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North Omaha Development Project Outlines 2010 Goals New Partnerships Among Key Objectives Announced

OMAHA, Neb., Jan, 28, 2010 -- The North Omaha Development Project (NODP) unveiled tonight an ambitious slate of objectives and projects for the new year, buoyed by a dynamic 2009.

"Working in conjunction with our valued partners, we look forward to harnessing the momentum we experienced in 2009 and parlaying it into significant, additional investment, development job creation in the North Omaha community in 2010," said NODP Executive Director Ed Cochran.

Topping the NODP's list of 2010 objectives is the opening of two new financial institutions on Ames Avenue. The First National Bank will open a new 5,000 square foot facility in the Bakers Plaza on 50th Street and Ames Avenue in June. SAC Federal Credit Union will relocate to a new 3,000 square foot facility in July at 3161 Ames Avenue. These new facilities will bring new jobs and state of the art banking facilities to North Omaha. Along with the Urban Entrepreneur Partnership with the Ewing Kauffman Foundation headquartered in Kansas City, Mo., these three projects will provide a strengthened economic core in North Omaha.

"The Urban Entrepreneur Partnership will encourage entrepreneurship in our community by providing business training, coaching and access to financing," said Cochran. "We are thrilled to collaborate with the Kauffman Foundation for the betterment of North Omaha and Greater Omaha."

In 2010, the Omaha Workforce Collaborative will partner with The Nebraska Medical Center to implement a new medical technician job training program. This continues the trend of targeted employee training programs.

Cochran reviewed 2009 successes and the 2010 objectives at the annual North Omaha Development Project community meeting. The location of the meeting itself was a symbol of the significant investment taking place in North Omaha.

"We thought meeting at Metropolitan Community College's new Institute for the Culinary Arts, gave us a chance to showcase a \$16 million dollar investment in North Omaha," said Cochran. The 37,000 square foot facility will celebrate its official grand opening on March 22.

Also in March, Omaha North High Magnet School will debut the school's new Engineering and Science Building. The addition will house 16 classrooms and labs for engineering, biotechnology and other science classes.

Another North Omaha fixture, the Charles Drew Health Center, is upgrading its campus with additional parking and green space and a new health and fitness center for patients and employees. CEO Richard Brown said the center's continued investment in its campus and its community sends a strong message.

"I think the message to the entire community is that it is ok to invest in North Omaha," said Brown.

"The message is, North Omaha is alive and well."

NODP had an accomplishment-laden 2009. North Omaha and the NODP welcomed the addition of an ALDI grocery store at 30th and Sorensen Parkway, an announcement of the First National Bank Branch at 50th and Ames Avenue and the opening of ten "Live - Work Townhomes" in the Long School Neighborhood, an almost \$2 million public/private investment.

"The Long School townhomes strike an impressive profile on the 24th Street corridor and are another example of the economic investment taking place in North Omaha," said Cochran.

Also in 2009:

- NODP raised over \$1 million for real estate development.
- Davis Business Ventures and Bluestone Development unveiled plans for the \$5 million dollar Omaha Vision Unlimited I, a four-story, mixed-use building scheduled to open in late 2010 at 13th and Cuming streets.
- Construction began in North Omaha Business Park I on Signs & Shapes International's new global headquarters. The facility is scheduled to open in spring 2010.
- The Omaha Workforce Collaborative (OWC), launched in 2009, announced a new customer service training program in conjunction with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska and Mutual of Omaha; an ophthalmic assistant training program in conjunction with Midwest Eye Care, P.C. and UNMC Eye Physicians, Inc.; and an introduction to the trades/welding program.
- OWC received the first place workforce development award from the national Mid-America Economic Development Council.
- The American Planning Association Nebraska awarded NODP the outstanding planning award for best practices.

Cochran was quick to spread the credit for recent successes, stressing the North Omaha Development Project represents a commitment on behalf of a multitude of partners.

"Without the concerted effort of these organizations working together, we simply would not be successful."

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The North Omaha Development Project is a commitment of the Greater Omaha Chamber, African American business leaders, the North Omaha community, corporate leaders and elected officials to develop a strategy that would result in significant business investments in North Omaha. The North Omaha Development Project plan is the culmination of a yearlong study process that capitalized on the area's greatest assets – the people of the community and the rich heritage.

This plan builds upon the economic rebirth already taking place throughout North Omaha. Located just north of Omaha's downtown, the North Omaha study area is bordered by Sorensen Parkway on the north, Cuming Street on the south, 16th Street on the east and 52nd Street on the west.

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