

# SOUTHEAST

Cheyenne  
Laramie  
Rawlins  
Torrington

## SE Wyo recovering from the economic downturn

### Goshen county is leading the way

By Mary Angell  
Business Report Correspondent

"Goshen County is bucking the trend a bit with respect to the economy," Tom Johnson, Southeast Region director of the Wyoming Business Council, recently told the Wyoming Business Report.

The construction of the new state prison as well as other community and private projects have had a tremendous impact on Goshen County's economy, according to the executive director of the Goshen County Economic Development Corporation, Lisa E. Johnson.

The Wyoming Medium Correctional Institution has brought new growth to Torrington, and the town is struggling to add housing for its workforce.

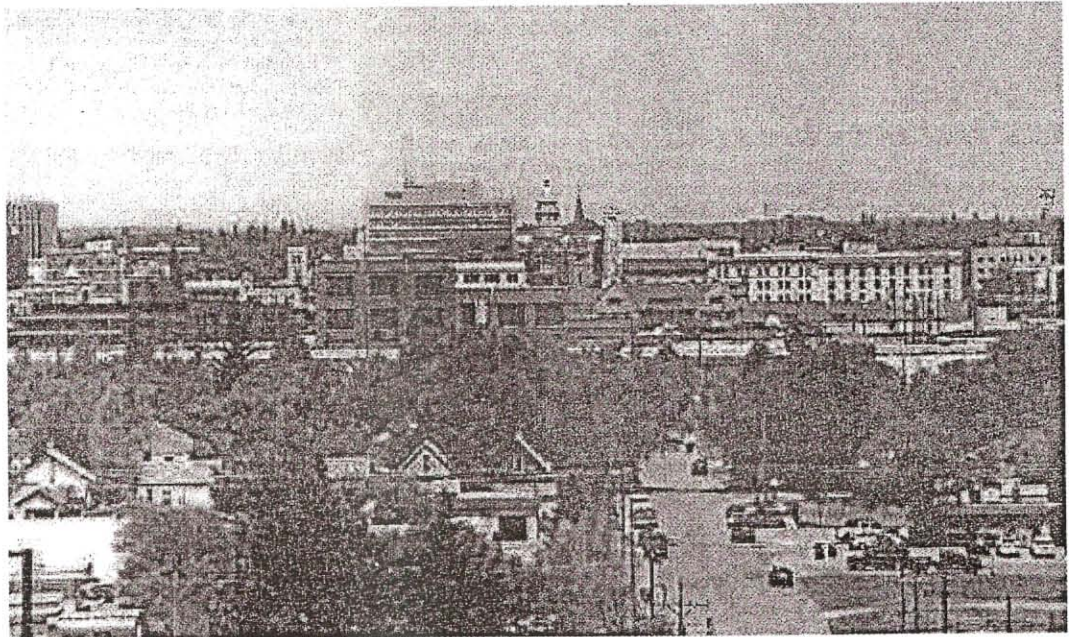
"We just did a housing study. There are a healthy number of homes on the market for a variety of prices, but the real need is for rentals. The rental market is very tight," said Lisa Johnson, who added there are developers interested in building in the area.

Other developments on the horizon hold great promise for Goshen County's economy, including a growing interest in horizontal drilling for oil and gas.

"There's already been a lot of income to property owners leasing for exploration," Lisa Johnson said. "We believe that phase is almost complete, and the drilling will start in the near future."

Construction is expected to begin in October on a \$3 million, 60,000-square-foot building to house Schlegel Manufacturing, a builder of farm equipment, in a new industrial park south of Torrington. The 66-acre industrial park will be developed into lots for an additional five companies.

Torrington has also benefitted from other public and private construction



Dennis E. Curran, Wyoming Business Report

**LOOKING FORWARD** — Cheyenne's historic downtown is looking ahead to new economic growth throughout southeast Wyoming as development and diversification continue.

projects. Within the last couple of years, Torrington Community Hospital completed a \$4 million expansion of its emergency room and outpatient services. One bank in town completed significant remodeling, and another new bank was built.

In LaGrange, a former high school has been renovated into the LaGrange Heritage Square, a business and recreation center that will serve a variety of functions, from office rental space, a museum, a library, and an Eastern Wyoming College outreach classroom to a fitness center.

#### Cheyenne holding up

Having just celebrated the groundbreaking of the National Center for

Atmospheric Research supercomputing center west of Cheyenne, Randy Bruns, the executive director of Cheyenne LEADS, Laramie County's economic development organization, is pretty upbeat about the future of the county's economy.

"We're holding our own," Bruns said. "It's tough because of government cutbacks. I think payroll was down last year in Cheyenne, and overall, that impact of that has been rippling through the economy. But the downturn has sort of caught up with us."

The recent start up of American Airlines' nonstop flights from Cheyenne to Dallas/Fort Worth will have a positive impact on Cheyenne's economy, Bruns said. (See related story page 11.)

"We're holding our own."

Randy Bruns, executive director, Cheyenne LEADS

He also noted that Wal-Mart is adding another 100 jobs at its distribution center west of town, and Laramie County's potential for gas and oil development will also help in its recovery from the downturn.

See SOUTHEAST, 19

## SOUTHEAST, from 18

"It's already put some additional lease dollars into the economy, and we'll start to see additional dollars from production activity," he said.

One of the biggest causes for optimism is the SWAN Ranch industrial park south of Cheyenne. Encompassing 7,200 acres, SWAN Ranch will eventually include industrial, retail and commercial components. Granite Peak Development of Casper has begun work on the industrial phase of the project, the Cheyenne Logistics Hub, which will consist of 1,300 acres located adjacent to I-25, I-80, the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe Railway and the Union Pacific Railroad.

With access to both two Class 1 railroads and two major interstates, the site is a perfect location, said Bruns.

"(SWAN Ranch) will be an extraordinary addition to Cheyenne's inventory," he said. "We're very pleased that Granite Peak is going ahead with that development."

Already LEADS has secured a commitment from Midwestern Pipeline Services, Inc. to purchase 55 acres in the Cheyenne Logistics Hub, and the site has drawn the interest of several other companies as well, Bruns said.

"SWAN Ranch continues to draw the interest of corporations interested in a site with rail access," he said. "There are some things on the horizon that make us optimistic about the next year or two."

### Albany County gets on board

As in Laramie county, Albany coun-

ty's economic development experts are exploring ways to increase rail access.

"The Laramie Economic Development Corp. has received many requests in the last couple of years for access to rail," said Gaye Stockman, president and CEO of the LEDC. "We have tons of rail in Laramie. We have a huge rail yard. There used to be huge tie plant here. But we have no rail access for business."

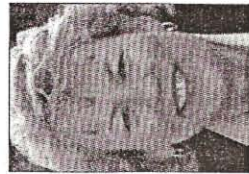
The LEDC is now working with Union Pacific, the Wyoming Department of Transportation and others to identify potential sites that would provide new and existing businesses rail access. The organization will be applying for a Wyoming Business Council grant, and the public hearing process is currently underway.

Stockman stressed that Laramie's efforts would not compete with Cheyenne's Swan Ranch.

"The Swan Ranch project draws more attention to Southeast Wyoming," she said. "If anything, this would be more of an attraction for them. It would draw more companies to this area."

She said if in the future a company requires more space or greater rail access than Laramie is able to offer, she would refer its principals to Cheyenne, just as she currently refers to Cheyenne callers whose convention needs cannot be met in Laramie.

Albany County's economy will also receive a boost from the establishment of



**STOCKMAN**

a coal gasification plant in Medicine Bow. Construction of the \$2 billion DKRW Advanced Fuels plant is expected to begin in December of this year.

"It's been in the works for years. It's getting closer," said Stockman, who added the federal loan for the project has been approved and the Environmental Impact Study for the plant should be completed soon.

"The impact to Laramie would be huge — 2500 construction workers," she said. "It would be a huge impact on Albany and Carbon counties."

"We need to diversify our economy," Stockman added. "Our major employers are (the University of Wyoming), WyoTech, the Albany county campus for (Laramie County Community College). We need to be able to diversify so we have a broad economic base, not all education."

### Platte County busy, too

In Platte County, American Renewable Energy Association (AREA) is working to establish a waste-to-energy power plant about two miles from Guernsey. The plant would generate power from solid waste such as animal and agricultural waste as well as waste that would normally go to landfills.

"AREA has a lot of things to line up," said Bruce Heimback, community development coordinator of the Guernsey Economic Development Group. "They have the site picked out, and are now working with the county on permits, figuring out the water and sewer requirements."

The town of Guernsey has recently

## "We have tons of rail in Laramie...But we have no access for business."

**Gaye Stockman, president and CEO LEDC**

completed several community projects, including the Lucinda Rollins Walking Trail and a new swimming pool, which opened last spring.

Hartville recently opened a new community center which was created out of a 100-year old one-room schoolhouse. The building now houses a museum and meeting and reception hall.

Meanwhile, new construction and renovation is about to begin on Wheatland's Fire Hall. The \$870,621 project will be funded by a one percent special option tax, with an additional \$22,371 for the installation of second floor trusses funded by the Wheatland Volunteer Fire Department.

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