

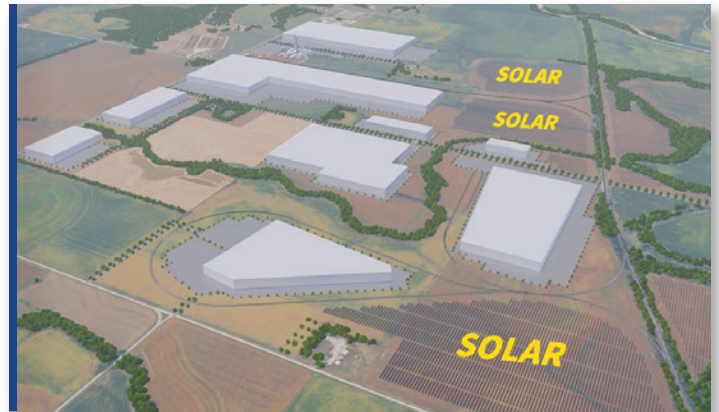


2024

ANNUAL REPORT

Mid-America Rail Campus

Located two miles south of Falls City along the Kansas state line and east of Hwy 73 along the Union Pacific rail are 1,017 acres secured through option agreements for development opportunities. The options, secured by Falls City EDGE with landowners, have been in place for more than five years. Within the last two years, it was decided to market the site to companies exploring emerging biofuel technologies that utilize corn and soybeans as feedstock. In an effort to decarbonize global production systems to meet corporate carbon intensity score goals, many companies have been successful proving proof of concept to minimize usage of fossil fuels. Some of these markets include sustainable aviation fuel, biodiesel processing, bio-polypropylene production, and other forms of energy generation using agriculture residues.



food systems, revitalize rural America, and create a decarbonized future for the United States and the world while protecting our four most precious resources: people, crops, water, and livestock.



On August 9th in Kearney at the Ag and Economic Development Summit, Governor Pillen announced his Nebraska BioEconomy Initiative to elevate Nebraska's economic capability, revitalize rural communities, protect family farms, spur investment in rural

infrastructure, and transform the products, services, technologies and production our country is demanding for a fully resilient future. The Nebraska BioEconomy will safeguard the United States, enhance U.S.



On November 5th, Citroniq Chemicals LLC announced a partnership with Falls City EDGE to locate at the Mid-America Rail Campus for one of their bio-based production facilities. Citroniq will transform ethanol produced from Nebraska corn into bio-based polypropylene, reducing the reliance on petroleum-based production while driving additional revenue to Nebraska's farms and rural communities. The plant is expected to be operational in 2029. ■

Communities LEAP Grant Awarded from Department of Energy



Falls City EDGE was one of thirty energy-burdened communities awarded the Communities LEAP (Local Energy Action Program) Cohort 2 grant through the DoE's

National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) to address economic impacts from historical reliance on fossil fuels to build community-driven action plans for clean energy-related economic development. Falls City's application was two-fold as we work to implement solutions for the electrical infrastructure in far-Southeast Nebraska and the development of the Mid-America Rail Campus which is designed to attract companies interested in reducing their carbon footprint with new technologies and production practices.

The grant includes 18 months of Technical Assistance from experts in the renewables field that are assisting with a cost-benefit analysis of potential community solar infrastructure that could offset peak electrical use with the goal of cost savings to rate payers' monthly invoices. The cost-benefit analysis report will be instrumental in applying for future grants to offset the cost of solar installation. The grant also includes a \$50,000 award which is being used for engineering cost of opinion to build a secondary transmission line into Falls City to power the Mid-America Rail Campus and to support the Nebraska BioEconomy Initiative. This study will assist elected officials in deciding the best-possible option for transmission infrastructure into Falls City and use of the \$15,000,000 grant allotted by the Nebraska Legislature in the Spring of 2022.

For more info on the project, you can read this article from the American Public Power Association featuring Falls City. ■



Falls City Recognized as Economic Development Certified Community

In an effort to better position communities for development opportunities, the Nebraska Diplomats recognizes communities that display a preparedness for economic development and a desire for growth. Becoming certified signifies to employers and potential newcomers that these communities have the essential ingredients for economic opportunity and a great quality of life. Falls City was first recognized in 2009 and has successfully recertified in 2014, 2019, and now 2024.



Successful applicants must demonstrate a high level of economic proactivity and a readiness to succeed. Each applicant is evaluated on program standards related to elements like local preparedness, support for business growth, organization and partnerships, well-identified targets and/or markets, infrastructure, local financing and business assistance, and available information on existing sites and/or buildings. ■

Full press release may be viewed on EDGE website under NEWS tab

Hospital Opens Community Kids Center



With the need to grow childcare capacity and impending closure of Falls City's largest facility, Community Medical Center was issued the proper certificate and assumed operations of the Sacred Heart Childcare Center at 18th and Fulton. Expanding childcare options for working families is part of EDGE's strategic plan and maintaining current facility operations was critical for the community. Without childcare services, parents are forced to stay home or move out of the community resulting in reduced workforce and decreased community services.



Expert childcare providers met at Falls City High School in April to offer education and answer questions from those interested in offering in-home childcare services. The engagement session was supported

by Nebraska Children's Communities for Kids, Falls City Sixpence, Falls City Public Schools, Corncat Entertainment, the Chamber of Commerce, and EDGE.

Falls City EDGE also co-hosted a Town Hall in August with District 1 Legislative candidates, Dennis Schaardt and Bob Hallstrom. The event was held in Auburn and focused on childcare service needs in far-Southeast Nebraska and provided attendees an opportunity to ask questions. ■

Land Bank Acquires Properties Abandoned by Private Market

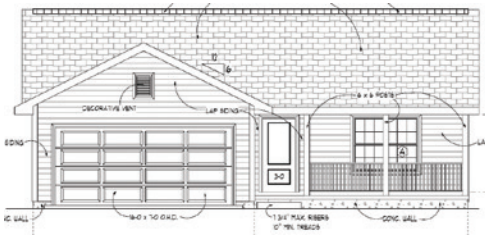


The Southeast Nebraska Land Bank meets at City Hall on the second Thursday of the month at noon.

The mission is to revitalize interior dilapidated neighborhoods and bring tax-delinquent properties back to a product revenue-producing position. An online listing of available properties is available on the EDGE website. The Land Bank could be motivated to offer these properties at no cost to developers wishing to create workforce housing in Verdon and Falls City. The Land Bank currently owns 7 Falls City properties, many of which are strategically located between downtown and the schools. Falls City and Verdon were the first communities to create a regional land bank in the State of Nebraska on August 7, 2023. Since then, about 3 or 4 have been created and leadership teams from each land bank meet quarterly to compare strategies and discuss objectives. Although not affiliated, the EDGE Board approved offering their executive director's services at no charge to be the land bank's director. This quasi-governmental entity is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and provides a vehicle to revitalize our interior neighborhoods. ■



House to be Built with Rural Workforce Housing Funds



After two years of planning, the City of Falls City, in partnership with EDGE and the Housing Board, will build a 4-bedroom 2-bathroom house

with extended-length 2-car garage and 1,662 sq. ft. of finished living space. The Housing Board was instrumental in choosing a preferred floor plan that can fit on 75-foot-wide lots throughout Falls City. Construction of the property at 1612 Fulton will be managed by Southeast Nebraska Development District who manages the grant funds. EDGE is working closely with the general contractor, SEND Contracting, to hire as many local sub-contractors as possible. The house will have an open concept kitchen on the main level with two bedrooms, living room, and one bath in the basement. The list price is expected to be around \$330,000 and available in the Fall of 2025. Potential buyers interested in purchasing and customizing the house are encouraged to contact EDGE. The goal is to sell the house for what it's constructed, minimizing private market profits and added costs to buyers, to build one new house each year. The goal is to utilize this program to assist revitalization of our interior neighborhoods. ■

Wilderness Falls 3 Opens



After 3 years of planning, 16 units at Wilderness Falls opened for seniors 55+ that meet income level requirements. An open house was held on June 13th and the units were all filled within just a few months. On August 16th, a ribbon cutting was held to thank all of our partners: City of Falls City, Excel Development Group, Forten Building Group, Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Marble Cliff Capital, Advantage Capital, Horizon Bank, REGA Engineering, and Midwest Housing Initiatives. ■

Asset Modernization Grant & Small Business Gap Financing Programs



Falls City EDGE has established the Richardson County Asset Modernization Initiative, offering

modernization resources to for-profit Richardson County businesses, including but not limited to, manufacturers and agricultural/food product processors. The initiative is intended to stimulate modernization of assets by county businesses that are members of EDGE or Chamber of Commerce.

The Small Business Gap Financing Fund is designed to assist small and start-up businesses with additional funding not provided by a local bank. Interested parties will have prepared a business plan for access to low-interest loans that can be paid back monthly over as many as five years.

Visit the Incentives page under the Location Advantages category on the EDGE website for more information. State incentives are also listed on this web page. ■

USDA Grant for BDO Zone Issues Falls City 'A' Rating



We are pleased to announce the issue of an investment-grade Bioeconomy Development Opportunity (BDO) Zone 'A' Rating for Falls City, Nebraska. Falls City's BDO Zone rating for 600,000 bone dry tons per year of corn stover is the first rating in the state of Nebraska and extends a 75-mi drive-distance from the center point in Falls City, NE. The 'A' rating confirms Richardson County, Nebraska as the home of consistent and productive corn yields and adds value to the agriculture industry that drives our local economy. Falls City's Mid-America Rail Campus is positioned to lead the way for bioeconomy investments to support our local family farms, create careers and prosperity for our working families, and capitalize on our land, rail, river, and air transportation assets. Nebraska is home to the agricultural resources necessary for the next chapter of bioeconomy investments. ■

Falls City High School Opens Career Academy

The Falls City Career Academy opened for the 2024-25 school year as part of the Southeast Nebraska Career Academy Partnership (SENCAP) offered through Southeast Community College. The academy offers five programs in the career pathways of Agriculture, Construction, Education, Healthcare, and Welding. Students will take courses in each pathway at the SCC Learning Center at Falls City. Students from Falls City High School, Falls City Sacred Heart, and Humboldt-Table Rock-Steinauer will be taking classes in the academy.

"Preparing the next generation of a skilled workforce requires innovative approaches to education. Our high school career academy will offer a variety of educational experiences, equipping students with not just academic knowledge, but real-world skills and industry exposure. By merging our high school coursework with hands-on learning, we will enable students to succeed in the ever-evolving job market, ensuring they graduate not just prepared for college, but poised for success in their chosen career paths," said Falls City Public Schools superintendent Tim Heckenlively. ■

HTRS Students Tour Power Plant and Wastewater Facilities



Empowering students with the skills and support to succeed in education, employment and life is the mission of Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) Nebraska. The program utilizes a model developed by the national JAG organization and is dedicated to empowering students with personal and professional development training and support to succeed in high school, further education, and employment following graduation. To better understand employment opportunities in the surrounding area, these JAG students toured the power plant and wastewater facilities owned by Falls City Utilities in November. ■

Investor of the Year



Dollar Fresh Market

Wall of Fame



Roger Kiekhaefer



Don Coupe



FALLS CITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& GROWTH ENTERPRISE, INC. (EDGE)

1705 Stone Street
Falls City, NE 68355
402-245-2105
Director@FallsCityEDGE.com