

## Guest Commentary

# GCEDC outlines goals

**By Ryan Schilreff**

*2009-2010 GCEDC President*

At a recent strategic planning session, the board of Goshen County Economic Development Corporation (GCEDC) established this vision for Goshen County:

Goshen County, Wyoming, attracts young professionals and families by offering varied employment and business opportunities, diverse recreational and cultural amenities, unique shopping, and overall appeal as a quality place to live.

As the board of directors set priorities for 2010, we focused on making investments and starting initiatives that will help achieve this vision.

### Engaging young people

According to a report by CEOs for Cities, a national network of urban leaders, two-thirds of Americans aged 25 to 34 say they're deciding first where they want to put down roots, and then looking for a job in that place. The fact that young professionals do not relocate solely on quality of job availability is a paradigm shift.

It causes us to seriously consider how we can make our community a more attractive place to live. As a start, we are working with our partner Serve Wyoming, to establish a Young Professionals Network. It will promote career development, leadership, and community involvement. We think that engaging young people, so that they are vested in the community, will help local employers to attract and retain employees. In the long-term, to attract young professionals and young families, Goshen County must offer greater recreational amenities.

Focusing within – business retention and expansion task force

We envision that Goshen County will have

a business climate that allows existing businesses to grow and prosper. So we are forming a countywide Business Retention & Expansion Task Force, made up of representatives of business, education, and government. The task force will work to:

- Help companies at risk of leaving or downsizing

- Identify opportunities to help companies expand in the community

- Identify problems that could cause employers to leave our county

### Fostering entrepreneurs

As our nation's economy begins to rebound, economists are predicting a jobless recovery, meaning that growth will be slow and there will be a labor surplus. The Kaufman Foundation, nationally recognized for its support of entrepreneurship, said in a June 2009 report that entrepreneurship leads recovery. The highest entrepreneurial activity comes from people in the 56-64 age group. That matches our demographics in Goshen County.

In 2010, our board will study the feasibility of creating a business incubator to provide the resources and expertise necessary to help start-up businesses succeed. According to the National Business Incubator Association, for every 50 jobs created by companies that graduate from this type of program, 25 more jobs are added to the community. And every \$1 of public investment generates \$30 in local tax revenue.

### Housing

While our primary mission is business development and job creation, Goshen County Economic Development Corporation recognizes the importance of workforce housing. We have requested technical and financial assistance from the Wyoming Community Development Authority, Wyoming Housing

Network, and Rural Community Assistance Corporation, a national nonprofit, to help us develop strategies to meet the short-term and long-term housing needs.

### Lean year

2010 will be a lean year for our organization. We have lost the lease income from an industrial building that was intended to be re-invested in our economic development programs, and in June, the sales tax for economic development expired. You've heard about our investment in a new business park that will generate future revenue, but the lease income and sale of property will largely be re-invested in that development. We are enthusiastic about these new initiatives, but to be effective in addressing the economic development and community needs throughout Goshen County, we must have adequate resources, so a primary effort of the organization will be renewing the county sales tax for economic development.

### Solid organization

Goshen County Economic Development Corporation is a solid organization. Our professional staff has more than 15 years experience in the economic development field. Our diverse board brings a wealth of experience in small business, finance, manufacturing, agriculture, health care, construction, real estate, and city and county government. We have a working committee structure that allows us to effectively respond to economic development opportunities. We appreciate the support from businesses and citizens who are interested in making Goshen County a better place to live and do business. And especially thank those who attended our recent annual meeting for taking an active role in our organization to make it stronger and help us shape the future of Goshen County.