

# Looking to the Future

By Frank A Schersing



In looking to the future for HCCDC we are looking at technology in an eco-friendly way. We recently submitted a renewable energy grant to the State of Nebraska as a pilot program. It is for the installation of an actively tracking solar energy system on the roof of the HCI building. The proposed system will replace 50% of the buildings current power needs. It will replace approximately 45 metric tons of CO2 in the air, which reflects a large mix of black coal and natural gas. The proposed project will serve to broaden the experience within HCI for other applications and keep the organization on the forefront of the green economy in Nebraska. This project will create a few jobs for the area initially and has the potential of spinning off an entire new industry for Northeastern Nebraska and the country.

Actively tracking solar technology is clearly an advanced technology, not present in Nebraska. Passively tracking systems have been used around the state many years and has helped many areas, but there are times when the system is not well aligned and there is little power collected along with some other disadvantages. The actively tracking solar systems use photo cells to orient the panels to optimal angles using small gyro motors along the East-West axis that only consume 1 kilowatt hour of energy per year.

If the grant is awarded by early February 2010, the system can be installed before July. Based on the 25 year project life, this project is estimated to eliminate 1,125 metric tons of CO2 in our atmosphere, so people can breathe easier. This is the equivalent of removing 9 cars per year off of the roads. The replication of this pilot project around the area or around the country will hold great promise in relieving some of the pollution concerns everyone has.

I have sent off another grant this week for training staff on holding different classes around the community for the creation of businesses, helping individuals clean up their credit rating, and just helping make people more money smart. This grant is written to the US Treasury Department to start the training so we will have the expertise in the future to begin the process of forming a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). The Technical Assistance award will help to establish a Winnebago CDFI as a corporate affiliate of HCCDC. The new 501(c)(3) corporation will become an alternative lender and technical assistance provider whose goal is to empower the underserved

community in Winnebago and low-income Native Americans in North-eastern Nebraska. These efforts are achieved through the provision of loans and technical assistance to organizations and individuals that in turn bring positive economic and social impact to Native American communities. Additionally, HCCDC is operating a small business incubator for qualified start-up entrepreneurs which will provide an even more substantive level of support for potential borrowers from a Winnebago CDFI. Business incubators accelerate the successful development of entrepreneurial companies through an array of business support services, coordinated by HCCDC and offered both in the incubator and through its network of contacts. Successful completion of a business incubation program increases the likelihood that a start-up company will stay in business for the long term: historically, 87% of incubator graduates stay in business.

HCCDC currently has a lending program to provide borrowers the ability to acquire business credit and will enhance their likelihood for business growth and success. This lending program will transition to the CDFI as trained staff becomes available. Other economic impacts from this financing resource are: business purchasing ability for such needs as equipment, inventory, building renovations, and operating capital; nonprofit cash flow for such needs as bridge financing and, for other nonprofit organizations that develop affordable housing, predevelopment and construction financing. After the Commercial side is up and running so more jobs can be created in the community, the CDFI will focus on Housing Issues for the community.

Native American Communities face many challenges in increasing homeownership and establishing economic development opportunities, particularly on reservations. Less than one-third of Native Americans living on reservations own their own home, compared to two-thirds for the overall United States population. Recognizing the need for effective development strategies, HCCDC will send staff to training programs focusing on essential courses like homebuyer education, building organizational capacity, financial literacy, and leveraging resources. This training will lead to certification in Native Homebuyer Education. We are also going to send staff for training to become certified credit counselors for the CDFI.

This grant should be announced in mid-2010 with funds released by September 2010 for the trainings. We are constantly looking for more grants and funding that would benefit the community. We also hope to find funding in the very near future to allow us to move the remainder of our staff from our Walthill location to Winnebago. In the meantime we are looking for individuals who are interested in leasing or buying our building in Walthill. You can contact me at 846-5353 or you can email at [fschersing@hochunkcdc.org](mailto:fschersing@hochunkcdc.org) or [Fschersing@aol.com](mailto:Fschersing@aol.com)