



#### **Part II: How the Niobrara Changed Fort Lupton**

#### **It really IS about the economy**



*Mayor Tommy Holton, Fort Lupton*

When Tommy Holton was running for mayor of Fort Lupton two years ago, he set a personal goal of bringing 1,000 new jobs to Fort Lupton. “So far,” said Mayor Holton, “because of the oil and gas industry, we’ve added about 800 new jobs.”

And the future looks even brighter.

What in the world could possibly give a long-time Weld County farmer and businessman the confidence to set such an aggressive goal when national unemployment flirted uncomfortably close to 10% for the last two years?

#### **Three words—The Niobrara Play.**

“My philosophy about the oil and gas industry in Weld County is that it not only has kept people employed, but it is directly responsible for the creation of new jobs,” said Mayor Holton, “and in today’s economy, THAT is a very good thing!”

Out of Fort Lupton’s 25 largest employers, 10 of them are from the oil and gas industry and are directly responsible for over 1,500 jobs. Halliburton, at 700 employees and growing, is the largest employer of them all. To give you a sense of how quickly the industry is changing, when Fort Lupton first began talking with Halliburton in October 2010, they had 125 employees in the Fort Lupton Camp—today that number has more than quadrupled. “As you can imagine, growth at this rate is not without its challenges,” said Mayor Holton. “Municipalities must find ways to react and respond quickly to proposed projects that meet the needs of the industry while being responsible stewards to the people and the environments they serve.”

When Mayor Holton talks, one quickly understands that this is a man who loves Fort Lupton. “I live in town here, I grew up here. My wife is from here. She was my high school sweetheart,” Holton said. “My kids all went to school here and they reside here with their kids. For me as mayor, it’s about doing the right thing for our kids, our community, and the environment—they’re all connected. When I became mayor I told myself that I will do the best job that I can for my grandkids, if it is good for them it will be good for everyone. I believe part of doing the right thing is working to help to create jobs so that our kids have the opportunity to stay in the communities that we all love. It is a tragedy when our greatest assets (our youth) have to move away to find work.”

Last March, Halliburton officials confirmed the company’s plans to expand their holdings south of Fort Lupton with the addition of a \$20 million facility that has already exceeded projections in terms of the number of employees currently on staff. Key to Halliburton’s expansion plans was the \$2.4 million in water and sewer upgrades along Weld County Road 27, extending service 2.5 miles down to Weld County Road 8.





*Water and Sewer Ground Breaking Ceremony in Fort Lupton*

“Without a doubt,” said Mayor Holton, “the Halliburton water and sewer deal has been a game changer. It is probably the biggest thing to happen for the city in probably 50 years. It adds 2.5 miles of water and sewer, and close to 2,000 acres of property that could be developed with industry.”

The water and sewer upgrades in Fort Lupton are not only proving to be economic catalysts for the town, they will eventually become a profit center for Halliburton as well. Companies interested in accessing these water and sewer lines will pay Halliburton a “tap fee” which, over time, will cover its costs and eventually generate a profit. With more companies “tapping” into these lines, more jobs will be created and more revenues will be earned.

What has happened in Fort Lupton is an example of a public/private partnership “gone right.” What Halliburton has done by investing in the town’s infrastructure has helped the town, helped Halliburton, and helped the individuals and families by creating jobs that two years ago did not even exist.

And they have done it responsibly and quickly.

“One of the best kept secrets is that Fort Lupton sits in one of the oldest producing oil deposits in the world and I am glad that the industry is taking and getting credit for being a large part of the economy in Weld County and the State,” said Mayor Holton. “As a result of this injection of capital into our infrastructure by Halliburton, Fort Lupton is talking with several other oil and gas companies that are looking to open operations in our city. The City has also experienced real interest by commercial developers to add restaurants and retail outlets because of our activities. The fuse has been lit and the City of Fort Lupton intends to make sure it keeps burning.”

Mayor Holton added, “Lately, we’ve been hearing that this latest oil field activity is just scratching the surface and the City of Fort Lupton, along with other municipalities, is diligently working to prepare for the wild ride that may follow. Fort Lupton is open for business and we are looking forward to many more years of collaborating with the oil and gas industry for our mutual benefit.”

**“Let’s get going!”**

We couldn’t agree more, Mr. Mayor!