



*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 II ■ 2010

# First TIF Project Under Construction and Opening Soon



*“TIF is another tool in the war chest as EDGE continues building for the future and striving to make a better Falls City.”*

*Charlie Radatz, Falls City Community Redevelopment Authority Chairman and EDGE Board Member*

Falls City’s newest development project—the Vision Inn located on U.S. Highway 73—is on track to open in May, according to Brian Palmer, investor and project manager. The development is the City’s first [Tax Increment Financing \(TIF\)](#) project.

The new motel will be a great addition to the community, providing 17 rooms including a fully furnished suite for business and tourism visitors. The project is being financed by a group of local investors—who are also EDGE investors. Vision Inn investor Jerry McKim said, “The motel project might not have been possible without Tax Increment Financing.”

The TIF process is now in place opening the door to use of this economic development tool to generate future growth and development in Falls City. In a TIF project, TIF bonds are issued. The property tax increase generated from the redeveloped site is

applied to the TIF bonds until they are repaid, or for 15 years, after which the (tax) increases revert to the local government taxing jurisdictions. No public funds (other than the TIF benefit) are involved. For the Vision 20-20 project, the amount of TIF benefit will be approximately \$100,000 over the 15-year period.

Charlie Radatz, Chairman of the Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA), and EDGE Board member praised the Council’s approval of the project, “Financial assistance provided through TIF projects will benefit the community for many years to come.” Radatz noted that many Nebraska communities have implemented TIF for years to realize redevelopment and by embracing TIF Falls City will begin to capitalize on its own string of successful projects.

*“Check into” the interior photos of the new motel on page 6.*

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# EDGE Focus on Wind Energy

Construction works at the Flat Water Wind Farm south of Humboldt in Richardson County have already started. By the beginning of 2011, 40 General Electric (GE) wind turbines with a capacity of 1.5 megawatts each will generate around 220 million kilowatt hours of clean electricity, thereby covering the annual energy needs of about 19,000 households within Omaha Public Power (OPPD) service territory. The \$100 million project will have a significant economic impact on the area, creating hundreds of temporary jobs during the construction phase and 8-9 permanent, full-time jobs when the farm is operational and generating approximately \$1 million in additional property taxes annually for the County.

The project will be constructed by Gallop Power LLC, an Austin, TX-based company established to develop, own and operate clean energy projects. Gallop has acquired Flat Water Wind Farm from juwi's J.W. Prairie Wind Power LLC. The project was developed by the juwi group, a leading renewable energy developer based in Germany, through its J.W. Prairie Wind Power LLC, located in Lawrence, Kansas. A 20-year Power Purchase Agreement has been concluded with OPPD.



EDGE investors and community stakeholders received an update on the project at the February *EDGE Lunch and Learn* from Gallop Power Project Owner and Developer Don Dison and OPPD Division Manager of Sustainable Energy Marc Nichols.

Dison provided the 50 plus attendees with a timeline for completion of the project. “We started work in November and preliminary work at the site is well underway. We expect to begin building roads and improving bridges for access in April and actual construction to start in May/June. You should see turbines standing in August/September. Our goal is to complete the project by the end of November/December.” Gallop power has a long history with renewable energy and Dison said they want to be good stewards of the land and contribute to the financial stability of the community. “Gallop Power always encourages our general contractor to do as much business in the local community as possible. Unlike some companies, Gallop is a builder, owner, operator—we are in this for the very long run,” said Dison.

Nichols said OPPD has been working for several months to prepare the infrastructure to connect the wind farm to the grid. “Gallop Power graded the site and our crews have been here for several months physically building the substation that is underneath the transmission line. Then, we will cut into the transmission line and when the wind farm is completed, they will bring in their extension cord and plug into us—that is how we get into the grid.”

Beckie Cromer, EDGE Executive Director, said EDGE is building upon the wind farm development success. Cromer said she has been following up on calls from former residents/families interested in returning home because of the employment opportunities that will be created by the wind farm development. In February, she and three local manufacturers, including the president of Watkins Aircraft Support Products, attended a NE Department of Economic Development (NEDED)-sponsored workshop to learn more about business opportunities in the exploding wind supply chain market. In May, in collaboration with NEDED and utility partners, she will be promoting the area as a prime location for wind energy development and manufacturing at the 2010 Wind Power Expo in Dallas—the world's largest energy event.



## The Richardson County/Nebraska Wind Energy Advantage

Richardson County's close proximity to I-29 provides same-day interstate access to the nation's top producing wind energy states and Midwest wind product manufacturers and suppliers.

- Low unemployment insurance and compensation rates
- Customized job training
- Attractive incentives through the Nebraska Advantage program

These and many other factors contribute to Nebraska's consistent rankings as one of the *Top 10 Best States for Doing Business* and one of the *Nation's Top 10 Pro-Business States*.

# EDGE Sponsors Youth Entrepreneurship Education

It has been almost a year since Mindy Young joined the [University of Nebraska–Lincoln \(UNL\) Extension team in Richardson County](#)—a position supported by a partnership between UNL and the Falls City Economic Development and Growth Enterprise (EDGE), Falls City Public Schools, Humboldt-Table Rock-Steiner (HTRS) Public Schools and Humboldt Shares. “Since assuming the position in May, I’ve enjoyed learning about the area, meeting a lot of great people and planning school enrichment and 4-H programs for youth, including youth entrepreneurial programming,” said Young.

Young hails from Courtland, Kansas, a community of less than 400 people. “Courtland is where entrepreneurial minds keep the town going,” says Young. “I grew in an entrepreneurial-minded family. My grandparents started their plumbing, heating and air conditioning business in 1964—the year my father was born. Today, my grandparents are retired and my parents are busy running the business—the only plumbing, heating and air conditioning business for miles.”



Through UNL Extension’s partnership with the schools, Young has been very busy this past fall and winter completing school enrichment programs. “I presented “*Making Cents of It*”—a money management lesson for second and third graders,” she said. “The class is the perfect early entrepreneurship lesson.” Young has also been teaching six and nine session-long entrepreneurship sessions using the [EntrepreneurShip Investigation \(ESI\)](#) curriculum developed by UNL. These interactive sessions

use a variety of tools to help students develop their entrepreneurial skill. The sessions were offered to Falls City High School and HTRS general business classes and Falls City Middle School eighth graders. Young said she is planning to continue teaching entrepreneurship to high school and middle school students throughout the spring and summer. She’s excited to be offering an ESI Entrepreneurship Camp June 21-25.

For more information on UNL Extension/Richardson County entrepreneurial programming, please contact Mindy Young at 402.245.4324. [Visit their website »](#)

## Events Encourage Entrepreneurship

The Nebraska Summit on Entrepreneurship was held on Friday, February 26. The 2010 event was sponsored by the Nebraska Business-Higher Education Forum, the Gallup Organization and the University of Nebraska. The summit brought together entrepreneurs, business leaders, service providers, students, and government representatives to dialogue and further entrepreneurial interest throughout Nebraska. EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer attended the summit. [Visit NebraskaEntrepreneur.com for more information on Summit and state entrepreneurial resources »](#)

On March 10 the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL Extension office sponsored a [Small Business/Entrepreneurship Workshop](#) in Falls City. Cromer was a featured speaker presenting the resources and economic development incentives available to entrepreneurs growing and expanding their business in Falls City/Richardson County. “EDGE, in cooperation with the Falls City Area Chamber of Commerce, is committed to assisting current and future small businesses grow and prosper. The workshop was a great opportunity to provide aspiring business owners easy access to all the support and services available in the community,” said Cromer.

## America’s Young People Want to Be Their Own Boss ...

... according to the results of a Harris Poll survey released in November 2007. The Kauffman Foundation commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct an online survey of 2,438 youth ages 8 to 21 about entrepreneurship. It shows that four in 10 young people would like to start their own business in the future, while another 37 percent believe starting their own business is a possibility.

Those who want to have their own business say their top reasons are to use their skills and abilities (92 percent), build something for their future (89 percent), be their own boss (87 percent), see their ideas realized (81 percent) and earn lots of money (85 percent).

In the United States, 63 percent of respondents in the Harris survey already believe that, if they work hard, they can be entrepreneurs. Twenty-five percent of the youth believe that entrepreneurship is a more desirable career opportunity than other options.

### Learn More ...



[Read the \*Youth Entrepreneurship Survey Fact Sheet\* \(PDF\) ▶](#)

# Come Home to Falls City

As an economic development organization, EDGE is excited about the upcoming high school alumni reunions. To some it may seem like just another event—but to EDGE it is an opportunity to remind current and former residents of the great education system we have and the great community we live in.



Falls City High School Reunion is scheduled for June 27, 2010.

Falls City Sacred Heart Reunion is scheduled for July 10, 2010.

If you would like to learn more about new developments in Falls City and EDGE's focused efforts to enhance the economic health and prosperity of the area, please contact us at 402.245.2105 or visit the [EDGE website »](#)

***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 »\*](#)

## Legislative Update

The Nebraska Economic Development Association's (NEDA) legislative day was held on February 3 in Lincoln at the Capital. NEDA members, including EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer, met with state senators to discuss economic development and tourism-related legislation. Specific bills discussed included:



- [LB1109, the Nebraska Innovation and High Wage Employment Act](#), proposes creating a task force to investigate entrepreneurship capacity in Nebraska, and to also look at best practices in designing a more entrepreneurship friendly state.
- [LB525 would allow more flexibility in the use of local community LB 840 funds](#). It adds to the list of allowable activities to include community marketing, workforce retention and attraction and a certain portion of the collected funds to be applied toward housing.

“I had the opportunity to visit with Senator Heidemann who represents our area,” said Cromer. “He truly understands the importance of economic development and progressive legislation. He was very willing to give of his time to listen to NEDA’s position on the issues and how it impacts business recruitment in Nebraska. I am continually impressed with Senator Heidemann’s endless energy and diligent work towards growing Falls City and southeast Nebraska.”

NEDA members encouraged state senators to maintain contact with their the economic development officials in the communities they represent as a source of information when researching and discussing ED issues that directly impact Nebraska communities.

# Falls City Welcomed as Newest Main Street Community



Nebraska Lt. Governor Rick Sheehy and State Senator Lavon Heidemann unveiled the Heritage Nebraska Main Street Community sign that officially welcomed Falls City to the Heritage Nebraska Main Street program on January 15. The sign presentation at the Falls City Chamber of Commerce and Main Street office followed a walking tour of the downtown that included several business stops and tours of the Falls City Library and Grand Weaver Hotel. Heritage Nebraska Main Street Director Elizabeth Chase welcomed the audience at a reception that followed the tour. Sheehy, who has paid an official visit to every Nebraska Main Street community, spoke about the benefits of the program and his favorite highlights of the various communities.

Heidemann, whose Legislative District 1 includes Falls City, talked about the importance of such a program in the current economy. He applauded the efforts of the state program to watch out for the economic revitalization of small towns.

EDGE commends the Chamber of Commerce for its leadership role in bringing the Main Street Program to Falls City and looks forward to working in collaboration with Cassey Whalen, Chamber of Commerce/Main Street Director, to implement the downtown revitalization plan. Go to the [Heritage Nebraska website](#) for more information and [photos](#) of the dedication »

## Lincoln Regional Innovation Grant (RIG) Update

The [Lincoln Area Development Partnership \(LADP\)](#) and Greater Lincoln Workforce Investment Board hosted a meeting in February to share the results of a study completed by AngelouEconomics. As discussed in previous newsletters, the Greater Lincoln RIG Project is a 12-county collaborative initiative, including Richardson County, to generate opportunities for further regional economic prosperity. It identifies the economic and workforce development assets within the region and provides recommendations on a strategy to strengthen the capacity of the area education and workforce systems to meet the demands of emerging target industries. While ongoing discussions will be taking in the following months to finalize and prioritize regional actions, the plan's goals and strategies outlined included:

- Education-Enhance the pipeline of skilled workers and become a talent magnet
- Workforce Development-Better integrate economic and workforce development throughout the region
- Entrepreneurship-Expand resources and connectedness to foster entrepreneurship
- Innovation-Integrate economic development and technology transfer specifically pertaining to Innovation Campus
- Business Retention /Attraction-Enhance efforts through regional branding, quality of life improvements and shared regional information

“Partnering with LADP affords EDGE the opportunity to leverage economic development resources to enhance the economic growth, vitality, and global competitiveness of Falls City and the entire southeast Nebraska region,” said EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer.

## Nebraska Is Third-Best State for Debt Burden

# 3rd

A new *Forbes.com* report ranks Nebraska No. 3 in the magazine's examination of how the 50 U.S. states compare in the area of debt burden. *Forbes* comments: "The Cornhusker State has its financial house in order with a per capita debt of just \$17." *Forbes* staff “considered a dozen or so factors, including unfunded pension liabilities, changes in tax revenue, debt as a percentage of GDP, debt per capita, growth expectations for employment and the state economy, net migrations and

a ratio that compares government employees, pension burdens and Medicaid enrollees to private-sector employment." See the story at [Forbes.com](#)»

# Rulo Bridge on Schedule

Plans for the replacement of the Missouri River Bridge at Rulo are on schedule with bid-letting to commence in June. The bridge project has been divided into 3 separate contracts with the Main River Span and Missouri Roadway and Bridge Approach to be let in the summer of 2010. Construction activities on these two phases of the project will begin this fall. The final contract for the Nebraska Roadway and Bridge Approach will be let this winter Nebraska District 1 Highway Commissioner and Falls City Mayor Rodney Vandenberg noted, "I am confident we will see construction begin in early fall of this year and we will have a new bridge by the fall of 2013."

The Tri-State area will reap many economic development benefits from this newly constructed transportation corridor and Falls City EDGE will work with the contractors to solicit their needs, provide local area information, identify supply chains, utilize local workers as well as our hotels, restaurants and entire retail district. "The greatest economic benefit will be realized once the bridge has been completed and the Tri-State area will have a state of the art pathway to our nation's Interstate system," commented Charlie Radatz, Tri-State Corridor Alliance Co-Chair and EDGE Board Member.

## Lincoln Journal Star Reports on Southeast Nebraska Communication's (SNC's) Fiber Project

The March 13 issue of the *Lincoln Journal Star* featured a story on Falls City's new fiber optic network. The headline read, "***Falls City hopes to hit home run with fiber optic network,***" and went on to say "*Falls City is not building a baseball park on the edge of a cornfield to attract people to the southeast corner of Nebraska. It's working on something more futuristic: a fiber optic network that will connect to 2,366 homes and businesses - basically the entire town.*" [Read the story at JournalStar.com »](#)



[Visit SNC's website to learn more about the Fiber To The Home project »](#)

## Check into the New Vision Inn *(continued from page 1)*



According to Brian Palmer, "reservations from tourists and visitors are in full swing and with all the new development in the Falls City area, including the Wind Farm Development and Missouri River Bridge, we anticipate a successful 2010 and beyond."

The motel offers 17 rooms, including a fully furnished suite. A daily continental breakfast will be served and a picnic area will be provided with ample green space for visitors and guests to enjoy. The Vision 20/20 Investors visualize a Phase II development which would add an additional 12 motel rooms so stay tuned for further improvements to the grounds!

The motel will open in May 2010. **For reservations call: 402.245.2459.**



# A Message from the Director

I just returned from an exciting week-long professional development course in Indianapolis conducted by the [Oklahoma University/Economic Development Institute](#). OU/EDI, accredited by the [International Economic Development Council](#), is the only professional level program of its type in the country that provides professional economic developers with up-to-date knowledge and tools necessary to succeed in the constantly changing and competitive business world of economic development.

The comprehensive course covered a wide range of economic development topics, including strategic planning; asset mapping; business retention, expansion and attraction; workforce development; prospect management; deal structuring and financing; land development/redevelopment uses; business collaborations/networks, management of economic development office ... and many other subjects. Several case studies were presented to make the topics come to life. Due to the practical design of the course, OU/EDI students can immediately apply their education on the job.



Year 1 courses afforded me the opportunity to gain insight into the many facets of economic development and how I can implement strategies to continue building a better Falls City. I was able to build a global network of seasoned professionals upon which I can call for guidance on prospect management, international business recruitment, as well as land development processes and social media marketing.

OU EDI is an intensive training program and I look forward to completing my education over the next couple of years with the goal of sitting for the [Certified Economic Developer](#) examination once I've completed my educational and four years economic development experience requirements.

*Beckie Cromer, EDGE Executive Director*

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

1614 Stone Street, Box 574  
Falls City, NE 68355  
402.245.2105  
[info@fallscityedge.com](mailto:info@fallscityedge.com)

Beckie Cromer, Executive Director

Visit us online  
[www.fallscityedge.com](http://www.fallscityedge.com)

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