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Chadrad Communications, Inc.
226 Bordeaux St - Chadron, NE 69337
308-432-5545 fax 308-432-5601
E-mail: kcsr@chadrad.com



(Neb.)-Chadron Receives Designation From Dept. Of Economic Development

By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 01/18/2013 08:19 AM

(Chadron)-Chadron has become the 36th community to earn the designation of Nebraska Economic Development Certified Community. Nebraska Northwest Development Corporation (NNDC) board members and the city council have all been supportive throughout the entire application and certification process, said Deb Cottier, NNDC executive director.

Cottier said that while the process was very involved, they found that every requirement in the certification process now makes the community better able to respond to potential business opportunities. She also stated that being certified really opens doors for the community to pursue additional improvements, whether it is through a DED program only available to EDCC communities, or just the overall opportunity to compete on a level with other certified communities, and she said it just ups the game a little."

Chadron's projects and accomplishments include:

- NNW Railroad replaced bridges, switches and rails in 2012 through a \$4.9 million federal TIGER II grant. NNW also attracted Transportation Services, Inc., a railcar repair company, to its facility in 2012.
- The 10-acre East Niobrara Street Industrial property, owned by the city of Chadron, is currently being developed to appeal to interested light industrial operations. The property is expected to be fully developed and put up for sale in 2013.
- A 2012 Labor Availability study was conducted, revealing that 27.3 percent of primary jobs held by Chadron residents and 30.2 percent of jobs held by Dawes County residents are located outside the county. The study indicated that many residents would prefer to work locally if similar positions and wages were created in Chadron. Alliance Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad is the business with the highest number of commuting employees, indicating a potential pool for railroad-related jobs should Nebraska and NorthWestern Railroad attract additional, complementary businesses to share rail yard space.
- A municipal wastewater treatment plant built in 2010 modernized the facility, as well as offered additional capacity for potential new and expanding businesses and residential use.
- NNDC owns approximately 27.22 acres of land on western edge of Chadron with easy access to Highway 20 that could be developed into a prime business park location.
- Chadron is equidistant between the Black Hills in South Dakota and Wild Cat Hills of western Nebraska, and as such, attracts visitors on their way to Yellowstone National Park and the Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. This location not only makes it a hub of small retail activity, but a regional trade center, on which the city hopes to attract new and expanding main street businesses. A four-lane expressway is currently under construction, further streamlining the area's transportation infrastructure.

- Chadron State College, the only four-year educational institution (in Nebraska) west of Kearney, enrolls more than 3,000 students, and serves as a national leader in distance education and the city's largest employer.

- Mobius Communications has spent \$11 million in federal funds to upgrade its service for customers throughout the region. It is one of three companies in the area, including CenturyLink and Great Plains Communications, providing higher bandwidth. Verizon and Viaero currently provide 3G coverage, and Viaero plans to offer 4G service by 2014.

- The Chadron Information Technology Committee is partnering with NNDC to investigate the potential for operating a Chadron technology center. Fiber optic and broadband cable is currently installed throughout the city at a level that could attract Internet-based companies operating on cloud-base applications.

- Two build-to-suit duplexes are currently available and six others are in the planning and design stages. An additional housing development that offers larger residential lots was begun in 2012.

- Startup business planning assistance, along with eligibility determination for available local funding for business development and entrepreneurial assistance also is available thanks to a partnership between NNDC and the local NebraskaBusinessDevelopmentCenter.

For information about Chadron, contact Deb Cottier at [308-432-4023](tel:308-432-4023), or ordcottier@gpcom.net, or visit www.nndc.chadron-nebraska.com.

(Story courtesy of Department of Economic Development)