

The North Range Business Park Gets a New Look

When Cheyenne LEADS acquired and developed the North Range Business Park (NRBP) west of Cheyenne it was conceived, platted and zoned primarily as a location for logistics operations – warehousing, distribution and related industries. And in fact the first operation to locate in the NRBP was the huge Wal-Mart food distribution center which now accounts for over 700 jobs in the park. Then in early 2007 the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) selected a site in the NRBP for its new super computer center and LEADS realized the park had a potential for a substantially more diversified future.

LEADS had identified over 90 acres in the Cheyenne Business Parkway (CBP) to be used primarily for technology related employers. LEADS offered a site there to NCAR as well as sites at Laramie County Community



Entry at Logistics Drive

College and in the NRBP. When NCAR settled on the west site it highlighted the unique advantages of that new property for power hungry, computer centric, industries. LEADS also realized that the Light Industrial zoning, while sufficient for a stand-alone datacenter, would not lend itself to some uses that we would want to recruit around the new NCAR/UW Supercomputer facility. We also understood that NCAR would set high standards for its property and we wanted to extend those standards to the rest of the business park.

Ultimately it was decided to make two significant changes to the NRBP. For one, it would have to be rezoned from Light Industrial (LI) to Planned Unit Development (PUD), requiring a rational set of new zoning standards. This would allow for a greater mixing of potential users while maintaining high standards for the development. As those

No Rail in Cheyenne?...Weird

When entering Cheyenne from any direction the amount of rail that runs through our community is apparent. With two main rail lines running through the city, the Union Pacific and the Burlington Northern people might laugh if they heard that LEADS was having difficulty finding rail access for its prospects, but it is. Access to these main lines has been elusive at best. For years LEADS has tried to obtain land that would be suitable for an industrial rail park but the right set of circumstances has yet to be present.

Cheyenne LEADS averages a list of 40 to 50 companies that we are actively involved with in discussions about locating to Cheyenne. Due to the economic climate, many of these companies have put their expansion plans on hold. The main exception to this is the companies that use rail as an integral part of their business. This is attributed to two factors; 1) in an effort to reduce transportation costs, more companies are looking to rail as a solution and, 2) the Denver area has become too saturated with rail to provide reliable service to new companies that come into the area, providing opportunities for other areas around the front-range.

A large tract (400-900 acres) that is undeveloped, sits on one of the main lines, is close to existing infrastructure and has access to an interstate would be ideal. LEADS has been in discussions with several landowners but at this point has not been able to reach an agreement. As LEADS continues to look for properties with rail potential, companies that need rail and have a strong potential to relocate in Cheyenne are lost, most recently on a monthly basis. Most are specialized manufacturing companies with 15-50 employees. Some are distribution based with slightly more employees. These are just the type of primary jobs LEADS works to attract to Laramie County.

LEADS is working on a few locations with rail throughout Laramie County but many of them are specific to a small tract that can't be used for other business. The process has been frustrating but we remain committed to continue with this effort. One factor that will make this process even more difficult in the future is the reduction of grant funds from the Wyoming Business Council. Infrastructure grants will be reduced from \$3 million down to \$1.5 million, making any kind of rail project almost impossible without significant outside funding.

One future bright spot is just South of Cheyenne along I-25. The development company that owns the land has access to I-25, I-80, and both rail lines. As Cheyenne continues to develop, it becomes more likely that this land will be developed, along with significant rail access. Until that time or until LEADS is able to successfully motivate one or the others of the few land owners with property that meets the rail requirements, Cheyenne will continue to lose a significant amount of new business because of the lack of rail access. ■



NCAR Supercomputing Center Reaches Design Milestone

The National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) and its managing organization, the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR), unveiled design concepts for the Wyoming supercomputing center on Tuesday, August 4.

This is the second major milestone in the development of the supercomputing facility in the past six months, following the selection in March of an architectural design team led by Denver-based H+L Architecture and the California Data Center Design Group. The center, once completed, will be dedicated to advancing scientists' understanding of climate, weather, and other Earth and atmospheric processes.

"We are pleased with both the design and what it signifies in terms of progress for this project," says NCAR director Eric Barron. "It gives us a real sense of what the facility will look like and substance for the review process."



Architect's rendering of the NCAR Wyoming Supercomputing Center.

Completion of the initial design phase represents an important milestone in the multi-step process used by the National Science Foundation (NSF), NCAR's sponsor, to review the project. Construction of the facility will begin in spring 2010, pending the outcome of the reviews, with the center scheduled to open in 2011.

The event was highlighted by the unveiling of color renderings of the proposed Cheyenne-based facility, based on construction documents that are 65 percent complete. One of the illustrations showed turbines from the Happy Jack Windpower project in the background and a group of four pronghorn in the foreground.

"The visuals and renderings from H+L Architecture are extraordinarily helpful in showing how the data center will be laid out on the site and how it will look," says Krista Laursen, who manages the project on behalf of NCAR. "They give NCAR, UCAR, the University of Wyoming, and the public a sense of the scale and planned configuration of the facility."

The Wyoming facility is being developed in partnership with the University of Wyoming, the state of Wyoming, Cheyenne LEADS, the Wyoming Business Council, and Cheyenne Light, Fuel and Power. It will contain some of the world's most powerful supercomputers dedicated to improving scientific understanding of climate change, severe weather, air quality, and other vital atmospheric science and geoscience topics.

The center will also house a premier data storage and

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standards were being developed, it also became clear that we should re-plot the park to gain greater control over drainage, landscaping, open spaces and lot development.

To start that process the LEADS Board of Directors approved a major effort to redesign the NRBP and authorized limited expenditures from LEADS reserves for that purpose.



Trailhead Overlooking Natural Area

LEADS also sought funding for the effort from the Cheyenne, Laramie County Economic Development Joint Powers Board. That body approved LEADS grant request and the work got started in earnest.

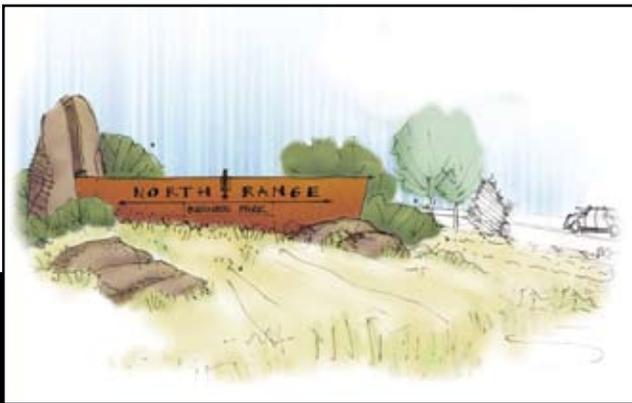
In the initial development of the NRBP, LEADS went out to bid to select a firm to handle the Master Plan and civil engineering. Ultimately the firm AVI

was selected from three bidders for that work. LEADS extended the contract with AVI – and to their subcontractor, BHA Design -- to assist with revisions to the Master Plan and for the re-plot and re-zone work. The instructions to AVI/BHA were to develop standards that

would, to the fullest extent possible, preserve and enhance the high-plains grassland nature of the property; would accommodate greater flexibility for multi-use, and; would set a new standard to be an example for quality industrial development.

This work has been ongoing. In June LEADS submitted the documents to the county for review to re-zone and re-plot the NRBP. By July both actions had received preliminary approval from the County Planning Commission and the County Commissioners. Documents will be filed in August for final approval of the new PUD zoning and the new NRBP plat. Significantly, the design and engineering team for the NCAR, Wyoming Supercomputer Center (NWSC) is already incorporating the new standards into the plans for that facility.

The new plat will set aside over 100 acres as open space. This open space will be used for regional detention and for a soft trail system that will link the properties internally. It will also be an organizing feature of the park. Higher elevation areas are to have native grasses while low areas, including natural and created drainage ways, will be planted to



Signage Concept

will be planted to

will be planted to

native trees and shrubs that naturally occur in riparian and low-lying swales.

Trees will be planted in three main grouping categories – native species within drainages and swales; native species occurring individually with granite boulders, and; screening species on drip irrigation around or near buildings. Native grasses will be utilized in open spaces created by grouping trees rather than planting at regular interval spacings. In all cases there will be a focus on low water-consuming, highly survivable native plantings for trees, shrubs, grasses and wild flowers. The intent is to replicate a natural look instead of imposing a typical urban city-street landscape.

The landscape requirements will be the primary organizing feature of the park rather than unified building design standards. This acknowledges the unique nature of this property while allowing greater flexibility in the types of industries that can be accommodated. The regional detention will allow employers to maximize productive utilization of each parcel. And with the open space ownership shared among all parcel owners, LEADS has an effective exit strategy – when the last parcel is sold LEADS will no longer have an involvement in the NRBP and full management of common areas will pass to the employers in the park.

LEADS has acquired property and developed business parks because an inventory of shovel-ready industrial property is a critical tool for job creation. Now with two business parks in that inventory and with nearly 18 years of business park experience, LEADS has begun to differentiate those properties for more diverse job creation opportunities. We are taking important steps to raise the bar in business property development, with the belief that this will help us attract more technology and knowledge-based industries. This will provide the community a resource in which all LEADS members can take pride. And while the focus of this effort is the NRBP, it is LEADS intent to take the lessons we learn from the NRBP and apply them to a comprehensive upgrade of the CBP. Stay tuned... ■

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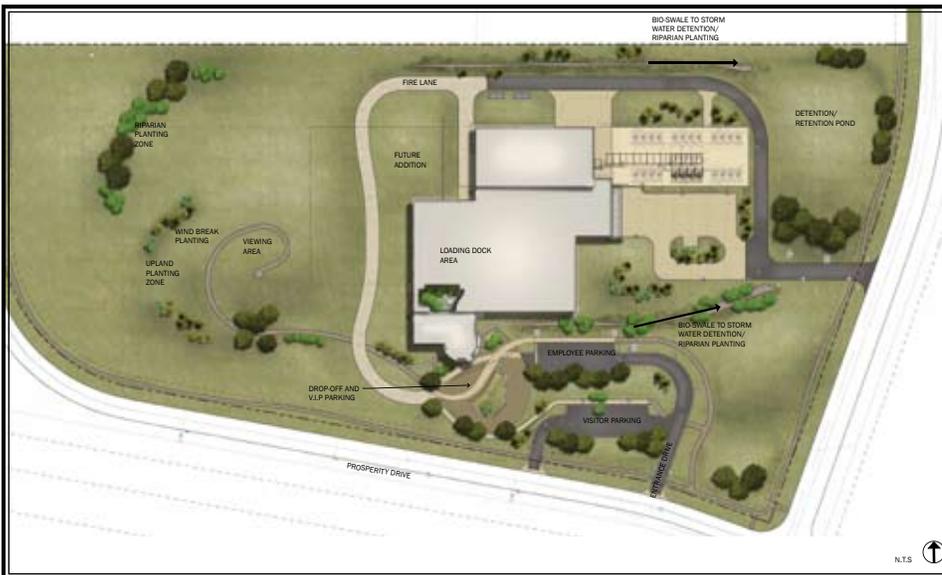
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archival facility that holds irreplaceable historical climate records and other information.

“I join the enthusiasm of our partners at NCAR and in Cheyenne for the quality of the designs for the new supercomputing facility,” said UW President Tom Buchanan. “We’re pleased that the process has come so far so quickly and that we’re one step closer to beginning construction of the center. More than ever, the University of Wyoming is poised to take full advantage of all that the center will bring to our educational and research endeavors.” ■

NCAR Gallery





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