Twin Falls Urban Renewal Agency
Updates | October 2011

Projects

During October we worked to complete the TFRUA/C3 video to present to the Board during the November meeting. As you know it outlines show how the URA helped secure the C3 business. We can use it as a tool to educate local groups and other potential business looking at Twin Falls as a new location.

Media

October media coverage was very positive based on the reports that ran this month:

THE BACK OF THE NOTEBOOK: Reclaiming Downtown Buildings from the Pigeons

Oh, downtown Twin Falls. So much potential. I work downtown, and there's plenty to love about the area: Rudy's — A Cook's Paradise and Ooh La La especially stand out.

But parts of Main Avenue aren't well-maintained, with pigeon crap building up on the sidewalk and empty flower pots filled with cigarette butts. TwinFalls' Urban Renewal Agency has $2.6 million in expected revenue in the coming fiscal year and another $3.8 million left over from last year, and it would be great to see the URA spend some of that on helping downtown property owners clean up and find tenants.

I catch myself daydreaming about what could fill downtown Twin Falls' empty spaces, and I'm not alone.

So what could go in? An utterly unscientific survey of my friends yielded this:

• A quiet, smoke-free place that serves good mixed drinks — one that's open on weeknights and doesn't close at 11 p.m. on weekends.

• More dining options. Bonus points if an Indian restaurant moves in.

• Starbucks. Hopefully in time for me to score a pumpkin latte before the seasonal drink goes away again. (I would also take Shot in the Dark and their awesome sandwiches.)

• Better parking and more bike racks. I always chain my bike to street signs, and I'm not sure that's legal.

• A bookstore. We can combine it with the coffee shop.

• A homebrew supply shop. (Only one person suggested this, and I'm married to him.)

I know there are challenges to getting downtown up and running — finding customers in this economy is a massive obstacle that even established businesses struggle with.

But I think of how Twin Falls photographer JeniBoisvert turned an abandoned downtown loft into a studio. She cleared out dead pigeons from a unit that had been vacant for years and made it her own. Other entrepreneurs have lured young adults downtown with a hookah business and dance clubs, and Friday Night Markets bring music and vendors to the streets.

There's some life in these streets yet. Ihope more business owners — and potential customers — realize that.

Melissa Davlin's column appears on Wednesdays. Have an idea? Shoot her a note at mdavlin@magicvalley.com.

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Posted in Local on *Wednesday, October 5, 2011 12:00 am Updated: 10:44 pm.*

Read more: http://magicvalley.com/news/local/the-back-of-the-notebook-reclaiming-downtown-buildings-from-the/article_e62a0bbf-99a8-5e1b-916e-9a31b3e86ab1.html#ixzz1cTQklFWp

http://magicvalley.com/news/local/the-back-of-the-notebook-reclaiming-downtown-buildings-from-the/article_e62a0bbf-99a8-5e1b-916e-9a31b3e86ab1.html

EDITORIAL: Cheers and Jeers

Cheers to New York-based Chobani Yogurt for considering a location in Twin Falls. There are numerous details still in the works, but the red-hot Greek yogurt trend seems to be a natural fit for Twin Falls. If it comes together, it would bring hundreds of jobs to the Magic Valley, but it only gets better from there. Our strong dairy industry and supporting feed farmers would be able to get top dollar for their goods, and the retail, housing and hospitality industries would see hefty benefits as well.

If our regional infrastructure can handle a new yogurt business that is riding a tidal wave of popularity, a plant of its size could pull the region out of a recession and offer a return to some of the boom times we enjoyed at the beginning of the millennium.

Cheers to Aaron Adams for showcasing the entrepreneurial spirit that makes folks in the Magic Valley so unique. Adams is taking a chance on downtown, and has invested in creating High Country Bakehouse, a new bakery and lunch restaurant. Adams' business will showcase local farmers' wares and give folks another reason to revisit downtown.

Adams, a self-taught baker, is taking advantage of the latest trends in social media to help get his business off the ground, and his passion is infectious. Here's to hoping that the niche eatery will provide another engaged business owner for Main Street, and others follow his example.

Jeers to area schools who set merit pay goals too low, and jeers to the state of Idaho for giving them a pass on it. Idaho Superintendent of Schools Tom Luna's plan to offer merit pay was a contentious measure involving complex formulas of state and local achievement. The state set their standards based on ISAT test scores, but they let local districts craft their own measures before signing off on them.

In the case of Wendell High School, teachers can obtain nearly 3/4 of their local bonus share by having 40 percent of parents show up at teacher conferences. They can get half of their bonus share if 36 percent show up.

Pardon? While there are certainly studies that show a correlation between conference attendance and student achievement, the marks set by Wendell seem ridiculously low.

Merit pay should be just that — a bonus or extra credit — and not easily doled out. We don't ascribe to the "everybody gets a trophy" theory. If districts insist on tying merit pay to conferences, we should see more than half of the parents show up to earn that large of a local bonus.

And, to Luna and the state education folks — you're not off the hook, either; you approved Wendell's plan.

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Posted in Editorial on *Saturday, October 29, 2011 1:00 am Updated: 8:55 pm.*

Read more: http://magicvalley.com/news/opinion/editorial/editorial-cheers-and-jeers/article_c4f8233f-b844-5eaa-8dc6-be6bc6c50710.html#ixzz1cTReflDT

Yogurt Producer Eyeing Twin Falls Location, Which Could Bring Hundreds of Jobs

About Chobani

• The yogurt:Chobani's Greek yogurt is billed as all natural and without preservatives or artificial flavors. Its yogurt comes from the milk of cows not treated with rBST, a bovine growth hormone. The yogurt contains real fruit and twice the protein of traditional non-Greek yogurts.

• The History Agro Farma, Chobani's parent company, was founded in 2005 and is based in New York. HamdiUlukaya, a native of Turkey and third-generation producer of Mediterranean foods, started the company. Chobani was launched in 2007.

• More online: Chobani.com.

TWIN FALLS • Twin Falls is one of a handful of cities in Idaho and Nevada being considered as a site for a Greek yogurt production plant.

Chobani, a New York-based manufacturer of Greek yogurt, has visited Twin Falls as well as Carson City, Nev., in recent months in its efforts to find a spot for a facility near the West Coast. If it becomes a reality, a Chobani facility would bring a needed boost to the economy of Twin Falls, which has seen little large-scale growth in recent years aside from the C3 call center opening in 2010.

A Western facility would allow Chobani to be more flexible in its distribution of its products, said Nicki Briggs, a spokeswoman for Agro Farma, Chobani's parent company.

"We have spoken with the folks at Twin Falls," she said, adding that several locations are under consideration and no decision has been made.

Briggs said the company has visited potential sites in the last few months and declined to name other places under consideration.

Twin Falls City Manager Travis Rothweiler and Melinda Anderson, the city's economic development director, both declined comment on the company. Jan Rogers, executive director of the Southern Idaho Economic Development Organization, also wouldn't speak on the subject, citing the organization's policy of not commenting until a company makes a decision.

Larry Werner, city manager for Carson City, said his community is in the running for the yogurt plant as well, and is still waiting to hear back from Chobani.

"We thought it was going to Twin Falls, but we've not been told 'no' or 'yes,'" he said.

Werner said, under the scenarios he was told about, the potential plant's employee count would begin at about 400 or 500 workers and gradually grow to about 1,500.

Carson City provided the company information about city infrastructure like transportation and water drainage systems, he said.

Werner said Chobani representatives mentioned Twin Falls to him, adding that the company was professional and didn't try to use a potential deal with Twin Falls as leverage.

"They were not pitting us like: 'Twin Falls can do this. What can you do?'" Werner said.

Chobani also has visited with Fallon, Nev., a region with a strong dairy and agricultural presence. Fallon City Engineer Jim Souba said the company has visited a potential site and had preliminary discussions in recent months, adding that he's uncertain of what decision the company will make.

Despite the recession, Chobani has been growing. The company announced in 2010 plans to expand its manufacturing facility and production hub in New York.

If the company follows the same business practice it has used for its New York facility, it could also be a boon for the region's dairy economy. Agro Farma used an estimated 25 million pounds of milk each week at its South Edmeston, N.Y., facility, with an economic impact of $300 million annually for that state's farming community, according to the company.

Danny Campos, director of investor relations with the Northern Nevada Development Authority, is working with Carson City and Chobani.

He said his guess is that there will be a decision made within 30 days, though he declined to comment further.

"Most of it's confidential," Campos said. "We don't even have the authorization to announce anything about it publicly."

Ben Botkin may be reached at 735-3238.

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Read more: http://magicvalley.com/yogurt-producer-eyeing-twin-falls-location-which-could-bring-hundreds/article_f535a326-0096-11e1-9dea-001cc4c03286.html#ixzz1cTS615J0

Hours

Client calls	3.5 hours
Client emails	1 hours
Agency calls	2.5 hours
Editing	9.5 hours
Total hours	16.5 hours