

# FALLS CITY NEBRASKA

Strategically Positioned. Building for the Future.



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 I ■ 2010

## The Journey Continues into the New Decade



### A Message from EDGE President Beth Sickel

The year of 2009 was a very eventful and extraordinary year for the Falls City area. Over the past year there have been many shining moments from being designated a Nebraska Economic Development Certified Community to being named Nebraska Community of the Year to being accepted into the Nebraska Main Street program.

In [Jim Collins'](#) book [Good to Great](#) he describes the *flywheel effect*—what happens when great organizations stay focused on their core business. With time, focus and energy and with all of the team members pointed in the same direction, the organizations' efforts build momentum which results in their success. My goal as president will be to build upon our successes—keep the flywheel turning—moving the team forward in the direction of economic development success.

With an increased inventory of marketable sites and buildings, new incentives, an infrastructure with capacity for growth and a new state-of-the-art fiber optics network, Falls City is one of the most competitive locations in the Midwest. In the coming year, we will continue to focus on aggressively marketing Falls City to generate new opportunities—through multiple channels, collaborating with our state and regional economic development partners and local industry to leverage marketing dollars and maximize success.

Finally, I would like to thank Kevin Malone for the outstanding leadership he has provided EDGE, serving as President over the past three years. I would also like to thank all of you who have and continue to support the work of EDGE. We are a stronger, more competitive economic development team because of the community's support.

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# EDGE Celebrates Top 10 Successes of 2009 at Annual Meeting

EDGE held its annual meeting on January 6. The evening was cold and snowy, but inside leaders celebrated a warm and sunny forecast for Falls City. Guest speaker was Phil Michel, a Business Development Consultant with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and a Falls City native. Michel said he was proud of what Falls City has accomplished in the past year, including being named the Nebraska Diplomats' 2009 Community of the Year.

Steve Kottich, EDGE Vice President of Marketing and Sales, said "EDGE has led efforts and achieved success in improving the economic health and prosperity of Falls City, despite a rocky national economy." He went on to present the following Top 10 Successes of 2009.

## 1. Increased product inventory – marketable sites and buildings.

- Expanded [Falls City Industrial Park](#), acquiring 10.1 acres of land to accommodate future business growth and development.
- Completed upgrades to the [17,700 sq. ft. available building](#) to enhance its marketability.
- Approved use of HUD-EDI grant funds to redesign and remodel the [former Family Medical Clinic building](#) to enhance its marketability and potential use as a back office operations/call center.
- Approved utilization of HUD-EDI grant funds to renovate space in the Grand Weaver Hotel to accommodate two entrepreneurial/start-up businesses.



[17,700 Sq. Ft. Available Building »](#)

## 2. Strengthened the competitiveness of the Falls City business location product.

- Completed steps to utilize Tax Increment Financing (TIF) as a financial economic development incentive tool.
- Secured \$12,000 Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) grant to fund an enhanced local housing and redevelopment plan. In addition, secured a \$100,000 grant through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program and \$20,000 in Site Clearance funding. These are key steps that have been taken to increase quality housing inventory.
- Participated in Career Day at Falls City High School by conducting entrepreneurial seminars for high school students, resulting in young people having a greater awareness of the many opportunities Falls City has to offer.
- Ongoing contact with Governor's Office, Congressional Delegation, State Senators and local public officials to advance Falls City's economic development priorities, including advocating for improvements to the area's transportation infrastructure and funding for development sites in the industrial park.

## 3. Retained all major employers/capital investments.

- Completed sales calls on [all leading employers](#) and corporate headquarters of Watkins Aircraft Support Products (WASP) in Glenwood, MN; Ames True Temper in Camp Hill, PA; Vantec in Webster City, IA; and Herzog in St. Joseph, MO.
- Employment levels remained steady and employers are optimistic about 2010. Ames True Temper's employment grew to over 30 and the company plans to bring new product lines to the Falls City facility.
- Community Medical Center opened its new \$21 million state-of-the-art medical facility.

*"I can see how Falls City, through EDGE and other initiatives, has positioned itself to be Community of the Year. I think you are on the right track with actively promoting Falls City and all it has to offer."*

*-Dave Anderson, President  
Watkins Aircraft Support Products*

# EDGE Celebrates Top 10 Successes of 2009 at Annual Meeting *(cont.)*

## 4. Filled the marketing-sales pipeline with qualified prospects.

- Launched series of quarterly targeted direct marketing campaigns, placed [available sites and buildings advertisements on the commercial real estate website LoopNet](#) and worked closely with state and regional economic development partners to market Falls City's business location opportunities. As a result, EDGE filled the marketing-sales pipeline with over 475 qualified businesses and site selection consultants, 5 active projects and 5 site visits.
- Over 5,000 Falls City and Sacred Heart high school alumni were sent a mailing encouraging them to help *tell and sell* the story of a new, progressive Falls City, resulting in 200, thus far, requesting to receive EDGE news and updates.

## 5. Strengthened the Falls City brand identity by developing a new, comprehensive community portal website that serves as a gateway to the EDGE, Chamber and City websites. The site retains EDGE's brand visual identity established in 2006, including the position-driven themeline—"Strategically Positioned. Building for the Future"



[Click here to go to Falls City portal website »](#)

## 6. Increased member investors and maintained investment levels.

- Worked diligently to inform, engage and demonstrate accountability to member investors and community stakeholders. The [2006-09 Milestones: Marking Our Journey on the Economic Development Road to Success](#) issued mid-year was very well received by investors and community stakeholders, as well as other informational events, including a series of *lunch and learns*, mid-year members networking event and annual meeting/banquet.
- According to the 2009 member investors survey, 100% of those responding indicated they are satisfied with EDGE's performance in achieving its mission of encouraging economic development and growth and improving the business conditions of the Falls City area.

## 7. Named *Nebraska Community of the Year*. [Click here to view video »](#)

## 8. Awarded [Nebraska Economic Development Certified Community Designation](#).

## 9. Accepted into the [Nebraska Main Street Community program](#). The Falls City Area Chamber of Commerce led the application process, resulting in the Heritage Nebraska Board of Directors formally accepting Falls City as the newest Nebraska Main Street Community—one of only a few in the state. EDGE looks forward to partnering with Main Street to continue *building for the future*—a new and progressive Falls City.

## 10. Located the JW Prairie Wind Power Flat Water Wind Farm development in Richardson County. This \$100+ million project will generate reliable energy, create clean-energy jobs and provide long-term economic benefits for the County.

## The Bottom Line: 2009 Return on Investment

- More than \$75,000 generated in private sector investments.
- \$100+ million dollar capital investment will be generated by the Flat Water Wind Farm development.
- More than \$132,000 secured in federal and state grant dollars.
- All major employers/capital investment retained and employers project steady growth in 2010.
- Political, regional and corporate relationships ... *priceless*.

# EDGE Vice Presidents Outline 2010 Action Plans

In November, EDGE Vice Presidents and Executive Director Beckie Cromer, facilitated a series of planning sessions with the organization's three strategic focus teams to develop a comprehensive plan of action for the coming year. Below the Vice Presidents outline EDGE's strategic priorities and key actions for 2010.

## Dana Rathje, VP - Product Development and Public Policy Advocacy

The Product Development and Public Policy Team's strategic objective is to *enhance the competitiveness of the business location product—the greater Falls City area—to compete more frequently and effectively for business investments and to decrease the number of missed business location/expansion opportunities.*

In 2010 strategic priorities will focus on: increasing product inventory—marketable sites and buildings, enhancing access and quality of transportation networks, increasing the quality of housing inventory, developing and enhancing workforce skills, enhancing incentives and advocating for public policies and funding in support of EDGE's mission, goals and program of work. Key actions this year will include:

- Accelerate completion of shovel-ready site(s) in the Falls City Industrial Park and design, specs and funding of a new speculative industrial building. Explore continued expansion of the park.
- Work with the County Commissioners and Airport Road Committee to advocate exploring all funding alternatives for the Airport Road project.
- Review, update and prioritize goals, policies and action strategies in the new Housing and Redevelopment Plan to develop a comprehensive, public-private approach to increasing the quality housing inventory in Falls City. Continue working with housing developers to encourage and facilitate housing development in Falls City, including market rate residential development and scattered site fill in, as well as new subdivisions and senior housing.
- Encourage redevelopment of the downtown and blighted areas utilizing Tax Increment Financing (TIF).
- In collaboration with the Falls City Chamber and area education service providers, develop a customer service skills training program and leadership training program.
- Stay engaged with local business and industry to identify specific workforce development/skills training needs.
- Generate funding for a *Richardson County New Venture Competition* to encourage entrepreneurial/new business development.



[Click here for information on the Falls City Industrial Park »](#)

## Steve Kottich, VP – Marketing and Sales

The Marketing and Sales Team's strategic objective is to *aggressively brand, market and sell Falls City business location opportunities, to retain/expand existing business investments, and to generate new business investment prospects.*

Strategic priorities this year will focus on: retaining and growing existing business investments, marketing Falls City through multiple channels to generate 500 new qualified business leads and encouraging/facilitating new business start-ups. Key actions to be implemented in 2010 include:

- Maintain ongoing dialogue established in the past year with the area's leading businesses/employers, including headquarters, to encourage growth/expansion in Falls City and to identify new business location leads/prospects—buyer-supplier linkages. Complete at least one call on all major Falls City facilities.

# EDGE Vice Presidents Outline 2010 Action Plans *(cont.)*

## Marketing and Sales *(cont.)*

- Build upon and strengthen existing relationships with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and regional partners, including the Lincoln Area Development Partnership and Southeast Nebraska Partners for Progress (P4P), to leverage marketing dollars and maximize success.
- Continue to build and strengthen relationships with the railroads serving Falls City/Richardson County—the BNSF and UP; utilities—OPPD and NPPD; and higher education institutions, including Peru State College and Southeast Community College. Focus collaborations on joint marketing activities and Falls City product enhancements, and workforce development.
- Continue the EDGE Business Prospect Lead Referral Program, engaging EDGE member investors and the general public in marketing and selling Falls City business location opportunities and generating business investment leads.
- Implement two direct marketing campaigns targeting Midwest metro-area markets.
- Make sales contacts at target industry trade shows by “working the floor,” partnering with state and regional economic development partners and local industry to increase results.
- Make sales calls on site selection consultants working with clients seeking rural locations.
- Continue implementation of the alumni direct marketing program, targeting alumni of Richardson County area high schools living elsewhere.
- Invite key business prospects to a special event in Falls City hosted by the Mayor, e.g. spring turkey hunt and/or autumn deer hunt.
- Develop sales tools to support marketing-sales actions, including updating the Richardson County Labor Basin Study, continuing refining/updating website, developing available property and target industry sales materials and developing social media tools to connect with target audiences.
- Aggressively follow-up and pursue all business leads generated from EDGE’s direct marketing-sales actions, as well as referrals from state and regional partners, existing businesses, member investors and other networks.

*A recent survey sponsored by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) and Development Counsellors International took a deeper look at the state of social media among economic developers. The survey asked more than 300 IEDC members about their use of social media and its role in their organizational strategies and communications efforts. The survey revealed LinkedIn and Facebook are by far the most commonly used social media tools in economic development. [Click here to view the full report »](#)*

## Bart Keller, VP – Investor and Community Relations

The Investor and Community Relations Committee’s strategic objective is to *maintain private and public investments and continue to gain internal support for EDGE by demonstrating accountability and “return on investment” garnering sufficient resources to effectively implement the economic development strategic plan/growth strategy.*

In 2010 strategic priorities will focus on: fostering positive investor relations, fostering positive community relations and generating capital investments needed to support EDGE’s program of work. Key actions this year will include:

- Continue to reach out to investors through multiple channels, including *lunch and learns* and *media spotlight* briefings, disseminating email news/updates and posting member news, announcements and reports on the EDGE website/member investors section.
- Actively engage member investors in EDGE’s program of work, encouraging investors to serve on strategic action teams and task forces and identifying other opportunities for investors to utilize their expertise and talents to contribute to the organization.

# EDGE Vice Presidents Outline 2010 Action Plans *(cont.)*

## Investor and Community Relations *(cont.)*

- Prepare and conduct the EDGE Annual Meeting and Banquet in January to celebrate accomplishments and successes. In conjunction with the event, prepare and disseminate an EDGE annual report to member investors and community stakeholders. Utilize the event to recognize individual member investors for their contributions to the organization, including recognizing an *Investor of the Year*.
- Recognize/thank local employers for their investment and jobs and showcase innovation/growth and employment opportunities.
- Work with high schools throughout the County to engage the students, promote awareness of EDGE and encourage youth retention in Richardson County, including participating in career days, graduate congratulation letters and summer entrepreneur programs.
- Proactively work to identify opportunities to speak to community and civic organizations throughout Richardson County to increase awareness of EDGE's program of work, encourage county-wide support and a *unified vision* for growth and development.
- Develop and disseminate local and regional media press releases and interviews focused on EDGE's economic development initiatives, accomplishments and successes, including disseminating the annual report to the community via the *Falls City Journal*.
- Actively recruit new member investors to secure funding needed to effectively and fully implement EDGE's program of work.

For more information on EDGE's 2010 strategic plan of action, contact Executive Director [Beckie Cromer](#).

*Join the EDGE team and invest in the future of Falls City!*  
*Investment levels range from \$5,000 for Visionary level to \$100 for Supporters (individuals/non-profits) level.*  
[Learn more about the opportunities and benefits »](#)

## AP Analysis: Nebraska is Third Best for Economic Stress

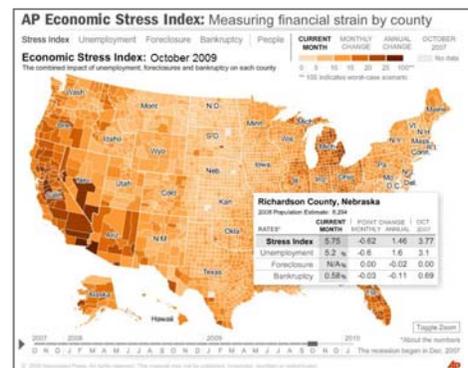
The Associated Press released its latest monthly analysis of economic stress in more than 3,100 U.S. counties. The AP's Economic Stress Index calculates a score from 1 to 100 based on a county's unemployment, foreclosure and bankruptcy rates. Under a rough rule of thumb, a county is considered stressed when its score exceeds 11. The Midwest was again the least-stressed, with North Dakota scoring 3.89, South Dakota scoring 5.14 and **Nebraska scoring 5.51 among the three least stressed states.**

**Richardson County scored 5.75—far below the stress level.**

[Read the AP story and view interactive map »](#)

### Nebraska also ranked:

**9<sup>th</sup> overall on Forbes.com's "2009 Best State for Business."** The State ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in business costs and 10<sup>th</sup> in quality of life. *Best States* ranking measures six vital categories for businesses: costs, labor supply, regulatory environment, current economic climate, growth prospects and quality of life. [Go to Forbes.com to read the story »](#)  
**12<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation among CNBC's "America's Top States for Business 2009"**—led by 6<sup>th</sup> place in business friendliness. [Go to CNBC.com to read the story »](#)



# State-of-the Art Fiber Optic Network Strategically Positions Falls City for Future Growth

Southeast Nebraska Communications (SNC) is in the process of installing fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) technology to all homes and businesses in Falls City. Of the 460 cities and villages in Nebraska, only 11 have FTTH. Seven, including Falls City, are in the midst of a FTTH upgrade. When the project is completed in spring/early summer of 2011, Falls City will have the most advanced telecommunications technology available.

The system will include 26 miles of mainline fiber and 64 miles of “service drop” from outside of homes/businesses to the mainline fiber. More than 4,100 fibers will enter the SNC central office. The capacity of data will be *virtually unlimited* according to SNC.

“FTTH networks help define successful communities just as good water, power, transportation, schools and other essential services have done for decades,” said Beth Sickel, SNC Vice President and General Manager. Sickel, who also serves as President of EDGE, added, “The economic development windows provided by this next generation technology are enormous, especially for businesses in need of reliable, state-of-the-art telecommunications. SNC is pleased to bring this advanced fiber optics network to Falls City.”

[For more information on the project, visit SNC’s website »](#)



## New Community Medical Center Opens

The new \$21 million Community Medical Center (CM) opened its doors in late November. The facility includes 24 patient rooms, a state-of-the-art surgery suite, private specialty clinics, two delivery rooms with maternity suites and the Family Medicine Clinic. The Center features a myriad of new, technologically advanced equipment from digital mammography to new patient beds and surgical equipment.

[Visit CMC’s website to learn more on CMS’s health care capabilities »](#)



Aerial view of new Community Medical Center



**Bart Keller, EDGE VP of Investor Relations, presenting *EDGE Investor of the Year Award* to Ryan Larsen, CEO of Community Medical Center**

**CMC was named 2009 *EDGE Investor of the Year* at the EDGE Annual Meeting and Banquet** on January 6. Bart Keller, EDGE Vice President of Investor Relations presented the award to CMC CEO Ryan Larsen. “I know I speak for the EDGE Board of Directors, our investors, the people of Falls City and Richardson County, as well as patients from outlying areas, when I thank you for your outstanding community investment, dedication and desire to excel in the field of healthcare in our area. We are very proud of our new Community Medical Center and pleased to present you our first ever *Investor of the Year Award*,” said Keller.

# Vantec Announces Business Arrangement with Australian Firm

Falls City manufacturer Vantec, Inc. has been awarded business from Atlantis Water Management. Vantec will soon begin producing plastic components for the Australian company.

“Atlantis Water Management has many solutions for rain water harvesting, storm water harvesting, roof gardens, vertical gardens, horizontal and vertical drainage,” Sherri Hotzler of Vantec noted. “We feel there is a good fit with the two, family-owned businesses and know how passionate the founder of Atlantis Water Management, Humberto Uriola, is about creating ‘Green Cities Today,’” said Hotzler.

According to Hotzler, Atlantis was looking for a quality, plastic injection molder to produce their components for North America. Vantec was one of only a handful of plastic injection molders visited after Atlantis’ initial rounds of possible molders, and bid packages. “We were thrilled to be chosen.” said Hotzler. “We expect to see many of their systems used in future projects throughout the US, especially where water conservation is extremely important, due to lack of precipitation.”

An Atlantis system is built under the new Yankee Stadium, so that the irrigation of the field can be reclaimed and used again. “With all the importance in going ‘green,’ and more incentives to do so,” Hotzler said, “Atlantis has a wonderful product with great future growth potential.”

“Vantec has a number of other potential projects on the horizon, which we are very excited about. It just takes time to get to production from the initial contact phase in a project. We have felt very lucky to be included in a number of major project opportunities and are confident that we will be successful in acquiring more new business,” Hotzler said.

“This is great news for Vantec,” said Beckie Cromer, EDGE Executive Director. “We’re pleased to hear anytime our local companies are successful in securing new business relationships. Increased business sales may result in more jobs in the future.”

To learn more about the companies, visit their websites: [Vantec, Inc.](#) » [Atlantis Water Management](#) »



[Vantec’s Falls City facility was recently featured in Mid-America Commerce & Industry. Click here to go to story »](#)

## Ames True Temper Falls City Plant Recognized for Safety Record

Dan Yurovich, Ames True Temper’s Senior Vice President of Operations, presented the plant with a trophy in November for its safety record—which was at the time 1,183 days without a lost time accident and more than 500 days without a recordable accident. According to Plant Manager John Martin, the plant has made safety a priority. Martin commended the workers, “The award is a testament to the quality of our workforce here in Falls City.”



# A Message from the Director

On January 6, EDGE member investors ventured out in blizzard conditions to attend the Annual Meeting and Banquet. The event is a special time to celebrate successes and recognize the hard work and accomplishments of each and every person involved in the organization. And this year we had much to celebrate! 2009 was an exciting year for the Falls City area. We stayed strategically focused on implementing a vision that fosters the economic development cycle and prepares the area for future growth, resulting in many notable accomplishments, including locating the \$100 million Flat Water Wind Farm development in Richardson County; increasing product inventory—sites and buildings; implementing Tax Increment Financing as an economic development incentive tool; fostering political, regional and corporate relationships; and the opening of the new \$21 million state-of-the-art Community Medical Center—an economic engine for this region for generations to come. Working together, as a private-public economic development team, we improved the competitiveness and economic health of Falls City—despite the downturn in the national economy. 2009 will be remembered as a landmark year for Falls City and Richardson County.

I would like to personally thank all EDGE member investors, especially the Executive Committee and Board of Directors, for contributing their time, energy and passion to the organization. I would also like to thank the citizens of Falls City for their continued support. Each and every one of you can pride in the successes celebrated in 2009.

The EDGE staff and its Board of Directors will continue to aspire to create an environment conducive to creating jobs and an expanded tax base which in turn creates balance and improves the quality of life for area residents. Economic development is not a linear concept focused on one single need of a community, county or region. It is a cycle that includes jobs, housing, streets, utilities, medical, schools, recreation, social amenities and much more. As we move forward into the new decade, let's continue to work together—building on our successes and moving forward on the economic development road to success.

*Beckie Cromer, EDGE Executive Director*

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## 2010 EDGE Board of Directors

President – Beth Sickel, Southeast Nebraska Communications  
V.P. of Marketing & Sales - Steve Kottich, Miller Monroe Co.  
V.P. of Product Development & Public Policy – Dan Rathje,  
Falls City Pharmacy  
V.P. of Investor & Community Relations –  
Bart Keller, Farm and City Supply  
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Dennis Hullman, Hullman's Ford  
Ryan Larsen, Community Medical Center  
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Kevin Malone, First National Bank  
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Jerry Oliver  
The Honorable Rodney Vandenberg, Mayor of Falls City

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