

## Highlights of the **January 19, 2017** meeting:

**NEW OFFICE - 209 E Main #104** in the Porter House in beautiful downtown Beloit. We love our new office so much; we hosted the January meeting of Solomon Valley Economic Development. We like to show off our new space, and invite you to stop by and see the best view of the Mitchell County Courthouse.

**PORTER HOUSE** – The Porter House Manager, Kevin Mickey, was our special guest this month. Kevin gave a little history on the building, and what residents of The Porter House can expect. I invite you to stop in and see the changes that have occurred since Kevin came to town.

The historic Porter Hotel opened for business on October 11, 1939 and was built by Mitchell County native, W. Earl Porter. His name can still be seen, carved in stone, on the front of the building. Porter, a traveling salesman and later a partner of the famous retailer, J.C. Penney, sold his stock in Penney's to finance the construction of the hotel. Beloit architect Frank Slack was chosen by Porter to design the building. Construction began on October 21, 1938 with Earl Porter using his own farm equipment to dredge the basement. The style is considered Moderne as it is devoid of ornamentation.

The hotel was originally built with 54 guest rooms and three apartments. It contains approximately 28,900 square feet plus a basement of 7,200 square feet. The building is of all steel and concrete construction and the main floor is terrazzo over reinforced concrete. The Porter Hotel had the first elevator in Beloit and local and long distance telephone service was available from all rooms; also a first for Beloit. There was a coffee shop located in the hotel that was of such good quality that it attracted the attention of world famous food critic, Duncan Hines. The Porter Coffee Shop was included in the 1958 edition of his book, *Adventures in Good Eating*. There was also a liquor store, attorney's office and a barber shop on the main floor and a beauty parlor in the basement.

When the Porter Hotel opened in 1938, it was considered one of the finest between Kansas City and Denver. It quickly became the hub of social activity for north central Kansas. Social and civic organizations and businesses all used the facilities of the hotel. Big bands such as Tommy Dorsey and Jimmy Dorsey played and stayed at the Porter Hotel. Every Kansas governor from 1943 to 1979 either stayed or dined at the Porter Hotel. In 1947, Porter constructed 10 ground floor guest rooms in an annex just east of the hotel.

Earl Porter and his son Donald took an active interest in the civic life of Beloit and were very active in Republican politics. Earl Porter served as mayor of Beloit from 1934 to 1943 and Donald was, at one time, leader of the Young Republicans of Kansas.

Times do change however and in 1989, the Porter Hotel became the Porter Apartments. In 1999 the Porter family decided to close down the Porter Apartments altogether. In 2004, Continental Real Estate, Inc. of Topeka, Kansas purchased the Porter Apartments. Also at that time, it was re-named the Porter House Apartments and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Continental Real Estate rehabilitated the building as senior housing. On November 1, 2014, ownership of the Porter House Apartments was transferred to the Midwest Housing Equity Group of Omaha, Nebraska. At that time, the qualifications for residency changed and you no longer had to be a senior citizen to live there.

In May of 2013, Kevin Mickey moved from Abilene, Kansas to take over as manager of the Porter House. In Abilene, Mickey was one of the founders of the Kirby House Restaurant and was personally involved in the renovation and restoration of the building. He also owned a nightclub, managed a convention center, was a fashion consultant for Gucci, worked in the buying office of an upscale department store chain in Denver, Colorado, worked for an advertising agency in Colorado Springs, and has done innumerable caterings. He loves history, art, antiques and old buildings and has spent most of his professional life owning and managing businesses.

Since moving to Beloit, he has become a member of the Beloit Rotary Club and publishes their weekly newsletter. He is a member of the Beloit Area Chamber of Commerce and Solomon Valley Economic Development, Inc. He appreciates it's historical significance, has endeavored to re-brand the Porter House and make it more relevant and accessible to the community as well as a nicer place to live for residents. He has instituted weekly coffee hour, pot luck dinners, and every year he puts on a Christmas Brunch for the tenants and their families.

**WEBSITE** – Our website is **LIVE!** Please take a minute to check out our new website by clicking here: [www.mitchellcountykansas.com](http://www.mitchellcountykansas.com) We will use the site to provide information for our residents, but also as a positive snapshot for those businesses, families and individuals looking for a new place to relocate and establish themselves. Please take a look and let me know what you think. We have over 485 pages views each week so far. Primarily people are searching for *Economic Development*, *Tourism* and the *Government Contact* pages.

**FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM** – I am very pleased to announce the start of a new program in Mitchell County, the Façade Improvement Program.

Purpose – This program is designed for small scale renovation projects to the façade of the buildings in Mitchell County. The program is available to provide an affordable financing option for improvements to commercial building facades in order to improve the functionality, structural integrity and aesthetics in commercial areas.

#### Applicant Eligibility –

1. Building must be located in Mitchell County;
2. Building owner or business owner must be the program applicant;
3. Project must comply with applicable city, building, electrical, mechanical codes and have a valid permit;
4. **The applicant MUST have 2 of the following 3:**
  - a. A credit score of 700;
  - b. Been in business for 1 year;
  - c. Provide a matching fund of 1:1 for the requested amount

Eligible Use of Funds – Funding will only be approved for exterior improvements only. Projects may include but not limited to:

- Building Expansion
- Window replacement and repair
- Vacant building redevelopment
- Canopy or awning replacement, repair or installation
- Signage – not more than 30% of the funds can go towards signage
- Removal of contemporary facades to expose original construction of building
- Repair and/or tuck point existing structures
- Repair or Replacement of siding, trim, windows, doors, awnings
- Exterior painting, pressure washing, sand blasting
- Exterior Lighting
- No Interior renovations
- Will consider Heating/Air/Energy Efficiency Projects
- Other improvements not listed may be approved

#### Requirements include:

- All projects awarded must be completed within one calendar year from the official date of the award letter
- Will not fund debt
- Quotes for work to be completed

#### Loan Terms and Repayment:

1. Maximum loan of \$5,000
2. Interest rate fixed at 0%
3. Maximum loan term of 5 years
4. Closing fee of 1% to cover NCRPC expenses of administering the program
5. The loan will be paid in equal monthly installments by ACH draft from the applicants

**Application period is open and on a first come, first served basis with no deadlines, based on the availability of funds.**

## **SMALL BIZ SURVIVAL – Innovative Rural Business Models Spread Opportunity in Small Towns by Becky McCray**

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Rural and small town businesses aren't limited to the downtown mom-and-pop stores or the businesses recruited into the industrial park any more. In fact, rural businesses today don't really have to look like any of the traditional business models for small towns.

The traditional way to go into business in a small town was to have an idea, try to find a usable location, develop a business plan, create your legal organization, then figure out marketing, staffing, financing, and more. You needed a lot of personal assets, great credit, good connections, experience, and maybe even insider knowledge. This puts a huge barrier between an idea and going into business in the traditional model.

The new, innovative models tear down barriers to entry. Today's Innovative Rural Business Models include tiny, temporary, together, trucks and trailers, and creative ownership. They add up to new ways for more people to participate in the benefits of owning a business with less risk of catastrophic failure.

**Tiny:** Expecting one single business to fill an entire building is a barrier to entry. Divide large spaces up, allowing many different businesses to fill just one tiny space. In Washington, Iowa there is a business called The Village. The huge old department store sat empty for decades because no one could fill all 15,000 square feet. It has now been divided up into a little "village" of shops that have only a few hundred square feet to fill. These smaller spaces give a lot more people the opportunity to try out a business idea.

**Temporary:** Businesses may pop-up for a day, week, or season. Our old image of our traditional business has them lasting for years, maybe decades with little change. Our new businesses may come and go in a flash as the owners learn something, earn more assets, and gather more fans and customers for their next venture. Think about booths at events as opportunities to test entrepreneurial ideas and products. Almost every town has some kind of special event that could allow booths that enabled more business experiments to happen.

**Together:** Rural people know how to work together, how to rely on each other. That's why we excel at this model, where separate businesses share a space. Small towns have many examples of a store inside another store, a business inside a business, as well as co-working spaces, maker spaces, shared studios and galleries, and shared commercial kitchens.

**Trucks, trailers:** You're used to seeing food businesses operating out of trucks and trailers, but this idea has expanded. Rather than depending on the market in one town only, innovative businesses are hitting the road to round up customers. Retail stores and boutiques now commonly operate from a truck or trailer. Service businesses are using this model, too: wedding planners, financial consultants. Just about any kind of business could go mobile, so this model appeals to established retail stores looking to expand outside their local reach as well as new businesses looking to get started.

**Ownership:** Especially for rural areas where people don't have a lot of personal assets or wealth, the traditional model of risk of ownership may be too much for one person to bear alone. That's why community ownership, cooperatives, and employee-owned models are appealing. Cody, Nebraska (pop. 154), has a community-owned and student-run grocery store, the [Circle C Market](#). The students even built the building! Now, they run the store.

**Spreading Opportunity:** By tearing down the old barriers to entry, the Innovative Rural Business Models spread opportunity to many more people. You don't have to have personal wealth to get started. You don't need all the best connections. You don't have to risk everything on a big experiment.

You can start small. You can try it just for a day. If you fail, you can recover quickly. If you do well, you can parlay that into a larger try.

**SOLOMON VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION** – The Solomon Valley Community Foundation announces grant applications are currently being accepted with a deadline of **February 1, 2017**. Mitchell County organizations are encouraged to apply online at the Foundation's website [www.solomonvalleycf.org](http://www.solomonvalleycf.org) Grant awards are made available from the Solomon Valley Community Foundation's Community Impact Fund and the Dane G. Hansen Foundation, for a total of **\$55,000** available for grants to charitable projects. Through the competitive grant application process, preference will be given to programs or projects that include community involvement and volunteerism. Grants are not intended to be for endowment, general operational expenses or repairs. If you have any questions, please contact us or check at our website: [www.solomonvalleycf.org](http://www.solomonvalleycf.org) 785.534.1126 If you would like to see some of the efforts of the Community Foundation please go to this link and watch a short video: <https://youtu.be/q9ZUVfGaHL4>

As always, please contact me with any questions or comments.