



2025

YEAR END REPORT

GROWING OPPORTUNITIES

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Embracing Our Culture and Enhancing Our Communities in 2026 and Beyond

In Phelps County, citizens truly have a strong entrepreneurial spirit and a welcoming heart toward visitors, and they support each other. Everyone works hard within their jobs and for the community, which provides a sense of pride through the accomplishments made each day, month and year.

As the newest member of the Phelps County family, it is my true privilege to serve as the PCDC executive director. It is a great honor to collaborate with Phelps County businesses, representatives in government units, and non-profit entities that are all striving to succeed with in their own programs, projects and endeavors. This position also involves a great responsibility to encourage community growth, strengthen our economy, and to continually enhance our rural culture.



In my first three months of interactions with leaders across Phelps County, I have recognized some common threads or 'values' that bring together the fabric of all groups and leaders across our county. These 'threads' have come across very resolute as "We the People of Phelps County" are to:

- 1) Be responsive to our community needs**
- 2) Be honest and have integrity in our professional and personal actions**
- 3) Provide service to others in kindness**
- 4) Plan for the future and strategically act toward those goals**
- 5) Enhance the business and community environment for generations to come.**

These values are the strength of the Phelps County culture that weaves through our community fabric, made up of business and family history. The product is a welcoming

blanket, which is continually being enlarged or 'sewn together' with the fabric of new businesses, new workforce, new visitors, new families and new ideas and goals. Albeit, the initial blanket created by our community founders was added to by citizens and businesses that at some point were considered 'new.' Now, those 'new' citizens are considered the 'foundation' and are our current economic and community leaders.

Phelps County has a strong foundation built with both businesses and citizen leaders looking toward the future. It is through these same times, we need to continually look toward follow-through of goals that are not quite achieved AND ask the tough questions of "What can we do better?" "How can we ensure future development?" "Is there any missing gaps that need to be addressed?"

A value that was mentioned earlier was honesty. In planning, this trait is very important as it relates to 'asking those tough questions' to get to the facts. Through the action of fact collection for projects, more challenges may be discovered, which in turn take more effort to cross the finish line. But, but this methodical process ensures a stronger foundational base for communities and preserves our rural culture.

Of course, we must continue focusing on the key economic development pillars that form any stable, continued growth in communities. These pillars are: 1) Helping encourage, plan, support and develop entrepreneurial and start-up businesses, 2) continually work with established businesses to assist in their general support and/or expansion needs, 3) communicate and assist businesses in succession planning to ensure they continue operations for generations to come, 4) Recruit new businesses to the area that complement community and citizen needs, and 5) encourage and support needed community development projects that grow and enhance the quality of citizen's lives and grows families, such as housing, workforce recruitment, childcare, and other community needs.

Asking those tough questions to more than 50 of our community leaders has resulted in a list of both (new and ongoing) development idea areas. PCDC has done a great job historically and currently working in all five pillar areas mentioned. I have heard of some 'gaps' that should be filled over time with some collaborative efforts with other community groups and leaders.

I believe we have the opportunity and responsibility to continually 'keep raising the bar' for our businesses and communities with our 'can-do' culture by investigating these ideas in 2026 and beyond:

A LOOK AHEAD 2026 GOALS

ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING

- Providing stronger youth support (high school age or younger) for entrepreneurial ideas.
- Helping develop a program that can provide basic business operations 'engine checks' to our new start-up businesses.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP - AFFILIATION PROGRAM

- Connecting our youth into the planning process of our communities at all levels.

ENHANCEMENT OF WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT

- Job Fair attendance – providing information to future workforce and residents about the Phelps County culture (including QR codes to PCDC website).
- Marketing our GO HOME program(s) to our businesses and to employees on a routine basis.

COMMUNITY MARKETING

- Telling our Story – Who we are, Why the Phelps County culture is best to live, work, play, and thrive.
- Sharing our Culture – In Phelps County, we have a great history, citizens with caring hearts of gold, and an entrepreneurial spirit. Sharing this early to children, engaging our youth in our community early, training them to be strong leaders, and ensuring that they know they are always welcome.
- Communication support of all our groups and businesses – to create a 'collaborative' rather than 'competing' atmosphere.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

- Unified efforts with other groups to assist in the research and solicitation of 'organizations' outside the immediate Phelps County area to help financially support larger projects that match local contributions toward a project.

BUSINESS — ORGANIZATIONAL ENGAGING

- Improving direct (face-to-face) connectivity with businesses across Phelps County.
- Surveying business needs and gaps that need to be filled.

Our ongoing PCDC programs, initiatives, and activity for our established business within the development pillars are strong. I will endeavor to strengthen these relationships over my first year and beyond. I am confident in our development commitment, proactive determination, and the community culture that brings longstanding strength to our businesses, community leaders, and citizens. Realistically, there are always challenges; although, like gold is refined through fire, any challenges confronting us in the future defines our character as a person ... as a community. We, the People of Phelps County, will always rise to any challenge and be responsive to create an even stronger economic foundation! I am excited about this new year and the opportunities on the horizon for long-term stability and growth.

#PhelpsHelps #Grow37 #GrowPhelps

Jeff Hofaker, PCDC Executive Director



2025 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Strategic Planning & Market Research & Targeted Recruitment

- Conducted dozens of business intelligence calls to shape retention and recruitment strategies.
- USDA approval and low-interest financing secured for \$3.5 million, 11-acre solar farm at Iron Horse Business & Industry Park.
- Collaborated with Holdrege Airport Authority to advance future commercial and industrial property development.
- Development updates presented to all village, city and county boards.
- PCDC represented Phelps County in key economic development, energy and bioeconomy forums statewide.
- Federal funding coordination underway and producer contracts initiated for \$9 billion DG Fuels project that will provide \$150 million new revenue to farmers and 640 new jobs.
- Sunflower processor Zea Sun announced its intentions to build a \$90 million plant in Phelps County.



GO! HOME

Downpayment assistance grants of \$71,500 resulted in 30 new residents in 2025 and real estate sales of \$4.2 million. Since the program began in 2017, \$389,000 in grants have welcomed 325 new residents and encouraged \$26 million in home sales.



GO! DREAM

PCDC awarded 11 GO! DREAM grants in 2025 totaling \$20,117, resulting in total project investment of \$92,316. This included five GO! SPARKLE grants awarded to My Fair Lady's Fashions, Bridal Isle, Hide-A-Way Salon, 308 Bakery & Heritage Agency.



GO! BUSINESS

In 2025, PCDC awarded 10 Business Franchise and Development Grants totaling \$47,645 and 1 Exterior Impact Grant for \$304. Since 2017, PCDC has awarded 32 B & F Grants totaling \$212,000 and 23 Exterior Impact Grants totaling \$19,300.



Branding, Marketing & Publicity

- Phelps County Business Journal earns Silver Award from the International Economic Development Council. The Journal is distributed to all households and businesses in the county and several hundred out-of-county stakeholders.
- PCDC honored Ron Tillery as the President's Priceless Pick at the spring Annual Meeting.
- PCDC inducted Dairy Queen and Rite Way Milk into the PCDC Business Hall of Fame at the October banquet.

Community Preparedness & Quality of Life

- Construction completed on 5 new homes in new Northern Meadows Subdivision, and construction started on 5 more new homes. Four new duplexes constructed in CREW subdivision.
- Engaged future workers at career fairs.
- Supported renovation of two upper level living spaces in downtown Holdrege.
- Awarded a grant to support a new mural at the Eagles Club.
- Continued financial and volunteer support of the Holdrege Area Early Childhood Partnership and other efforts to secure quality childcare in Phelps County.
- Financial contribution continued to complete Holdrege's new baseball and softball complex.



GO! WORK

PCDC awarded 11 High Demand Jobs Scholarships totaling \$23,000 to students planning to return to Phelps County to work after graduation. PCDC paid \$2,800 toward the education of 43 high school students enrolled in auto technician and CNA training at CCC Holdrege.



GO! HOME

PCDC helped renters move to Phelps County in 2025 by awarding 2 renter relocation grants totaling \$1,000. PCDC also awarded \$26,500 in code compliance, site improvement, demolition and renovation grants for 12 rental properties, resulting in \$360,000 in private investment.



GO! BUILD

PCDC assisted many businesses with permitting and site acquisition in 2025, including Klein's Custom Leather, a business that moved to Holdrege from Kearney. PCDC's Builder's Bureau, consisting of 24 members, serves as a vital resource for businesses.

Business Retention & Expansion

- Nebraskaland Aviation broke ground on a \$12+ million new fertilizer plant and is the first tenant in the Iron Horse Business & Industry Park.
- Continued infrastructure development in the Iron Horse B & Industry Park.
- Provided site assistance to relocate a former Kearney Business, Klein's Custom Leather, to Holdrege.
- Assisted small businesses with consulting, grants and loans in 2025, including Real Estate Connection, The Hive, Adorn Lighting Solutions, A Page Turner, Ronda & Terry's Funky Monkey Shaved Ice & More, Caring Friends, 607 Studio, Turner Digital Solutions, Judy's Cleaning Services, and Black Sheep Products.





Photo by Allen Olson

MAKING PROGRESS ON INVESTOR GOALS

Investor priorities outlined during the Grow37 Campaign and 2025 Progress:

MORE RESTAURANTS

- 37 Smokehouse and The Hive open
- 308 Bakery coming soon

MORE ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

- Work continues on DG Fuels \$9 billion project to bring 640 new jobs to the area and add value to area farms.
- Nebraskaland Aviation begins \$12+ million new fertilizer plant at Iron Horse Business & Industry Park
- Zea Sun announces plans to locate sunflower processing facility in Phelps County

EXPANDED CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

- CCC moves to empty building in downtown Holdrege

MORE VIBRANT DOWNTOWNS

- Iron Horse Arts District adds festoon lighting and painted crosswalks downtown
- Eagles Club installs new mural
- PCDC launches GO! SPARKLE grants

MORE CLOTHING OR APPAREL STORES AND OTHER RETAIL

- Klein's Custom Leather relocates to Holdrege

MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Five new homes completed and five more under construction in Northern Meadows subdivision with asking price of less than \$300,000
- Four new duplexes built in CREW Subdivision with prices ranging from \$265,000 to \$325,000

MORE HOSPITALITY VENUES

- Study started to renovate the Holdrege City Auditorium into a modern event venue
- Iron Horse Arts District announces new art gallery at First State Bank Holdrege
- Holdrege Sun Theater begins construction on new downtown venue called The Crescent Room



2025 LEADERSHIP TEAM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Jared Engelbert
President



Nate DeWald
Vice President



Grant Hinze
Secretary/Treasurer



Shane Westcott
Past President



Janet Boehler



Grant Ericksen



Phil Hinrichs



Tye Marquardt



Reed McClymont



Chris McQuillan



Jeff Moon



Doug Stevenson



STAFF



Jeff Hofaker
Executive Director
Began October 1



Ron Tillery
Executive Director
Outgoing



Sally Sadd
Director of
Business Services



Stacy Pafford
Director of
Administrative Services



THANK YOU 2025 PCDC INVESTORS!

3 W Farms LLC
37 Cattle Company
ACE Hardware
Adam Seeds Co.
Ag Service Associates
AgWest Commodities
Brad & Beth Allmand
AP Roofing & Specialty Coatings
BD Construction/Syberia Enterprises LLC
Becton Dickinson-Holdrege
Bergman Ag, Inc.
Black Hills Energy
Bosselman's Energy Division
Bridal Isle
Bruce Furniture
Bruning Bank
Central Community College-Holdrege
Central Nebraska Public Power
& Irrigation District
Christian Homes Care Community
City of Holdrege
Convenience Plus
Cross Diamond Cattle Company
Dairy Queen
Dannull Engine Service & Auto Sales
Delores Diedrichsen
DeWald Deaver L'Heureux
Law Firm PC LLO
Edward Jones Investments
Jared & McKenzie Engelbert
F. Johnson Building
Family Medical Specialties
Farm Bureau Financial Services
First Interstate Bank
First State Bank of Holdrege

First State Bank of Loomis
FirsTier Bank
General Service Agency
Glenwood Telecommunications
Grant Hinze, DDS
Heritage Agency
Scott & Michele High
High Brothers Partnership
Hi-Line Ag
Holdrege Area Chamber of Commerce
Holdrege Equipment
Holdrege Family Dental LLC
Holdrege Family Vision
Holdrege Irrigation
Holdrege Memorial Homes
Holdrege Pharmacy
Holdrege Soft Water
Home Federal Bank
InSPIRe Rehabilitation
Integrity Construction LLC
Janssen Auto Group
K & D Motor & Electric
Keith D. Samuelson Land Leveling Inc.
Mark & Jessica Kraus
KRJ Public Relations
Landmark Implement
Legacy Purpose, LLC
Lincoln Federal Savings Bank
of Nebraska
LIPS Printing Service
Lundeen Isaacson Insurance
Alex & Adrienne McClymont
Reed & Sheryl McClymont
Sherry McClymont
Morpho Hotels & Resorts USA LLC

My Fair Lady's Fashions and Frills
NAS Realty
Nebraska Public Power District
Nebraskaland Aviation
Olsson
Phelps County
Phelps County Community Foundation
Phelps County Title Company
Phelps Memorial Health Center
Pioneer Seed Company,
Blake & Renee Johnson
Principal Financial Group, Grant Ericksen
Principal Financial Group, Dave Hunt
Principal Financial Group, Joshua Murdoch
Wayne & Jerrie Quincy
Real Estate Connection
ruralMED
S & W Auto Parts
South Central Diesel, Inc.
Southern Public Power District
Ty & Linda Swan
The 308 Boutique
The Cutting Room
Ron Tillery
Ted & Afton Titus
Trent's Electric, Inc.
Turner Technology
Village of Atlanta
Village of Bertrand
Village of Funk
Village of Loomis
Diana Watson
Jim & Ann Wiser
Woods & Durham CPAs