

Energy CAPITAL of the NATION

Campbell County, Wyoming has deservedly earned the title 'Energy Capital of the Nation.' 'About 40 percent of the nation's power is generated by coal that is mined here,' explains Phil Christopherson, CEO of Energy Capital Economic Development. 'In addition, we have abundant oil, natural gas and uranium.'



facility will use coal as their raw material and manufacture Activated Carbon. The manufacturing plant will provide over 30 permanent new jobs. "The activated carbon plant is the first step in a number of opportunities we are looking forward to," says Mr. Christopherson. "We are looking at a number of other value-added businesses that will take coal, oil, and uranium and do something with that over and above the traditional uses."

Energy Capital ED recently joined the New Growth Alliance, an economic development coalition between three local cities. The regional partnership will ensure that the region makes the most of its resources. "We are working together to help bring business to our communities."

Campbell County enjoys a number of business advantages in addition to its abundance of fossil fuels. "First of all, it is a good business climate," says Mr. Christopherson. The local and state government is pro-business, so newcomers will not be stymied by red tape or high taxes. Wyoming generates the income that the state needs from a mineral royalty tax assessed on oil, gas, coal, and other minerals, so there is no corporate or personal income tax. Property taxes are low and the statewide sales tax is just four percent, with a one percent optional local sales tax. Wyoming-based manufacturers are exempt from sales tax for equipment and energy usage.

Written by Claire Suttles

"Energy is a big part of what we do here," says Mr. Christopherson. Three of the community's five largest employers are mining companies: Peabody Energy Co, Arch Coal, and Cloud Peak Energy.

The energy industry flock to the County to take advantage of its plentiful natural resources. "They just come here natu-

rally." With those businesses already in place, Energy Capital ED is seeking other sectors that would complement the community's existing energy businesses. "We are working to diversify our economy, by building on our strengths," Mr. Christopherson explains. "We are looking for businesses that would support our energy industries – manufacturers and value-added businesses –

that would add to our growing manufacturing community." A value-added business is one that takes an existing raw material such as coal or natural gas, processes the raw material and manufactures or produces a finished product. Some examples of good value-added products made from coal include Activated Carbon, Graphene, and Carbon Fiber.

The strategy is win-win. New businesses will help stabilize the local economy while enjoying easy access to coal, oil, natural gas, and uranium. "Prices of energy right now are down, so we are in the midst of a little bit of a downturn. However, this is a good opportunity to take the natural resources that are here and add value to them because they are available at a very good price and they are available at the source."

An activated carbon manufacturing plant recently moved in to take advantage of these opportunities. Atlas Carbon's new

Gillette boasts a particularly strong business sector that makes the city stand out from the rest of the state. "We have a great community; it is really unique in Wyoming. Most of Wyoming is pretty rural and Gillette, while considered rural in comparison with most large cities, has amenities and features that set them apart. Gillette is very business-oriented, very industrial with the manufacturing and mining in the area. We are not nearly the size of Cheyenne or Casper, but we have the same type of feel. Most of Wyoming [has] great communities and wonderful places, but they are still mostly agricultural and rural, whereas we are more industry, commercial, retail and business." »



Gillette hosts a variety of events including the Donkey Creek Jazz Festival, art shows at AVA Community Art Center, and productions from the Gillette Community Theater. CAM-PLEX is a full-service convention, exhibition and performing arts center that hosts over 400 events attended by more than 350,000 people each year. The sprawling facility sits on 1,100 acres and boasts a wide variety of offerings, from the National High School Finals Rodeo to Motorcycle Rallies and a weeklong fireworks competition known as the Pyrotechnic Guild International.



Campbell County also boasts several museums. Einstein's Adventurarium Science Center attracts 12,000 to 15,000 people each year to experience hands-on learning. The Campbell County Rockpile Museum introduces visitors to general, regional, and local history with a special focus on Campbell County's story. The Campbell County School District Planetarium has the first Goto Chronos II to be installed in the United States. This state-of-the-art star projector showcases more than 8,000 stars on a 30-foot diameter Nanoseam dome. The planetarium offers free shows to the public in addition to hosting almost every student in the county and students from school districts as far afield as Montana.

Local entertainment and recreation options include bowling, ice skating at the Rockpile Ice Arena, and golf at four different golf courses including the nationally recognized Powder Horn Golf Course in Sheridan. Wyoming is famous for its outdoor offerings and Campbell County delivers top-notch fishing, hunting, camping, boating, swimming, and river rafting opportunities. World-renowned landmarks, parks, and wilderness areas are located nearby; Keyhole State Park, Mount Rushmore, Devils Tower, and Big Horn National Forest are all within a day's road trip.

The county's retail options are varied and extensive—and they continue to expand. A new retail shopping center recently welcomed a Menards and Sportsman's Warehouse and is in the process of bringing in additional stores. "There are a number of other lots that are available that are being built out."

A strong education system is important to the community as well. "We are a very young community with lots of young families," Mr. Christopherson explains. In addition to highly ranked public schools that serve about 8,400 students in grades K-12, Campbell County boasts two private, K-12 Christian schools. The Northern Wyoming Community College District has a local branch, Gillette College, so locals enjoy easy access to higher education and vocational training.

Gillette College has a reputation for having excellent technical and vocational programs. The College's \$39.6 million Technical

Equally important, Campbell County enjoys a prime location within the state of Wyoming. "We are centrally located when it comes to the energy industry," Mr. Christopherson points out. Local businesses enjoy direct rail access, easy access to Interstate 90, and access to daily jet flights on United and Delta to Denver and Salt Lake City.

A strong workforce rounds out the community's business advantages. "We have a great workforce; the people here like to work. Unemployment is up right now because of the downturn so we have a great, available workforce of people eager to work. They are not afraid of hard work. They like hard work."

The community offers a great quality of life in addition to business opportunities. With a population of just under 50,000, Campbell County is the educational and retail hub, as well as the business hub, of the Powder River Basin and North East Wyoming. Thanks to the energy industry, Gillette is one of the wealthiest cities in America, with an average household income of \$69,500. The bustling, urban community enjoys all the amenities of a larger metro area while still delivering the advantages of small town living. "We are a very livable community with lots of amenities," Mr. Christopherson shares. "Over the years the energy industry has provided a lot of revenue to our community and, with that, the community leaders have built recreation centers, big conference centers, sports complexes, hiking and walking trails around the community, they brought in art from all over the nation. Everything you would want in a community, you have it here."

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As an example of the types of programs that Gillette College is willing to set up and run for local businesses and employers, the newly established machining program and course of study provides an excellent illustration. A local manufacturing business identified the need for trained machinists. Gillette College, after conducting research and studies of the local need, created a custom designed program to train and develop specialized machinists. The Gillette College Machining Program provides machinists for the local machine shops as well as mines, farms, ranches, and local manufacturers. The Machine Tool Program strives to provide students with the cutting edge of technology and education in CNC machines as well as the manual machines, making them very well-rounded machinists. Gillette College is one of five other colleges in the three surrounding states that offer a machining program. Gillette College provides a facility with the latest in CNC lathes, mills and other manufacturing equipment to ensure that the students are well trained and ready to go to work. Through the Workforce Training program, Gillette College develops special courses of instruction for local businesses in order to provide the exact training needed.

Businesses eager to take advantage of all that Campbell County has to offer will find plenty of potential locations. "We have a number of industrial parks that have sites and buildings available, so it is easy to come here and set up a business here or

"We are working to diversify our economy."

expand here." A couple of brand new industrial parks are currently accepting new businesses and a couple of older ones still have space available.

Businesses moving into Campbell County's industrial parks—or any location within the community—will find a list of critical benefits that set the community apart. As Mr. Christopherson summarizes, "The things that help us stand out are the livability of the community, the work ethic in the community, the business-friendly attitude in the community, and the opportunities that are here for businesses to come and expand." ■

