

# Our economy ... we're all in this together

When Henry Held came through Sheridan in the late 1880s on his way to another town to set up a blacksmith shop, Sheridan's founder, John D. Loucks, persuaded him to go into business here instead.

Held built his shop at what is now the corner of Works and Main streets and, according to historians, doubled Sheridan's population.

It's the earliest example of economic development in the city.

Ask 10 people to define economic development, and you'll get 10 different answers. But economic development isn't a goal, it's a process.

And it involves everyone.

Whether you own or manage a business in Sheridan County, work for a fast-food restaurant on Coffeen Avenue, whether you're a retiree in Dayton or Big Horn or a stay-at-home mom in Sheridan or Ranchester or Story, economic development is you.

It isn't who you are, it's what you do, and what you do has an impact on Sheridan County's economic health — now and in the future.

Do you shop in Sheridan or go to

Billings or Casper? That affects local businesses.

Are you one of the many potential employees who turn down jobs in Sheridan County because you can't find an apartment to rent or a home to buy at a price you can afford?

That affects how well businesses can operate — or whether they can operate.

An estimated 400 jobs are currently unfilled in Sheridan County because parents cannot find a safe place to leave their children while they're at work. Are you one of those?

That also affects how well a business can operate — as well as your ability to provide for your family.

If you want to live, work, raise your family in Sheridan County, you have a stake in the county's economic development — how it will happen, when it will happen, where it will happen.

## A Community Affair

Philippe  
Chino

*Planning for Sheridan's economic development*



Economic development is about what we — all residents of Sheridan County — want the county to be in five years, 10 years, 20 years from now.

It's what all of us have in Sheridan County now, what we want

to have in the future, and what we need to do to ensure that it is, and remains, a vibrant, healthy, thriving community in which we all, from businesses to nonprofit organizations, retirees to those who work on the "main streets" in all the county's communities, can grow and thrive and prosper.

While Sheridan County has an economic development organization — called Forward Sheridan — economic development is not the "business" of Forward Sheridan. It's the business of the county residents and businesses.

The intent of Forward Sheridan is

to help coordinate activities of citizens and businesses who want to help plan for the county's economic future — and to help implement those plans.

Several citizens' and business groups are already at work, organized into task forces on issues from an overall general plan of economic development to specific issues such as airline service and child care.

Many people are involved, but the doors to the task forces and committees aren't closed. If you want to be part of the process, you can contact me at 751-4322.

And if you want to know who is part of economic development in Sheridan County, just look in the mirror.

*Editor's note — This is the first "A Community Affair," a weekly column from citizens who support Forward Sheridan, a professional business organization of invested partners whose purpose is to develop and maintain a sound economy in Sheridan County. Philippe Chino is president/CEO of Forward Sheridan.*

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