

Grande
Alberta
 ECONOMIC REGION

GRANDE IDEAS

News from the Grande Alberta Economic Region

The **Grande Alberta Economic Region (GAER)** is an economic development partnership consisting of:

- Woodlands County
- Yellowhead County
- The Village of Onoway
- The Village of Sangudo
- The Town of Drayton Valley
- The Town of Edson
- The Town of Fox Creek
- The Town of Grande Cache
- The Town of Hinton
- The Town of Mayerthorpe
- The Town of Whitecourt
- The Municipality of Jasper
- Jasper National Park

Welcome!

October 18, 2004, was a day of change for many municipalities in Alberta, including those in the Grande Alberta Economic Region (GAER). As a result, we're pleased to welcome nine new elected officials to the GAER board of directors: Glenn Taylor (chair), Hinton; Alberta Schalm (vice-chair), Mayerthorpe; Merv Zaddery, Fox Creek; Diana McQueen, Drayton Valley; Greg Pasychny, Edson; Louise Krewusik, Grande Cache; Gordon Vaughan, Onoway; Lola Glimps, Sangudo; and Trevor Thain, Whitecourt. And of course, a hearty welcome back to our returning board members: Joe Couture, Jasper; Jim Rennie, Woodlands County; Andy Stanton, Yellowhead County; and Barry Romanko, Jasper National Park.

A Grande Idea

This box is where you'll find a featured best practice in economic development from the region. In this issue, we highlight the Town of Hinton's new concept for an eco-industrial park (EIP). Wanting to make use of undeveloped green space on Hinton's east end, the town looked at building a traditional industrial park but was deterred by the cost of installing water and sewer infrastructure. Thinking outside the box, they developed a concept for an EIP using "green infrastructure."

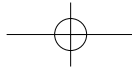
This concept was approved by the town council in July 2004 and now fundraising, planning and permitting efforts are proceeding, with summer 2005 the target date for first-phase groundbreaking. Focusing on the town's development theme of value-added wood products, phase one will consist of facilities for small businesses and large light industrial companies in this market sector. The green infrastructure will include services such as on-site potable water (from wells), an engineered wetland for wastewater management and protected green spaces with walking trails. Other features will promote networking and business relationships, such as shared shipping and receiving facilities, a common wood storage area and a business incubator. Lisa Graul is Hinton's planning and project manager. She explains that while green infrastructure is important, "what really makes an EIP are the relationships and synergies between technologies, site design, and business practices."

The rest of GAER will be watching with great interest and support as Lisa and her Hinton colleagues work to make this exciting concept a reality in the coming years. Keep us posted Lisa! For more information, you can contact Ms. Graul at lgraul@town.hinton.ab.ca.

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With so many newcomers to the board, this is an opportune time for a brief description of GAER – the region, the organization and its accomplishments. The Grande Alberta Economic Region is an economic development partnership involving 13 members in west central Alberta. The partners are named above in the list of board members and on the newsletter masthead.

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The region has a number of unique attributes that make it a fertile ground for economic development. Its open spaces, abundant natural resources, industrious people, recreational opportunities, surface transportation routes and proximity to major urban markets make for a matchless combination when it comes to building and attracting business. The GAER organization's mission is to collaboratively promote and enhance the unique and diverse opportunities of the region.

Towards this end, the organization produced a colourful new regional opportunity profile intended both to give people a better grasp on the region's identity and to "lure" potential investors into making more detailed inquiries about the region's business opportunities. Team Grande Cache, that town's economic development committee, is one of the region's most enthusiastic users of these profiles, distributing close to 150 to a variety of audiences in the past few months. Colleen Grose of Team Grande Cache says, "Our town is booming

right now and we don't have our own promotional material yet. So we've been sending the GAER profile in our packages to big developers. Over 100 of them went all the way to Nova Scotia with Grande Cache Coal. The great thing about these profiles is they help us, and they help other areas in the region as well."

With her last comment, Colleen hit on a major theme for the GAER organization – when one part of the region succeeds, the whole benefits. GAER encourages its members to "think globally and act regionally," and Team Grande Cache is a fine example of this principle in action.

GAER also provided economic development training for over 200 municipal representatives through the CEDAP program (see below for more details). And in partnership with AlbertaFirst.com, GAER staff and volunteers compiled community business directories and trained municipal people to use the business attraction information system on that web site.

These are just a few recent GAER initiatives. We'll tell you more in coming issues of *Grande Ideas*.

CEDAP Training

CEDAP is an acronym for Community Economic Development Accreditation Process. But it's really a toolkit to help communities build their own economic development processes and resources. GAER has offered both basic and advanced training sessions in this program during the past two years and is staging another training session on January 10 and 11, 2005. There are still spaces available for this great learning opportunity, but don't wait long because they're going fast! To find out more or to register, call Chris at the GAER office in Edson, 1-866-723-7706.

Around the Region

We use this section to share news about economic development work in the region, so if you have something big going on in your area, contact the GAER office and "infect" us all with your excitement. Use some discretion though – we want this to be of interest for everyone in the region, not just the folks from your area.

For this issue, we heard from our friends in Drayton Valley, Hinton and Edson. Just like most of GAER, Drayton Valley is booming thanks to surging oil and gas prices. A new power centre located on Highway 22 west of town boasts a WalMart scheduled to open in December, a Canadian Tire store slated for the new year, and many other retail outlets including Tim Horton's. Edson is abuzz over its \$13 million hospital expansion project, announced in October by provincial Minister of Health Gary Mar. In Hinton, the Cheviot coal mine has begun production, meaning several hundred jobs for the area. Last summer, the town unveiled plans for its new eco-industrial park, our featured "Grande Idea" on the front page.

