



**Economic Development Week May 6-10;
Recognizing what Economic Developers do in Your
Community**

Opinion/Letter to the Editor submitted by Shawn Wenko

Hurray! It's Economic Development Week and Williston Economic Development (WED) invites residents in the Williston Trade Region to help us celebrate now through May 10! The community is encouraged to attend the following events which we are either hosting and/or sponsoring: the Williston Basin API May Meeting, 1 Million Cups, Activate Women Lunch and Learn, State of the City Address, Williston Chamber Business After Hours and our Awards and Appreciation Banquet. Plus, tune into News and Views with Joel Heitkamp Friday morning! For registration information visit willistondevelopment.com.

Economic Development Week was created by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) in 2016 to increase awareness of local programs that create jobs, advance career development opportunities, and improve the quality of life in communities everywhere. The week is celebrated the first full week of May. WED held its first Economic Development Week in 2018 and we were so pleased with the response that we are planning an event bigger and better week this year!

Economic development is at the core of the well-being and quality of life of communities like Williston. It pertains to a group of policies, programs and activities that seek to create and retain jobs and ultimately facilitate economic growth. Essential to WED's program is the Williston STAR Fund. The STAR

Fund was created in the 1990's to diversify Williston's economy and create jobs. The STAR Fund is a financial incentive program that is funded by a portion of the city's 1 cent sales tax. In 2018, the City of Williston assisted 63 projects with a private investment of \$23 million!

One of the other milestones our office will be celebrating this week was becoming an IEDC Accredited Economic Development Organization (AEDO) in 2018. To qualify, we completed a thorough application process which included onsite visits from IEDC officials. At the time of our accreditation, there were only 62 accredited organizations. The IEDC President and CEO Jeff Finkle praised WED by saying, "Williston Economic Development displays the professionalism, commitment and technical expertise that is deserving of this honor."

As we celebrate the achievements of 2018 and prepare for the future; you will notice we place a heavy focus on quality of life development; things that make a city a city. This past year, for example, we contributed to the Safari Trampoline Park, which has provided family entertainment for hundreds since its recent grand opening. We have also supported the Buck Scheele Family Animal Center, new high school and Williston Area Recreation Center as well as many restaurants and retailers. We understand the success of diversification and business development starts with building a solid community that people want to live in.

While we will celebrate our many successes this week, we will also note the challenges ahead; including our daycare shortage, high labor costs, workforce development, building costs and community perception. These are some of the issues WED is working on to create a more vibrant and healthy community.

Tomorrow we will take a closer look at the history of Williston Economic Development and how it's evolved since its inception. We hope to see you this week!