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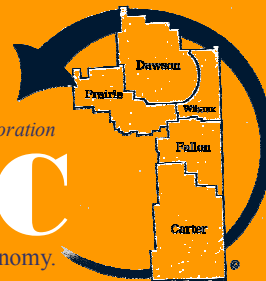
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November 9, 2011

Eastern Plains Economic Development Corporation

EPEDC

... providing support for a better economy.



Main Street

The EPEDC's recent work with the Town of Terry, related to the Main Street program funded through the MT Department of Commerce, prompted Executive Director Jason Rittal to attend his first Main Street Conference October 12th-14th. Topics ranged from parking issues to events and fundraising.

While some of the topics were geared toward more populated areas, the overall experience was enlightening, and the conference's message rang true. We need to support our main streets. Development efforts should strengthen existing businesses, fill in vacant properties, and encourage visitation because our rural main streets are critical to the overall health of our communities.

Next EPEDC Quarterly Board Meeting

Wednesday
January 25, 2012

Baker, MT

at the Fallon County Courthouse
9:30 AM

Contact Information

Comments or questions?

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Local Project Updates

As part of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document updating process, S.W.O.T. ("Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats") assessment meetings were held in each of the EPEDC's five counties October 3rd and 4th. EPEDC staff presented the CEDS committee groups with statistics pertaining to their county's population, employment, and housing in order to give each group a sense of the information currently available. Common topics of conversation included the need for economic diversification, threats posed by State and Federal regulations, opportunities to promote tourism, and welcoming growth. The EPEDC will use the information collected from the meetings to inform the CEDS data gathering process in the coming months.

The Montana Broadband Program held two meetings in the EPEDC region September 20th and 21st in Glendive and Baker, respectively. Both meetings were well attended and helped provide the program's staff with information about regional challenges and concerns regarding broadband service. Attendees indicated the need for extending service to more rural areas and the continued exchange of information about local technology resources. Since the release of the last EPEDC newsletter, the Broadband Program has updated its web address. Maps and information can now be found at: www.broadband.mt.gov

The EPEDC put together a Request For Proposal response to the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center for the Terry Community. The selection committee reported that a total of 10 communities had submitted responses to Phase 2. Terry was notified November 4th that they were not one of the communities selected to move into Phase 3 of the selection process.

Meanwhile, Evelyn Cameron Heritage, Inc. hosted their annual gala September 17th. Over 100 individuals attended the fundraising event held at the Evelyn Cameron Heritage Center. Renovation of the Center's main floor is quickly progressing! At the time of the gala, heating and air conditioning systems had been installed, foam insulation had been hung on the walls, and a fire-rated ceiling covered the previous dilapidated tin tiles (scene from 2011 Gala pictured above).

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Oil and Gas Development North Dakota Reconnaissance Tour

Jason Rittal

October 4th Fallon County and City of Baker officials were gracious enough to invite me on a day-long tour into the heart of the Bakken activity. Our first stop was in Stanley, ND, followed by stops in Williston and Watford City. It was an eye-opening experience, and I thank Fallon County and the City of Baker for the opportunity to ride along. It quickly became clear that, while I cannot predict the extent to which Bakken activity will impact the EPEDC region, I do know the initial impact is already affecting our region and will continue to do so. Therefore, I believe there are three areas where we need to step up our efforts—planning, housing, and infrastructure.

The EPEDC, in cooperation with the MT Department of Commerce, is working toward getting planning resources on the ground in eastern Montana. These resources will be essential in updating, initiating, and/or revising current plans. We also need to begin thinking long-term about having a regional planning professional available to our 5 counties and 7 municipalities.

The need for housing was evident prior to the Bakken activity, so the additional demand has pushed housing to crisis levels in parts of our region. Through planning and local efforts, decisions concerning quantity and the types of housing needed will have to be made.

The condition and availability of infrastructure is going to impact any proposed development whether it relates to business or housing. We need to determine where infrastructure is available, the condition of the infrastructure, the capacity available, and if necessary, what would it take to extend.

While this article is certainly not all inclusive of my thoughts on the Bakken impacts, it is a short summary of where I think our efforts should be centered. Development is coming, let's make every effort we can to be ready.

"All growth depends upon activity. There is no development physically or intellectually without effort, and effort means work."

-Calvin Coolidge

Eastern Plains Economic Development Corporation
PO Box 497
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**The EPEDC serves the following participating counties and municipalities:
Carter County, Dawson County, Fallon County, Prairie County, and Wibaux County,
as well as the City of Baker, the Town of Ekalaka, the City of Glendive, the Town of Plevna,
the Town of Richey, the Town of Terry, and the Town of Wibaux.**