Gothenburg has one of the best ready and available sites in the state and Midwest, according to a Nebraska Department of Economic Development official.

At the Dec. 5 meeting of Gothenburg Improvement Company stockholders, at the Monsanto Learning Center, DED business development manager Tim O'Brien said manyurban areas have difficulty preparing properties like Gothenburg's to lure business and industry.

The site referred to by O'Brien is 350 acres in the southeast part of town which netted a $500,000 development grant from DED last summer—the first and only one awarded in the state so far as part of the Nebraska Site and Building Fund.

GIC is trying to market what they call the East Industrial Tract and develop the site into a shovel-ready one with paved road access and water and sewer mains.

GIC president Mike Bacon, who chaired the meeting, said several people have been interested in the site, specifically a company that repairs coal cars.

However the cost of installing multiple switches has stalled the project, Bacon said.

The area has been described as prime because of its location between the Union Pacific Railroad, for shipping purposes, and the Platte River.

O'Brien described Gothenburg as being in "a sweet spot" in the heart of agriculture and next to the railroad which are both strengths.

O'Brien also talked about changes that have recently occurred within the DED.

The travel and tourism department is no longer under DED's umbrella and the DED is more focused on jobs, wealth creation and business attraction, he said.

"A new staff is doing new things," O'Brien said, noting that some staff members moved to different development jobs outside the department. "We have the smartest, most creative staff I've seen."

Within economic development, he said communities need to be prepared with information about their buildings and sites before companies come calling.

The DED can assist with what's needed, O'Brien said.

The kinds of industries looking to locate or relocate have changed.

Lately, O'Brien said they've seen interest from such industries as biochemical and warehousing and noted that a company that uses timber to make utility poles recently located in Sidney.

Some prospects are railroad related such as car-repair businesses, he said, while others revolve around green and renewable companies that use recycled material and produce such things as solar panels and rainwater collection devices.

“Our goal is to recruit business and find the best fit for you,” O’Brien said, adding that officials travel across the state, country and overseas.

Nebraska’s DED has an office in Japan and will soon have one in China.

O’BRIEN ZULKOSKI

O’Brien also introduced DED business consultant Walker Zulkoski who will help GIC sell property in the East Industrial Tract.

Bacon shared highlights of the past year that included:

the opening of a $2.9 million Gothenburg Medical Clinic

the recognition of the Monsanto Water Utilization Center by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration for excellence in the company’s safety and health program

a 16.0% jump in valuation over the past year

Dawson Tire and Wheel’s building of a 18,000 square-foot facility

the announcement of the building of a new restaurant—Nebraska Bar & Grill

All Points Cooperative's $3-million investment in storage.

Nebraska Salt & Grain's renovation of a downtown building for offices and a meeting facility and for increased grain storage.

He also recognized Pony Express Chevrolet for helping with GIC recruitment efforts and the impact the dealership makes on the local economy.

Elected as GIC directors for 2013-2015 were Jim Aden, Mike Bacon, Nate Wyatt, Chandler Mazour and Karl Randecker.

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