

# VCDC's Peterson Talks About Economic Development

By Sarah Wetzel For the Plain Talk; Jan 26, 2024

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Jim Peterson, executive director of the Vermillion Economic and Development Company (VCDC), spoke of the organization's role in local economic development at the Jan. 10 meeting of the Vermillion Rotary Club. Courtesy of Vermillion Rotary Club

Jim Peterson, executive director of the Vermillion Area Chamber and Development Company (VCDC) spoke at the Vermillion Rotary meeting on Jan. 10, giving information on the VCDC's activity this past year and potential future progress.

Development in 2023 included commercial ventures such as Goodwill (under construction), Les Schwab Tires (under construction), Caribou Coffee (completed) and Dollar Tree (under construction).

Other projects include Pulse Church/daycare, Jensen Kennels, Clean Slate Auto Spa, and XiX Brewery.

According to Peterson, lots of projects happen on their own, though the VCDC gets involved in some by working with the City and Clay County on things like planning and zoning, with land being the key in development.

“Without land we're kind of landlocked by the farmers,” Peterson said. “We don't have it to grow and that's okay. If we don't want to grow, then we don't grow.”

He said last year there were eight project requests that came through the state to the VCDC, all of which the VCDC declined to bid on.

“When you look at the acreage or square footage or number of employees they want, we have to say what's realistic to spend our time,” Peterson said. “We say it's more realistic to work with our local businesses to help them expand, make sure they stay.”

VCDC itself owns various plots of land.

“We own land by Erickson which is by Runnings,” he said. “If you add all that up, we have 15 acres left we still have to sell. By Brooks, which is by AMS we have 5.9 acres

and then we own these buildings that are leased out. Market Street, VTC Center which is Guidehouse and Biomat, NMM Archives and then McVicker where we are.”

According to Peterson, the VCDC is also looking at studies and is in talks working on what businesses they should try to attract to Vermillion.

“We are connected through the state,” he said. “We did bring the state down to talk to our lending institutions so everybody knows the financing available.”

Some possible promising businesses include IT, data centers or advanced manufacturing, according to Peterson.

When a new business comes to town, he said the VCDC helps in areas such as providing them a list of contractors that may help them -- dirt work, builders, plumbers, electricians, HVAC, realtors, restaurants, places to stay, etc.

The goal is to help new businesses get off to a good start and do check-ins.

“We’re trying to do more general business training,” Peterson said. “We work with various sources on financing and when a company does come to town, we want to make sure we’re in the forefront and they go to our contractors in town for dirt work and cement contractor.”

Companies interested in the area often wonder about incentives such as tax breaks and free land, though those are luxuries Vermillion traditionally does not offer.

“If a company expands, we can get credits on workforce, we can give them low interest loans 2% and 3% for a set portion, so there are financing options we have,” Peterson said. “But a company may want to come today and want to put in a new, for example, towing company in Vermillion. Do we have a SPEC building they can buy right now? No. Would we put it up and lease it to them? No, but other cities in our very close proximity

will do that. So, it gets back into that whole, what is your philosophy of economic development, how aggressive do you want to be and what can you afford?”

The VCDC makes it their job to be in the know as far as real estate goes.

“We know every empty lot in town, who owns it, what price it is, if they’re willing to sell,” he said. “Then we branched out to the outskirts of town, who owns it, are we talking to them, what’s their thinking because without land we can’t do that much.”

Peterson said they even got the right contacts for the owners of land in front of Walmart.

“They won’t sell it, they will lease it on 10-year leases,” he said. “But that was a win we felt because it took us about eight months to get that.”

Peterson said a lot of time was spent on housing this past year with 30 sold lots in Bliss Pointe II with 24 lots available.

Affordable housing is still a struggle with a good-size new-build house costing around \$300,000, he said.

Bliss Pointe I has two commercial lots and two residential lots available. Peterson said the value of Bliss Pointe I is about \$23 million in tax base.

“So, all this extra tax base on that \$23 million, say you know \$500,000 it’ll come back to the city and then it gets distributed to the school district, county and the city, and hopefully as we do Erickson group or other developments, that’s how it all flows,” he said.

According to Peterson, there are two builders at Bliss Pointe with a possible third.

For more information visit the VCDC website at [Welcome to Vermillion | Vermillion Area Chamber & Development Company \(livevermillion.com\)](#).