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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Cozad's commitment to economic growth prompts EDCC recertification

MARCH 16, 2016 (LINCOLN, NEB.)—Cozad, Neb. (pop.3934) has earned its recertification in the Nebraska Economic Development Certified Community Program. The city was originally certified in September 2007 and recertified in December 2010 and February 2016. DED Director of Business Development Dan Curran attended a luncheon today to recognize the City's efforts.

The program is sponsored by the Nebraska Diplomats and administered by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Designation as a Nebraska Economic Development Certified Community indicates that Cozad is prepared for business growth and ready to meet the needs of companies seeking new business and industrial locations.

“For nearly ten years now, Cozad has done everything right to grow and sustain a vibrant economy that meets the needs of citizens of all ages, through a mix of projects encompassing downtown redevelopment, new affordable housing, job creation, technology, health care, education and fine arts,” said Nebraska Diplomats President Dean Hart. “Cozad sets the bar very high as one of Nebraska’s hot spots in which to do business, find good paying jobs, raise families, and enjoy the quality of life that Nebraskans have come to expect.”

“It is an honor to continue to be a certified economic development community and I thank everyone involved in the recertification process,” said Cozad Mayor Nancy Meyer. “Great things are happening in Cozad through continued investments by both new and existing businesses and this recertification is another push to keep our momentum moving forward.”

During the past five years, the City of Cozad, along with the Cozad Development Corporation (CDC) and Dawson Area Development (DAD), attracted two new manufacturing businesses and five new service and retail businesses. These community additions brought in 26 new jobs and helped two existing businesses expand.

“Cozad’s recertification demonstrates our community’s commitment to the continued growth of our economy through the development of new industry, expansion of current businesses, the creation of jobs, and support for our local ag producers said CDC Executive Director Robyn Geiser.



*(L. to R: Robyn Geiser, Executive Director, Cozad Development Corporation; Jennifer Wolf, Executive Director, Dawson Area Development; Dan Curran, DED Director of Business Development; Cozad Mayor Nancy Meyer; and Susan Kloepping, City Clerk, City of Cozad).*

Other community development projects completed over the past five years include:

- Creation of the Cozad Community Foundation in 2015
- Cozad Telephone’s \$10 million investment in new underground fiber leading to every home and business
- Expanded facilities and services (including new equipment) at Cozad Community Hospital
- A new \$100,000 gallery showcasing featured artists at The Robert Henri Museum
- A new \$65,000 greenhouse for agriculture education and entrepreneurship training at Cozad Community Schools
- A planning and implementation grant (the second of its kind) in the Downtown Revitalization category for façade renovations and alley improvements.

Additional accomplishments during the past five years include:

- **Housing Development Projects:**  
DAD and the City completed a local and area-wide housing study in 2015 with financial assistance from the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority. The plan has sparked a number of projects, including construction of seven duplex rental units for senior residents in Cozad.

DAD and the City also received two housing grants in 2015. The Department awarded DAD with Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Funds to establish a regional Purchase Rehab Resale program, and the City of Cozad with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to undertake Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation. Previously Cozad was awarded Neighborhood Stabilization Program 3 funds to raze the former middle school, clear the property and build new duplexes for elderly residents. This project transformed the downtown neighborhood and opened up an entire city block for new housing.

- **Community Development Projects:**  
Cozad was awarded \$500,000 in CDBG Downtown Revitalization Funds in 2013 and used \$225,000 of that amount for downtown business improvements. Cozad was one of the first communities in Nebraska to become an eligible municipal Rural Utility Service borrower to access Rural Economic Development Grants (REDLG) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development. Cozad received two REDLGs in 2012 totaling \$480,000. The first REDLG grant to the CDC went toward creation of the Cozad Business Center (a speculative office and training center) in a former carpet store. Cozad Community Hospital received the second REDLG grant for the purchase of new equipment. These grants have helped create a \$570,000 revolving loan fund for future projects.
- **Workforce Development Projects:**  
The City accessed funds from the Nebraska Workforce Investment Board to create an economic recovery plan that identified many strengths and weaknesses throughout the area. Cozad used job training funds from the U.S. Department of Labor to retrain displaced workers in blue print reading, welding, OSHA requirements, leading and motivating, and root cause analysis. In addition, the Nebraska Business Development Center offered classes on interviewing and resume writing. CDC and DAD sponsored Money Matters seminars to help individuals manage and control their finances.
- **Economic Development Projects:**  
In 2009, Cozad voters renewed its LB 840, sales tax for economic development. The LB840 funds have been used to assist more than 50 business expansions or locations in Cozad during the past five years. In addition, sales tax funds have gone toward development of an industrial site at the interstate exchange. CDC contracted with Olsson & Associates in 2015 to develop master planning for the site and conduct an environmental review. Funds also were used to purchase and rehab a vacant industrial building, which attracted a new business to the community. The City also partnered with the USDA to conduct workshops on applying for energy conservation grants, leading three Cozad businesses to receive funding to install new windows and roofs, and upgrade electrical wiring.

Contact Lynn Kohout at 402-440-2559, or [lynn.kohout@nebraska.gov](mailto:lynn.kohout@nebraska.gov), or visit <http://www.neded.org/economic-development-certified-community> for additional information on the Economic Development Certified Community Program.

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