

AROUND THE COUNTY

By Noel LaBine, Wright County Economic Development Partnership

More information about the positive business developments in Wright County includes the following: The 40,000 square foot former Plymouth Plumbing building in St. Michael has been purchased by U.S. Water Services. They are an engineering company that designs equipment for water treatment. They expect to bring 50 to 60 jobs with several engineers to St. Michael. This is the third company that is a high tech company in the St. Michael industrial park and the city hopes the trend of high tech companies coming to their city continues.

Plans to build a new apartment complex in St. Michael are looking promising with the acquisition of \$625,000 in federal affordable housing tax credits through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency. This 42 unit, four story complex will be built downtown along Hwy. 241 on the eastbound portion of the split one-way pair. This road is now called the St. Michael Parkway.

Jamie Thelen, Chief Executive of Sand Companies, Inc. the developer of the project, is very positive about the prospects of this project moving forward. They still have to get city approval for the project, but don't expect any resistance there since the city had to agree to the firm's request for MHFA financing. There is a strong possibility that construction of the site will start in June, with a completion target of spring 2011.

This project will be close to the 14,880 square foot retail/office building developed by Shingobee Builders at the downtown's main intersection of Central Avenue and Main Street (County Road 19). This was completed in 2006 and includes a Thrifty White Pharmacy.

Another recent vacant building occupation includes a new company that has agreed to lease the former Dental Resources Company in Maple Lake. This new company is called Platinum Plus Printing.

The former Classic Egg building in Cokato, which is now owned by Forsman Brothers, has been leased to a company from Litchfield called "Cow Girl Tuff." They are a national provider of ladies clothing for Western and Rodeo wear. Among other things they do silk screening of tee shirts. The owners will remove all the equipment that made this an egg processing facility and will build out the building to meet the new company's needs. Both the Maple Lake building and the Cokato building have been leased with the assistance of Wayne Elam of Commercial Realty Solutions, a new commercial realty company in Buffalo.

In a recent conversation with Keith Franklin of Franklin Outdoor Advertising, Keith pointed out that they haven't had this strong a demand for their outdoor advertising signs in three years.

The optimism towards our economy continues to grow. According to recent reports from the Star Tribune, “Forty-two percent of the (Minnesota) companies responding (to a recent survey) said they planned to increase hiring in the next 12 months. A year ago just 17 percent planned to make additional hires.” Moreover, “. . . four out of five Minnesota companies expect higher sales in 2010. . . . Meanwhile, 32 percent plan to increase capital expenditures.” (Star Tribune, April 25, 2010; section D, p. d-1).

Another positive piece of news is that the new jobless claims figure continued to trend downward in April. At the same time, consumer spending trended upwards in April.

If this brief list of positive news doesn't give you that old “get up and go” then consider reading the Harvey Mackay column “Overcoming the Power of No” in this newsletter. Just change the word ‘no’ to ‘negative thinking’ and do the exercise. There's more to be gathered with the power of positive thinking and moreover, it works.