

Economic development goes gang busters

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 11 October 2012 13:27 -



Wolf: DAD planted seeds in county that pay off this year

Several seeds that have seen fruition were on Jen Wolf's list when she recounted what's happened in Dawson and Gosper counties the past year.

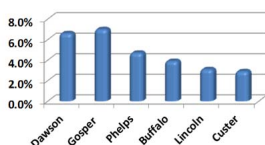
Wolf, director of Dawson Area Development, presented the county economic development promoter's annual report at the Oct. 2 meeting of the Gothenburg City Council.

"Two years ago, we planted a lot of seeds like site development in the county," Wolf said. "And it's paid off. A lot of exciting things have happened."

One of the most amazing, Wolf said, is that Dawson County's 2011 job growth rates topped those of Nebraska's metropolitan areas.

This at a time when the county lost its second largest employer with 500 employees—the Tenneco manufacturing plant in Cozad.

"That's phenomenal," she said.



According to the U.S Census Bureau American Community Survey 2011 population survey, job growth in Dawson County was 1.1%. The county's population grew 1.75% to 24,803 people, and new job growth is predicted at 37.1%

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Additionally, Wolf said Dawson County experienced 6.6% growth in sales tax collections from 2010-11.

That's almost twice as much as what was collected from the neighboring counties of Buffalo, Lincoln, Custer and Phelps.

Gothenburg led communities in the county with a 15% increase.

And there's more.

Wolf said the county's net taxable sales are almost 65% higher than other counties of the same size.

Last summer, Gothenburg and Lincoln were the only two communities in the state to receive a new grant from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development's Site and Building Development Fund in the first round of grants.

The \$500,000 grant will help install infrastructure to an industrial site in the southeast part of the city.

Lexington was awarded \$250,000 in the second round.



Gothenburg, Cozad and Lexington were the first three communities in the state to get Rural

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Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) Revolving Loan Funds from the United States Department of Agriculture.

“This means more than \$1 million will be available for business retention and attraction projects,” Wolf said.

Ground breakings throughout Dawson and Gosper counties were also celebrated.

She noted that:

Prep work has begun on a new building for Orthman Manufacturing in Lexington.

The business has expanded employment by about 150 and hopes to add another 100 employees when the new 115,000 square-foot plant is completed.

Industrial Skins, in the former Evans Bakery Building in Cozad, is expected to revolutionize the restaurant ceiling tile industry.

Rayeman Elements in Lexington has discovered a method for producing feed pellets from distillers grain, and other products, that Wolf said has endless possibilities.

Both Industrial Skins and Rayeman Elements have patented their production processes and chosen Dawson County as the location to launch their businesses.

“Having available buildings is key to any kind of economic development,” Wolf said. “Dayton Phoenix is here in Gothenburg because of an available building.”

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Nebraska Health and Human Services moved into the Opportunity Center in Lexington and provides 50 new jobs in the county.

Lone Wolf Wurst Meats, a sausage factory in Eustis, opened the doors to their new facility in May and will add 11 new jobs.

The Dawson County Historical Society received a \$135,000 DED tourism grant for renovations.

Wolf said DAD dues, that are \$19,000 for Gothenburg, are likely to increase next year.

She also pointed out every dollar in dues has been yielding \$18 in grant funds.

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