

May 2015

**Phillipsburg Area Chamber of Commerce**

Letter from the President

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Phillipsburg Area Chamber Chair

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When I was growing up in Phillipsburg in the 1950's and 1960's, nearly everyone you knew had a family connection to the Ingersoll Rand Corporation, given the fact that this premier tool, pump, condenser and compressor manufacturer employed a quarter of the population. My father worked in the Turbo division and my father-in-law poured steel at their foundry. Several uncles worked in the Cameron division. We enjoyed Christmas parties and summer picnics hosted by the company that since 1905 brought steady economic vitality to our blue collar town. Many laborers rose to join the middle class because of the opportunities provided by this prosperous corporation.

Then the unthinkable occurred. The company's steady operational decline in Phillipsburg began in the 1980's, and by the end of the millennium the 208 acre industrial site was virtually silent and unproductive. And the slow evaporation of our prime engine of prosperity brought hard times to the community as a whole.

Due to Mayor Harry Wyatt's laudable grit and persistence, life will soon be returning to the former heart of Phillipsburg. Municipal negotiations with Opus Investment Group reached a point of public optimism that was shared and celebrated at our Chamber's March 31st gathering of local government leaders. Mayor Wyatt received a standing ovation from his political peers for his successful efforts to identify the right developer for this prime piece of commercial real estate, which is now known as Commerce Park. Preliminary information regarding the proposed use reveals plans for the clearing of the old brownfield buildings that will to be replaced with more than four million square feet of warehouse space proximal to rail and highway connections. Local business and government representatives were especially happy to hear the projections for a significant number of job openings.

The Chamber's role in facilitating the invaluable collaboration of the private and public dynamics was clearly evident on this auspicious occasion. We hope that this long awaited major project helps to spark a revival of our town's previous good fortune.