2007 Annual Report

Mission Statement

The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development will promote and improve the business climate in the city of Great Bend through its services and partnerships that encourage growth and assist existing and new businesses in reaching their business goals.

Goals

- o Partner with organizations to position Great Bend community for growth
- o Maintain fiscal accountability
- o Provide quality services and programs for members
- o Increase revenues to provide for future longevity

Areas of focus

- o Advocacy for business
- o Investment in the future
- o Community Marketing and Promotion
- o Chamber member services

Great Bend sits on the cusp of great opportunity! With agri-businesses, oil and gas production and beef prices on the up swing, Great Bend is poised for growth. As Secretary David Kerr, Kansas Department of Commerce, recently noted during his day long visit to Great Bend, "Great Bend is making it happen."

Positive signs of progress:

City population increasing

2001 – 15,142 **2006 – 15,537**

Sales tax receipts increasing

2001 - \$ 1,414,426. **2006 - \$ 1,648,805**

City assessed valuation increasing

2001 - \$ 68,846,000 **2006 - \$ 81,785,000**

Barton County assessed valuation increasing

2001 - \$ 163,168,000 **2006 - \$ 206,376,000**

Bank Deposits increasing

2001 - \$ 406,233,000 **2006 - \$ 584,099,000**

Enrollment sustained in USD 428 compared to other neighboring school districts

Numerous businesses making investments in new buildings

Commercial and residential permits increasing

Pull factor – one of the top five cities in Kansas with population exceeding 10,000 - (2006 - 1.52 pull factor) Unemployment consistently below 4%

Two Kansas towns are listed in the top 50 of a national news magazine's "Best Place to Retire" list for the Midwest. The Wichita-area community of Derby is 49th, and Great Bend is 50th out of the 1,000 places ranked by U.S. News and World Report.

The Board of Directors for the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development set the following priorities for 2007.

- Business retention
- Focus on small businesses
- 3. Barton County Young Professionals
- 4. New business recruitment
- Focused message
- Work force development
- Excited about Downtown buildings
- On-going support for all businesses
- 9. Chamber conduit
- 10. City-revised building inspections
- 11. Develop partnerships with:

Kansas Department of Commerce Central Business District Barton County
Barton County Community College USD 428 Major Employers
Ambassadors

- 12. Increase Tourism Tournament Director for Youth Sports
- 13. Recognition of positive/best changes

In addition, The Great Bend City Council set the following goals for Economic Development:

- 1. Meet the new employee needs of local employers
- 2. Calling on local businesses
- 3. Follow up on economic development leads
- 4. Update the Community Profile on the City's web site

2007 proved to be the year of opportunity. Here are just a few of the highlights

E community designation

NetWork Kansas was established as a component of the Kansas Economic Growth Act of 2004 to further entrepreneurship and small business growth as a priority for economic and community development in the State of Kansas. Backed by more than 400 partners statewide, the NetWork Kansas service promotes an entrepreneurial environment by establishing a central portal that connects entrepreneurs and small business owners with the expertise, education, and economic resources they need in order to succeed.

Great Bend was chosen as an E Community in this pilot program. Communities chosen to become E-Communities will partner with NetWork Kansas to achieve the following:

- 1) Establish a fund for entrepreneurs and small business owners that is administered by each E-Community;
- 2) Map all local, regional and state assets available to assist entrepreneurs and businesses in each E-Community;
- 3) Develop a long-term tracking and accountability system to measure business and economic growth; and
- 4) Form long-term partnerships with more than 400 NetWork Kansas partners statewide that assist entrepreneurs and small businesses in order to provide a positive impact on the Kansas economy.

"Becoming an entrepreneurial community is a process, not a project," said NetWork Kansas Director, Steve Radley. "We believe we have identified six communities that are already engaged in that process and are developing the key components necessary to flourish in today's competitive environment."

With \$300,000 available for entrepreneurs in the forms of loans or grants, this money can be used for start up businesses to assist in reaching their business objectives. Twenty Great Bend businesses or organizations contributed over \$600,000 to The Network Kansas program receiving tax credits for their contribution.

Buxton Study

In order to recruit retail business to the community, the City Council of Great Bend entered into a partnership with the Buxton Company to assist enterprises in building success by accurately identifying their retail customers. For municipalities, understanding the lifestyle and purchasing characteristics of their residents enables civic leaders to focus clearly on specific economic development strategies involving retail franchises.

Buxton is the industry leader in customer analytics, providing strategic decision-making information for retail site selection and targeted marketing to major retailers, cities, economic development groups and healthcare organizations throughout the United States. Buxton pioneered the use of demographics, psychographics, drive-time analysis and lifestyle characteristics to provide strategic decision-making information to any enterprise serving customers. Using over 450 years of executive retail, marketing and community management experience, Buxton provides a powerful customer analysis solution

Community is a total retail identification and marketing program designed for community economic development programs. It enables local governments, economic development organizations and chambers of commerce to improve their economy and the quality of life of their citizens through retail sector expansion.

With eight "matched" retailers, the Great Bend Economic Development Team begins the process to position Great Bend in the best manner possible to entice future growth of retailers.

Downtown ... our town ... OUR FUTURE

Downtown Great Bend, much like its peer communities, is at a crossroads. The character of downtown businesses is changing. No longer are retail establishments the primary tenant of downtown. Changes in the composition of downtown make it less attractive to retail oriented businesses; increasingly retailers are choosing to locate along the 10th street corridor. A result of this shift in retail trade has resulted in empty store fronts. A plan to make downtown matter--make it a place people want to linger by returning downtown to its retail roots has been developed.

The goal is to create a **regional shopping destination** using franchised businesses which has a number of advantages, stemming from the **synergies** created though controlling operations of several ventures. One of the primary advantages is the **economies of scale** offered by controlling ten different retail venues in the central business district.

Staff from the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development have worked in concert with a leadership team to implement the plan for the project. An anticipated October 2008 opening is planned.

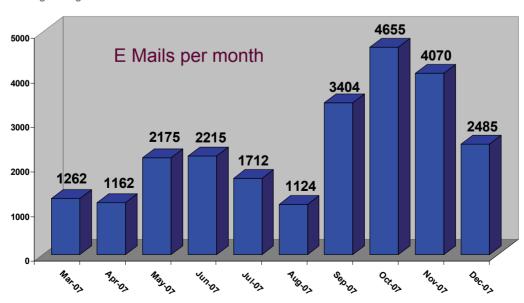
Marketing

Promoting local business was perhaps the greatest focus for 2007. Through the newly designed Outlook Business Journal, Chamber Business Directory, weekly E-mail blast and newly created web site – activities and special features of numerous businesses were highlighted.

From March 2007 through December 2007, **24,264 people were touched with emails** from The Great Bend Chamber and Economic Development.

From January to December 2007, **97 businesses** were highlighted in the Outlook Business Journal comprising **6,604 inches of editorial space**. At the rate of \$7.00 per inch (a comparable advertising rate for the area), the **total value to these local businesses equates to \$46,225.00**. Quite impressive. A copy of data available upon request.

All prospects who are looking to locate a business in Great Bend received an End of the Year/Status Report on the positive signs of growth in the area.



Building Relationships

Lt. Governor Mark Parkinson

On March 28, 2007 newly appointed Lieutenant Governor Mark Parkinson was treated to a grand tour of Great Bend and introduced to community leaders, business owners, and spoke at a luncheon in his honor. Presentations on innovative community projects related to WorkForce Development, the integration of Barton County Young Professionals and the importance of agriculture to the local economy were given. In addition, Mr. Parkinson interacted with local students from Park School at the Great Bend Zoo and site of the new Raptor Center

Secretary David Kerr - Kansas Department of Commerce

A power packed day greeted Secretary of the Kansas Department of Commerce David Kerr on his October 24, 2007 visit to Great Bend and Barton County. After a meeting with business leaders and a luncheon at The Club at StoneRidge, Secretary Kerr loaded a van with various business leaders and promptly set out to see some of the best that Great Bend has to offer. From healthcare facilities to an innovative public/private partnership with Barton County Community College students at CPI, Qualified Plan consultants, Secretary Kerr was most impressed with the "hard work and dedication of community leaders." His toured ended by traveling a portion of the National Scenic By-ways route and Cheyenne Bottoms. Later Secretary Kerr stated his approval of Great Bend by saying "Great Bend has decided to make it happen." Nothing could be closer to the truth.

Skip Yowell - Founder of JanSport

In 1967, Skip Yowell, his cousin Murray Pletz, and Murray's wife Jan founded JanSport, the world's leading manufacturer of backpacks and collegiate apparel with nothing more than a sewing machine and a fierce determination to make the best and most dependable product on the market. Forty years later, Skip Yowell tells the story of the adventures, the expeditions, and the people that made JanSport a beloved brand all over the world in his new book, *The Hippie Guide to Climbing the Corporate Ladder and Other Mountains*.

As the keynote speaker for the 2008 Chamber Annual Banquet, Skip will bring a special perspective as he talks about his early days growing up in Great Bend. A 1964 graduate of Great Bend High School, much of Skip's values and inspiration were acquired in Great Bend. His desire to "give back" is his top goal these days and will share his insights on starting and sustaining a business in a seminar during his visit back to Great Bend.

Business Visits

In an effort to stay connected to Chamber members, the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and Great Bend Ambassadors teamed up to make 448 calls on various businesses. Feedback from businesses was very positive and information on any expansion plans or critical issues facing the business were discussed.

Community Recruiter

The greatest challenge facing businesses today is the shortage of workers. Under the direction of Matt Hoisington, Kansas Department of Commerce and Director of the Great Bend WorkForce Center, a partnership between businesses, local government, The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development, state resources, and non-profit community action organizers was established to develop a plan for a COMMUNITY RECRUITMENT PROGRAM. Elements of the program include:

- Cost-share an investment in retaining a dedicated Community Recruiter to promote employment opportunities and quality of life in Barton County.
- Develop incentive package designed to encourage relocation
- Host another JobFest in 2008
- Identify non-traditional recruitment opportunities
- Leverage online and local recruiting resources to identify qualified applicants
- Assist employers in developing community based branding and marketing initiatives

Golden Belt Leadership Program

The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development helped create the new Golden Belt Leadership program in conjunction with the Golden Belt Community Foundation and other area organizations. Leadership Golden Belt focuses on training local leaders through the combination of a skills-based curriculum and purpose oriented site visits. The inaugural class for Leadership Golden Belt begins January 2008. The class is open to interested individuals in Stafford, Rush, Pawnee, and Barton counties. Each class will consist of participants who are selected by the Advisory Board from applications received. The class members will have access to the skills, training, and relationships needed to become more effective citizens. Class members will be trained in 21st Century Leadership skills such as community visioning, group facilitation, learning styles, collaboration, consensus-building, and advocacy. The Leadership Golden Belt program and the relationships the participants develop will provide the skills needed to work with others to address current problems and find opportunities for the future. A \$23,890. grant was received from the Kansas Helath Foundation for this newly designed regional program.

New Businesses - New Employees

- •maurices
- •Parkside Sports Grill
- Team Employment
- •Wilbea Medical Equipment
- •Wolf Furniture Sales & Warehouse
- •CPI

- 2 full time employees and 8 part-time employees
- 2 full time employees and 2 part-time employees
- 3 full time employees
- 2 full time employees
- 10 full time employees
- 80 full time employees

- •Comfort Inn to open in 2008
- •Retail/Service Prospect to open in 2008
- •Media Service to open in 2008

TOTAL - NEW EMPLOYEES

99 full time employees and 10 part-time employees

Business Expansions

NEW BUILDING

10th Street Eyecare Center Eldridge Fencing First Kansas Bank M & M Equipment McDonalds Animal Medical Center Able Mini Storage CPI, Qualified Plan Consultants GBHS Field House

NEW OWNERSHIP

The Color Clinic White's Repair Great Lakes Airlines Doonan Truck Johnson Electric
Shirley Flick
Doonan Specialized Trailers

EXPANSION PLANNED

Central Kansas Medical Center

Credit Union of America – opening 2008

Protective Equipment And Testing

Western AG Enterprises Surgery & Diagnostic Center Becker Tire

NEW LOCATION/REMODEL

Insurance Planning H & H General Partnership Kwik Shop - # 747 & #753 Farmers Bank & Trust Sonic

As outlined in the 2007 Plan of Work the following list highlights just a few accomplishments in this year of great opportunity.

Advocacy for Business

- 4 Legislative Forums addressing current legislative issues
- 50 Chamber Networking coffees
- 12 Business After Hours Networking Events
- The coordination of **Human Resource** professionals meeting monthly to share best practices in their respective field.

Community Marketing and Promotion

- Created and maintained a 16-page quality business newsletter that allows The Great Bend
 Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development to effectively promote member businesses and
 well as keeping all members informed of business happenings. Strong content and a new design
 made for "the best Chamber newsletter in my territory" as stated by Richard Shank, AT&T.
- Selling over \$160,000 worth of gift certificates
- The redesign of the Chamber's **web site**, featuring Economic Development facts and information will go live in February 2008.
- Redesign of the Chamber Directory to give it a more professional look and more functionality with three sections for cross referencing.
- **UPDATE E-Blast** Weekly e-mail blasts serve as a vehicle that allows the Chamber to reach members in a timely manner with information about committee work and special projects

Investment in the Future

- The Agribusiness Committee created yet another very successful Kid's Ag Day for Barton County 4th graders
- Monthly meetings of the Barton County Young Professionals Group
- Connected with over 50 new and existing businesses for business expansion or relocation
- Participated in College 2 Community Day BCCC
- Participation in "stav connected program" with students at Kansas State University
- Chamber & Economic Development staff participated in the City's Adult Academy
- Continuation of centralkansasjobs.com a clearinghouse for job seekers and employers 51 resumes circulated
- Restructure of leadership program. Partnership with the Golden Belt Community Foundation to run the new four-county program. Received a \$23,890.00 grant from the Kansas Health Foundation for the program.
- Received the E Community designation through network Kansas, which established Great Bend as a pilot community to advance entrepreneurship. \$300,000 will be distributed in the form of grants or loans for new start-up businesses in the area. Over \$600,000 was raised from the Great Bend area for this state wide program.
- **Expo facilities** utilized 36 days and 16 weekends for SRCA Drag Races, generating over \$13,000, an increase of over \$3,500 from the previous year.
- A new home for The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development.
- The implementation of a strategic plan for retail development The Buxton Study, in conjunction with The City of Great Bend.
- Implementation of strategies for the downtown revitalization Downtown...Our town ...
 OUR FUTURE
- The Beautification Committee continues to wrap up the improvements to the island on Broadway Street and honor a business for its efforts in the beautification of their business.

Chamber Member Services

- 448 members contacted by the Ambassadors and Board of Directors through personal visits
- 40 new members joined the Chamber of Commerce in 2007 staff called on 111
- Organized a successful Gary Gore Annual Golf Tournament 21 teams and 22 hole sponsors
- Winter storage of 40 boats and campers
- Distribution of approximately 2,000 maps and 4,500 phonebooks
- Distribution of relocation packets
- 34 members of the Plan Room with 50 sets of plans opened for review in 2007

Additional partnerships, services, and programs:

- Memberships
 - Prairie Enterprise Proiect
 - SCORE
 - CKDI
 - Kansas Chamber
 - US Chamber of Commerce
 - Kansas BIO
 - wKREDA
 - International Conference on Shopping Centers
- Chamber staff participation
 - JobFest 2007
 - · Video shoot for National Scenic By-ways video
 - Jack Kilby Monument Project
 - State Spelling Bee Planning Committee March 2008
 - Motorcycle Rally Planning Committee September 2008
 - · Wings and Wetland Festival
 - WorkForce Development project with the out come Community Recruiter position
 - Community branding project partnership with City of Great Bend and Great Bend Convention & Visitors Bureau
 - Kansas Department of Transportation district meetings
- Follow-up on Entertainment Study
- Attendance at the Western Kansas Congressional Staff Reception Washington, DC
- 17 speaking engagements to service and social organizations and high school business classes
- Worked with Central Business District volunteers in producing a successful Downtown Holiday Parade, holiday advertising campaign, Summer Sidewalk Sale, and efforts to recommend angle parking on Main Street
- Creation of NEW 2 GREAT BEND program to be launched first quarter of 2008
- Development of business training program in preparation for increased tourism activity
- Monthly updates presented to Barton County Commissioners
- Monthly updates to Great Bend City Council on Economic Development efforts
- Weekly meetings with Economic Development Team (City Administrator and Mayor)