



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

edge

FALLS CITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GROWTH ENTERPRISE VOLUME IV ■ 2010

Housing Development Funding Approved



“The new housing development will be an asset for aging baby boomers and seniors who reside in the Falls City area and will improve the quality and choices available in the housing stock.”

-Dana Rathje, EDGE VP, Product Development & Public Policy

The Falls City City Council last month unanimously approved [EXCEL Development Group's](#) request for \$65,000 in infrastructure funding for a new senior housing development. Headquartered in Lincoln, EXCEL specializes in senior living communities and affordable housing. EXCEL has completed more than 800 units, totaling more than \$80 million dollars in development.

The approved funding will be used for water, sewer and street infrastructure. \$60,000 of the approved funding will be provided through Tax Increment Financing, with the additional \$5,000 provided through LB 840 funding.

The development will be called Wilderness Falls. The plan consists of 16 affordable duplexes and 6 market-rate duplexes. “The \$3 million dollar project will help attract retirees to Falls City as well as reduce the flight of current residents to neighboring communities,” said Beckie Cromer, EDGE Executive Director.

The Wilderness Falls housing development project is one of the outcomes of the January 2010 Falls City Housing Study completed by Hanna:Keelan Associates, a Lincoln-based professional community and research consulting firm, with guidance and direction from the City of Falls City Housing Board and EDGE. The study provides direction and clarity to improving the housing inventory and enhancing redevelopment efforts in Falls City.

“Available, quality housing is a key factor in Falls City’s success in attracting new businesses and attracting and retaining workers at all income levels,” said Cromer. “We are working diligently in collaboration with the City to meet the goal of developing up to 82 new housing units by 2015.”

[Click here to download a copy of the 2010 Falls City Housing Study »](#)

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Groundbreaking for Missouri River Bridge at Rulo

Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman joined leaders from three states to break ground for the new Missouri River Bridge at Rulo in Richardson County. The Governor credited area residents for their role in a letter-writing campaign that urged government financial support for the new \$32 million dollar bridge.

“We’re here because of all of you,” the Governor said in his keynote address. “This project is not only significant to our state—but to our neighbors in Kansas and Missouri. The new bridge is critical for economic development and tourism throughout the Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri tri-state region.”



Beth SICKEL, Co-Chair of the Tri-State Corridor Alliance and President of Falls City EDGE, served as emcee for the program. In addition to remarks by the Governor, NE State Senator Lavon Heidemann; Alan Abbott, Highway Specialist for NE U.S. Senator Ben Nelson; Angela Kreps, aide to MO U.S. Representative Sam Graves; and Brown County (KS) Commissioner Steve Roberts and Mitch Glaeser (Falls City) representing the Corridor Alliance, participated in the program. SICKEL also recognized her co-chair, Charlie Radatz, for his leadership and hard work on the project.

“This is a great time to celebrate,” said Radatz. “Many hundreds of people from all three states have made this new bridge possible. Because of their involvement, construction is beginning four years sooner than was thought possible when an effort to gain support for a new bridge was launched.”

Actual work on the bridge is already under way. The new bridge is being constructed approximately 650 ft. south of the existing bridge. Construction of the 1,026-ft.-long main span started in late August; and the Missouri side approach, including roadway embankment, culverts, concrete pavement and an 883-ft. section of bridge, started last month.

Flat Water Wind Farm on Schedule

The \$145 million dollar wind power project is on schedule according to company officials.

GE turbines began arriving by truck in August. The concrete foundations, each reinforced with massive amounts of rebar, have been poured and erection of the turbines began in September. As of the end of September, the skyline in southwestern Richardson County is patterned with 18 wind turbines as construction continues to progress.

The project, which provides the greatest valuation increase in the history of Richardson County, is employing approximately 140 workers—half of them from the county. Moreover, Gallop Power, the company that is constructing the green energy project, estimates that \$100,000 per day is being spent in the county on everything from salaries to lodging, groceries and fuel.



EDGE officials tour construction site

The wind farm is expected to be operational by January 1. OPPD has agreed to purchase all of the power produced by the 60 megawatt wind farm.

EDGE will host a program on the Flat Water Wind Farm project for Falls City Middle School students on October 19th at 2:00 PM. The public is invited to attend. According to Beckie Cromer, EDGE Executive Director, “The all-school assembly will be a good way to share recent economic development successes with students, as well as educate them on exciting opportunities in the field of renewable energy.”

USDA Awards Southeast Nebraska Communications \$11.3M to Expand Broadband

[Southeast Nebraska Communications \(SNC\)](#) received notification in August from the U.S. Department of Agriculture of approved funding assistance for an exciting new project to extend Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) technology to over 1,200 rural households and businesses.

According to Beth Sickel, Vice President and General Manager, “This \$11.3 million dollar USDA award, a combination loan and grant, will help provide investment to extend FTTH technology to residents in the villages of Salem, Shubert, Stella, Rulo, Verdon, Barada and Preston, along with all of the surrounding rural areas.” SNC is currently in the process of installing FTTH technology to all homes and businesses in Falls City, where upon completion, it will be the largest community in Nebraska to be completely upgraded using this state-of-the-art fiber optic network. Once FTTH technology is extended to rural villages and areas, SNC’s service territory will be 100 percent fiber optic.



Sickel who also serves as President of EDGE said, “SNC’s progressive vision for the future of providing all households and businesses in its service territory with FTTH technology will help toward stabilizing shrinking population and providing economic growth through innovation, collaboration, and professional development. Now that vision will be a reality!”

Falls City Finalist for Dual Rail Site Planning Grant

EDGE is a finalist in the running for a Community Development Block Grant through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED) to assist in the site analysis and master site development of a dual rail-served industrial park. According to EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer, the detailed application involved extensive coordination and support of the railroads serving Falls City—the BNSF and Union Pacific, the City of Falls City Municipal Utilities, Southeast Nebraska Communications and the land owners.



Next steps in the process involve NDED conducting on-site visits. NDED's announcement of up to five sites to receive planning grant(s) is expected in November.



If successful in securing the grant, Cromer noted development of the dual rail site will be a major component of EDGE’s long-range strategic economic development planning.

Available Office Building Remodeled

The 6,700 sq. ft. former medical clinic building has been completely remodeled.



The building has a new face, entryways and parking lot on the outside; and the inside was converted to 2,700 sq. ft. of updated clinical space and 4,000 sq. ft. of shell space that may be built to meet the needs of new or expanding businesses. [For more information, including a floor plan, go to the EDGE website »](#) Please [contact us](#) for a customized proposal and/or site visit.



[Visit the EDGE website for a complete inventory of available office and industrial buildings »](#)

EDGE and Chamber of Commerce/Main Street Co-Locate to Streamline Business Services

EDGE has moved its offices and, as of September, is now co-located with the Falls City Area Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Falls City at their current location of 1705 Stone Street.

"The Falls City Area Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Falls City and EDGE each have unique programs of work focused on enhancing the economic health and prosperity of Falls City and Richardson County," said EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer. "This move creates not only a unified office location but a stronger working relationship that will streamline business development services for clients—whether they be retail, industrial, residential or commercial."

The shared office space does not mean the three organizations are merging. All three will continue to maintain separate funding, boards of directors, programs and staff according to Cromer.

New, Upgraded EDGE Website Launched

EDGE launched a new, upgraded website in late August. The new site is rich in content specifically developed for the corporate site selector and site location consultant. The site provides detailed information and data on the area's location advantages, available properties, leading employers, target industries, business resources and other key features/benefits of doing business in the Falls City area. The navigation system allows for easy and intuitive navigation throughout the site, enabling visitors to find the information they need to evaluate the Falls City area for investment opportunities.

In addition to detailed information on Falls City/Richardson County's business location advantages, the site features:

- a GIS-enhanced site selection database powered by the Location One Information System (LOIS), providing an easy-to-use tool to search for sites and buildings based on specific project criteria as well as gather detailed demographic and economic information on the City, County and State.
- an improved news blog with the latest development news and happenings
- links to EDGE's social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn



The newly-designed site is also visually appealing with a home page that welcomes visitors with rotating photos featuring the area's key location assets and new developments—along with the *Community of the Year* video montage. Overall the site provides a positive *virtual site visit* for site location decision-makers. [Take a tour of the EDGE website today!](#)

Welcome New EDGE Member Investors

Tim and Tracie Heckenlively
Monsignor Robert Roh

Tim was also appointed as an Ex-Officio Member of the EDGE Board in his role as the new Falls City Public School Superintendent, replacing Dr. John Habben.

New Restaurant Opens in Falls City

Java Dave's opened in August in the Falls City downtown business district at 1523 Harlan Street. The restaurant is open for business 6:00 AM to 8 PM Monday through Saturday and features a full espresso bar, sandwiches, salads and unique pizzas, as well as a "grab and go" breakfast. The owners, John Hopp and Linda Orton, own and operate a similar business in Sabetha, Kansas.



EDGE provided the business with site location assistance. According to John and Linda, "EDGE was our first stop to exploring business investment opportunities in Falls City."

Mayor Proclaims Peru State College Week

Falls City Mayor Rodney Vandenberg signed a proclamation declaring the week of September 7 "[Peru State College Week](#)." The proclamation read:

A PROCLAMATION
*by the Mayor of the City of Falls City, Nebraska,
recognizing the regional outreach efforts of Peru State College, Peru, Nebraska.*

***WHEREAS**, the city of Falls City is concerned with the availability of educational opportunities for its citizens; and*

***WHEREAS**, Peru State College provides excellent educational opportunities
for students of all ages, both on campus and online; and*

***WHEREAS**, Peru State College provides employment possibilities
for the citizens of Falls City and the region; and*

***WHEREAS**, the City of Falls City and Peru State College cooperate and
work together to further develop partnerships for the betterment of the
citizens of Falls City and the region;*

***NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the
the Mayor of Falls City hereby officially
declares the week of September 7, 2010, as Peru State College Week*

Following the signing, PSC President Dr. Dan Hanson noted, "In Elaine's and my visits to Falls City, we have been well received and we look forward to meeting and visiting with more individuals in the community. The College appreciates the mayor's and committee's efforts in their community outreach endeavors."

"The proclamation highlights the strong connections Falls City has with the higher education institutions serving the region," said Beth Sickel, EDGE President.



The week culminated on Saturday with the Peru State Bobcats facing the Buena Vista Beavers in their first ever game at Jug Brown Stadium in Falls City.

Governor Heineman Highlights Priorities for Nebraska's Continued Economic Vitality

In September, Governor Dave Heineman outlined the findings of a new report that surveyed Nebraska's business climate and recommended strategies to capitalize on the state's existing resources. "This report provides us with a roadmap for future economic development efforts," Governor Heineman said. "It helps us better understand Nebraska's strengths and competitive advantages. It highlights opportunities for better collaboration and it offers ideas for accelerating new economy innovation in communities across Nebraska."

Three initiatives were identified as key to Nebraska's future competitiveness, including: providing tailored support to encourage development of growing industries in the state; connecting talented professionals and recent graduates with opportunities for high-skills jobs in Nebraska; and supporting the innovative expansion efforts of companies already doing business in the state.



The report indicates that Nebraska is well-positioned for continued growth with an unusually diverse economy. Twelve industry clusters were identified where Nebraska is already a national leader or is well-suited for additional growth. Governor Heineman said, "We are fortunate to have so many industries that are strong and contribute to our economic base. Our challenge for the next few years is to create new opportunities to attract more specialized and advanced companies to Nebraska."

Five industries are strong with businesses providing specialized services and with growth rates outpacing national rates. Industries considered to be current strengths for Nebraska include: the financial services; companies providing transportation, warehousing and distribution logistics services; precision metals manufacturing; bioscience-related firms; and renewable energy. Three industries represent emerging strengths for the state with strong potential to attract new investment and create new jobs. Emerging industries include: research and development and engineering services; health sciences; and hospitality and tourism. Four industries provide specialized services to customers and have a significant presence in Nebraska. Companies are considered to be important to retain and would benefit from a highly-trained workforce. Four industries classified as retention priorities for the state include: agriculture and food processing; business management and administrative services; software and computer services; and agriculture machinery.

The comprehensive review was developed with input from state and local economic development professionals, university and college officials, and rural and urban business leaders. The Nebraska Departments of Economic Development and Labor oversaw and funded the study conducted by the Battelle Technology Partnership Practice, the world's largest nonprofit independent research and development organization. An overview of the report is available online at www.neded.org.

EDGE Identifies Target Industries

With assistance from Nebraska Department of Economic Development, EDGE identified three target industry sectors where the Falls City area offers a distinct competitive advantage: advanced manufacturing—wind energy, rail transportation services and business services—customer service call centers and data centers. According to EDGE Executive Beckie Cromer, "These targets build upon recent development successes and are well matched to the area's assets and workforce skills and knowledge."

Learn more about why Falls City and Richardson County are a good fit for these industry sectors by visiting the [EDGE website](#) »



Located in the center of the U.S. wind corridor and wind energy industry, Falls City/Richardson County is an ideal location for wind energy manufacturers

A Message from the Director

Recently, I ran across a blog story on the importance of economic developers focusing on continuous improvement of *the product*—working to develop it at the highest level—whether that be workforce, sites, public policy or infrastructure. Since its formation in 2006, Falls City EDGE, in collaboration with its public and private partners, has done just that. We have been strategically focused on making the *Falls City area product* one of the most competitive in the Midwest. Some of the significant product improvements include:

- Expanded the Falls City Industrial Park by 10.1 acres to accommodate future growth
- Upgraded and enhanced marketability of available buildings
- Enhanced financial incentives, including Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and EDGE development incentives
- Developed and implemented employer-driven workforce development programs, including the Welder Training Program
- Improved telecommunications infrastructure with Southeast Nebraska Communications' Fiber-to-the-Home Technology, connecting all homes and businesses to fiber optic cable
- Worked with state and federal officials to improve transportation infrastructure, including the new Missouri River Bridge at Rulo
- Improved quality of living infrastructure, including a new hospital, library and recreational amenities
- Collaborating to improve housing options, including initial phases for planning a 27-acre residential development site which include the proposed Excel Development project

These improvements are enabling the Falls City area to compete more frequently and more effectively for public and private investments.

Beckie Cromer, EDGE Executive Director

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