

# THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PULSE

NEWS FROM WEDA FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN GROWING WYOMING'S ECONOMY • MARCH 2016

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## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- > June 7-8, 2016  
WEDA Summer Conference  
Cody, WY

## > PRESIDENT'S NOTE Can We Afford Economic Development?

In this time of bleak forecasts for the Wyoming state budget from the Consensus Revenue Estimating Group (CREG) reports, public officials are looking for areas they can cut their budgets. Each office, department, and contract is being analyzed to determine what can be trimmed, and those areas affecting economic development are no exception.



As professionals in economic development, we recognize that everyone is being asked to tighten their belts, and rightly so. However, one thing to consider when looking at the field of economic development is that this field was created specifically to support growth, strength and stability to local and regional economies. The goals of any economic development program are to work to retain existing jobs, to support the growth of new jobs, and to encourage and leverage private capital investment. At a time when revenues from the minerals industry have dropped precipitously, Wyoming and local communities need to be looking at ways to support and create diversified jobs and industries.

At WEDA, we recognize that we cannot work on these ambitious goals on our own. As we are all facing tough decisions on where budget cuts need to be made and where we need to continue to invest, we need to be thinking even more about how we can team up and help each other. With that in mind, one thing WEDA has done is to work with WAM (the Wyoming Association of Municipalities) to have our

summer conferences back-to-back in Cody in June this year. While this is a simple step, this helps broaden participants' understanding and everybody gets to know who the players are. When local governments and economic development organizations learn more about each other, everybody wins.

Another way that WEDA is partnering is having our members help each other out. Instead of having one region of the state vying with another, we are pairing up instead. This February we kicked off our mentoring program, pairing seasoned Wyoming economic developers with those new in the field. Johnson County is working with Platte County, Cheyenne with Glenrock, Casper with Thermopolis and Powell. Mentors and mentees are excited to share and learn from each other and make Wyoming stronger.

Wyoming has been making great progress in broadening the types of jobs that are available, in supporting new industries to come, as well as in encouraging existing industries to grow and innovate. This is in no small thanks to local and state leaders who had the vision to create and support economic development organizations and programs, and to create a business-friendly environment. While we are seeing decreased revenues, Wyoming is still operating in the black, and despite the pain of the proposed budget cuts these prevent the state from running a deficit. While local and state leaders are facing difficult decisions, a critical element to consider it is to ensure that economic development organizations and professionals have the support they need to do their work to bolster the local economies so we can ride out these tough times. ■

—Anja Bendel

## WEDA'S 2016 STRATEGIC PLAN

**Providing secure funding sources for WEDA as an association:** WEDA will continue to demonstrate its value as an investment for members and generous sponsors, as well as explore other sources of funding for the Association.

**Influencing public policy in support of economic development in Wyoming:** Because public policy decisions impact the ability of economic development professionals to fulfill their mission to bring quality, diversified employers to Wyoming, WEDA will continue to talk with Wyoming's policy makers to ensure they understand how policies can support economic development efforts.

**Providing for the building of the capacity and professionalism of WEDA members and their organizations:** As a professional organization, WEDA must be key in providing Wyoming's economic development professionals with opportunities to learn more about the tools available to them. In addition to statewide conferences and a mentoring program, the Association provides scholarships to help defray the costs of education opportunities of all types.



## MENTORING PROGRAM AIDS NEW ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS

By Tom Dixon

The Wyoming Economic Development Association is starting a new mentoring program. The idea is to educate and train new economic developers while encouraging communication and creating positive working relationships with veterans of the trade. New business leaders will learn about current trends and challenges that might be affecting their communities, while discovering some of the opportunities available to bolster their local economies.

"Our mentors will share a wealth of knowledge and experience, we will all talk about best practices and theories," said Jody Shields, principal consultant at Cheyenne consulting firm Align. "This is very economical in terms of training, and we will be able to share resources."

The mentorship program is also going to focus on professional leadership growth and community development. Each month, mentors and mentees will use an article, video or other information to launch a discussion about different topics. Those topics will range from how to partner with local, state and federal agencies to start projects and what is involved in workforce development to expansion strategies and helping local entrepreneurs.

WEDA developed the program from responses to a fall assessment asking about the strengths and weaknesses in various economic development areas. The study also gauged interest in becoming a mentor or mentee.

The initial program will have 10 mentor and mentee matches.

Building a network of economic developers will help new professionals to the field help their

see **Mentoring Program page 3**

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## Conference Bulletin Board

Wyoming Association of Municipalities  
Convention **June 8–11** Cody WY

Wyoming Association of County Officers  
Convention **September 27–29** Laramie WY

Wyoming State Chamber of Commerce Fall  
Conference **October 5–7** Green River WY

## WYOMING BUSINESS COUNCIL NEWS:

### BUSINESS COUNCIL SETS AMBITIOUS GOALS, CREATES PLAN TO ACHIEVE THEM

By Tom Dixon

The Wyoming Business Council wants to positively impact the state's gross domestic product over the next decade. That vision is the driver behind the strategic plan being laid out by Wyoming's economic development agency. "Our mission is to increase Wyoming's prosperity," said Shawn Reese, chief executive officer of the Business Council. "The GDP, or the total value of goods and services produced in Wyoming, is a good measure of that."

Wyoming's gross domestic product grew 32 percent over the last decade. To grow GDP, the Business Council has built a road map for expanding heavy industry, increasing exports and foreign investment, growing small businesses, creating a technology sector and bolstering quality communities.

"We are actively engaged with industry to understand their needs," said Tom Johnson, chief performance officer of the Business Council. "Then we can bring their concerns to the state and see if there is a way to address them."

#### Industrial Parks

Constructing large-scale industrial parks is central to the Business Council's industrial development strategy. These parks cater specifically to companies that turn raw resources into higher value products. The concept has been tested in places like Alberta, Canada. Alberta's Industrial Heartland is 225 square miles of industrial land that has attracted \$30 billion in investment and now employs 7,000 people.

Wyoming oil and gas producers will create new products from the raw materials extracted from the ground. Those products can then be sold for higher profits than just the crude minerals.

"Coal, oil and gas are the backbone of Wyoming's economy," said Ben Avery, business and industry division director of the Business Council. "But as the regulatory environment becomes more onerous, the public sector and private industry will need to find new, innovative markets for those products."

Building industrial parks requires public feedback, cooperation with industry experts and a common sense permitting process. Economic developers can partner with community colleges to train new workers and existing support industries to create supply chains. Air and rail service, along with other infrastructure, will need to be expanded.

The Business Council also expects to develop new initiatives and create financial incentives to entice private industry to invest in value-added projects.

#### Investing in Innovators

Recruiting new companies is only a small part

of growing Wyoming's economy. The Business Council also wants to nurture homegrown entrepreneurs. By 2026, the goal is to be ranked first in the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation study for number of new startups per capita. The Business Council also wants to increase the five-year survival rate of startups to 50 percent.

Today, Wyoming ranks second in startups with nearly 280 out of every 100,000 adults becoming entrepreneurs in any given month, according to the Kauffman Index. Of Wyoming's nearly 34,000 businesses, 80 percent employ fewer than 10 people. "Wyomingites are independent people, however when it comes to starting and operating a business, we hope they'll take advantage of all the great resources available to them," said Jill Kline, state director of the Wyoming Small Business Development Center.

The first few years of a new venture, Kline added, are the most challenging for a business. The Small Business Development Center helps owners access capital, develop a team and create a marketing strategy.

Creating a successful entrepreneurial environment starts with making licensing and permitting easier. Businesses need employees to grow. The Business Council and Wyoming communities will make plans for workforce development and housing. Economic developers will work with angel fund networks, like the Pitch Me expo in Jackson Hole to match investors with businesses.

#### Expanding Exports

Export and market expansion will help business owners discover a larger client base. Wyoming will work closely with the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Western U.S. Agricultural Trade Association to make local businesses more competitive in foreign markets.

Over the next decade, the Business Council is going to help increase Wyoming exports 50 percent. Exports were a \$1.8 billion industry for Wyoming in 2014. To grow exports, the Business Council will leverage the diplomatic ties that Wyoming policymakers have forged, advocate for expanded ports and provide more technical assistance to help Wyoming companies export.

At the same time, the Business Council wants to double direct foreign investment in Wyoming. Last year, the state garnered \$2 million in foreign investment. The Business Council is evaluating a program, called the EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program, which entices foreign business leaders to invest in Wyoming. Foreign investors can receive a visa if they give at least \$500,000 toward a project that creates or saves at least 10 jobs.

At home, the Wyoming Business Resource Network can also provide individual help to entrepreneurs through market analysis and technical assistance. The Business Council provides money to about a dozen Business Resource Network partners. Those partners then focus in various ways on local small business development.

#### Technology center of the high plains

An ambitious tenet of the Business Council's vision to grow Wyoming's GDP 100 percent is

a plan to make technology the state's fourth largest sector. In 2013, the technology industry, comprising about 50 advanced industries that spend more on research and development and employ workers in science and math intensive jobs, accounted for just 5.7 percent of Wyoming jobs. The state ranks 46th in the nation.

"We want Wyoming to be the technology center of the high plains," Johnson said. "We've made huge strides toward that goal in the last five years, but we have a lot of work left to do." The Business Council wants to see the number of patents awarded per capita double over 10 years. Wyoming inventors were awarded 122 patents in 2014.

Business Resource Network experts have a number of programs available to help improve the number of patents awarded. One of those programs provides money to help businesses apply for federal research grants. Wyoming wants to double the amount of federal research grant money awarded in the state. Wyoming ranked 37th in 2013.

Technology companies like SciAps, formerly DeltaNu, in Laramie epitomize the rewards of the Small Business Innovation Research program. DeltaNu builds medical analytical tools. The equipment used to be the size of a car and cost \$100,000. DeltaNu won \$4.5 million in grants over a decade spanning to 2007. That money helped the company to hire experts, develop its first commercial product and reduce the equipment to a handheld device worth \$15,000.

The Business Council is also interested in creating a seed capital program to help technology companies get off the ground.

The greatest resource for technology entrepreneurs is often their peers, which is why economic developers want to help form a Wyoming Technology Association and create a technology plan to guide the state in the future. Like heavy industry, the technology sector relies on well-developed infrastructure to operate. The Business Council will help extend last-mile broadband internet service and expand cell service

in Wyoming. The idea is to achieve one gigabit internet speeds in 75 percent of the state.

### Keeping it Local

Wyoming's education system will also play a vital role in making the state a technology hub. Schools that focus on youth entrepreneurship and a curriculum steeped in science, technology, engineering and math will give students an advantage when it is time to enter the workforce. Once those students graduate, Wyoming has a vested interest in making sure they stay in the Cowboy State to work and play. Bolstering quality communities is essential to retaining Wyoming's youth.

The Business Council plans to increase total property and sales tax collection 35 percent. The expansion of the Wyoming Main Street program is part of achieving that goal. "The purpose of the Main Street Program is to make downtown districts economically successful," said Linda Klinck, Main Street program manager. "By using market data, businesses and building owners can increase sales and property values."

The Main Street program provides businesses market analysis to show what kinds of products are missing in a community and how entrepreneurs can meet those needs. The program also helps coordinate marketing and promotions to bring people downtown and increase sales. Main Street communities also emphasize infill to increase property taxes.

The strategic plan for Wyoming's economic development in the next decade is built on a foundation of leadership and public policy. By creating quality communities, developing a skilled workforce and constructing infrastructure, Wyoming's leaders set the stage for entrepreneurs to start new companies and for existing businesses to expand. That leads to a growing economy, which attracts the attention of outside enterprises that relocate to Wyoming and further embolden the state.

"Economic development is a process, not an event," Reese said. "And that process is how we are going to increase Wyoming's prosperity."

*The Wyoming Business Council mission is to increase Wyoming's prosperity. We envision a Wyoming where industries are strong, diverse and expanding. Small business is a big deal. Communities have the highest quality of life. Wyoming is the technology center of the High Plains. Wyoming knows no boundaries.*

*Please go to [www.wyomingbusiness.org](http://www.wyomingbusiness.org) for more information. Contact Wyoming Business Council Chief Executive Officer Shawn Reese at 307-777-2862 or [shawn.reese@wyo.gov](mailto:shawn.reese@wyo.gov).*

### from Mentoring Program page 1

communities more effectively. "Especially if you are in a small, rural community, sometimes it can be lonely," Shields said. "Knowing where to go and who to call can be difficult. This program gives you somewhere to reach out and gives you a chance, rather than spend years developing relationships, to dive right in."

Participants must be WEDA members. To join the association, call 877-322-5446 ext. 9001 or email [info@wyomingeda.org](mailto:info@wyomingeda.org).

## SUCCESS STORY: CODY LABORATORIES WAREHOUSE FACILITY



In June of 2015, **Forward Cody** handed over the keys to a new hazardous materials warehouse to **Cody Labs** principals. The project was the result of a long and intensive planning process and the able help of a wide array of partners

The project provides the secure storage of raw materials used by Cody Labs in the production of active pharmaceutical ingredients in their Cody facility.

The 11,000 square foot facility carried a construction cost of \$3.8 million. Sources of funding included \$2.5 million as a Wyoming Business Council Business Committed investment, \$765,000 in company finance and \$450,000 from Forward Cody.

The project has created 45 positions averaging \$55,000 per year plus benefits. This project sets the stage for the development of a pharmaceutical manufacturing campus in the same industrial area. Plans are still being evaluated for that project.

This business expansion project is an ideal example of how state and local partners can work together to grow existing companies in our communities.

### Ex Officio Members

Shawn Reese, WYOMING BUSINESS COUNCIL  
Ben Avery, WYOMING BUSINESS COUNCIL  
Heidi Peterson, WYOMING STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
Chris Brown, WYOMING ASSOCIATION & GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS NETWORK

WYOMING  
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**WEWA**

**JOIN US IN CODY**  
June 7-8 at the Holiday Inn

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WEWA 2016 SUMMER CONFERENCE  
Watch for Details

### WEWA 2016 Board Members

Anja Bendel, PRESIDENT	Cindy Wallace
Noelle Reed, VICE PRESIDENT	Pat Robbins
Dave Simonsen, SECRETARY	Christine Bekes
Brandi Harlow, TREASURER	Robert Briggs
	Josh Boudreau

## **WEDA MEMBER NEWS:**

### **ROCK SPRINGS**

The Broadway Theater in Rock Springs continues to build on efforts to make the downtown a destination for entertainment with a mini concert series, Live in the Lobby. The concert series is designed to showcase local talent, when possible, and feature some small traveling bands. The shows are held in the lobby of the Broadway Theater so the setting is intimate; shows are limited to just 50 tickets.

First concerts included a singer/songwriter from Western Wyoming Community College and The Joe Barbuto Trio. Tickets are sold at the Rock Springs Main Street/URA office and the Rock Springs Chamber of Commerce for just \$5.

The Live in the Lobby series is sponsored by WyoRadio and performances are scheduled for the fourth Thursday of each month through May. Subsequent shows include Nick Gomez - The Altitude and Atlas (March 24), Josh Wentz & Friends (April 28) and Erika Nelson (May 26). Downtown music will continue with Concerts in the Park.

### **GREEN RIVER**

The Green River Chamber of Commerce released its report for 2015, calling the year "exceptional." The organization ended the year with a 5% increase in membership and 93% retention of existing members. The gift certificate program kept over \$299,000 in local stores and restaurants.

### **EVANSTON**

The City of Evanston submitted a Business Ready Community (BRC) grant request in December. The Roundhouse Ready for Business Project, if funded, will prepare the remaining three sections of Evanston's Historic Roundhouse for a business or multiple businesses. The project will repair the masonry, purchase and install the many windows needed, expand necessary utilities and conduct remediation measures. Section 1 of the Roundhouse will continue to function as public event space. The WBC Board will meet this spring to determine the final grant amount and approval. The remaining sections of the Roundhouse encompass nearly 47,000 square feet and would be spacious enough to accommodate one large business or many companies.

The Evanston Urban Renewal Agency has completed a downtown market analysis study. Conducted by Myers-Anderson Architecture in association with Strategy 5, LLC, the study contains an inventory of all the historic downtown district buildings and the various market sectors, including retail, restaurants/entertainment, office, residential and hospitality. Evanston's Historic Downtown District ranges from 6th Street to 15th

Street and from Front Street to Center Street. The analysis also addresses such issues as target markets, signage, parking, pedestrian/bicycle traffic, as well as special events, business retention and more.

The analysis states that, overall, Evanston's downtown is unique, charming and robust. It does suggest some businesses that could enhance the downtown experience include antique shops, art galleries, a web design store and some type of lodging or hospitality business. Other niche stores, such as a sporting apparel and footwear shop or a distinctive food and beverage establishment would also be suitable additions to the district.

Finally, the plan advises the community to consider adding streetscape improvements, such as bike racks, public art and distinctive paving patterns, as well as building upon the already strong special events calendar.

Uinta County Economic Development Commission conducted a strategic planning session on January 27 with facilitator Mary Randolph. The nine member board, whose mission is to promote and foster economic prosperity throughout Uinta County, is comprised of individuals appointed from each incorporated community of Bear River, Evanston, Lyman and Mountain View and Uinta County. The commission discussed the area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, five primary goals and other economic issues, including the building blocks of economic development listed above.

The group agreed to continue focusing on business retention and expansion, infrastructure development, the recruitment of primary sector and compatible businesses and identifying funding sources. The commission members also decided to establish an education program both for new UCEDC members and the public at-large in regards to the numerous aspects of economic development. One of the main opportunities the commission discussed was that of regionalism. Southwest Wyoming can be marketed as one unified economic force. A regional outreach strategy allows for one point of contact for a site selector or company, ultimately simplifying the communication process while still celebrating the unique difference of each community within a given region.

### **CHEYENNE**

The economic development agencies in Cheyenne – Cheyenne LEADS, Cheyenne DDA, Visit Cheyenne and the Greater Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce – are working together on a downtown core project. The project includes alleyway cleanup, lighting at the depot and nearby blocks, a water feature and enhanced wayfinding. Individual elements of the project have timelines varying from this spring to several years out.

**WEDA'S MISSION IS TO PROVIDE  
LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT TO FOSTER  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN WYOMING.**



Rendering of David Street Station

### **CASPER**

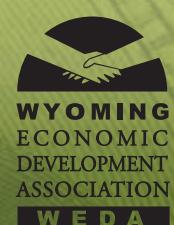
The Casper Downtown Development Authority announced the name and final design for the downtown plaza in February. The plaza is named David Street Station for its location on David Street, where Second Street downtown changes to West Yellowstone Highway through the Old Yellowstone District.

The design team was led by downtown Casper business owner and resident, Lyle Murtha, of Stateline No. 7 Architects. "The design is a culmination of ideas from community members, lessons learned from other spaces around the country and what will work best in our climate," said Murtha. The design features include a band shell and seating area for performances, a free splash pad for children and families to enjoy, and ice rink in the winter time. Other features include attractive gateways, on-site restrooms, integrated vendor/tent stations, second story observation deck, art installations, public seating areas, and a small area for pop-up street performers.

"This is a huge step forward in the process of bringing this to the heart of our community. The input from the public has been invaluable and we are excited to show everyone what Stateline No. 7 has put together. We would like to thank the Casper City Council, city staff, Wyoming Business Council, our private donors, and the public for their continued support – we wouldn't be where we are today without it" said Kevin Hawley, Executive Director of the Downtown Development Authority.

### **NORTHEAST WYOMING**

Sheridan, Buffalo and Gillette – with funding assistance from a Wyoming Business Council grant – are creating a regional marketing effort that will debut in March. After a national search, the area economic development agencies selected Smart Solutions Group, Inc. and Golden Shovel to develop a comprehensive branding and marketing strategy. The project will be discussed in depth with key stakeholders at a regional conference on April 8. ■



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