

Hoxie couple considers free land offer

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press
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A rural Hoxie couple thinking about moving to town is considering an offer for free land.

Mark and Dorothy Heim live 15 miles northeast of Hoxie. Dorothy met with city officials earlier this month to talk about guidelines on 19 lots Hoxie has to give away.

The lots were given to the city by a former private development group, and the city plans to give them to anyone who will build a home.

"I'd like to know from the city what we can do," Mrs. Heim said.

Hoxie City Attorney Ken Eland said a group of investors known as the Hoxie Development Co. disbanded last year after nearly 46 years of operation, leaving 19 lots in northeast Hoxie. The group donated the lots to the city as a way to lure new homeowners to an area from 14th and

Noble Streets to 17th and King, just north of the development known as Wheatridge.

Anyone approved for a lot must agree to begin construction within six months, Mr. Eland said, and complete a home within 18 months. All homes must be single family dwellings not less than 800 square feet on the ground floor and no larger than two and one-half stories tall. No mobile or manufactured homes will be allowed, however, modular homes on permanent foundations will be.

Mrs. Heim said she and her husband plan to build a home with an attached garage which would be 70 by 35 feet. If they submit their application, and it's approved, they will be the first people to use the offer.

The city requires a \$500 application fee designated to pay for legal expenses. Applicants must obtain title insurance for a general warranty deed the city will issue. And the city retains the

right to reject applications of those who can't show they'll actually build a home.

Applicants wanting to build a home larger than will fit on a single lot can apply for multiple lots. The city will decide based on the size of the home and proposed location. The city will pay the property taxes on all lots until such time property is conveyed to its new owner.

Hoxie is now one of a growing list of communities with land to give away.

The cities of Atwood, Plainville, Lincoln, Minneapolis, Washington, Wilson, Ellsworth, Kanopolis, Marquette, Holyrood, Eureka and Chetopa have similar promotions for residential property. Stockton, Lincoln and Washington have commercial property to be given away. Free land promotions in those areas can be seen at www.kansasfreeland.com

Hoxie City Clerk Jessica Spresser (785) 675-3291 can help anyone interested in the offer.

Sheridan County

• **Money spent** for economic development in Sheridan County in 2006 — \$50,000.

• **Population** today 2,600, in 2000 2,813, in 1990 3,043, in 1980, 3,544.

• **People working** today 1,411, in 2000 1,437, in 1990 1,482, in 1980 2,070.

• **Economic Development Director** — Jessica Spresser, interim, two months service.

• **EDC office** at 924 Sheridan Ave., Hoxie. Phone (785) 675-3016.

• **Median family income** in 2000 — \$33,547.

Country tries several development ideas

By Jan Katz Ackerman

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A few determined Sheridan County businessmen years ago established the Sheridan County Economic Development Corp.

"There was no economic development until they formed a group and hired Kyle Andregg," said Hoxie resident Dan William.

Mr. William, a vice president of the First State Bank of Hoxie and a member of the Hoxie Chamber of Commerce, said before 1994, business owners spearheaded economic development in the county. Ten business owners banded together to open a bowling alley, a door factory and a 12,000-head feedlot. One of those men was Don Prickett, who moved his trucking company from Plainville to Hoxie in 1969.

"One of the things I learned a lot of years ago is that nothing stands still," Mr. Prickett said. "You will grow or go backwards. You don't stand still. You either grow or it's gone. We are seeing evidence of that."

For three years, he said, the group of men owned a door factory which was a mile west of Hoxie on U.S. 24 in what is referred to as Hoxie's industrial park. The factory was renovated and



A BUSY DOWNTOWN HOXIE is reflected in the north end of Main Street as patrons shop and visit.

— Photo by Jan Katz Ackerman/Colby Free Press

is now home to a nondenominational church called Living Word Fellowship.

The bowling alley, at 917 Pine Ave. in Hoxie, now is the Dollar General Store. Colby resident Tuffy Taylor, along with former economic development director Bert Mosier, was instrumental in turning the building into a variety store.

The feedlot, originally owned by Mr. Stephens, is now owned by members of the Bob Foote family. While principal owner Bob Foote lives in Bucyrus, Kan., the feedlot, which has

expanded to 43,000 head, is managed by Scott Foote of Hoxie.

Michelle Foote, Scott's wife, is in her second year as a member of the Sheridan County Economic Development Corp. board. When Scott's family purchased the feedlot she knew she would be making a lifetime commitment to Sheridan County.

"I knew we would be raising our children here and that we'd have a stake in the community," Mrs. Foote said, "not only for ourselves, but for

everyone in the community to have a good quality of life."

She serves as the board's secretary, and works with Leanna Sloan, president; Rick Leiker, treasurer; and members Ron Schamberger, Wanda Sealock, Jacque Boultinghouse and Jessica Spresser.

In 1994 John Karls of Selden along with County Attorney Mike Haas and the late Kyle Andregg met with commissioners Stan Rogers, Norman Kliever and Dean Thomas to talk about organizing an economic development group bringing together the county, the cities of Hoxie and Selden, the Sheridan County Hospital and the Hoxie Area Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Andregg served one year as director.

On Jan. 5, 2000, Bert Mosier was hired an economic development executive director. Mosier headed up the corporation until June 2005.

Mr. Mosier said former Hoxie residents Bill Gasper and Brian Kirk, Rick Leiker and Selden residents Karls and Boultinghouse, helped form the current development corporation.

"We are proudest of the fact that both Hoxie and Selden's main streets are full, with only three empty buildings between them," Ms. Spresser, the Hoxie city clerk said.

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