Revenue, assessed valuations on property in Richardson County increased 45 percent from 2006 to 2010. EDGE Executive Director, Beckie Cromer said, "While ag land prices are a factor, we continue to see taxable growth in Richardson County because of economic development efforts, including the wind farm, housing development and existing manufacturing expansions."

Nuclear Power Industry Training Programs Offered at Southeast Nebraska Career Institute

Kevin Gardner has worked in commercial nuclear power for 21 years. Recognizing the industry's need for highly trained, qualified individuals in several different crafts to work as contractors during refueling outages, Gardner founded Southeast Nebraska Career Institute, LLC (SNCI) in 2009.

The 56,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art learning facility is located in Stella (Richardson County), NE, and includes 23 classrooms, 5,600 sq. ft. shop area and 20 plus acres are available for large scale mockups. Training programs include Radiation Protection Tech Program and Certified Scaffold Builder Program. Costs of the programs range from \$7,000 to \$8,500 dollars per person.

During a nuclear power plant refueling and maintenance outage the utility typically hires 800 to 1,200 contract individuals to work for a number of weeks to support the outage. Once the outage is complete the contractors move to another outage and so on. Clearly it is not feasible for one plant to train those individuals to have them go to another plant. Some of the hiring contract companies offer training and some do not. SNCI's business model was designed to fill that void.

SNCI works closely with the hiring contract companies to attain commitments for a certain number of people needed for the upcoming outage season in a given craft. That is the number of students SNCI allows into the programs ensuring everyone that is trained at the Institute is immediately employed upon completion of the program. Average pay is between \$2,100 and \$2,800 dollars per week depending on which program is utilized. A typical outage can last between 4 and 7 weeks and it is not uncommon to work 4 to 5 outages a year.

According to Gardner, SNCI created nine jobs in 2010, eight jobs in January 2011 and a projected 40 in 2011. The current projection is between 30 and 40 jobs to be created in 2011 and 40 to 50 in 2012. "These projections are based on demands within the industry and working with vendors for placement after training," said Gardner.



[Southeast Nebraska Ventures Competition is coming to Peru State College this fall. Stayed tuned for more information »](#)

EDGE Welcomes New Member Investors

**Bernard and Trudy Burenheide
Ben and Krystal Howard
Alan and Freeda Romine
Salem Grain Co.
Jim and Diane Sefried**

To learn more about EDGE's program of work and how you can join us in shaping the future of Falls City, visit the [EDGE website](#) or contact [Beckie Cromer, Executive Director](#).

A Message from the Director

The term *shovel-ready* has been tossed around in economic development circles for many years but it really became a household term in 2008 when Congress worked to pass the economic stimulus package. The shovel-ready premise is based upon the need for communities and economic development organizations to invest in infrastructure projects that strengthen the long-term competitiveness of economy, including developing an inventory of “shovel-ready sites” available for immediate development.

Developing a shovel-ready site involves grading, infrastructure development including electric, gas, water, and wastewater, telecommunications services and pre-zoning. A shovel-ready site increases the marketability of an industrial site by reducing potential costs and time constraints in the site development process. Cornfields can be found anywhere in the Midwest but a shovel-ready site is a *business-ready* site.

In 2009 Falls City EDGE added a 10.1 acre industrial site to its inventory of sites and buildings. EDGE’s strategic plan includes the goal of making this industrial acreage a shovel-ready site and we have moved into the grading phase of this process. So if you are driving through our vibrant industrial park and see the earth moving, know we are all working to make Falls City competitive in the industrial recruitment arena. It takes us one step closer in the shovel-ready process and gives us an enhanced site which further positions us for future growth.



[Falls City Industrial Park 10.1 Acre Site under development. Go to the EDGE website to learn more »](#)

-Beckie Cromer, Executive Director

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