

Tioga's Micro Retail



Tioga's Main Street is filling in a empty green lot with small buildings to create a micro-retail district.

Opportunities for businesses to start small

Elaborate sheds on Tioga Main Street, are a different kind of retail district. They're called micro retail -- small buildings in downtown Tioga giving retail businesses an opportunity to sell to the public without having high costs of a full-size store.

"We want to encourage growth," said Dennis Lindahl the Community Development Coordinator at Tioga. "It's difficult to attract small retail business. So we purchased two small 200 square foot sheds, dressed them up and rent them to people who want to start a business in Tioga."

The six city lots where the micro retail business are placed used to be empty buildings that were purchased and then razed before the cyclical down turn in the region's oil industry.

Start with Two

The first two small buildings have been rented out to a dress shop and a bakery. Each pays \$200-a-month rent which includes electricity. Lindahl said more businesses have indicated an interest in getting started on a micro level. A ladies and children's clothing store wants a 400 square foot building.

"We'd like to make a village of micro retail businesses," said Lindahl. "Our goal is six, eight or ten of these."

Tioga Fund

The voter-supported Tioga Fund, a city sales tax, is used for several economic development and quality-of-life projects. Drones and electronics for the local school help with training students and is considered workforce development.

Other money from the Tioga Fund helps with park facilities. Fully half of the one-percent sales tax is helps business and industry locating or expanding in Tioga including the micro retail buildings.

50% of the one percent tax is committed to economic development and is available to business and industry locating or expanding in the Tioga area, 25% is committed to property tax relief, 15% for community improvement, 5%for recreation and 5% for park facilities.

Getting ahead of the next upturn



Preparing

The concept places Tioga in a position to be prepared for an upturn in economic activity. Lindahl said the city recognizes a cyclical nature in both farm and energy prices and activities.

It will be a busy construction season next spring that will create an uptick in the economy. 300 wind turbines are to be added to the 75 that now stand outside of town.



More Prospects

Tioga is also working on developing a manufacturing industry in town with details yet to be announced. If that becomes reality, more people will be moving to or commuting to Tioga.



Already 250 people work at the Hess gas plant outside of town, and Lindahl's dream is to create such an outstanding quality of life in Tioga, that Hess employees and people who could be added to a manufacturing workforce will choose to live in Tioga.

Lindahl said that unlike many other similar size communities, Tioga does not have a housing shortage. "Housing? That's not an issue," he said. "Vacancies exist for people who want to move here. The square footage price for businesses is still quite high, so these micro retail businesses are an option."

"We've got really good prospects," Lindahl said "We want to be prepared for what's coming."