



*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 IV ■ 2009

**Falls City Receives Prestigious  
 Community of the Year Award**



*“Falls City has a lot of momentum going and we will capitalize on that momentum. Stay tuned ... “*

Governor Heineman,  
 Senator Heidemann and  
 Falls City Delegation

In May of this year Falls City earned the coveted Nebraska Economic Development Certified Community designation. Today, less than four months later, Falls City is back in the spotlight as the recipient of the Nebraska Diplomats 2009 Community of the Year Award.

The Award was presented at the Diplomats Annual Banquet on Friday, September 11, in Lincoln. Criteria to be considered for the award included: proven commitment to economic development, success stories in showing support for business development, providing infrastructure for business, regional cooperation and national recognition.

A 21-member Falls City delegation comprised of EDGE and community leaders was on hand as Mayor Rodney Vandenberg accepted the award from Governor Dave Heineman.

“The ceremony was highlighted with a video montage showcasing many of Falls City’s location assets and recent developments, including the new library and arts center, new aquatic center, new state-of-the-art track and field stadium, public school renovations/additions, newly-renovated Prichard Auditorium, new hospital under construction, rehabilitation of the historic Stephenson Hotel and the Vantec location in the spec building,” said EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer.

“This award was received due to the hard work and efforts of a great number of volunteers and elected officials, as well as the citizenry of the Falls City area,” said EDGE President Kevin Malone. “While EDGE has played an important role in the positive things going on in the Falls City area, this award is truly a “community” award as so many have played an important part in Falls City receiving this recognition.”

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# Richardson County Chosen for juwi's and OPPD's Largest Wind Development Projects

Flat Water Wind Farm LLC (Flat Water) has concluded a power purchase agreement with regional energy provider Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) stipulating that OPPD will purchase 60 megawatts of power generated by the wind farm to be built in Richardson County. The contract calls for OPPD to buy wind energy from the new farm for 20 years once it is in service in mid to late 2010. Flat Water is a subsidiary of juwi Group/JW Prairie Wind Power (JWPW), Lawrence, Kansas.



*Flat Water Wind Farm Site*  
[Download juwi project fact sheet »»](#)

**With its total capacity of 60 megawatts, the installation will be the largest wind project juwi has ever undertaken.** Forty wind turbines each with a capacity of 1.5 megawatts will generate around 200 million kilowatt hours of clean electricity, equaling the annual energy demand of approximately 18,000 US households.

As juwi Executive Board member Matthias Willenbacher explained in the company's press release announcing the OPPD purchase agreement, "This is a major milestone for the project and for our US-based activities overall." **Flat Water is also OPPD's largest wind energy project.** Fred Ulrich, Board Chairman at OPPD, is pleased with the development: "For generations, the land has provided food for local people. And now the wind will provide the energy to supply power for future generations."

Falls City EDGE was actively involved in attracting this project to Richardson County. Dick Zachariason, juwi Wind US Corp's Chief Operating Officer, said "Falls City EDGE played an important role in helping us introduce the wind project to Richardson County citizens. EDGE assisted in setting up community meetings, spreading the word throughout southeastern Nebraska and helping to focus the region's economic development on the benefits of wind power."



"Falls City EDGE is very excited to participate in a project that provides significant benefits to Richardson County," said Beckie Cromer, EDGE Executive Director. "This was truly a county-wide effort and the success is shared by all partners involved, including Falls City EDGE, our counterparts - the Humboldt Shares, and Richardson County. The Flat Water Wind Farm will position Richardson County as a leader in renewable energy and represents a positive step in making Nebraska more self sufficient relative to its energy needs."

[Visit juwi's website to learn about the technology »»](#)

Construction of the wind farm is expected to begin late this year or early next year with commercial operation expected by the end of 2010.

To learn about the estimated economic impact from development and operation of wind power in the state, download the U.S. Department of Energy's two-page fact sheet "Wind Energy and Economic Development in Nebraska" »»

Don't miss the next *EDGE Lunch & Learn*. The focus will be on the Flat Water Wind development project and feature presentations by JW Prairie Wind Power and Omaha Public Power District (OPPD). Look for more information on this event to be announced soon.

# EDGE Participates in Roundtables as part of Regional Innovation Grant Process

Regional assets and challenges were the topics of discussion at a series of economic development roundtables held throughout the Southeast Nebraska region in July.

The [Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development](#) coordinated the discussions with its regional partners as part of the Regional Innovation Grant (RIG) process. The [grant, from the U.S. Department of Labor, was secured by the City of Lincoln](#) to assist in establishing regional networks and help provide economic development objectives for the workforce development, education and economic development organizations across Southeast Nebraska.

Roundtable discussions were moderated by representatives of [AngelouEconomics](#), the consulting firm hired to perform the preliminary study on the region's assets. Two meetings were held in Lincoln, with one each in Nebraska City, Seward, and Beatrice and nearly 200 community leaders from the 12-county region participated.

EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer attended the session in Beatrice and Administrative Assistant Cassey Whalen attended the roundtable in Nebraska City. "The roundtables provided an opportunity to share information with the RIG consultants on our area's assets and challenges, as well as to learn more about the project and expected outcomes," said Cromer.

"We were very pleased with the valuable insights gained from the five roundtable discussions," said Steve Vierck of AngelouEconomics. "All of the sessions were well attended with good discussion ranging from Southeast Nebraska's competitive advantages and disadvantages for new and expanding businesses, to ways to better work together regionally to strengthen the economy. There was particular interest in initiatives to capitalize upon emerging industries to broaden the job base in order to retain more young people and offset recent layoffs."

Vierck said that AE would take the data from the sessions as well as information gathered from third party sources, personal interviews and surveys to develop a competitive analysis for the region.

The expected outcomes of the RIG project are:

- Clearer understanding of regional economic and workforce development assets
- Specific regional industry targets
- Understanding of workforce needed to compete for industry opportunities—and strategies for job training capacity-building
- Identification of transferable skills and application to high-growth industries
- Strategies for enhancing regional "innovation" through support of entrepreneurship and tech transfer
- Clear vision for the 12-county region's economic future

For more information on the Regional Innovation Grant and the Lincoln Partnership process, visit the project website at: [www.lincolnarearig.com](http://www.lincolnarearig.com) >>>



## *12-County RIG Region*

- 7,200 sq. miles
- 411,000 people
- 11,400 businesses that provide more than 180,000 jobs

# Why Regionalism?

Thinking regionally means thinking beyond political boundaries to the boundaries of those sharing a common interest. EDGE embraces regional collaboration and cooperation as evidenced by:

- The **Tri-State Corridor Alliance** working together to successfully secure federal and state funding for the new Missouri River bridge at Rulo.
- **Southeast Nebraska Partners for Progress**, a five-county partnership—Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee and Richardson—working together to encourage development of local entrepreneurs through education, mentoring services and business assistance. The group helped launch the [Southeast Nebraska Investors and Entrepreneurs Club \(I2E Club\)](#) last year and recently unveiled a new website—[www.southeastnebraska.org](http://www.southeastnebraska.org).
- [Lincoln Area Development Partnership](#) (LADP), a nine-county regional partnership, working together to market the region nationally and internationally through online marketing, direct marketing, trade shows and advertising. EDGE has participated in a number of regional events and plans have been finalized for a DED FAM tour which has a scheduled stop in Falls City this November.



In his presentation at the Southeast Nebraska Economic Development Summit on June 18, Steve Vierck of AngelouEconomics talked about the importance of regionalism. Vierck stated “regionalism” addresses three conditions influencing local economic vitality today:

- **Competition is Steep** – communities are fighting globally to attract a reduced number of new employer projects
- **Times are Tight** – communities face serious economic/labor market challenges with increasingly limited resources with which to address them
- **It’s the new “Paradigm”** – it’s where federal and state funding will continue to be directed

He went on to say that it makes communities more competitive and is especially critical for regions with large rural populations. He summarized the benefits of regionalism in the graphic below:

## Benefits of Regional Collaboration



To view Vierck’s presentation, go to: [http://www.lincolncdev.com/resources/dyn/files/143109/\\_fn/vierck\\_steve+-+Importance+of+Regionalism.pdf](http://www.lincolncdev.com/resources/dyn/files/143109/_fn/vierck_steve+-+Importance+of+Regionalism.pdf). For more information on EDGE’s regional collaborations, contact EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer at [director@fallscityedge.com](mailto:director@fallscityedge.com).

# Nebraska Business Development Center Office Opens to Serve Southeast NE Region

In a ribbon-cutting ceremony on August 21, the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) officially opened its new office in Auburn to serve businesses in the Southeast Nebraska Region, including Richardson County/Falls City. Staffed by Julie Wilhelm, NBDC Procurement Technical Assistance Counselor, the office helps businesses generate contracts with local, state and federal governments. “Governments purchase billions of dollars in goods and services each year, offering enormous opportunities for companies that wish to grow their revenue or diversify their revenue sources,” said EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer. “The NBDC Procurement Assistance Program has helped Nebraska companies win millions of dollars in government contracts. I encourage Richardson County businesses to take advantage of this free consulting service.” To learn more about NBDC’s government contracting assistance, visit their website at: <http://ptac.unomaha.edu/> >>>



*Pictured from left: Pete Kotsiopoulos, Vice President for University Affairs; Bob Bernier, NBDC Director; Bob Engles, Auburn Mayor; and Lou Pol, Dean, UNO's College of Business Administration*



## Winners of Southeast NE New Venture Competition to be Announced Soon!

[Invest Nebraska Corporation](#), a venture development organization that advises and invests in companies and early stage business ideas, sponsored the 2009 Southeast Nebraska New Venture Competition in partnership with the Southeast Nebraska Partners for Progress and Peru State College. EDGE is a member of Partners for Progress, a five-county regional economic development organization. On October 9 a panel of judges, comprised of business and community leaders, will identify the most promising business plan. The winning entrepreneur or team will receive a minimum \$20,000 equity investment into their business.

## New Development Projects Receive Funding

Falls City EDGE Executive Committee members, Mayor Rodney Vandenberg and City Clerk Gary Jorn, met in August to discuss advantageous uses for the '03 HUD-EDI funds which need to be used before a federally imposed deadline of September 2010. These funds must be used to renovate or retrofit an existing building so new construction opportunities could not be considered. The committee discussed several options and two projects received consensus support and were ranked as top priorities. During the September 21st City Council meeting, both projects received unanimous support from Council members as well.

The first project will be an investment of \$200,000 for the first floor renovation of the Grand Weaver Hotel. This project will help spur downtown development by providing space for two start-up businesses. The \$200,000 loan will be repaid over 10 years and funds will be placed into a re-use pool that can be used for future Main Street projects which will help boost economic activity in our downtown district. The second project concept, which will receive a \$150,000 grant, is to reconfigure the entrance of the current Family Medicine clinic which entails some demolition of the old hospital, building a new entrance and completion of a new brick façade on the west wall of the medical clinic building. Should there be enough funds, this project could also include some interior remodeling of the space. Once complete, this project will result in the addition of a marketable building for Falls City EDGE and potential uses include back office operations or a call center.

In other news, the City Council also entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Vision 20/20 which lays the groundwork necessary for the developers to utilize Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Vision 20/20 investors have begun construction of the new Vision Inn Motel which will open in April 2010.

# Senator Johanns Commends EDGE

U.S. Senator Mike Johanns toured Falls City with EDGE officials on Tuesday, August 18. The Senator's visit was coordinated in conjunction with a reception to officially open EDGE's new location at 1614 Stone Street in downtown Falls City. Nebraska Senator Lavon Heidemann also attended the event.



*EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer and U.S. Senator Johanns*

Johanns presented a letter to Mayor Rod Vandenberg recognizing Falls City's designation as an economic development certified community by the Department of Economic Development. In his letter and comments made during the reception, Johanns stated he appreciated the good work of Falls City EDGE and the hard working people of Falls City in earning the distinguished honor. He also commended EDGE's pursuit of opportunities for growth and improvement and said he was proud of continued efforts to strengthen the community.

## Federal Legislative Notes – Cap-and-Trade Program

NMPP (Nebraska Municipal Power Pool Energy) was disappointed the U.S. House of Representatives passed the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009. This legislation, specifically the cap-and-trade program, intended to address climate change, imposes unnecessary costs on consumers unrelated to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and risks the reliability of the electric system.

NMPP members are committed to pursuing reductions in greenhouse gas emissions provided any federal legislation properly balances environmental goals with impacts on consumers and the economy.

The House version of a cap and trade program falls short with regard to allocation of CO2 credits. The bill does not contain a stringent cost control mechanism to protect consumers, has the potential for market manipulation and includes the use of revenues for purposes unrelated to addressing climate change.



*Written by Chris Dibbern, General Counsel, NMPP Energy*

Any federal legislation addressing climate change should:

- be realistic and achievable;
- provide ample time to develop, demonstrate and deploy new low-and-zero-emitting technologies;
- mitigate price volatility and protect consumers from unproductive costs; and
- recognize public power's unique role to provide energy to millions of Americans.

Though state legislatures are currently not in session, senators are still holding hearings and studying energy issues. Check out the state websites for interim studies and to see topics and trends for the next session. Examples of work behind the scenes include:

- LR 195 (Nebraska Sen. Ken Haar) – an interim study to examine energy efficiency;
- LR 221 (Nebraska Sen. Pete Pirsch) – a study to determine ways the State of Nebraska could promote energy conservation in commercial and residential properties.

Both of these matters have public hearings in Omaha on October 16.

*-Reprinted from NMPP Energy September 2009 Newsletter*

# EDGE Markets Available Properties Online



EDGE is advertising available sites and buildings on LoopNet. View listings at: [Falls City Commercial Real Estate for Sale and Lease - Falls City, Nebraska »»](#)

LoopNet Inc. is a leading information services provider to the commercial real estate industry. It operates the largest and most heavily trafficked commercial real estate listing service online with more than 3 million registered members and 920,000 average monthly unique visitors. LoopNet customers include virtually all of the top commercial real estate firms in the U.S., including CB Richard Ellis, Century 21 Commercial, Coldwell Banker Commercial, Colliers International, The CORE Network, Cushman & Wakefield, Grubb & Ellis, Lincoln Property Company, Marcus & Millichap, NAI Global, Prudential CRES, RE/MAX, RREEF, Sperry Van Ness and Trammell Crow Company.

In addition to LoopNet, EDGE lists available sites and buildings in the [Location One Information System \(LOIS\)](#) and [Nebraska Economic Development Info \(NEDI\)](#) databases. These systems are widely promoted by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and the state's utility partners. Available properties are also featured on the [EDGE website](#) with links to the profiles in the LOIS database for detailed information and downloadable brochures.

## Nebraska Named a Pollina Corporate Top 10 Pro-Business State

Nebraska has once again been named as one of the [Pollina Corporate Real Estate Inc. Top 10 Pro-Business States](#). The *Top 10 Pro-Business States* report reflects state leadership that truly understands the importance of producing the best business environment and the best opportunities for job growth for their constituents.



The Pollina Corp. Top 10 study examines 33 factors relative to states' efforts to be pro-business, and is the most comprehensive examination of states available. The Top 10 Pro-Business selection process is based on a comprehensive two-stage approach: *Stage I: Labor, Taxes & Other Factors* (19 of the 33 factors), and *Stage II: Incentives & State Economic Development Agency Factors* (14 additional state government-controlled factors).

The full report is posted on Pollina's website: [www.pollina.com](http://www.pollina.com) »»

**Did you know that in recent years Nebraska has been recognized on a number of national business rankings? Other rankings include:**

- 11th overall on [CNBC.com's America's Top States for Business '09](#), 6th for Business Friendliest, and 7th on the Economy rankings factors
- 10th on [Forbes Best States for Business '08](#)
- 4th for Best Quality of Life and 5th for Best Education Climate on [Business Facilities Annual Rankings Report '08](#)

# Marketing & Sales Activity

As a result of the Marketing and Sales Team's proactive marketing actions, including a series of targeted geographic marketing campaigns, EDGE has made 438 new business contacts, generating 12 new prospect leads and 3 site visits to Falls City in 2009.

“We’re pleased with the activity to date, particularly in this economy,” said Steve Kottich, EDGE Vice President of Marketing & Sales. “In addition to aggressively pursuing all leads, EDGE has two active projects—prospects with specific location criteria that have indicated an interest in locating in Falls City—we are working with.”

The EDGE staff continues to work with existing businesses, maintaining open lines of communication with businesses and addressing specific needs as they arise. In October, EDGE officials will be traveling to the headquarters of Ames True Temper in Camp Hill, PA, to discuss their Falls City operations.

## EDGE Encourages Alumni to Tell and Sell the Story of the *New, Progressive Falls City*

In collaboration with the Falls City High School Alumni Association, EDGE will send letters to more than 4,000 Falls City High School graduates inviting them to become actively involved in the future growth of Falls City. EDGE will be asking alums to spread the word about the new, progressive Falls City and to refer potential business leads to the Falls City EDGE office. Grads will also be encouraged to stay in contact through the EDGE newsletter and to visit the EDGE website to learn more about living, working and doing business in Falls City.

As the following excerpt from a recent AP story posted on [Forbes.com](http://Forbes.com) and other news sites states, it is very important to keep the lines of communications open:

*Luring former Nebraskans back to the state may not require slick ad campaigns or overcoming negative perceptions of nasty weather and the like. It seems good jobs may trump all else, a recent study by Gallup suggests. State officials say they are pleasantly surprised at how many former Nebraskans, especially younger ones, appear willing to move back to the state only if they could find a good job.*

*State officials say the survey also highlights the problem of a lack of one-stop job shopping for jobs available in Nebraska. While there may be more job information at people's fingertips than ever, they say, it can be hard to know what websites to peruse, or who to call.*

*"This isn't going to be easy," Dan Curran with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development said of compiling openings for a wide variety of jobs across the state into one or two Web sites. "How do you create an information portal and not put someone out, like another job-search site in the state", he said. The state hopes sometime this fall to have answers to help lure former residents home. A marketing plan to draw people back to Nebraska is also expected to be crafted, and community groups will be encouraged to keep in touch with people after they leave Nebraska. The hope is that doing so will help encourage former Nebraskans to return.*

*"A lot of high-school information disappears with the senior class," Curran said. "But if that information is retained, you can keep a line of communication and let people know what opportunities are available."*

*One of the recommendations Gallup gave the state was that if people get help finding a job in Nebraska "all else can be managed."*



# EDGE EMPLOYER SPOTLIGHT ON AGRI-BUSINESS

*Agri-businesses and producers were the focus of EDGE's third-quarter Employer Spotlight. To recognize the economic impact producers have on the local economy, EDGE sponsored an open house for the public on August 26 and an advertorial in the Falls City Journal featuring area agri-businesses and producers. Read the following excerpt from the advertorial written by EDGE Member Investor Lori Gottula to learn more about this important business sector:*

*"Your mission—should you choose to accept it—is to write an article about the effects of the agriculture industry on the Falls City community." This was my assignment for EDGE's third-quarter spotlight in the Falls City Journal.*

First I started with a few statistics from [Nebraska Farmer Magazine](#). Did you know that agriculture employs 20 percent of the U.S. workforce? And each farm in today's market provides food and fiber for about 140 people? Or that for every dollar that Americans spend on food the farmer gets about 20 cents? Those statistics are very important. But I wanted to put faces on those statistics—faces we all recognize. I knew the task would be huge so I started at the beginning with the land purchase.

**Brian Poppe, of Poppe Realty and Management**, manages over 10,000 acres in southeast Nebraska. Brian stated that the average amount of land a farmer owns or rents today is roughly 1,200 acres. The farmer needs that much land to make the return worth the investment.

Obviously, the land is used in one of two ways—either as crop land or to raise or graze livestock. To understand part of the livestock market, I headed out to **Stalder Cattle Company** near Salem. Operated by **Merle Stalder** since the 1950s, Stalder Cattle Company is a confined feedlot that sets on 65,000 of acres owned by Merle and his family. Lonnie Goff has managed the company since 1982. Stalder employs 11 people full-time. The employees at Stalder Cattle currently work 2,000 head of cattle—every single day. "We're a livestock hotel," Lonnie said, laughing.

Although Stalder Cattle Company produces its own feed, most of the farmers who raise cattle in this area do not mix their own and must rely on someone else to do it for them. That leads us to another sector of the agriculture market—**Scheitel Feed and Seed**. **Marvin and Pat Scheitel** purchased Floyd Sumner's shares in Ebel Seed Company in 1965 and became partners in the business with Bud Gerweck. The Scheitels have been sole owners since 1972. Marvin is retired now; the business employs two people full-time and three part-time. "We're one of the few remaining feed suppliers left in southeast Nebraska," Kevin Scheitel said. "So we're happy to deliver to our customers, and to help them out any way we can."

And boy do people in the agriculture community help each other. Just ask Randy Sickel, who learned first-hand about the giving nature of his community when the house and machine shed on his mom and dad's farm were both demolished by a tornado last year. The agriculture community turned out in full force—just like they always do. Randy's family has farmed their land northeast of Falls City for three generations. They produce a 50-50 rotation of corn and soybeans. The business employs three people besides Randy and his dad, Benny. All five employees work year-round, planting, fertilizing, harvesting and hauling the crop. They even do their own maintenance on machinery, which leads us to one of the other sectors of agriculture—farm equipment and tools.

**Farm and City Supply** is one of Falls City's main retail outlets that focus on agriculture. The business was purchased in 1978 by (the late) Ron Keller and Madaline Keller Wilhelm. It moved to its current location on north Harlan Street nearly 15 years ago. Farm and City employs 13 people, including sons **Brett and Bart Keller and mom Madaline**. The business sells a variety of products to support the farming community—from clothing and footwear, to farm supplies, and livestock and sprayer equipment. Farm and City Supply also sells local products because Madaline and her sons believe in them. They also believe in Falls City and southeast Nebraska, and they want to keep people employed—just like every business mentioned in this article, and every business that wasn't mentioned.

The impact that these businesses have on Falls City involves more than just the number of jobs they support, or the dollars in sales that they report on their taxes. Their impact simply can't be measured. In terms of dollars and dimes, it is immeasurable. In terms of blood, sweat, and tears—well, it is priceless.

*My assignment can't be completed. Mission impossible.*

**Factoid:** Richardson County's market value of agricultural products sold totaled more than \$97.9 million in 2007, an increase of 85% from 2002. [Download the 2007 Census of Agriculture Richardson County Profile »»](#)

# A Message from the Director

Last spring, Dr. Habben, Superintendent of Falls City Public Schools, approached me to discuss ways EDGE could create a presence with students. Falls City has a vested interest in retaining our youth so I thought this was a great idea. Partnering with the schools gives me the chance to get involved in building awareness about living and working in Falls City. I think it's prudent we all think of ways to engage youth in our local businesses and community. Additionally, youth need to be aware there are rewarding opportunities to participate in civic and community organizations—giving them the opportunity to make a difference.

I was asked to coordinate an entrepreneurship seminar for high school students on career day which was held on September 22, 2009. I recruited Dr. Diane Vigna, UNL Extension Specialist from Lincoln, to join me as a presenter. She has been actively involved in writing and teaching youth entrepreneurship in Nebraska and she was also a presenter in the successful webinar titled "Growing Youth Entrepreneurs in Communities." Dr. Vigna and I encouraged youth to start a business, accept the responsibility for operating it, take the risk to succeed and reap the reward. We were able to educate students on the many tools and resources available to help them succeed and I encouraged them to think of Falls City when they start their careers. Falls City youth, career day and entrepreneurship—a recipe for success!

Finally, I would like to say congratulations Falls City! We should all be very proud of the 2009 *Community of the Year* Award. To celebrate, Falls City EDGE and the Falls City Area Chamber of Commerce are coordinating an evening reception that will be open to the public. The event will feature the Falls City video montage which showcases our many successes and the award will also be on display. Please plan to attend this exciting event and stay tuned for further details!

Beckie Cromer, EDGE Executive Director

## Falls City Economic Development & Growth Enterprise (EDGE)



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