

FINLEY CELEBRATES GRAND OPENING OF GROCERY STORE

FINLEY, July 21, 2010 – The Finley Economic Development Corporation (EDC) along with the Griggs-Steele Empowerment Zone, Mayor of Finley Larry Amundson and other community leaders gather today to celebrate the grand opening of Stone’s Market.

Mayor Amundson stated, “Finley is excited about having the new grocery store. It has taken some time but was worth the wait. It is a terrific facility in a terrific location. Situated along highways 200 and 32 it has great exposure to pass through traffic.”

A new grocery store was desperately needed in Finley as the former Stone’s Market building was deteriorating beyond repair. It would take a new building to keep the store going in Finley but the cost of construction was a major issue for the rural grocery store. To keep the store, the Finley Economic Development Corporation stepped in to help find a cost-effective solution. The EDC would construct a building to house the grocery store, purchase the equipment, then lease the facility and equipment back to the Stones.



Entrance to Stone’s Market.

“This project is a great example of a community banding together to support a local business,” said USDA Rural Development Director Jasper Schneider. “It is vital for residents in rural communities to have access to basic amenities such as a grocery store.”

Unlike the old facility, the new store was designed with no steps to navigate, automatic doors and larger aisles, to make it more accessible for the elderly and handicapped residents. The 76x100 square foot facility is estimated to cost \$550,000 when finished.



Wide aisle in grocery store.

According to Scott Sayer, EDC President, “A grocery store in rural North Dakota is not a convenience but a necessity. That is why the EDC has taken on the role of landlord, to ensure that a grocery store remains in Finley now and in the future.”

The Finley EDC is still working to acquire more funds and to date have raised more than \$200,000 through donations and grants. Though not all have confirmed, anticipated partners in this project are the Finley EDC, Steele County Job Development Authority, City of Finley, Bank of North Dakota, Citizens State Bank of Finley, Griggs-Steele Empowerment Zone and the North Dakota Governor’s Fund.

“It’s important that we acknowledge our volunteers as well as our financial partners in this project” stated Sayer. “We had a fantastic response from our community when the call went out. We are so thankful for their help in making this happen.”

Allan and Tracy Stone purchased the grocery store, formerly Dale’s Super Valu, from the late Dale Severson in 2002. The Stone’s already owned Stone’s Market in Aneta, so Tracy ran the Finley store while Allan ran the store in Aneta until it was sold. Stone’s Market is the only grocery store within a twenty-mile radius of Finley and provides a much needed service to the surrounding communities.

In 1999, the Griggs-Steele Empowerment Zone, Inc. which comprised of all Steele County and parts of Griggs County, North Dakota, was federally designated by USDA Rural Development. This designation brought with it a total of \$17.6 million in grant funds over an eleven year period. Throughout the years, the majority of these funds were used for loans, equity injections and grants for projects in the Zone. Some of these projects include infrastructure updates, the development of industrial parks, funding for the community coordinator program, feasibility studies, business attraction programs, growth and development for new and existing businesses, technology development and more.

“Today’s investment demonstrates the long term impact of the Empowerment Zone on a community,” continues Schneider. “The Empowerment Zone’s revolving loan fund established by USDA Rural Development will continue to play an important role in business development throughout the region.”

Due to the creation of the empowerment zone designation, the GSEZ remains a facet in the region and continues to be a source for area businesses and organizations for financial and technical aid.

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