WYOMING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
WEDA

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
PULSE

NEWS FROM WEDA FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN GROWING WYOMING'S ECONOMY • MAY 2015

IN THIS ISSUE

> Local Efforts Drive Wyoming Main Street Program 2
> WEDA Wraps Up Legislative Session and Looks Ahead to 2016 3
> WEDA Welcomes New Board Members 3
> WEDA Goes Green 3
> WEDA Member News 4

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

> September 30 - October 1, 2015
WEDA Fall Conference
Rock Springs, WY

> PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Let's keep talking…

Economic development is a constant conversation that takes place around us day to day, year to year. This conversation takes place as communities talk about the business climate, who's growing, who's contracting, and how regional and national factors affect our local economies. While it's easy to celebrate successes, or ruminate on failures, economic development is dynamic and communities need to continually evaluate what happened, what business and workforce needs are, how have things changed, and what, if anything, can we do about it.

After having served on the Wyoming Economic Development Association (WEDA) Board of Directors for three years, including co-chairing the WEDA Legislative Committee, I'm honored to have begun serving as president in January. And congratulations are in order for Lisa Johnson, WEDA Past President, who stepped down from her position as executive director of Goshen County Economic Development to become the new Southeast Regional Director for the state's economic development agency, the Wyoming Business Council. With a few new faces on the WEDA board of directors, and the progression of the officers, we have the fresh opportunity to reflect about economic development on a state-wide scale.

There have been some changes in economic development in Wyoming in the past year. Shawn Reese, the new CEO for the Wyoming Business Council, took over the helm last summer. He has been examining everything that the organization does using a five-tiered strategy: think big, think small, think new, think local, think global. Internally and externally, everyone is encouraged to join the discussion and talk about all that the Business Council does, from working with Wyoming communities, to providing business assistance, to how we market Wyoming as a place to do business. Everything is being reevaluated and refined using the strategy to direct the conversation.

WEDA has seen a significant change as well. After running the association for 17 years steadfastly, yet with great enthusiasm and care, Paula McCormick from McCormick Marketing retired from leading WEDA. The board selected Cheyenne-based Align to take over administration for the association. As a result of this transition, our board has begun our share of talking – who do we pick, what should we do with limited resources, and how do we continue to provide service to our members in Wyoming's economic development community?

On another front, the Wyoming Business Alliance is in the midst of TOUR 23 which is an ambitious effort to discuss and document business conditions and economic development strengths and needs throughout all counties of the state. The program is a comprehensive effort involving the Wyoming Business Council, state agencies, and business and government associations (including WEDA). According to Wyoming Business Alliance President Bill Schilling, "This unprecedented effort features 23 sessions, with every county having its own meeting, and total participation from more than 500 Wyoming citizens. It has never been done before by any state." Final conclusions and recommendations from the meetings will be presented at Governor Mead's Wyoming Business Forum in November. The TOUR 23 conversations will be positive and directional. Shawn Reese, CEO of the Wyoming Business Council, believes "the tour process will help shape the state's economic strategies going forward."

As the world turns, changes that are both in and out of our control happen. Energy prices rise and fall, we have floods and droughts, some industries contract and others expand. With all of this being played out across our state, the opportunity for Wyoming citizens and organizations has emerged on several fronts to reengage in the conversation about our communities and economic development. Let's keep talking! Be part of the dialogue and help shape economic development in your community.

— Anja Bendel

TOUR 23
ESSENTIALS FOR ECONOMIC SUCCESS

April 13	Crook County
April 15	Weston County
April 17	Campbell County
April 22	Park County
April 23	Hot Springs County
April 24	Big Horn County
April 28	Washakie County
April 29	Fremont County
May 5	Sublette County
May 8	Teton County
May 11	Natrona County
May 14	Niobrara County
May 15	Converse County
May 18	Albany County
May 20	Carbon County
May 28	Uinta County
May 29	Sweetwater County
June 1	Laramie County
June 8	Platte County
June 9	Goshen County
June 15	Johnson County
June 16	Sheridan County
June 24	Lincoln County (North)
June 25	Lincoln County (South)

For more information, please contact the Wyoming Business Alliance at 307-577-8000 or visit www.wyomingbusinessalliance.com.

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WYOMING BUSINESS COUNCIL NEWS:

LOCAL EFFORTS DRIVE WYOMING MAIN STREET PROGRAM

By Shawn Reese, CEO

The Wyoming Main Street program is ten years old this year. I can't think of a better way to celebrate than to recognize the efforts of the local economic development professionals, local boards of directors, local elected officials and volunteers who work tirelessly to make their downtowns vibrant and economically viable.

Fifteen cities and towns, along with Platte County, participate in Wyoming Main Street, a Wyoming Business Council program.

These communities were well-represented among the more than 70 Wyomingites who attended the 8th Annual Wyoming Main Street Best Practices Workshop on March 27-28 in Greensboro, Rome and Cartersville, Georgia, and the National Main Streets Conference on March 30-April 1 in Atlanta.

The city of Rome, Georgia, warmly greeted Wyoming Main Street *Best Practices Workshop* attendees on March 27 with a sign on the historic DeSoto Theatre.

The number of Wyoming participants, which rivaled, and often exceeded, those of the most populous states, exemplified the seriousness with which Wyoming Main Street program members take their roles and responsibilities.

The one-of-a-kind workshop provided opportunities to study and discuss Main Street success stories in another state. Attendees learned best practices and pitfalls to avoid while visiting a renovated historic theater in Greensboro that had been slated for demolition. They took notes on efforts well under way to turn abandoned downtown buildings into lofts in Rome along with the city's success at creating opportunities for public gatherings, such as its river walk and downtown plaza. And they learned how downtown Cartersville became a major shopping hub in the age of big-box stores. And that's just to name a few.

> **"I have tons of ideas to bring back to my board," was the commonly heard takeaway.**

The National Main Streets Conference offered more workshops than one person could attend. Choices included marketing and promotion, fundraising, ways to restore your downtown for $500 or less, small-town revitalization priorities, defining value in downtown festivals and events, crowdfunding and tips for understanding the economic impact of Main Street, among others.

Wyoming Main Street Best Practices Workshop attendees pause for a group photo on the steps of the Rome, Georgia, City Hall on March 28. In the background is the statue of the Capitoline Wolf with Romulus and Remus, given to Rome in 1929 by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.

Appropriately, the first decade of the Wyoming Main Street program was marked by a tangible result at the National Main Streets Conference. Rawlins, which joined the program nine years ago, was presented with the prestigious Great American Main Street Award (GAMSA) on March 30 at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta. Rawlins became the 88th community and the first in the northern Rocky Mountain region to win a GAMSA.

"Nine years ago it was overwhelming, and as we moved through the steps, it became a little clearer," Rawlins Downtown Development Authority/Main Street Executive Director Pam Thayer said of the city's downtown renovation process. "And sitting here through these classes (at the National Main Streets Conference), all I think about is all of the work we have left to do.

"That's honestly how I feel. We're going to win (the GAMSA). It's huge, it's amazing, it's exciting for the volunteers, the board, the state, but we've got to move forward. To me, it's filling up our tank. It's going to give us the gas to keep going. That's exactly what it is. This trip alone, we have seven of our nine board members here because of this honor. And they are going ballistic. Probably 15 project ideas already, just in five days, for us to do. So the award's our gas."

Thayer said Rawlins' road to the GAMSA began in 2006 with the city's $40,000 master plan provided through Wyoming Main Street Technical Assistance funding.

"I kept saying, 'This master plan is going to get us funding, this master plan is going to get us awareness, this master plan is going to get us to where we want to be in 20, 25 years,'" Thayer said. "Now, have we deviated? Have we had to pull people back on track? Absolutely. But, honestly, that master plan was the catalyst for where we are today."

Wyoming Main Street recognizes community diversity throughout the state and levels of readiness to pursue full Main Street certification. In order to minimize local costs, effectively reach the entire spectrum of communities and efficiently distribute technical assistance and resources, Wyoming Main Street offers two tracks of connection with the state program: Certified Main Street and Wyoming Main Street Affiliate Downtowns.

Wyoming Main Street provides communities the opportunity to strengthen local pride and revitalize historic downtown districts by using the Main Street Four Point Approach. This approach helps downtown business owners improve the appearances of downtowns, build cooperation between downtown groups, help downtowns market their unique qualities and strengthen the economic bases of downtowns.

Affiliate Wyoming towns include Thermopolis, Douglas, Glenrock, Kemmerer, Pinedale, Platte County and Powell. Certified Wyoming Main Streets include Gillette, Buffalo, Cheyenne, Evanston, Green River, Laramie, Rawlins, Rock Springs and Sheridan.

For more information about Wyoming Main Street, please visit www.wyomingmainstreet.org or contact Program Manager Linda Klinck at 307-777-2934 or linda.klinck@wyo.gov.

Wyoming Business Council's 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 for more information. Contact Wyoming Business Council Chief Executive Officer Shawn Reese at 307-777-2862 or shawn.reese@wyo.gov.

Georgia Main Street photos courtesy of Ron Gullberg, Wyoming Business Council

SAVE THE DATE!

WYOMING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION WEDA

SEPT 30–OCT 1, 2015

WEDA Fall Conference
ROCK SPRINGS

MORE INFORMATION SOON

Conference Bulletin Board

Wyoming Energy Summit
May 12-13 Casper

2015 WAM Convention
June 10-13 Cheyenne

2015 WACO Conference
September 22-24 Laramie

Wyoming Chamber of Commerce Conference
September 28-30 Gillette

WEDA WRAPS UP LEGISLATIVE SESSION AND LOOKS AHEAD TO 2016

By Chris Brown, WEDA Legislative Committee

The 2015 Legislative General Session wrapped up last month and the Wyoming Economic Development Association played a lead role in the passage of several important economic development related bills.

Funding for Cities, Towns, Counties

Governor Mead recommended an additional $25 million for cities, towns and counties in his supplemental budget. With oil prices plummeting during the session, all funding came into question with the Joint Appropriations Committee and the result was the removal of the Governor's funding recommendation for local governments. WEDA members sent numerous emails to their legislators supporting reinstating the recommended funding. The House and Senate approved different amounts to reinstate and a conference committee settled the difference by approving $8 million in funding for local governments.

Rolling Stock Railcar Repair Tax Exemption

The tax exemption on the repair of railcars in Wyoming has most recently been in place since 2005. By maintaining the exemption, Wyoming remains competitive with many of our surrounding states (Nebraska, Colorado and Montana also have the exemption or no sales tax at all) in creating and maintaining above average paying jobs in rural communities that depend heavily on them. The exemption was set to sunset this July 1. Had the exemption gone away, many of these jobs would have been lost and the growth this industry has been enjoying over the years would have come to a halt. While this bill passed the House with very little resistance, it was stalled in the Senate and concern grew over whether the bill would be introduced and given a fair hearing in committee and on the Senate floor. The main hang up was the lack of a new sunset date on the bill. While we would have certainly preferred not adding a new sunset, extending the exemption for six more years allows the industry to continue to grow and move forward as a critical employer in the towns that the repair facilities operate in. The bill goes into effect July 1, 2015.

Challenge Loan Interest Rate

This bill amends the Wyoming Business Council Challenge Loan Program with a rate structure that adjusts with the market, benefitting small businesses and commercial lenders. This was an interim bill that the Joint Minerals, Business and Economic Development Committee worked on throughout the last interim. The bill goes into effect July 1, 2015.

Interim Topics

The Joint Minerals, Business and Economic Development Committee will host three two-day meetings between now and the start of the 2016 budget session. Of particular interest to the Wyoming Economic Development Association is the continuation of the Joint Subcommittee on State Involvement in Economic Development. The committee will meet at least once during the interim though no dates or specific topics have been announced. Please keep a close eye on the WEDA legislative updates over the next few months for specific information as it becomes available. In addition to the joint subcommittee, the Minerals Committee will also study Coal related issues, alternate energy sources and fuels and energy development issues.

Finally, the committee will hear reports from all related agencies and interested parties throughout the interim. The Joint Revenue Committee will undertake a study of the mechanism for distribution of revenue to cities, towns and consider the development of alternate distribution methods. The committee will also undertake a general review of tax exemptions and may consider the formation of a group similar to the Consensus Revenue Estimate Group (CREG) to review tax exemptions.

In addition the interim topics listed above, the WEDA legislative committee is working on a strategy to introduce a bill related to Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for the 2016 session. Please keep an eye on the WEDA updates throughout the interim for the latest on these and any new, developing issues as they arise.

WEDA GOES GREEN

"Going green" is a trend that most of us have gotten used to, but is the trend going to the wayside? At WEDA, we don't think so! Going green may be a trend, but it's a trend with a variety of benefits for business owners and organizations alike. That's why WEDA has decided to start our own green initiative.

In 2015, WEDA will continue to distribute its newsletters and success stories as it has in the past—by utilizing hardcopies and mailing them out to various community members and legislators. Then, in 2016, WEDA will ramp up its green efforts by distributing these publications electronically, with limited hardcopies being available upon request.

WEDA believes that green Initiatives are important for nonprofit organizations. Many for-profit industries have already made the change. It's important for WEDA to keep pace in our increasingly connected world. Furthermore, this initiative will enable WEDA to meet the demands of today without compromising the needs of tomorrow.

For more information on WEDA's Going Green Initiative, please contact the Mona Pearl at the Align offices at 307-772-9001 or via email at pearl@thealignteam.org.

WEDA WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS:

ROBERT BRIGGS

As the City of Sheridan's Planning & Economic Development Director for the past ten and a half years, Robert Briggs brings a wealth of knowledge to WEDA as well as an immense amount of enthusiasm. "(Being elected to the board) is a wonderful opportunity to be involved in the local, regional and state efforts of economic development," he says. "I look forward to rolling up my sleeves, getting to work and seeing how I can help."

Born in Tuscon, AZ, and living the life of a typical "military brat," Robert has lived around the globe, including the countries of Turkey and England, as well as Washington, D.C., Idaho, New York, and currently Sheridan. While his many travel experiences may have piqued his interest in city planning and economic matters, Robert explained that it was when he was asked to lead the Sheridan Economic & Educational Development Authority that his passion for economic concerns and WEDA were firmly established. "When I was asked to head up this organization is when I became aware of all the state's economic development issues, and I really became involved," he said.

As a WEDA constituent for the past four years, Robert is excited to be a member of the board and continue with the association's mission of providing leadership and support in economic development issues affecting Wyoming. He says, "I'd like to see WEDA continue to represent economic development interests of all the Wyoming communities with the future of economic development being sustainability and the retention and expansion of local businesses."

CRAIG NELSON

Craig Nelson is currently employed by Rocky Mountain Power as a Community Manager which allows him to work with all levels of government, chambers of commerce, non-profits and economic development groups. He has been a community manager for the past 12 years but has had a 37 year career with RMP and served in many different management capacities.

Craig has been involved with WEDA several years and previously spent six years on the WEDA board of directors. He has also served on the economic development boards of Laramie, Carbon County, South Lincoln County, Uinta County and Sweetwater County. He had the opportunity to chair both the Uinta County and Sweetwater County boards during those years.

Along with his involvement with the economic development groups, he served as a city councilman in Evanston for 12 years and in Rock Springs for four years. He also served on the Sublette County School District #1 Board of Directors. While on the Evanston City Council, Craig served on the National League of Cities Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Steering Committee as well as the NLC Small Cities Council.

Craig is currently on chamber boards in Sublette County and Evanston. Craig has also served as president of Rock Springs Chamber of Commerce as well as many other nonprofits throughout Wyoming. Craig is a graduate of Weber State University and a Leadership Wyoming 2004 graduate.

WEDA MEMBER NEWS:

BUFFALO

Buffalo will receive a $1,758,961 grant from Wyoming State Loan and Investment Board (SLIB) to improve and revitalize portions of Benteen Street, Fetterman Street, Lobban Avenue and the Clear Creek Trail.

Buffalo, Sheridan and Gillette also requested and received a $100,000 planning grant to develop a unified regional marketing plan to support economic development on a regional level.

NATRONA COUNTY

Natrona County requested a $2,578,000 Community Readiness grant from the SLIB board to construct a 10,000 square-foot hangar and 2,000 square feet of office space at the Casper/Natrona County International Airport, which will be available to house aeronautical service providers or companies with corporate aircraft looking to establish or relocate operations. The request was approved.

Rawlins DDA/Main Street Executive Director Pam Thayer holds the city's *Great American Main Street Award* plaque on March 30 at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta.

RAWLINS

The Rawlins DDA/Main Street was honored at the national Main Street conference in April with a 2015 Great American Main Street Award. The organization adopted the Main Street approach in 2007. In 2011, the city council adopted Rawlins DDA/Main Street's Downtown Master Plan, and has since completed a $1 million streetscaping project. The city and organization have invested in a number of projects that encourage comprehensive use of the downtown area for living, working and playing.

The "Klink Block"

THERMOPOLIS

Thermopolis has become an affiliate member of Wyoming Main Street. Thermopolis-Hot Springs County Economic Development Company, working with owner Bob Bell, applied for a Historical Architectural Assistance Fund grant for improvements to the "Klink Block." Located on the corner of Broadway and 5th Street, this two-story business building originally housed a billiard hall, saloon, bank, post office, jewelry store, restaurant, and grocery store on the ground floor. The second story was home to 38 fully occupied offices. Over time, the building has fallen to disrepair and now houses only two businesses.

Since the time of the grant application, High Plains Architect out of Billings has completed a feasibility study. The proposal includes re-purposing the vacant second floor into 14 efficiency apartments. Mixed use buildings in the downtown is considered a great use of the space and there is a need for additional rental inventory. The old "Mac's Bar" is currently under construction getting a face-lift on the entryways.

EVANSTON

The Evanston Main Street program is working on a downtown market analysis and inventory. The study will give insight to the organization as it works to further develop the downtown district.

The City of Evanston, Uinta County Economic Development Commission (UCEDC) and the Evanston Chamber of Commerce are collaborating on a web landing page that will serve as a gateway to all three organizations' landing page. The effort will funnel interested individuals to the correct resources.

KEMMERER

Kemmerer was approved by the SLIB board for a $1,925,500 Community Readiness grant to fund the development of water infrastructure integral to the continued economic and community development of the Kemmerer-Diamondville area.

CHEYENNE

Cheyenne DDA/Main Street, Arts Cheyenne, Wyoming Arts Council and Artspace Projects are conducting a study of the space needs and preferences of artists and creatively engaged individuals in Cheyenne and the surrounding region. This study will assist in the development of affordable new space where artists and creatives of all disciplines may live, work, create, and share their works with the public. This is the second step in a feasibility process, which began in January 2014 when Artspace was invited to preliminarily assess the potential for an artist live/work creative facility in Downtown Cheyenne. Anyone in the region is invited to take the survey at www.cheyenneartspace.org.

21st & Main

TORRINGTON

The renovation of 21st & Main began in early December of 2014. The first phase of construction is utilizing up to 15 workers from a local contractor for the first phase of construction and will increase up to 25 workers through the final stages. The updated and upgraded building will house the Goshen County Chamber of Commerce, expanded visitor's center, local businesses and event space. Overall, the project is ahead of schedule, with completion expected in May.

The project is a joint project with the City of Torrington that was funded in part by the Wyoming Business Council. Along with the 21st & Main project, the City of Torrington is building new public restrooms and an expanded parking lot that will accommodate buses.

The Java Jar is the first official tenant signed up for 21st & Main. The coffee shop has been in business for twenty years and is looking forward to their new home. It will have an expanded commercial grade kitchen, a larger seating area and an expanded menu. As the anchor tenant, The Java Jar will bring added foot traffic to the building to the benefit of all tenants.

Farm Girls Boutique has also signed up for space at 21st & Main. Farm Girls Boutique sells retail items that are inspired by country homes and vintage markets. The boutique will open briefly for the 21st & Main grand opening in early June then open with full time retail hours in late summer.

Photo courtesy of University of Wyoming

Thank You for Building a Better Wyoming

Mick McMurry 1946 – 2015

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Noelle Reed, Vice President
Dave Simonsen, Secretary
Brandi Harlow, Treasurer
Cindy Wallace
Pat Robbins
Craig Nelson
Robert Briggs

Ex Officio Members

Ben Avery, Wyoming Business Council
Angela Jarvis, Wyoming State Chamber of Commerce
Lisa Johnson, Wyoming Business Council
Shawn Reese, Wyoming Business Council

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

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