

Audubon County Economic Development Corporation
ANNUAL REPORT 2007-2008
July 11, 2008

The Audubon County Economic Development Corporation Board is made up of a great group that is positive, forward thinking, caring, and making smart decisions to position our county to be in its best position for tomorrow. Our major objective is to promote and assist our current businesses for retention and expansion, promote and assist entrepreneurship, and target and recruit prospective job producing companies.

Our board members are Dr. Steve Schmitz, Troy Wessel, Todd Nelsen, Gene Karstens, Sam Kauffman, Bryan Olson, Mary Lee Jensen, Lavern Lansman, Lyle Hansen Jr., Alan Kearney, and Jay Nelson. This group's leadership has great county awareness and makes very positive impacts in Audubon County.

With all the uncertainty in the current economy, we are fortunate that Audubon County and the State of Iowa is heavily impacted by the agriculture economic sector which is a strong sector. There always will be variables where some businesses close, some open, some grow, and some shrink. We all need to be watchful for the opportunities that changes bring. Our main objective is simply to help preserve and grow existing business and recruit new businesses.

1) Exposure to the public is critical in making our efforts work. We have a presence on the following websites: www.auduboncounty.com, www.valleybusinesspark.net, www.westerniowaadvantage.com, www.locationone.com, www.fastfacility.com, www.iowaworkforce.org, www.iowalifechanging.com, www.traveliowa.org, and www.omahafoundation.org.

On our county website, www.auduboncounty.com, we have added this past year the following additions: Business Directory, ACED Newsletters, News Reports, Audubon County Zoning Ordinances, Audubon County Laborshed, Regional Laborshed, and the Audubon County Extension link button. Under construction are pages for the Audubon County Landfill and the Audubon Fire Department. The site is experiencing great visit numbers and the stats show that most visitors are getting business information and travel information.

2) We have also changed our monthly newsletter to e-newsletter status. This also has received a number of compliments. We appreciate hearing from you.

3) The survey we ran regarding the potential Bowling Alley Project generated a lot of positive response. The community definitely has interest in seeing the project come together and the committee is trying to find the correct ownership structure and financing. Hopefully this project will be able to survive.

4) The final leg of the T-Bone Trail is scheduled to be completed this fall. The completed asphalt trail will follow the old railroad from Audubon to Hamlin to Exira to Brayton and connect with the T-Bone Trail at the Audubon-Cass County line.

5) The Audubon Downtown Revitalization project is scheduled for completion this August. After completion of the major construction; landscaping, mosaic installations and plantings will finish the 1900 era streetscape project. What an opportunity for our local businesses to capitalize on the tourist attraction for visitors and a pleasing atmosphere for the locals to congregate in.

6) We have submitted several proposals to prospects of the Valley Business Park. Several of the proposals are still pending, but several businesses have put expansions on hold for a couple quarters. Other items currently being worked on are the entrance from Highway 71, extending rural water to the east side of the park, and existing acreage building cleanup.

7) Western Iowa Advantage is the regional cooperative marketing group that we are a partner in. This eight county group is composed of Audubon Industrial Development Corporation, Carroll Area Development Corporation, Chamber & Development Council of Crawford County, Greene County Development Corporation, Ida County Economic Development, Midwest Partnership, Sac Economic & Tourism Development, and Region XII Development Corporation.

Some of the benefits and programs that we participate in are: Community Venture Network (CVN), Laborshed Program, Trade Shows, Visitation Programs, Regional Website, Regional Legislative meetings, Iowa Job Banks, Location One Information (LOIS), IDED relations, Shovel Ready Designations, Sell Iowa trips, First Impressions Team, Virtual Building Project, and much more.

8) The purchase of land for the Audubon Industrial Park expansion is now complete. The project has progressed to the point of having the final plat completed and it is now in the process of being annexed to the City of Audubon.

9) This past year Audubon received media exposure as a result of our population decline figures released by the US Census 2007 report in the Des Moines Register. Channel 8 TV was out the next morning to do a live report and we ended up having some great positive exposure from the TV and Radio media when they discovered the positive things going on and the real reasons for population decline in the rural areas.

10) The Industrial business visitations gave Audubon County a great score. Some interesting statistics as a result of these visits are: they have 1022 employees, annual payroll of 28.1 million, all had growth during the past 3 years, all have future expansion plans, international competitors are China, India, Hong Kong, Canada, and Mexico, rated worker quality high, most have unfilled job positions, and expressed a need for vocational training.

11) We have assembled a Financial/Incentive Tools list. It has a short explanation of what each source has to offer and their eligibility requirements as well as the website address to get additional information.

12) The Audubon County Endowment fund has distributed approximately \$100,000 to our county non-profit groups. This program is a wonderful asset to Audubon County and all of its towns.

13) We have had discussions and recognize a need to develop a plan to unify the efforts of all county civic groups. This will assist all of our efforts to be more effective and trail with the efforts of globalization, regionalization, and local unity which are required to participate with state and regional economic development efforts and funding. We have a committee titled Teamwork that is addressing this concern.

14) Audubon County Tourism is a subdivision of Audubon Economic Development and is under the direction of Margee Shaffer. Their report is attached and is made a part of this report.

Audubon County Economic Developments' work in process is to achieve the goal to make Audubon County the best it can be and a prosperous place to live.

Respectfully submitted,
Thomas R Nielsen, Executive Director