



Bennington Pathways

A Vision and Action Strategy

**Planning Studio 990
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*This student project was created by the students of CRPL 990
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COVER LETTER

Bennington, Nebraska
December 5, 2003

It is with great pleasure that the University of Nebraska Lincoln Fall Semester 2003 Community and Regional Planning Department's Studio Class presents this Vision Statement and Action Strategy report to the city of Bennington, Nebraska. This report was developed as a result of listening to community strengths, concerns and interests, and with the support of our instructors John Kip Hulvershorn and N. Brito Mutanayagam.

On September 2, 2003 the Studio Class toured Bennington and held a listening session as the first of three public meetings. During this first meeting, the Studio Class held a dialogue with the community to better understand key interests, values, issues, strengths and concerns. Immediately after the public meeting the Studio Class, and Bennington community stakeholders initiated an online dialogue via the University of Nebraska Blackboard system.

The first portion of this semester was used to research key elements of the community and the existing area's framework to become familiar with the Bennington community. Our primary and secondary research found many strong points to build upon, so the Studio Class focus naturally shifted from existing conditions to the future successes and possibilities for Bennington. On November 11, 2003 the Studio Class held a second public meeting to brainstorm community project ideas and receive feedback. In this second meeting, proposed community projects built upon three themes: Bennington Character, Sense of Place, and Economy.

From the second public meeting, the Studio Class shifted focus from individual projects to six core imperatives to further develop or diversify the strengths of the Bennington community. This final report is organized according to the following six core imperatives: Community Revitalization, Enriching the Lifestyles of the Elderly, Youth Engagement, Community-Civic Center Interests, Economic Development, Project Funding Options.

Given the academic atmosphere in which this plan was created, this report is a reflection of the Bennington community as seen through the eyes of this report authors. To ensure that each project detailed in this report is an authentic representation of Bennington, the community needs to engage with each project by analyzing and further defining appropriate steps forward.

The level of compelling dialogue between this community and the Studio Class -- both online and face-to-face -- is the cornerstone from which this report is written. On behalf of the University of Nebraska and the Department of Community and Regional Planning, the Studio Class feels honored to have worked with the community of Bennington and to offer this Vision Statement and Action Strategy Report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bennington's vision is to retain and protect the health, safety, and small town character of the community. As the town grows, Bennington is establishing itself as a place that truly values each citizen, preserving and enhancing an environment unique from that growing around it.

Having verbalized a vision of Bennington, the Studio Class explored six core imperatives to realize this community vision:

- Community Revitalization,
- Enriching the Lifestyles of the Elder,
- Youth Engagement,
- Community-Civic Center,
- Economic Development,
- Funding

The Action Strategy Report explores key projects as objectives to performing each imperative. Specific community actions are listed in this section more as a springboard rather than a roadmap for successful completion of each project.

The more comprehensive text, or full report, offers more thorough research into each project and various alternative strategies.

ACTION PLAN

Bennington's vision is to retain and protect the health, safety, and small town character of the community. As the town grows, Bennington is establishing itself as a place that truly values each citizen, preserving and enhancing an environment unique from that growing around it.

Community Revitalization

Design Standards

Design standards would set the physical elements of Bennington in a conceptual framework. The framework creates specific continuity, as well as character for cities. Design standards should be formulated based on goals established in the comprehensive plan, thus making them legally binding and enforceable by law. If Bennington exhibits unique physical characteristics people will immediately sense they have arrived at a special place. A comprehensive list of specific items that could be enhanced by design standards are listed in the full text. Just to exemplify the potential application of design standards, a few items are briefly listed below:

- Building Facades: Downtown Bennington has great historic and aesthetic potential. Design standards could build upon the original brick faces still in existence downtown so the facades would all fall along a general theme.
- Street Lighting: Bennington has insufficient street lighting. This poses both a safety and aesthetic problem. Unique, historic lighting would help identify Bennington as its own district and make the streets safer places to be after dark.
- The Retaining Wall: The wall is perhaps the most unique feature in Bennington, but it is currently in a serious state of disrepair. Special attention must be made to ensure that it is properly repaired or reconstructed.

Community Actions:

- 1.) Formulate the Design Standard Committee
- 2.) Hire the help of an experienced consulting firm
- 3.) Develop design standards based on the goals of the comprehensive plan
 - Include key physical aspects of Bennington
 - Amend the comprehensive plan if necessary
- 4.) Implement design standards within 1 year
- 5.) Apply design standards to new construction throughout Bennington immediately

thereafter

- 6.) Enforce required changes to current physical elements in commercial and industrial areas
- 7.) Allow current physical elements to exist as is in residential areas only

Downtown Access

Bennington's downtown is the focus of many different community interests. While most communities have convenient pass-through traffic in their downtown areas, Bennington faces a unique challenge due to their downtown being off-set from major roads like 156th Street and Bennington Road. In the near future, the increased area population and development base should attract more businesses, investments, and general interest to the downtown. Capturing this opportunity requires overcoming the location hurdle. If the unique street alignment leading to the downtown area from 156th Street is to remain, other options are recommended to capture the attention of travelers through town.

Community Actions:

- 1.) City Council must adopt visual corridor overlay zone
- 2.) Hire the help of an experienced consulting firm
- 3.) City Council must adopt gateway sign design guidelines
- 4.) Budget for City financing of future gateway signs

Website Development

We strongly recommend Bennington establish an Internet presence. The community stands to gain name recognition, networking, intergenerational unity, and marketing potential for the local economy with this tool. Ultimately the idea is for Bennington to create an interactive community website, complete with a directory of Bennington businesses and residents. This site could be maintained by high school students through a course on website design.

Community Actions:

- 1.) Generate consensus about what information Bennington will include on the web site
- 2.) Request cooperation of the school in setting up a course, or modifying existing courses to accommodate community needs such as posting the website, overall maintenance, or upgrades
- 3.) Contract with a professional web development company to design the initial web site. Bare in mind, the design software used by the contractor has to parallel the school software resources.

- 4.) Transfer design from the contractor to the students to post on the school server.
- 5.) Each semester, students could devote some class time to maintenance activities.

Public Art

Public art holds the potential to further enhance the aesthetic qualities, and cultural identification of Bennington. One area that could benefit from public art is the retaining wall in downtown Bennington. While the retaining wall in downtown Bennington serves a structural purpose, it holds significant potential to serve as a canvas for public artwork.

Community Actions:

- 1.) Develop a Public Art Policy (sample language provided as Appendix B of this report)
- 2.) Mayor or City Council Needs to Approve Art Policy
- 3.) Form Committees With Specific Duties Listed in the Policy
- 4.) Select Theme for the Art.
- 5.) Choose Public Art medium.
- 6.) Select a process for the Wall to be completed.

Community Revitalization Funding

To complete many of the projects recommended in this report, Bennington will need to secure funding and professional assistance. Specific community revitalization funding and information sources include the Nebraska Lied Main Street program, the National Main Street Center, Nebraska Community Improvement Program, and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. This report recommends the creation of a Fund Advisory Council to oversee all funding coordination in Bennington. This council will be responsible for coordinating efforts with resources that have been created to help communities improve themselves in a cost efficient manner.

Community Actions:

- 1.) Formulate a Fund Advisory Committee
- 2.) Contact Nebraska Lied Main Street Program
- 3.) Contact National Main Street Center
- 4.) Contact Nebraska Community Improvement Program
- 5.) Contact Nebraska Department of Economic Development

Enriching the Lifestyles of the Elderly

Continuing Care Retirement Community

Census analysis indicates that Bennington will need appropriate housing options for over 300 elderly individuals by the year 2020. Currently, sixteen low-income housing units are available, but none are specifically designated for the elderly. To fill this need, we propose establishing a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC). A CCRC is defined as “an organization that offers a full-range of housing, residential services, and healthcare in order to serve it’s older residents as their needs change over time.” It would include a continuum of three stages of care; independent living units, assisted living, and skilled nursing care.

The community could realize the following benefits:

- The creation of healthcare jobs and ancillary job stimulus in other economic sectors.
- Economic growth related to the community retirees. Available housing options will increase the amount of money brought into and spent in Bennington.
- Increased property tax revenues.
- Ability to integrate the activities of all age groups which would be difficult if the aging population is forced to move to Omaha or further for lack of housing.

Community Actions:

- 1.) Develop a Senior Advisory Committee to: research the opportunity, secure interest and communicate with stakeholders
- 2.) Bennington needs to recruit a private developer interested in establishing a CCRC. Effective networking with the following tools should assist in recruiting efforts:
 - a. Nebraska Department of Economic Development
 - b. Omaha Chamber of Commerce
 - c. Web-site marketing
- 3.) Assess Bennington’s tools to attract development capital
 - a. Offer Property Tax Incentives
 - b. Improve Sanitary Sewer and Roads, as needed
 - c. Insure a Percentage Occupancy Prior to Construction

Youth Engagement Proposal

The Bennington School District reflects the time and investment this community places in its young people. Census projections show a dramatic increase in the under twenty population in Bennington over the next five years. Engaging the under twenty age group in civic and community projects will strengthen the community by offering “real world” experiences over and above the academic education provided in a classroom.

While many of the proposed projects in this report require the creation of committees, the natural lead organizational framework already exists in the Bennington area to execute these projects with existing clubs, committees, courses or an active Parent-Teacher Organization.

Bennington Water Tower

Bennington should take advantage of the opportunity to promote community pride in the school system by painting the school mascot, a badger, on the water tower. Ideally, the badger should be visible from the Legion Baseball field stands.

Community Actions

- 1.) Enlist a Graphic Arts Class to Produce a Large Badger Stencil.
- 2.) Approach Local Vendors to Donate Paint.
- 3.) Secure Time and Labor to Complete the Project

Bennington Business Directory

Young people in Bennington could support economic development by developing a modern Bennington Business Directory. Longtime community residents mentioned the old directory with great fondness and referred the usefulness of the document. Based on the current course descriptions for Computers II, III, and IV the students are given the tools to construct and maintain the websites. Bennington students could upgrade an existing website, detailed by the Community Revitalization section of this document, to incorporate the Directory.

Community Actions:

- 1.) Students, as part of a civics or business class, complete a modern version of the Bennington Business Directory.
- 2.) High school computer classes posts the directory on a Bennington Website.

Pedestrian Crossing

The intersection of 156th and Bennington Road raises some safety concerns among area

residents. This is an area of heightened sensitivity for the community since it is in close proximity to the school and many students must cross these streets on the way to and from school. The traffic study would justify needs for enhancing pedestrian safety in Bennington.

Community Actions

- 1.) Approach Douglas County Engineer for Engineering and traffic planning to perform traffic study
- 2.) Partner students with Douglas County to gather data
- 3.) Evaluate traffic study and potential improvements for pedestrian safety – complexity, needs, and costs should all be evaluation criteria
- 4.) Select a course of action that will reasonably and effectively address safety
- 5.) Secure funding for proposed action

Trail Bridge

Bennington has a wealth of park space. The parks and school systems exemplify the potential the Bennington area residents hold for uniting toward common goals. Because of the value placed on parks and recreation Bennington has a number of well designed, well maintained park spaces. As a community space with important meaning, parks should be woven together to provide a range of activities and adequate parking.

Particularly, Bennington should consider constructing a walking bridge across the Papio-Creek. The bridge would create one contiguous green space, with easy pedestrian access to expand available parking for sport and recreation activities.

Community Actions:

- 1.) Have students perform a survey to assess community interest
- 2.) Evaluate funding options and availability
- 3.) Partner students with area architect or engineer willing to serve as a mentor in the design process
- 4.) Have Students Produce a Model or Drawing of the Bridge
- 5.) Use Model or Drawing to Encourage Fund Raising Efforts
- 6.) Request Donations of: Materials, and/or Money
- 7.) Hire Contractor for Construction

Public Swimming Pool

In each public forum, the Bennington area residents voiced a strong desire to have a public swimming pool. Since the school is already recognized as a gathering point for the community it appears to be one of several logical locations for the pool.

Community Actions:

- 1.) Create a Vision of the Swimming Pool
 - a. Indoor/Outdoor
 - b. Optimal Location
 - c. Desired Amenities
- 2.) Should Bennington Opt for an Outdoor Pool, Contact Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for potential Land and Water Conservation project design and funding. specific contacts listed In report text.
- 3.) Consider utilizing a Community Foundation to raise funds

Community/Civic Center Proposal

The Bennington community clearly identified several immediate and near future needs which could be satisfied by the construction of a community and/or civic hall.

This group listed eight potential site locations with maps, approximate facility size, property values and key components in the full text of this report. Additionally, the text offers three primary alternatives for the facility components, each of which can serve a range of municipal, and community recreation needs. The three primary alternatives listed in the report are as follows:

- One Facility – One building could accommodate recreation and a range of civic, and public library functions. This option streamlines the construction, design, and fundraising efforts into a single process to serve both the civic and recreation needs.
- Two Separate Facilities – Two buildings could separate recreation facilities from the civic and library functions of Bennington. This option offers the City of Bennington the opportunity to recruit a development company to build the recreational facility, perhaps as a part of a continuing-care retirement community (CCRC).
- Three Separate Facilities – Under this option, the recreation, civic functions, and library would be physically separate. While the separation of these functions creates a competitive environment for community support, this option benefits the library

which, if separated, could select a location for even further expansion.

Community Actions:

- 1.) Form committee or task force
- 2.) Determine vision and goals through focus groups and public meetings
- 3.) Identify funding sources
- 4.) Locate site
- 5.) Initiate fund raising efforts
- 6.) Develop a request for proposal which reflects the community's vision of the project
- 7.) Review architectural designs in a public meeting forum
- 8.) Start construction

Economic Development Proposal

No planning study is complete without an economic development element. Without a strong economic base in Bennington other community development activities will struggle to be realized under fiscal pressures. Bennington, as a community, needs to take control of its economic future to insure proper and sustainable growth occurs. The Economic Development team has three specific proposals to stimulate manageable economic growth in Bennington.

Farmer's Market

A Farmer's Market could stimulate the Bennington micro-economy by providing a forum (or market) for local goods to be bought and sold. Non-monetary benefits include: face-to-face interaction between consumers and producers, confidence in quality of goods purchased, inspired sense of community unity, and economic benefits for non-target industries generated by traffic.

Community Actions

- 1.) Formulate a committee to spearhead a Farmer's Market
- 2.) Survey community members to determine local interest in project – sample survey provided in this report
- 3.) Research Nebraska guidelines for farmer's market
- 4.) Develop local market or partner with surrounding communities.
 - a. Determine time, location, season, and guidelines for Farmer's Market
 - b. Promote market opportunity to community vendors
 - c. Advertise market to surrounding area

Economic Development Corporation

In Bennington, a corporation or economic development group should utilize available tools to develop an economic strategic plan. Planning efforts enhance Bennington's abilities to recruit and retain the "right" types of businesses. The Economic Development Corporation structure is a proven concept for Nebraska communities. Many county wide and community initiatives work to market their area for potential industries. Assistance is also given to accommodate and enhance the economic development potential of existing business partners. Bennington will find many benefits from the networking structure of an Economic Development Corporation (EDC). The closest EDC to Bennington is Sarpy County EDC, which serves both Sarpy County, and the Greater Omaha Area.

Community Actions

- 1.) Formulate an Economic Development Board consisting of Civic and Business leaders in Bennington
- 2.) Contact the Sarpy County EDC to learn the benefits and requirements of membership
- 3.) Evaluate Pros/Cons of Establishing a Bennington EDC or Partnering with Sarpy County.

Economic Development Funding

To enhance Bennington's ability to market their area, specific funding options will be required. In Nebraska, two initiatives have become very popular to rural communities. First, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a method of defining certain areas "blighted and substandard" in order to allow improvements to occur and the city to recoup the increased tax base to payoff loans taken out to pay for improvement assistance. This method will require the assistance of experienced planners and lawyers to ensure its proper application.

Secondly, LB 840/Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act is providing added economic development incentive in 33 communities across Nebraska. This is Bennington's opportunity to generate funds to not only develop sites, but also to purchase development rights, market itself, start an economic development corporation, etc.

Community Actions:

- 1.) Coordinate with an experienced lawyer to determine application of TIF locally
- 2.) Prepare economic development strategy
- 3.) Follow public input process
- 4.) Establish an economic development fund

Bennington Pathways – Action Strategy Matrix

	Design Standards	Website Development	Community Art	Continuing Care Retirement Community	Water Tower	Business Directory	Pedestrian Crossing	Trail Bridge	Public Pool	Community/Civic Cntr	Farmer's Market	Ec. Development Corp.
Administrative Function	x		x								x	
Formulate Project Committee	x			x			x			x	x	x
Research		x		x					x		x	x
Define Project Vision	x	x	x				x		x	x	x	
Define Application or Scope of Project	x		x						x			
Needs Assessment							x	x	x		x	
Develop Market				x							x	
Evaluate Funding Options			x				x	x	x			
Elder Engagement						x						
Youth Engagement		x	x		x	x	x	x	x			
Networking or Mentoring Assistance				x			x	x	x		x	
Request Donations					x			x				
Hire Consultant or Contractor	x	x	x		x			x	x			
Enforcement	x											
Recruit Vendors / Developers				x							x	

VISION

Bennington's vision is to retain and protect the health, safety, and small town character of the community. As the town grows, Bennington is establishing itself as a place that truly values each citizen, preserving and enhancing an environment unique from that growing around it.

VISION THEMES

Character

Character is a combination of qualities that distinguishes Bennington from other places. In essence, it is how the citizens of Bennington view the quality of life of their community. While the quality of life of Bennington is relatively good, the City of Bennington wishes to act proactively to retain and enhance its character for the future.

Three major components molding the future of Bennington's character were identified: a self-contained community, a destination point, and buffering encroachment (from Omaha). These three components are interrelated. That is to say, the vision and action strategies presented in this report often address more than one of these components at once.

From these three components, the Character Group developed concepts that exemplified qualities inherent in retaining the small town character that Bennington desires. These six concepts were: know your neighbor, healthy community, community pride/quality of life, generational unity, community interdependence, and security and safety. The citizens of Bennington assisted us in identifying action strategies for each of these concepts during the November 11, 2003 town meeting. As a result of this input, we were able to develop several action strategies that embody the priorities of the community, as they relate to character. These include: Bennington directory (web site), a continuing care retirement community (CCRC), pedestrian crossings, a community/civic center, and farmer's market.

Economic Development

The City of Bennington identified economic development as a goal, recognizing the challenges and opportunities that its location next to Omaha presented. By addressing economic development, the city hopes to strengthen its future as an independent community, while also taking advantage of its position next to a growing metropolitan area.

The community expressed a desire to create an organized vision, and a plan to get there. Towards this end, the community identified broad goals, such as increasing the tax base, and offered specific ideas such as a grocery store or restaurants. Another important consideration for the community was recruitment of the "right" light industrial businesses to Bennington. Under the direction of the community, the goal of the economic development theme was to provide Bennington with the information it needed to formulate and implement its own economic development plan.

To reach this goal, the economic development group engaged in the following process. First we got to know Bennington—its strengths and its challenges. Next, the group researched a broad range of economic development possibilities, such as the primary model, community shopping centers, niche markets, and events. Then the group identified steps that could be taken to pursue these possibilities. The steps involved organizing, partnering, and marketing. With this information, the group formulated several economic development alternatives for Bennington. After presenting the alternatives to the community for comment, the group re-evaluated and refined its alternatives.

The result is a vision centered on two main goals. One goal is to attract jobs that will not disrupt the culture of the community, such as light industrial or other low-impact “primary” businesses. The other goal is to attract small businesses and services to downtown, in an effort to promote downtown revitalization.

Sense of Place

The concept of promoting a small-town atmosphere in Bennington was one of the primary issues that surfaced early in this project. While a community’s sense of place may be more difficult to express than the experience it inspires, this theme provided a framework for the physical development in Bennington. The intent of this framework is to secure and enhance the specific small-town atmosphere that the residents of Bennington have come to know and expect.

By exemplifying the qualities of a small-town, Bennington creates a distinct experience separate from Omaha that will benefit the community by making the city an attractive place to live. The concept also serves to promote Bennington as a destination point for the area for residents, visitors, or businesses. Ultimately, the community can capitalize on the economic opportunities presented by an increased population and pass-through traffic drawn to the unique attributes of Bennington.

Toward this end, the Sense of Place group focused on the physical environment of Bennington. The physical setting should celebrate the small-town attributes and the experience it provides to the community. The group identified the key areas for enhancing Bennington’s Sense of Place as entrances, downtown, and recreational areas.

Any changes or enhancements to these physical settings of Bennington should be guided so the small-town atmosphere remains consistent over time, yet allows changes to take place that add greater and greater richness to the same experience.

With the direction of community input, it has become evident that Bennington will need to establish its territory so that it will be unique compared to the area surrounding it. Concepts that emerged included taking advantage of all major entrance points to the community, protecting visual corridors for the downtown, and making pedestrian oriented connections between civic buildings, schools, and parks.

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

Design Standards

Overview:

Design standards set the contextual framework for many of the physical elements throughout a community. They help to add continuity, as well as character, to a particular city, village, neighborhood or district. Design standards are formulated based upon the goals set for in the comprehensive plan. In this way, they are both legally binding and enforceable by law. But the key is having the proper framework set forth by the comprehensive plan. If this is not the case, changes and amendments must be made to the comprehensive plan before appropriate design standards can be formulated.

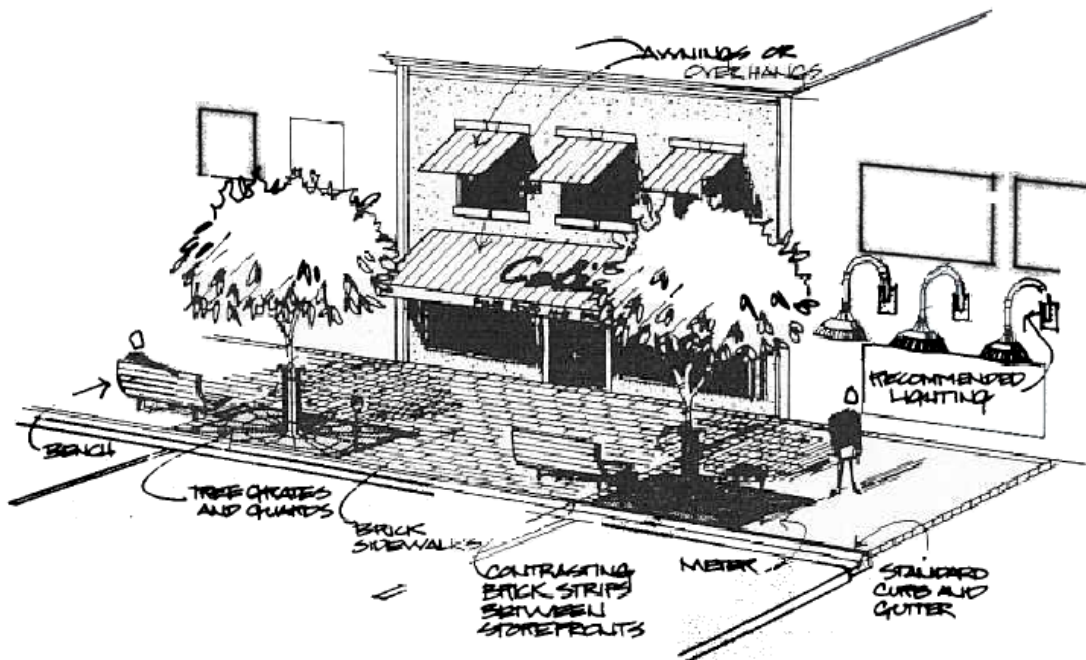
In order to be the most effective, design standards for Bennington must be unified and based on a common theme. For example, some communities may have historic street signs for each neighborhood or historic lighting for the downtown area. So when people pass from, say a modern subdivision, into one of these uniquely labeled neighborhoods, it becomes obvious that they are passing from one area into a distinctly different area. Bennington could also be viewed as one, unique district. This would be especially important as the community gets encroached upon by Omaha. If Bennington is unique in terms of physical character from run-of-the-mill subdivisions that are soon to surround it, people will know immediately that they are in a special place.

Application to Bennington:

The overall goal of design guidelines would be to set the contextual framework for Bennington's physical elements. In order to do this, a Design Standard Committee should be formulated. This committee could either be an existing group like the City Council, or a group of newly elected or appointed individuals who would help to develop design standards for the community. This group should seek the assistance of an experienced consulting group to help navigate through the nuts and bolts of this extensive process. By working as a team, the consulting group and the Design Standard Committee can then begin to develop and revise the actual design standards by using the goals set forth in the comprehensive plan as their guideline. Please note that all significant physical aspects of Bennington must be addressed, including signage, building facades, street furniture, etc.

Within one year's time frame, the design standards will be able to be implemented. These standards should be applied immediately thereafter to all new construction throughout Bennington's jurisdiction. In regards to old construction, required changes in commercial and industrial areas would have to be made within a specified timeframe, such as within five or ten years. Changes within residential areas would not necessarily have to be made, depending on the particular physical element. The following paragraphs will help to clarify this.

All of the diagrams in the Design Standards section are courtesy of the Raleigh, North Carolina Planning Department: http://www.raleigh-nc.org/planning/CP/streetscape_plans.htm (Click on the "University Village Streetscape Plan on Hillsborough Street" link).



The following is a list of the major elements that will demand design guidelines if Bennington wishes to maintain its small town character along with alternatives and recommendations to the implementation of such design standards:

Basic Signage:

Bennington currently has generic, green and white street signs. Omaha also currently has generic, green and white street signs. Eventually, what belongs to Bennington and what belongs to Omaha will become indistinguishable. But by making the street signs unique, people will be able to tell that they are not in a random subdivision, but rather that they indeed are in Bennington. And design standards are the key. They set the precedent on establishing this unique signage, not only for street signs but also for advertising and building signs. For example, rather than having several small, homemade signs for businesses at the corner of Highway 36 and 156th Street, one large, unified sign could be erected to advertise all of Bennington's downtown businesses. Not only is this more effective, it is also far more attractive than the current arrangement.

Gateway Signage:

Ports of entry into Bennington should project a strong, positive and enduring image of the community. Each person entering the community should instinctively know he or she has arrived at a unique destination point. As a small town within the larger region of Douglas County, area housing and commuter traffic hold significant potential in contributing to the Bennington economy. The impression Bennington makes upon entry should be welcoming, easily identifiable, and unique from its immediate surroundings.

Each entry point to Bennington should have a sign that demarks the city limits. Whether Bennington is a place travelers use as a destination point, or happen to pass through, obvious signage marks the city as a distinct destination. Signs that build upon the existing model, (shown below), should be positioned, with landscaping, at each entrance:



Contents: (Figure 1)

- a. A welcome message
 - b. Date Bennington was founded
 - c. The town motto or slogan
 - d. Name of the School's mascot
 - e. The population, associations and businesses
 - f. Water Tower
 - f. School Sign at 156th St. and Bennington Rd.
- Just past the Milk

Figure 1 Bennington Entrance Sign

Contents: (Figure 2)

- a. 168th and Bennington Road
- b. Highway 36 and 156th Street (both sides)
- c. 156th Street and Warehouse Street
- d. Bennington Road at East edge of town
- e. Water Tower - "Bennington" and Mascot
- g. Just past the Milk Barn, on the 156th St. corridor, as valley view opens to reveal Bennington below



Figure 2 Bennington Gateway Locations

Alternative 1: Apply design standards to new signage throughout Bennington. Enforce required changes to current signage in commercial and industrial areas. Allow current signage to exist as is in residential areas only. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Alternative 2: Apply design standards to new signage throughout Bennington. Enforce required signage changes in all areas of town. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Recommended Alternative: Alternative 2.

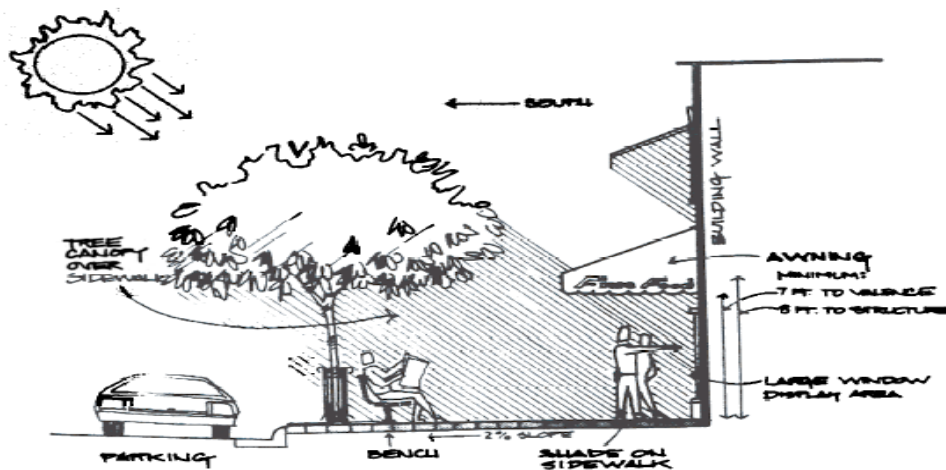
Building Facades:

Downtown Bennington has great historic and aesthetic potential. Unfortunately, many of the unique features of the buildings in this area have been covered up or removed. Appropriate design standards would require existing buildings to revert to their original look and require new buildings to appear to be 100 years old. Choice of building materials, building design, and special building features would all be regulated by the design guidelines. An example of this would be design standards for awnings. Awnings can greatly benefit a downtown area in many ways. They can add to the aesthetic value of buildings as well as providing protection from the elements for shoppers and passers-by.

Alternative 1: Apply design standards to new building facades throughout Bennington. Enforce required changes to current building facades in commercial and industrial areas. Allow current building facades to exist as is in residential areas only. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Alternative 2: Apply design standards to new building facades throughout Bennington. Enforce required building facade changes in all areas of town. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Recommended Alternative: Alternative 1.



Sidewalks:

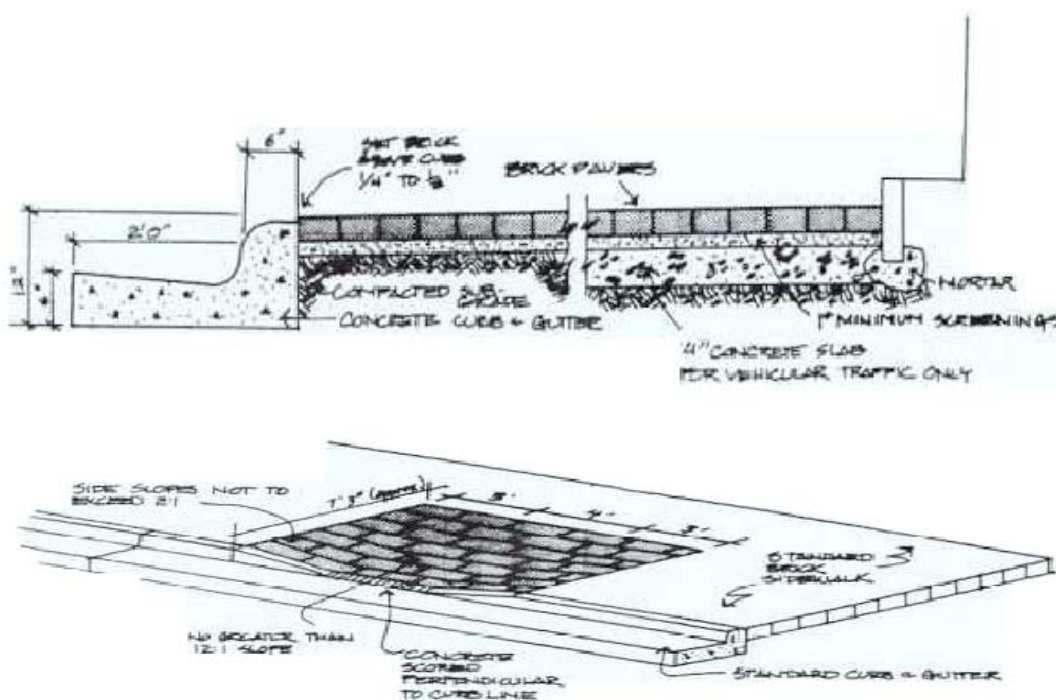
Bennington is currently lacking a cohesive sidewalk network. Many people rely upon walking on the streets because oftentimes the sidewalks have random gaps in them or are in need of repair. Due to Bennington's small population and small number of vehicles, walking on the

street is not currently a problem. But with Omaha just over the hill, the upcoming population growth will lead to vehicular traffic growth. This means that in the near future, people may not be able to rely upon walking in the streets to get downtown or to the school, which would be a major safety concern. Design standards for sidewalks would help to make Bennington much more pedestrian-friendly, thus reducing the potential for serious injuries.

Alternative 1: Apply design standards to new sidewalks throughout Bennington. Enforce required changes to current sidewalks in commercial and industrial areas. Allow current sidewalks to exist as is in residential areas only. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Alternative 2: Apply design standards to new sidewalks throughout Bennington. Enforce required sidewalk changes in all areas of town. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Recommended Alternative: Alternative 2.



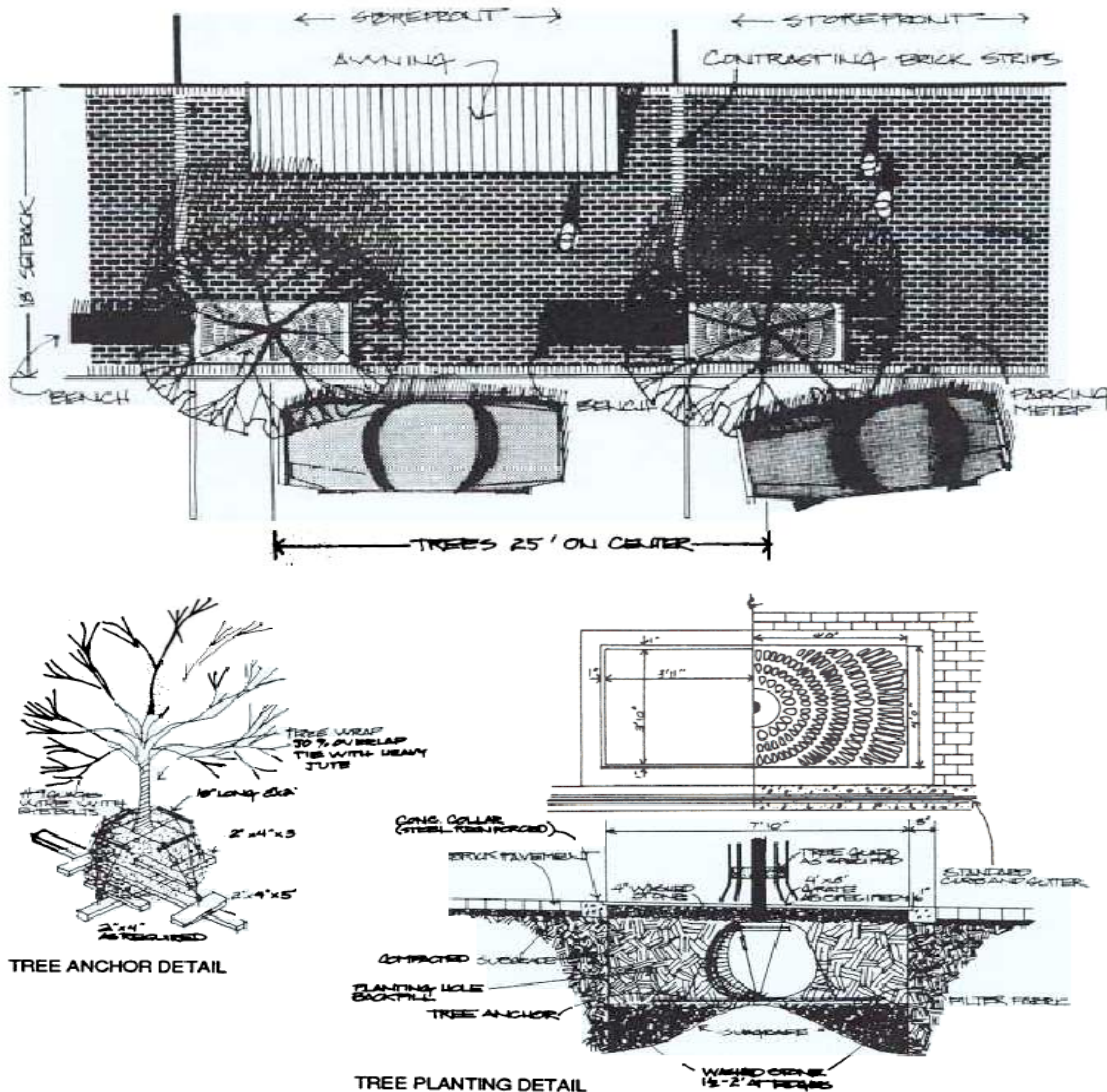
Landscaping:

Lack of landscaping in public spaces is an issue throughout Bennington, especially in the downtown area. This area is particularly barren, basically consisting of concrete and brick. Design standards could be used to mandate areas for landscaping to be set aside in all public areas. Lack of street trees throughout the rest of town is also an issue. And where they do exist, there is lack of continuity in both spacing and species. Once again, design guidelines could be used to regulate the planting of street trees.

Alternative 1: Apply design standards to new landscaping throughout Bennington. Enforce required changes to current landscaping in commercial and industrial areas. Allow current landscaping to exist as is in residential areas only. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Alternative 2: Apply design standards to new landscaping throughout Bennington. Enforce required landscaping changes in all areas of town. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Recommended Alternative: Alternative 2.



Street Furniture:

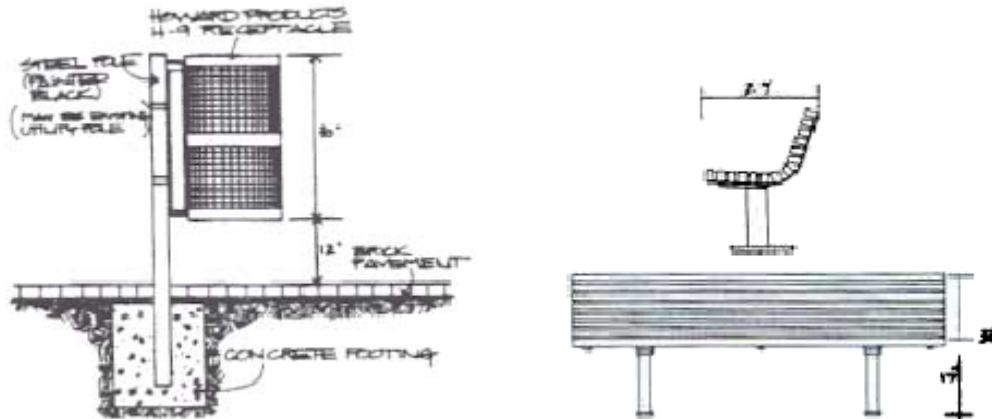
Bennington currently has very little to no street furniture. About the only existing features are a couple of large planters in the downtown area. Street furniture, such as benches, bike racks, trash receptacles, and planters can add both aesthetic and functional value to an area. Design standards for such features ensure that they are located in the proper areas for people to enjoy.

Alternative 1: Apply design standards to new street furniture throughout Bennington. Enforce required changes to current street furniture in commercial and industrial areas. Allow current

street furniture to exist as is in residential areas only. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Alternative 2: Apply design standards to new street furniture throughout Bennington. Enforce required street furniture changes in all areas of town. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Recommended Alternative: Alternative 1.



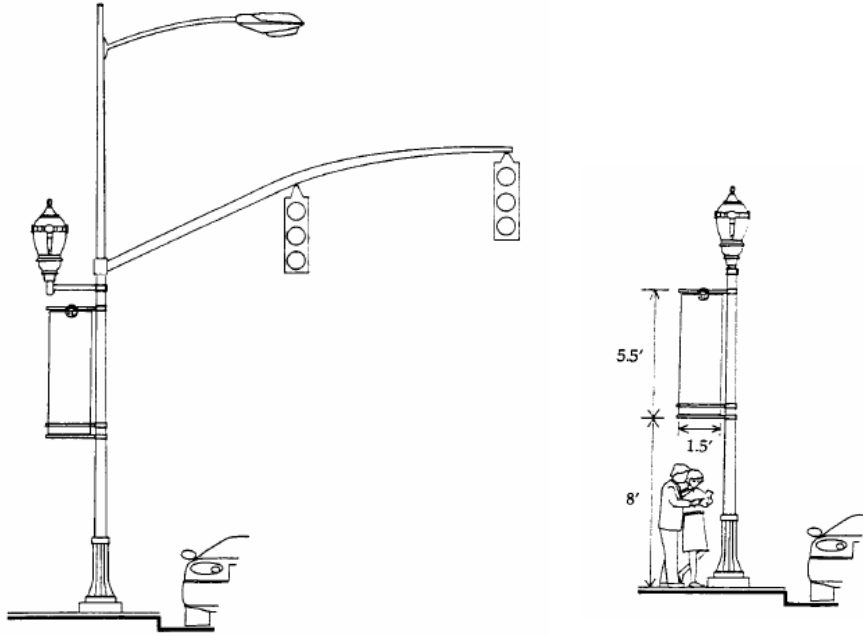
Street Lighting:

Bennington has a serious lack of street lighting. This poses both a safety and an aesthetic problem to the area. Design standards would govern the style and location of such fixtures ensuring that they enhance the small town atmosphere within town. Unique, historic lighting, much like street signage, would help to identify Bennington as its own district after encroachment by Omaha and make Bennington a much safer place to be after dark.

Alternative 1: Apply design standards to new street lighting throughout Bennington. Enforce required changes to current street lighting in commercial and industrial areas. Allow current street lighting to exist as is in residential areas only. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Alternative 2: Apply design standards to new street lighting throughout Bennington. Enforce required street lighting changes in all areas of town. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Recommended Alternative: Alternative 2.



Parking:

Lack of parking is an issue in downtown Bennington, especially on weekends and during special events. More areas need to be designated for public parking and designed appropriately based on the results of a traffic demand study. Design guidelines would assist in the process of turning these areas into effective parking lots and on-street parking.

Alternative 1: Apply design standards to new parking throughout Bennington. Enforce required changes to current parking in commercial and industrial areas. Allow current parking to exist as is in residential areas only. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Alternative 2: Apply design standards to new parking throughout Bennington. Enforce required parking changes in all areas of town. Implement plan as soon as possible.

Recommendation: Alternative 1.

Downtown Access

Within a few city blocks, Bennington’s downtown is the focus of many different community interests. Not only a physical space, the downtown serves as a commercial corridor, a historic district, a local gathering place and is a pivotal location defining community identity. With respect to the small town vision, downtown is literally and metaphorically the “heart of the city”. While most communities have convenient pass-through traffic in their downtown areas, Bennington faces a unique challenge due to their downtown being off-set from major roads like 156th Street and Bennington Road.

In the near future, the increased area population and development base should attract more businesses, investments, and general interest to the downtown. The projected expansion of Bennington’s economic base presents a unique opportunity for the community to be proactive in

integrating growth and expansion of the downtown area into the overall vision for Bennington. Capturing this opportunity requires overcoming the location hurdle. If the unique street alignment leading to the downtown area from 156th Street is to remain, other options are recommended to capture the attention of travelers through town.

Alternative 1: Preservation of a visual corridor

Currently, the West fringe of Bennington's downtown area is visible as travelers move North-bound along 156th Street. From the bridge, looking northeast through the park, Bennington has the opportunity to present the downtown area and pull travelers off the main thoroughfare. This visual corridor can be preserved through an overlay zone much like the City of Lincoln's Capitol Environs District <http://www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/attorn/lmc/ti27/ch2756.pdf>. Here the purpose is to preserve the inherent value of the State Capitol Building by preventing view obstructions. A proposed map of the overlay zone to prevent view obstructions to the downtown area is provided as Figure 3 below.



Figure 3 Visual Corridor Overlay Zone

Alternative 2: Uniquely standardized directional signs

This alternative is discussed under the Design Guidelines section of this imperative. Signs at all major transportation gateway locations could serve as directional beacons for travelers to Bennington who may not be familiar with the location of downtown.

Alternative 3: No action

There is always the possibility of not providing any improvements to get visitors downtown and business to locate downtown. The choice is directly up to the civic leaders.

Preferred Alternative: Combination of Alternatives 1 and 2.

Alternative 1 does not require any financial commitment by the community. This proposed zoning ordinance will need to be coordinated with the goals in the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, the view corridor must provide a specific value of enhancing the attraction and marketability of Bennington's downtown. Alternative 2 will require funding by the community at a level dependant on the number of signs that are constructed. With respect to Alternative 1, signs in the view corridor will need to be regulated for size, content, and material as not to distract from the focus of the corridor.

Community Revitalization Funding

One of the greatest problems facing Bennington is not the lack of ideas, but the lack of funding. Revitalizing the city of Bennington is easy to do on paper, but when it comes down to it, there needs to be a source of funding to get these projects completed. There are many organizations around Nebraska dedicated to helping towns, villages and cities maintain, improve and revitalize their downtowns. Bennington should use these resources to the fullest, because they were created to help communities improve themselves in a cost efficient manner. Below are some suggested programs and organizations that we feel would be a tremendous tool for Bennington to utilize.

Join Nebraska Lied Main Street:

A great starting point for community revitalization within Bennington is joining the Nebraska Lied Main Street. This organization is a membership based program dedicated to providing Nebraska communities with opportunities to strengthen local pride and revitalize downtown districts, while involving local citizens in the planning process. They work with the community and focus on four main points; design, organization, promotion and economic restructuring to improve and revitalize a community's "main street". Because the downtown area of Bennington is such an area of wanted improvement, joining this organization would be a great strategy for community revitalization and improvement.

By becoming an associated member, Bennington would receive technical assistance in the areas of organizational development. This support focuses on such organizational questions as fundraising, membership development, formation of public and private partnerships, board and committee structure, and other issues that a community typically faces when trying to start a local Main Street program. Along with this, associated members will also be included on the mailing list and receive newsletters, program updates, and other relevant downtown information. Quarterly training sessions are also offered and available for up to four community members to attend. Besides educating the participants, this is also a wonderful networking tool.

The cost for a community to become an associated member of Nebraska Lied Main Street is \$400.00 per calendar year. The benefits Bennington would receive from this program would

outweigh this cost. To join the Nebraska Lied Main Street Associates program, a citizen of Bennington would just have to contact the Nebraska Lied Main Street office to obtain an application form and more information. This can be done by simply accessing their web site, which is located at <http://www.nebraskamainstreet.org/>.

The National Main Street Center:

Focused on commercial district revitalization through historic preservation and economic development, the National Main Street Center has been working with communities across the nation to revitalize their historic or traditional commercial areas.

Bennington would be eligible for the “network membership”. This membership is available to anyone involved or interested in revitalizing a traditional downtown or neighborhood commercial district. Members include citizen activists, mayors, city planners, state government officials, chambers of commerce, consultants and many others. The focus of the National Main Street Center is networking and learning from other individuals, professionals and communities. Benefits include free research services, access to grant and loan programs, a membership to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, cutting edge information and news, and much more. The network membership is \$195.00 per year. Joining is easy, and can be done through an online application form available at <http://www.mainst.org>

Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP):

This program assists communities in meeting challenges while building on the vitality of their strengths and resources. Every Nebraska community with a population of 50,000 or less is eligible to participate in NCIP. Contact information: <http://crd.neded.org/ncip/>

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED):

This is a vital resource available to Nebraska citizens. This site focuses on multiple areas, including community development. This site will educate the viewer on what is available for Nebraska communities in the areas of funding and assistance. There are many wonderful ideas and suggestions found at this web site. <http://www.neded.org/>

Community Web Site

Developing Web Content:

Alternative 1: Basic

Basic information about the community, including services and business contacts are created. Create a single page with links to other sources, such as the Nebraska Public Power District Economic Development site.

Benefits:	Start community name recognition; provide a resource to the people of Bennington; low-cost; relatively easy to create.
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Drawbacks: Very simple, may only be used once by visitors, many other websites may contain similar information if statistical.

Alternative 2: Modified Basic

Web page with regularly updated information on community activities is produced, including Bennington Daze, Oktoberfest, sporting events, fund-raisers, etc. Design elements are simple, but multiple pages are tiered to reflect “keystones” of community. “Keystones” might include: Announcements, Businesses, Downtown, School, Sports, and/or Government.

Benefits: More interactive than Alternative 1; good resource for community; low maintenance requirements; relatively low-cost for maintenance.

Drawbacks: Not “professional” looking, looks bad if maintenance is neglected, requires some initial setup work that may be expensive.

Alternative 3: Cadillac

Interactive website with flash graphics and community web directory of businesses and residents is produced. Design elements are more complex with continual updating of community temperature. Maintenance requirements are either daily or every other day.

Benefits: Professional looking, very useful for people in and outside of the community, resource that provides information immediately.

Drawbacks: Expensive, requires regular maintenance, good judgment required for information provided.

Alternative 4: No community web site.

The community could still list its profile with the Nebraska Public Power District (<http://sites.nppd.com>). The City manager can activate the community profile.

Maintenance:

Alternative 1: Hire or train a City employee to design and maintain a community website.

Benefits: Person is familiar with the informational needs of the city; less expensive option; community has more control over the design elements and timeline for posting information.

Drawbacks: Requires a new staff position to be created or the expansion of duties for a person already working for the city; training may take awhile; quality of web page is dependent on the proficiency of the individual.

Alternative 2: Hire a company to design and maintain the website.

The City of Springfield, Nebraska has contracted with WireBuilt Company out of Louisville, Nebraska to provide web-site development. The typical contract that was established for this type of venture is for 24 months at \$210 a month. The cost of this project is paid for through sponsorship by local business and community funding initiatives arranged by civic leaders. Companies like this will be willing to help communities in what ever way is needed. Contact information for Wirebuilt can be found at the following web site:

<http://www.wirebuilt.com/index.htm>

Benefits: A professional is accountable for regular updates and maintenance; no need to train people on web design; capability of setting up complex web elements is high.

Drawbacks: Expensive to start-up; maintenance must be budgeted; less control over design elements; regular communication of activities required to someone “outside” of the city; money flows out of the community (unless the company is based in Bennington).

Alternative 3: Engage students enrolled in a high school course on website design and maintenance. The students can maintain the website and develop a professional skill set, while at the same time they are providing a service to the community.

Benefits: Educating the youth in a key computer skill; low cost for the city because it is tied to the school system; it will generate creativity; new techniques can be added over time to continually improve site.

Drawbacks: Slow start off; steep learning curve for teachers and students; summer maintenance needs are not met.

Recommendation:

For web content, Alternative 3 is recommended. However, this option is the most complex of all the alternatives. Thus, a stepping stone approach would be a good choice. Community Profile listing should be accomplished first by the city manager. Next, the web page structure should be designed to be as open-ended as possible, allowing for continual improvements with the goal of achieving Alternative 3. We really like the idea of high school students designing and maintaining the web site. The skills they will learn are invaluable in today’s marketplace. But, given the difficulty in setting up the initial web site design, it is a good idea to contract a profession web site developer to create a domain for the community and an initial website.

We found that many people in the community are interested in creating a services and resident directory, similar to one that used to be produced for the community. It would be ideal to integrate this directory with the website to create an on-line resource. Initial telephone numbers

and addresses may be obtained through Qwest's Directory service. Information should be requested in a database format that is compatible with the website design element selected for the online directory.

Web-site Development Timeline

Jan	<p>Decide what information is important for the community web page (i.e. Government contacts, property assessments, school information, emergency alerts, directory, community activities, newcomer's page, etc)</p> <p>Select a teacher for the course. Line up training for the summer and funding for the course through the school.</p> <p>Fill out community profile on the NPPD site. (http://sites.nppd.com)</p>
Feb - Mar	<p>Begin contacting web development companies to compare services and costs. Ask for examples of previous work and estimates on cost and time for development. Ask what type of program they use for website design and maintenance (Is it compatible with what you will be teaching in class?). Disclose that a high school class will be maintaining the site and request guidelines for maintaining the web site.</p> <p>Research other academic programs on web design. What are their goals and objectives? Their timelines for course work? The expectations of their students?</p>
April	<p>Compare information from web development companies. Select one that best meets the initial needs for the web site.</p> <p>Set up web site domain.</p>
Summer	<p>Teacher will be trained in web site design and maintenance. (Check community colleges)</p> <p>Course designed to begin in the fall.</p> <p>Web site initial design should be complete by August.</p>
Sept	<p>Invite web development company to class to explain initial website design and maintenance techniques.</p> <p>Students will start basic maintenance and begin building on sections of the website.</p>
On-going	<p>Continue to build on the web site by enrolling new students in the course. As proficiency increases, new course may be added to take the students to the next level of web page design.</p>

Creating a Community Image on the Wall

Community artwork could be utilized in Bennington to enhance the physical environment. Art work, beyond being aesthetically pleasing, can produce some of the following benefits:

- Support local economies
- Attract business investments
- Attract tourism
- Provide cultural opportunities
- Encourage volunteerism

To capture some of these community benefits, Bennington should draft a community art policy and support the creation of artwork in public spaces.



Figure 4 The Infamous Bennington Wall

Appendix B includes a sample Community Art Policy to get Bennington started.

One prime space for public artwork is the retaining wall in downtown Bennington. In a survey conducted by Bennington High School students in early 2003, the number one issue residents wanted to see addressed was repair of the Wall in Downtown Bennington. Several options, including reinforced concrete, landscape bricks, and landscaping, were reviewed in the student's report. The primary goals of repairing the Wall are functional and structural in nature, providing structural integrity, pedestrian safety, and storm water drainage. A secondary goal is to develop character for the downtown area by using the street-facing surface as a canvas and decorating the wall with artwork. Here are a few options to create an "image" on Bennington's Wall. Note that each of these options requires a reinforced concrete finish to the Wall. This option was selected because it would be most cost-effective over time and provides the proper finish for the material suggested.

Alternative 1: Repair the Wall; No Public Art

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Benefits: | Takes care of the problem; involves basic costs; no need for process to create community art piece. |
| Drawbacks: | Appearance is minimal; Height of the Wall is unusual and detracts from overall appearance of downtown. |

Alternative 2: Brick Wall Facades

Examples:



Here, a number of carved brick panels, which look like windows with views, set into the brick wall running along the promenade. The artists ran workshops with pupils from four local schools, and each group carved four windows into unfired bricks to illustrate the story they had written. Members of a local history group did the same thing, depicting the changing history of the area. The bricks were numbered and fired, and then set into the wall. www.art-on-the-riverside.co.uk

Figure 5 *Windows and Walls in Sunderland, United Kingdom, Primary Artists Collin Wilbourn and Karl Fisher*

Iron Horse Legacy (below) is an impressive 17 foot by 40 foot color-blended brick mural. It is the central focal point of the redeveloped Historic Haymarket District in Lincoln, Nebraska.



Figure 6 *Lincoln's Old Iron Horse in the Haymarket, Artist Jay Tschetter*

Benefits: Solid structured art piece that will improve with age; unique material to create image; image could convey the “History of Bennington” or some other story or icon that represents community pride; long lasting; legacy artwork; becomes a focal point attraction for Downtown Bennington.

Drawbacks: More expensive than the “do nothing” approach; requires a professional artist to design and create façade; could be target for vandalism.

Alternative 3: Mosaic Wall Facades

Example:



The traditional installation technique is to mortar the mosaic directly onto a masonry wall, floor or sculptural form. The trick here is to ensure that the surface is stable enough to support a mosaic. Walls in particular must have a block or cement core and be covered with a scratch coat of mortar. The mosaic is then applied like any tile product. The design is applied in sections, the mosaic already attached to a mesh backing material. www.kesslerstudios.com

Figure 7 *Wheeling Hospital Mosaic, Artist Franz Mayer*

Benefits: Unique material to create an image; conveying the “History of Bennington”; source of community pride; legacy artwork; focal point for Downtown and an attraction; work could be designed and completed by community with assistance of an artist relatively easily; less expensive than the brick artwork.

Drawbacks: Tiles may fall off; target for vandalism; more expensive than the “do nothing” approach; occasional cleaning necessary.

Alternative 4: Painted Wall Facades

Example:



Figure 8 *A public mural for Cedar Cottage and Trout Lake, East Vancouver, BC*

Benefits: Project could be designed and implemented by community; area attraction; gives character to Downtown; relatively less expensive than bricks or tiles; can be painted over and changed through the years.

Drawbacks: Paint could chip with damage to the wall; colors will fade over time; more expensive than the “do nothing” option; regular cleaning required; mural is not as permanent as the other options.

ENRICHING THE LIFESTYLE OF THE ELDER

Overview

According to an analysis of the US Census figures for Bennington, Nebraska there will be 300+ elderly individuals in the community that need appropriate housing and care options by the year 2020 (see Figure 9). A Housing and Human Development report for March 2003 showed that currently sixteen housing units are available for low-income families in the Bennington community, and that none are specifically designated for the elderly. Rentals are an option for lower income individuals, but the existing housing stock will not be adequate to meet this expected need. Besides not meeting Bennington's own elder needs, there is no current market to reach out to the elderly from surrounding rural communities.

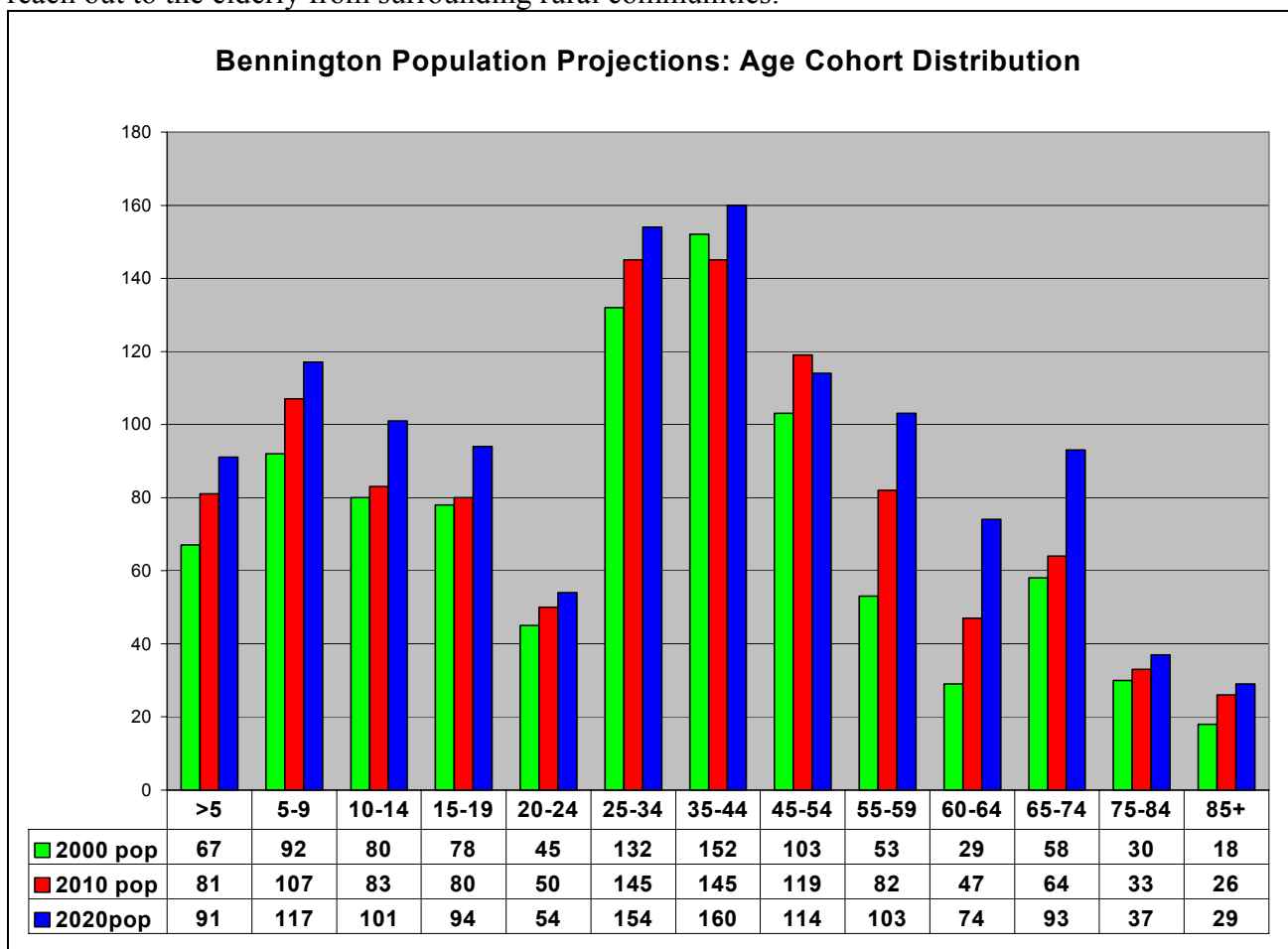


Figure 9 Population Projections: Age Cohort Distribution (source: 2000 U.S. Census)

Providing adequate housing for the aging affects the lives of the elderly. No matter what type of housing style, a variety of design features can be helpful. Adequate lighting, shelving that does not require climbing or bending, equipment such as telephones with large-print labels, and alternatives to stairs can relieve the stress of physical exertion. Housing design should provide plenty of opportunity for physical activity. If elderly housing is located in walkable communities, near destinations such as libraries, stores, and places of worship, then elderly people can remain

independent, active, and engaged. Combined transportation and land-use planning that offers convenient, accessible alternatives to driving can help the elderly reach this goal of an active, healthy lifestyle.

Creating an enhanced physical and social environment specifically for the elderly in Bennington would help to preserve the values that exist within the community. The residents of Bennington have indicated that it is important to integrate the activities of all age groups, especially the youth and elderly. It will be difficult to provide this integration if the aging population is forced to move to Omaha or further, due to a lack of housing. Also, Bennington, as a “small town” will need to make an extended effort to meet the needs of its aging population. This is a common characteristic shared by small towns around the State of Nebraska. Doing so will generate the small town “Sense of Place” that Bennington desires.

Economic development is a continuing need for rural communities and Bennington is no exception. Jobs created by meeting the demand of the increasing elderly population would have a direct economic benefit to the community in several ways. First, it creates jobs. According to research by the Nebraska Center for Rural Health Research, UNMC, the development of health care jobs creates other employment in the community. Although a specific report has not been done for Douglas County, the economic impact for Sheridan County, Nebraska, by way of example, is impressive. For every one job created in the Health Care Sector, there would be 0.56 new jobs created in other economic sectors of the economy.

Not only are jobs created for the community, but retired individuals bring transfer payments to the community as well. If Bennington is able to provide the housing options needed for their increasing elder population, more of the money will be brought in and spent in the community to stimulate further economic growth. This combined with increased property tax revenue will help Bennington make the physical and social improvements necessary to meet the needs of all its’ residents.

Alternatives

Bennington has the potential of meeting the needs of its aging population. It is up to community leaders to decide if, when, and how difficult decisions will be made to meet them. This report gives two possible solutions that can be considered the greatest and least effort options. Regardless, it is recommended that a senior advisory committee be formed to coordinate the efforts of civic leaders, religious affiliates and citizens of all ages.

Alternative 1: CCRC Development Proposal

A Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) is defined as "an organization that offers a full range of housing, residential services and health care in order to serve its older residents as their needs change over time". The proposed concept is to incorporate the CCRC into the overall development of a Planned Unit Development (PUD). Bennington’s PUD-1 floating district is defined as having the intent to provide for creative design in buildings, open spaces, and community inter-relationships that provide the health, safety, and welfare of existing and future residents. This development would be intended to incorporate very specific attributes, such as:

- * A range of housing opportunities and choices
- * “Walkable” neighborhoods
- * Community stakeholder collaboration
- * Predictable, fair, and cost effective development decisions
- * Mix land uses
- * Preserved open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- * Strengthen and direct development linkages towards existing neighborhoods
- * Compact building design

Residents of CCRCs can expect numerous services to be provided for them. These services give the aging a sense of independence and personal security throughout the later years of their lives. Such services include meals, grounds maintenance, local transportation, security systems, and on-site physician care. Each CCRC is unique, depending on the management and the local culture. Other services may include housekeeping, laundry service, or the processing of Medicare and insurance reimbursement forms. Security is coupled with peace of mind for residents as they are allowed to age in place. This prevents seniors from dealing with the stress of moving in the latest parts of life when their health begins to fail.

It is important to recognize that CCRCs have rather distinguishing differences in their basic structure and environment. CCRCs come in many shapes and sizes. They range from luxury high-rises with balconies, to one and two-bedroom cottages, to ranch-like configurations depending on what fits into the local framework. Small distinctions in services, facilities, and community interactions make an enormous difference in the overall atmosphere of each CCRC community.

CCRCs are unique to the area of long-term care in that they provide a continuum of care for elderly as they progress to different levels of long-term care needs. Although it is believed that most people who need long-term care are severely disabled, only 48 percent of those at risk (for nursing care) are frail, but do not have significant physical limitations. In this light, CCRCs are attractive options for “active” elderly who want the extra help available through a nursing home, but also the freedom that they would have in their own home. Residents are enabled to age in place once they are members of the community.

The three main stages of care include Independent Living Units (ILUs), assisted living, and skilled nursing care. ILUs provide independent lifestyle for the most active elderly who may require some assistance from others. It assures the transition from complete independence into dependant living is smooth, secure, and convenient. Housing options vary, but are similar to apartment and cottage type living, with size depending on the amount of downsizing the elder(s) are looking for.

Assisted living, the second option, provides assistance for residents with chronic care needs apart from the 24-hour skilled nursing care. Residents in this situation benefit from services such as bathing, dressing, and taking of medication as well as other daily activities. It is the middle stage, just before skilled nursing care. Skilled nursing care may be needed in the short or long term which CCRCs are designed to meet. In most cases, CCRCs will leave the transition process to the residents and their families

Although CCRCs have historically been an expensive option for most elderly populations, recent efforts have tried to make it a more affordable option for low-income populations. For instance, Greencroft, a CCRC in Goshen, Indiana houses 1000 residents, of which, 250 are considered low-income and are available for section 8 funding. The operation receives HUD funding while the residents are offered the same services and amenities as their middle and upper income level cohorts. This socialized form of care promotes the level of dignity aging individual deserves. The Continuing Care Accreditation Commission (CCAC) is a not-for-profit organization that is the only accrediting body for CCRCs in the nation. The regulatory oversight provided by the CCAC ensures the quality and integrity of the aging services profession. Even though the cost of maintaining the level of service designated by the CCAC is higher, the social benefits to the residents and financial liability to the community make the regulations worth the cost.

In most instances, CCRCs are required to obtain 50% occupancy commitment before construction begins. The developer must also complete a market study of the retirement demand before accreditation is given. This up front liability is transferred to the future residents, but ensures financial stability for the host community and retirement community developer. It also provides security to the residents that their investment will remain secure.

An extensive review of this type of retirement lifestyle, written by Jacquelyn Sanders, can be viewed on the web, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/daltcp/reports/ccrcrpt.htm#intro>. The paper was published by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services in 1997 and is entitled “Continuing Care Retirement Communities: A Background and Summary of Current Issues”.

As a case example the Greencroft Community, in Goshen, Indiana provides a view of the continuum of care provided by CCRCs to its residents and the greater community setting. Greencroft is a CCAC accredited Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) and a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that accommodates 1,200 residents. Approximately 80% of the population is female and there is a broad cross section of denominations. The average age of the residents is about 80 years old and the residents primarily come from within the county (69%) or state (12%).

The Greencroft Retirement Community employs 550 individuals for various aspects of community living. Amazingly, almost 600 registered volunteers from the surrounding area contribute 55,000 hours of assistance per year. All of this occurs on 165 acres with an annual budget of \$24 million. As a not-for-profit organization, the community is available for charitable giving opportunities. The web site for Greencroft is <http://www.greencroft.org/>.

Location and Siting of the Development:

Bennington has diverse needs that will require enhanced infrastructure and an increased tax base to develop and sustain. Of the immediate areas proximate to Bennington (proper), the undeveloped area with the greatest potential that could support an increased tax base is the area defined by Bennington Road on the north, and eventual 144th Street expansion on the east, the flood plain boundary on the south, and Downtown Bennington and vicinity on the west. This area is divided by two small tributaries extending north from the Big Papillion Creek, one on the

current eastern edge of Bennington and one about 3/4 miles east. Both tributaries offer a natural corridor for sewer improvement to connect with the existing sewer main that runs SW adjacent to and just north of Big Papillion creek. Water should not be a major concern provided the existing water main has the capacity to support additional demand.

Potential Sites

Alternative Site 1: Corner of East Bennington Road and Possible 144th Street Extension



Figure 10 CCRC Alternative Site #1

- A. Undeveloped Site
- B. Privately owned
- C. Approximately 170.5 Acres
- D. Appraised land value at approximately \$155,540
- E. Outside of city limits but, within one-mile ETJ
- F. Access to water and sewer lines? Infrastructure needs to be extended/improved
- G. Strategically located along regional trail system and near downtown
- H. Provides prominent development for future City boundary
- I. Less land in the floodplain, can be preserved as open space/parks
- J. Convenient access to a possible extension of 144th Street
- K. Easily accessible by automobile, bike, wheelchair or foot
- L. Not located near existing neighborhoods
- M. Minimal grade differential
- N. Larger total development area

Alternative Site 2: East of Bennington's Downtown and Adjacent to Big Papillion Creek

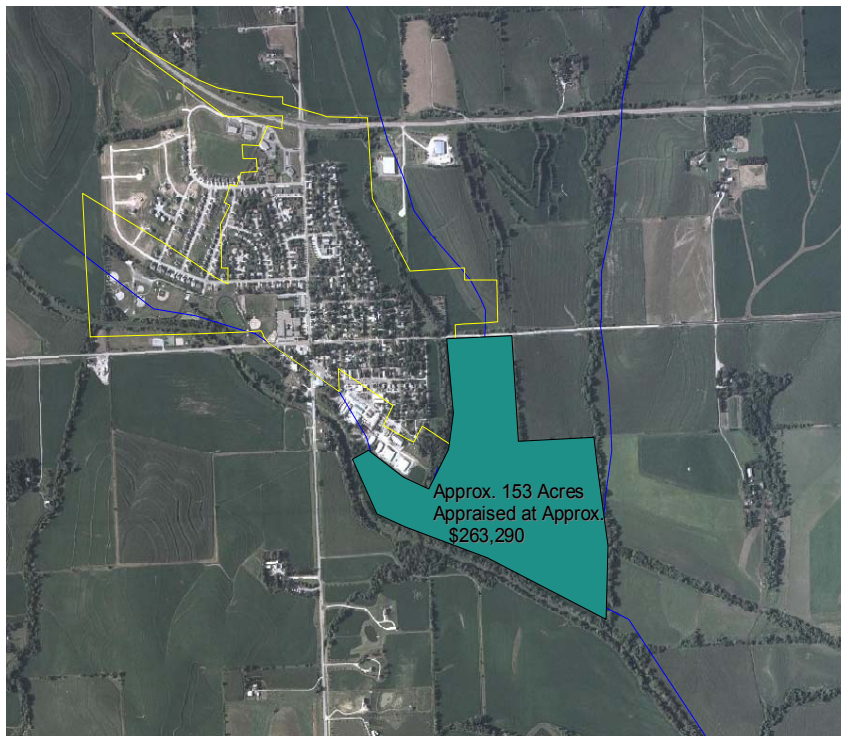


Figure 11 CCRC Alternative Site #2

- A. Partially developed site
- B. Privately owned
- C. Approximately 153 acres
- D. Appraised total value at \$263,290 with house
- E. Outside city limits
- F. Access to water and sewer lines? Infrastructure needs to be extended/improved
- G. East of town on Bennington Road, but close to downtown
- H. Trail linkage with rest of town would be easy; site is next to a creek
- I. Larger portion of the property exists in floodplain
- J. Partially disconnected from existing neighborhoods
- K. Accessible by automobile, bike, wheelchair, or foot
- L. Minimal grade differential
- M. Smaller total development area

Incentives and Recruitment:

Incentives for attracting private development capital might include short term property tax relief, bond supported infrastructure development, adequate design standards and the mixed use (Planned Unit Development) concept to allow for increased density and attractive design.

Alternative to generating additional bonds to finance this type of development, projects could also be funded through sales or property tax appropriations.

Typically, financing would come from a bond issue for infrastructure needs such as road and water line improvements. Bennington may need to make the improvements in order to recruit potential developers to the area. This type of public/private partnership is becoming popular amongst communities trying to recruit business and development into their area. Overall improvements will cost less though, when compared to other types of development because of the mixed-use, higher density development. There will not be a need to rush improvements as development only occurs after a majority of commitment has been made by future residents.

Design Concepts and Community Integration:

The main idea of this overall concept is to encourage the inclusion and participation of the elderly in the community by building an environment that promotes community involvement in their lives and their involvement in the community. Details such as trails that connect the CCRC facilities with the green spaces and other community amenities, buildings that have the look and feel of the community such as cottages and duplexes, adequate setback and choice of building materials will be negotiated with a developer. They will also want to consider some variety in design features, building footprint and integration into the mixed use community.

Although the two alternative sites do not directly link into the City of Bennington at this time, strong growth patterns indicate that any physical separation will soon be overcome. It is important for Bennington to establish its boundaries and develop a unique community environment at one edge of town. This will be a strong hallmark to visitors that they have arrived in a new place. Locating the CCRC at the corner of Bennington Road and a possible extension of 144th Street will anchor the Bennington on the east, while the new High School does the same on the west. If Bennington were larger, this separation may not be considered an ideal, but in this case, the physical separation will not be a barrier to building the city character.

Finally, inclusion of a community/civic center within the CCRC would increase the amenities offered in Bennington as well as support the rural values that the community vision is built on. Values such as volunteerism, healthy community, safety, and intergenerational unity could be stimulated by the entire CCRC and the community/civic center specifically.

Alternative 2: Network with Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging

The Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging (ENOA) is one of 670 nation wide aging agencies that are established under the Older American Act. Its purpose is to ensure that the older adults within a five county region have access to a continuum of services that enable them to remain active, independent and in their own homes for as long as possible. ENOA provides programs that engage the aging population in their service area. By working with local volunteers, the changing needs are assessed and new programs are continually developed. Bennington can realize the increasing number of elderly people and utilize the services of the ENOA to meet many of their unique needs without adding significant costs to the community.

Certain programs will encompass the values that citizens of Bennington exemplify. The Gatekeepers program trains volunteers to become aware of signs that things may be wrong with an older adult. After an hour of training, residents are enabled to take the initiative and care for people besides their own family. The Caregiving Connection is another program that engages local businesses to offer senior oriented services and products as well as providing education opportunities. As part of the Corporate Services program, community service groups are given assistance in writing grants and fundraising. NEOA provides a host of other programs including Adult day care, breakfast club, legal, and consumer services to name a few.

To capture all the benefits of these programs, it is important to have a single, centralized point of contact for the ENOA to work with the community. Bennington's senior advisory committee will be that point of contact. It is recommended that at least three, but no more than seven people serve on the committee at one time. Committee members will be able to gather information periodically as well as keep appropriate, non-committee members informed of new developments. One person should take the leadership role in this committee and take the initiative to contact the ENOA. The contact information is:

Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging
808 S. 74th Plaza, Ste. 200
Omaha, Nebraska 68114
Administrative Offices: (402) 444-6536
Information and Referral: (402) 444-6444
Web site: <http://www.enoa.org/index.html>

Preferred Alternative:

Bennington does not seem to lack the desire to meet the needs of all its residents. Simply stated, the community is looking for a plan of action that will accommodate all of its residents as they grow up, live, and age. Community stakeholders have indicated that they are willing to make decisions that will show current and future residents of Bennington that they are important and valued. To accomplish this end for the aging population around the area, Bennington is faced with a range of possible options. A consideration of the major constraints and opportunities facing the community indicates that enabling the development of a Continuing Care Retirement Community would be the preferred alternative for Bennington.

It has been indicated that Bennington does not currently meet the needs of its aging population. While the age 55-85 population can certainly find housing options in town, there are little to no options that meet the specific needs of an older person. Health care is almost non-existent in Bennington and those looking for more than a dental check-up must travel to Omaha to find services. Besides housing and health care, social engagement of elders is seen as sporadic and lacks program optimization. While some would look at these issues as constraints, from the viewpoint of the preferred alternative, these issues become opportunities.

Bennington can bring health care services, housing options, centralized social services, and much more to aging residents by recruiting a CCRC. This new era in retirement living contrasts

significantly to the more traditional retirement home setting. Independent adults are encouraged to enjoy as many activities and services as possible and allows them to downsize their lifestyle when it is appropriate for them. Bennington residents will benefit from the increased health care personnel in town and may not find it necessary to travel into Omaha for routine check-ups and exams.

Wellness centers are commonly built into CCRCs in coordination with the towns needs. The centers are typically open to the entire town. This would further the healthy lifestyle and intergenerational unity desired by Bennington residents. At Galloway Ridge in North Carolina, a 27,000 square foot wellness center, complete with track, lap pool, juice bar, and nutrition classes was included in the development. At Bennington's request, a developer will consider this type of amenity during the planning stage. A picture of Galloway Ridge is included below. Perhaps a similar development will find itself nestled in the corner of 144th Street and Bennington Road.



Figure 12 *Galloway Ridge, North Carolina* <http://www.gallowayridge.com/default.asp>

The typical planning phase for development of a CCRC can last three to ten years. Over the course of the next ten years, Bennington will see increased growth pressure. It is anticipated that the Bennington Park subdivision will be feasible for annexation in the very near future and increased residential growth will move north and west. By proposing the development at the corner of 144th and Bennington Road, medium density residential will be able to grow directly west of town, south of Bennington Road. At the construction phase, the CCRC will be adequately financed and available for annexation into Bennington. This strategic placement will serve to maximize the property tax receipts available to the City and enable further development to occur within the Bennington extra territorial jurisdiction.

A market study will need to be completed by a potential developer before the decision is made to proceed. Currently, there exists three major retirement centers in the Omaha area that are considered retirement communities, one in Blair and two in Omaha. All three facilities are at or near capacity indicating a sufficient demand for retirement housing options. Bennington should be able to develop with unique attributes for the new generation of aging individuals. The CCRC in Bennington should incorporate a larger portion of independent living opportunities

than its local counterparts. Most of the aging in Bennington are active and healthy, but will require specific housing qualities to enable them to age in place.

Timeline for CCRC Recruitment:

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NEDED) has approved medical services as a target industry for the metropolitan area. They should be contacted within the next month to discuss State assistance in recruitment and development. The foremost experts in the senior residence field are located in Des Moines, Iowa. Their contact information is:

Life Care Services LLC
400 Locust, Suite 820
Capital Square
Des Moines, IA 50309-2334
Phone: 515/875-4500
Fax: 515/875-4780
e-mail: lcsmail@lcsnet.com
Web: <http://www.lcsnet.com/index.html>

Besides the NEDED, the Omaha Chamber of Commerce will prove to be a great ally for the City of Bennington. Membership should be placed as soon as possible and community representatives should meet with Chamber staff to discuss the economic development vision of Bennington.

Bennington needs to develop a web based presence so that potential business owners can easily see what the community has to offer. There are many different platforms to accomplish this task, but it will be important to present the City as professional, unique, and available for business. Local businesses should be praised as a way to indicate the type of treatment a new business can expect to receive. The web site for Bennington will be constantly changing, but a basic template should be completed within a year.

It will be important for the City of Bennington to assist the developer in whatever way possible to recruit elderly from around the area to move to the new CCRC in Bennington. Marketing the proposed CCRC to potential residents will be accomplished cost effectively through the web site.

Both road improvements east of Bennington on Bennington Road, as well as storm and sanitary sewer capacity extension should be anticipated within the next two to five years, depending on the recruitment of a developer. Once a commitment has been secured, Bennington can proceed with the process of designating funds for those improvements. Payments made to meet the needs of a developer will be returned to the community through increased tax-base, new jobs, new residents and increased spending. Consider also that older adults tend to shop locally, meaning that less money will be migrating to Omaha and the region.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Overview

Bennington has a well-established school district serving a large section of northwest Douglas County. See Appendix D for a map of the Bennington School District. The school is a source of pride for the entire community. In the May 6, 1999 Town Hall Meeting held during the development of the 2000 Comprehensive Plan, the education system was near the top of list of the “positives” in Bennington. “School” was third on the list of “issues” in Bennington, behind “Public Utilities” and “Keep Independence”. “More School Facilities” topped the list, tied with “Sewer and Water Plans” for “Projects that need to be done in the future in Bennington” (Comp Plan, p. 45-47). This emphasis on education and youth movement is warranted. The 2000 Census shows that nearly 34% of the town’s population is 19 years old or younger (Figure 13). The Bennington School District Annual Report for 2003-2004 lists total enrollment of 595 students. With this population segment’s growth projected to continue, the number of students in the Bennington school system will increase dramatically over the next five years.

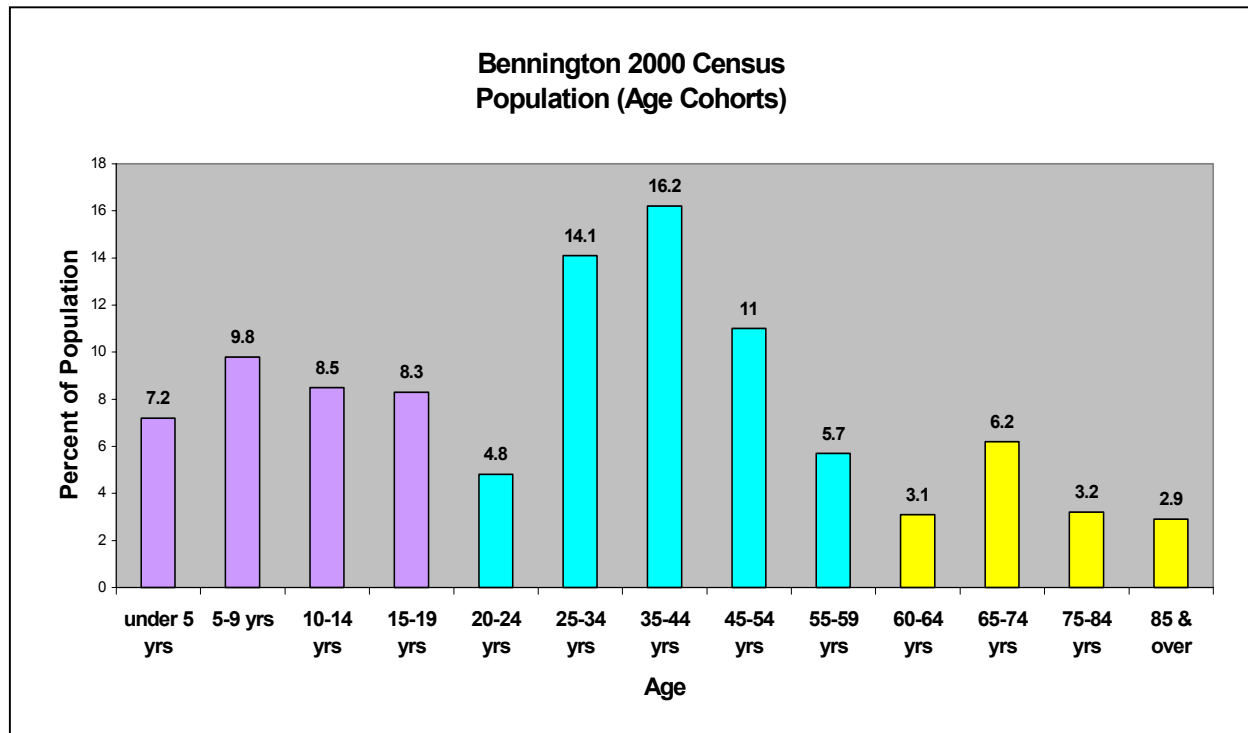


Figure 13 Bennington Population Distribution (Source: 2000 Census)

Figure 13 shows the age cohort distribution for Bennington’s 2000 population. In May of 2003, residents of Bennington demonstrated their commitment to the community’s youth and school system when they approved a \$15.9 million bond issue to build a new high school on city property just west of town. Construction is scheduled to begin in March 2004 with completion in the fall of 2005. The current school building at North 156th Street and Bennington Road will continue to serve as the middle and elementary schools.

To make Bennington the community that the residents want it to be, two questions must be answered. What can/should the community do for the school and what can/should the school system and its students give back to the community?

Youth Focused Project Alternatives

Table 2 Youth Focused Project Matrix

Core Concepts						
	<i>Short Term Strategies</i>			<i>Long Term Strategies</i>		
School	Water Tower	Web Directory	Safe Pedestrian Crossing	Trail Bridge	Tournament Uses for Ball Field	Swimming Pool



The Bennington Water Tower: Show Your School Spirit

Bennington should take advantage of the opportunity to promote community pride in its school system by painting the school mascot, a badger, on the water tower. This action strategy would also contribute to community's character and sense of place. The water tower badger should be visible from the Legion Baseball fields' stands.

If this concept meets with the approval of the community, the strategy can be implemented with minimal expense. The high school graphics art class can produce a large "badger" stencil. This stencil can be used during the painting the water tower. The only expense would be the paint and labor to get the job done. Once completed, all those within eyesight of the water tower will know they are in Bennington Badger Country.

The Bennington Directory: Student Engagement in Website Development

To promote community character and sense of place as well as provide economic development opportunities, Bennington should develop and operate a "community directory" website. The website can be constructed and maintained by high school students in their computer classes (Computers II, III and IV) at Bennington High School. In addition to school staffers, a small advisory board (3-5 members) of community volunteers should mentor the students and assist in suggesting and developing content for the website.

Longtime community residents mentioned the old Bennington Directory with fondness. Many said it was an excellent, often-used resource for many reasons and applications. With proper input and content, a modern, web-based directory could develop into much more than the old directory. It could serve as an interactive business directory, school directory, government services directory, community newsletter, message board and calendar, Bennington history guide, trading post for goods, recreation and entertainment guide and advertisements for local and area businesses. The advertisements would generate revenue needed to maintain and upgrade the site. With access to Bennington Public Schools' computer server (<http://www.benningtonschools.org>), actual start-up expense and operating costs should be negligible.

The course description for Computer II includes the topics of presentation software and web page design. Areas of study for Computer III and IV include HTML, advanced web design and e-commerce. Appendix E shows the full course descriptions for the Computer and Journalism classes. It should be possible to begin this project in the spring semester starting in January 2004 with little if any changes to the current course curriculum and lesson plans. For sustainability, the website can be an evolving, continuous work-in-progress. Initial website development and operation could cover a few facets i.e. business directory and community newsletter. Appendix F is a complete list of businesses in Bennington. Each class and/or each semester, items/aspects/facets can be added to and expanded within the website.

Development of the website would promote intergenerational unity. Older community members familiar with the town's history and the original Bennington Directory would be a valuable source for students to access during the development of the site. Community members, especially older life-long residents, could take advantage of their contacts with the high school students to learn some basics about computers and use of the Internet.

High school students participating in the computer class not only gain valuable practical experience in the "real world", but also provide their home community with a valuable tool to enhance quality of life in Bennington while promoting the community's character. The web-based directory could be an important first step toward establishing a business association in Bennington as well as generating economic development. The Bennington Directory will offer a view of Nebraska's "good life" to all visitors via the World Wide Web.

As this project develops and the demand is there, a hard copy directory could be assembled and produced by the high school journalism classes. The project would be similar to the school yearbook. This hard copy could be sold at a nominal cost to cover the expense of production and printing. This directory promotes the "Know your neighbor" aspect of community character and would be an excellent edition to any "Welcome Wagon" package offered to newcomers to the Bennington community.

Safe Pedestrian Crossing:

The intersection of 156th Street and Bennington Road raises some safety concerns among Bennington residents. Each street is two lanes wide. The intersection is currently controlled by four-way stop signs supplemented with an overhead flashing red signal. Both streets carry a

significant amount of vehicle traffic. The cause for concern is the Bennington School's close proximity to this intersection. Many students walking to school must cross these streets before and after each school day. Possible solutions to this potential safety problem range from short-term, simple and inexpensive to long-term complex and quite costly. Regardless of cost, the safety of the school children is the most important objective in any course of action.

The standard guide for traffic control devices is the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*. It is available in a PDF format at <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/>. Further guidance is available through the Metropolitan Planning Organization

Ranging from least expensive to most expensive, possible strategies for consideration include use of volunteer pedestrian crossing guards, installation of traffic calming devices, installation of an automatic traffic signal with pedestrian signal, and construction of a pedestrian overpass bridge. The *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)* contains detailed information on all of these options. The community should consider all of the available options and select a course of action that will address the short term needs as well as plan for future growth and development.

To assess the need for a traffic control device at 156th and Bennington Road, a traffic study including a count of vehicles and pedestrians must be completed. In Douglas County, this responsibility belongs to the County Engineer's Engineering and Traffic Planning Division. A high school class studying transportation issues could also participate in this traffic study. The necessary data to gather would include traffic counts for vehicles and pedestrians to determine how many cars and people travel through this intersection on a daily basis. This data must be graduated by time of day with an obvious focus on before and after school time frames. In addition to the traffic count data, the study should also include all available data about accidents at or near the intersection.

The basic factors to consider for any type of traffic control device include the volume of vehicles and pedestrians as well as the number of traffic lanes and the pedestrian crossing distance from curb to curb.

The easiest to implement and the least expensive option is use of volunteer pedestrian crossing guards. While the *Manual of Uniformed Traffic Control Devices* suggests using adults as crossing guards if available, high school juniors and seniors may be a resource to consider. Potential weaknesses include a lack of volunteers and difficulty in maintaining a set schedule to ensure someone always "on duty" when needed. For the system to work, it is necessary to have a volunteer coordinator responsible for recruiting, training and scheduling the crossing guards.

Another option is the installation of traffic calming devices at the intersection to slow vehicles down. One example would be the use of "speed humps". These are different than speed bumps because the humps are flat on top and wide enough to be crosswalks. These devices force traffic to drive slowly through the intersection. "Humps" may not be required from all four corners of the intersection. Dependent on the numbers from the traffic study, it may be feasible to place these humps only across 156th Street or Bennington Road. The only expense would be the installation of these asphalt humps, but any such modification to the roadway would have to be

approved by the Douglas County Engineer's Office.

For example in 1998, Grand Island considered using speed humps near its Senior High School. The city council considered a project estimated to cost \$75,000 to install the humps and add landscaping such as bushes and shrubs to deter students from crossing in places other than the marked and raised crosswalks. By comparison, Grand Island's Public Works Director estimated the cost of a pedestrian overpass at more than \$250,000. The council rejected the hump project by a 6-3 vote (Grand Island's *The Independent*, Feb 27, 1998).

Upgrading from the four-way stops signs to an automatic signal is the next option. Again, the results of the traffic study would be an excellent indicator whether the volume of traffic and other traffic flow variables necessitate this upgrade. According to the *MUTCD*, a "typical" automatic signal installation costs approximately \$125,000. That includes miscellaneous expenses such work items as sidewalk repair, pedestrian access curb cuts and required pavement markings.

With approval of the county board, the Douglas County Traffic Engineering and Traffic Planning Division installs approved traffic devices at the expense of the local Sanitary Improvement District.

The most expensive but long-term and safest upgrade is construction of a pedestrian overpass. To assess the need for a pedestrian overpass over a two-lane roadway, *MUTCD* has standard measures based on vehicular volume, number of children crossing during school crossing periods and the street width from curb to curb (crossing distance for the pedestrians). Figure 14 (page 45) is a graph of these measures.

If the traffic study demonstrates a need for a pedestrian overpass and the community wishes to pursue that option, the primary concern would be funding. Since neither 156th Street nor Bennington Road is a state or federal highway, those avenues of funding sources may be limited. Construction of a pedestrian overpass can easily exceed \$1 million even for a basic design.

The most viable option to complete this project may be to partner construction of a pedestrian overpass at 156th and Bennington Road with efforts to establish a hiker/biker trail through Bennington. Such a project will need to be coordinated with MAPA and the Department of Roads to ensure proper funding channels and design standards. If pursued, the bridge should be considered a gateway to Bennington and should serve to welcome visitors and connect them to the downtown area.

Trail Bridge:

Bennington has a wealth of park space and trail opportunity. The parks and school systems exemplify the potential that Bennington area residents hold for uniting toward common goals. Because of the value placed on parks and recreation, Bennington has developed a number of well-designed, equipped, and maintained park spaces. It will be important for community leaders to make the decision to tie these elements of the community together with a strong trail and bike route system.

Pedestrian Overpass Warrants for Two-Way Streets

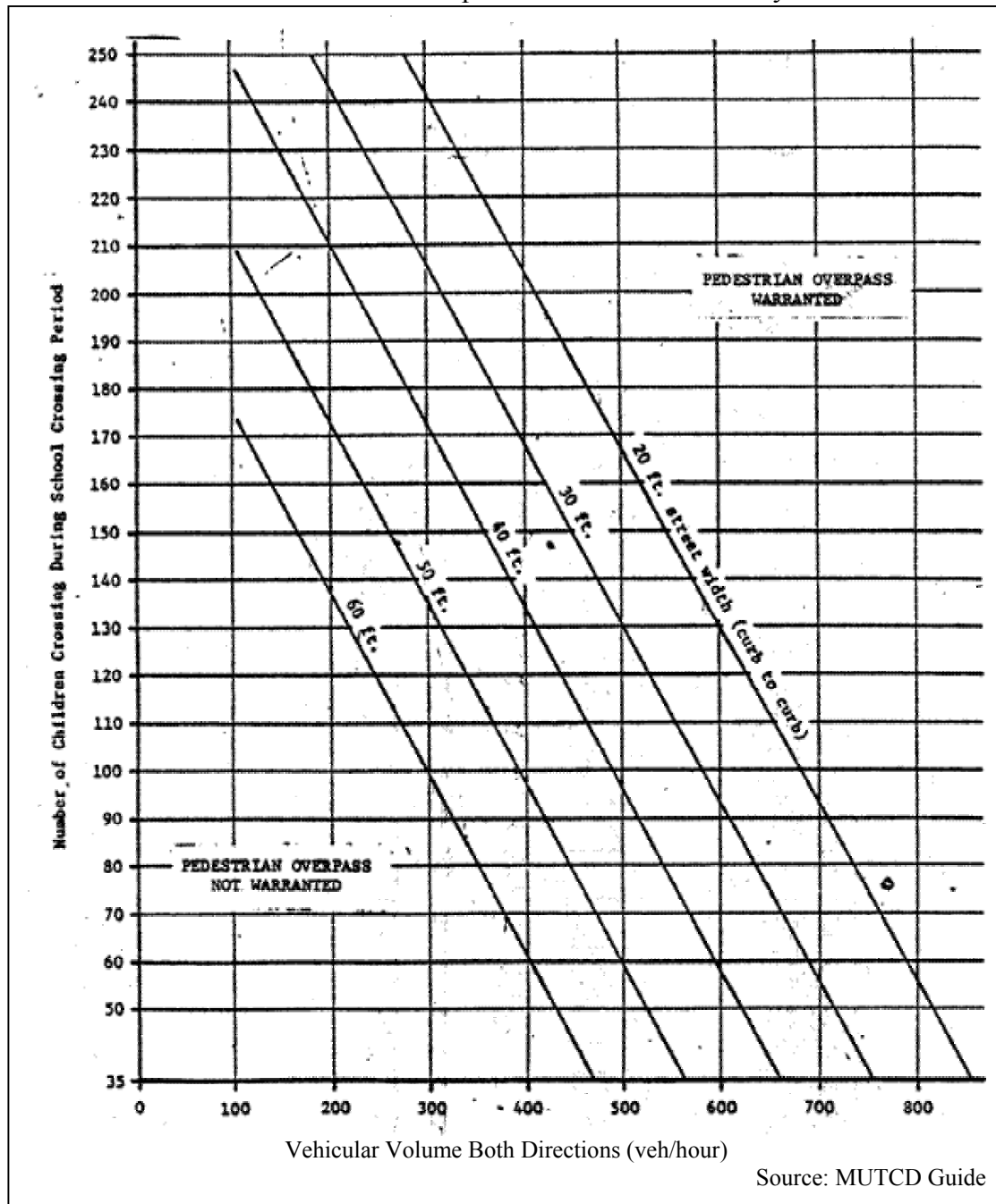


Figure 14 Pedestrian Overpass Decision Chart

The physical connection of spaces, such as the downtown, schools, parks, and neighborhoods, as well as the designs of individual parks could enhance the compelling vision for park space in Bennington. As a community space that has important meaning, parks should be woven together to provide a range of activities, adequate parking and clear signage at entry points and trail intersections.

One suggestion, which built upon the theme of unifying green space in Bennington, came from the Public Meeting of November 11, 2003. A community member posed the idea to utilize the flood plain area to the west of the school as an arboretum space. The community can pursue the merits of an arboretum further by contacting the Nebraska State Wide Arboretum.

Justin Evertson
Assistant Director for
Community Programs
402/472-5045
jevertson1@unl.edu

However, the focus of the School Group toward connecting Bennington park spaces is to suggest a walking bridge over Big Papillion Creek. The construction of such a bridge could unify available automobile parking areas located near the baseball fields on the north and soccer fields on the south (see Figure 15 below). The bridge would provide a link for students traveling from the new High School to the north portions of town without having to approach high traffic areas along Bennington Road.

Another benefit of to this option is the lightened parking burden of the baseball fields as visitors would have convenient access to an established parking lot next to the soccer fields South of Big Papillion Creek. Build, repair and widen sidewalks along these routes to maximize accessibility and safety for trail users, especially bicyclers. These trails should link to the regional trail network to provide for connectivity.



Figure 15 Conceptual Trail Bridge Connection Layout

Tournament Uses for Ball Fields:

The area surrounding Bennington has already recognized the exceptional recreation and sporting facilities offered in Bennington. After adequate parking space is secured, the Bennington community may want to explore the option of marketing its recreation areas, specifically the baseball fields, for tournament use.

Sport tournaments would make Bennington a destination point for families in the surrounding area. Establishing Bennington as a destination point is a key factor in presenting the quality of life offered by the community, and promoting the local economy. The community already laid the groundwork for sporting event tournaments by investing in an excellent set of baseball facilities. Once the parking is made available, the last step toward realizing this goal is to market Bennington as a tournament space.

Swimming Pool:

In each public forum the Bennington area residents voiced a strong desire to have a public swimming pool. Resoundingly, the Bennington community states that a swimming pool is an attractive commodity. The benefits of swimming would support the health and well being of the Bennington community. Swimming pools benefit a wide range of ages, and physical abilities. Toward supporting the health and well being of Bennington, the swimming pool supports both a form of aerobic exercise along with a source of income and attractiveness for the community.

Elizabeth Pooley stepped forward in the UNL Blackboard system to pursue a small water park in Bennington. Pooley is in the process of forming a committee with the expressed purpose of proposing, locating and raising the funds to build a pool.

Most communities that have ambitions of building new aquatic facilities begin with a needs assessment. A needs assessment functions as both the cornerstone for justifying the project to funding sources, and solidifying a level of community interest in a swimming pool project. Some of the groundwork for establishing the need for a pool has already been performed by the Bennington Engineering Club. The school is already a recognized gathering point for the community. Therefore it appears to be one of several logical locations for a swimming pool.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund might be able to offer some financial assistance, should Bennington opt for an outdoor pool. Since 1965, Nebraska has received \$38 million worth of improvements to state and city parks. Construction of swimming pools, ball diamonds, and outdoor recreation facilities are just a few of the projects funded by the program. Land and Water Conservation Funds can also be leveraged with other funds, through private, state and local partnerships. Send comments or questions regarding the Land and Water Conservation Fund program to:

Duane Westerholt
Nebraska Game & Parks Commission
2200 North 33rd Street
Lincoln, NE 68503
(402) 471-5411 (phone)

Neal Bedlan
Nebraska Game & Parks Commission
2200 North 33rd Street
Lincoln, NE 68503
(402) 471-5424 (phone)

COMMUNITY/CIVIC CENTER

Overview

Through discussions with community members and the class' data gathering stage, several needs were identified for the immediate and near future. These needs included:

- a physical place to enhance the sense of place of the community
- a place for youth to gather
- a place for seniors to gather
- a meeting hall
- new facilities for public services[†] (specifically the police, city offices and library)
- a swimming pool
- indoor recreational opportunities

Given these needs, we felt that building a community and/or civic hall would address many of these needs, if not all. Public buildings act as a physical representation of a town's spirit. A building that is unique, beautiful, and built to last is a physical representation of these same qualities in the town's character. While a community center does not constitute identity on its own, it is a great source to establish a "sense of place" for the citizens of Bennington, as well as for visitors. Currently, the Bennington school is the physical manifestation of the town character. Bennington must build on this through its other public buildings.

Depending on what land is purchased and how the community feels these needs should be met, several options exist. Before these options are presented, it is necessary to provide a brief description of the facilities.

[†] *Current fire department facilities are adequate. If it is determined that the fire department needs to move from its current facilities, it is not recommended that they be integrated with a civic center.*

Overview of Recreational Facilities

Swimming Pool*: approx. 7,250 – 8,000 sq. ft.

A swimming pool also needs to include locker rooms, a storage area and/or office, and a front desk. The choice between an indoor pool and outdoor pool needs to be made. An indoor pool can offer year-round swimming, and still offer an inviting place during the summer if skylights and large "garage" doors are integrated into the design. These large "garage" doors may be opened during warm days to allow more sun in and offer swimmers a chance to catch some sun on an outside veranda. However, an outdoor pool is typically cheaper to build and is likely to be eligible for a 50% funding grant from the Land & Water Conservation Fund, through the Nebraska Games and Parks Commission (see <http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/parks/lwcf/lwcf.html> or http://www.nps.gov/nrcr/programs/lwcf/exemp_prjts.html).

Bennington may also want to consider integrating a swimming pool as part of the new high school (in this case, an indoor facility). In addition to creating a new extra-curricular sport for the high school, the swimming pool can bring in funds to the school and/or city by opening it to the public during evening hours and the summer.

** Operational funding for a swimming pool may be aided through fees to use the pool, equipment rental (such as kickboards or foam noodles), a concession stand, swimming classes, water aerobics classes, and lifeguard training classes.*

Gymnasium*: approx. 9,000 – 10,000 sq. ft.

A gymnasium may share the locker rooms with the swimming pool or provide its own. A gymnasium offers a variety of activities, including: basketball, volleyball, racquet ball, aerobics classes, running track, a dance hall, and many others.

A community gymnasium offers opportunities for community members to use the gym during normal operational hours. There is the option, however, of opening the school's gymnasium for community use. While this is an excellent way to get maximum use from school facilities, community use will be limited by school hours, practice times, and school games. The community must do a more thorough needs assessment to determine if this type of facility needs to be separate or if the school may fill this need sufficiently.

** Operational funding for a basketball court may be supplemented through fees charged for using the facility, equipment rental, and aerobics classes. Selling punch cards to users is a source of funding that also encourages frequent use. Rental fees may be charged to rent the facility to a sports league, or organization wishing to hold a dance.*

Overview of Civic Facilities

City Offices: approx. 1,500 - 2,500 sq. ft.

These need to include a mayor's office, city employee(s) office(s), a reception area, small meeting room, and a records/storage room.

Police Department: approx. 1,500 - 2000 sq. ft.

This should include offices for at least 4 police officers & a secretary (currently there are 2 FT officers, 2 PT officers, and 3 reserve officers), an evidence room, locker room(s), a supply room, and garage space for 3 patrol vehicles. Since detainment is handled through the Douglas County Sheriff Department, detainment facilities are not needed at this time. However, since facilities for a police department should last a minimum of 60 years, Bennington needs to consider future space needs for an expanded police force.

City Hall*: approx. 600 - 1000 sq. ft. (depending on range of uses desired)

A Village Hall provides a public space to conduct city council meeting, planning commission meetings, committee meetings, and other town meetings. It also provides a meeting space for

local organizations, clubs, music recitals, wedding receptions, and cultural programs.

** If the community desires, a rental fee may be charged to non-public organizations wishing to use this space.*

Library*: approx. 3,500 - 7000 sq. ft.

The majority of the area in a library is taken up by the stacks. Reading areas for patrons should be integrated into the design, including a special reading area for children (a place where they can read on their own and be read to). Areas for computers, media (videos, audio, etc), circulation/reference desk(s), an office for library staff, and bathrooms need to be included in the layout of the library. The Bennington library is popular among Bennington residents and it also serves patrons outside the Bennington city limits. Ample space needs to be provided for to accommodate the library's growing collection. Room for future expansion is a requirement for this facility.

** Operational funds are currently received from the City of Bennington and the Douglas County library tax funds. Therefore, it is recommended that patrons who live outside the city limits of Bennington and/or Douglas County pay a fee to receive a library card. This fee may be minimal. In addition, the community may wish to have a minimal video rental fee for non-educational videos checked out from the library. This type of fee would be charged to all patrons, regardless of their location.*

Teen Center*: approx. 800 - 1000 sq. ft.

There is a strong need for a safe place for Bennington youth to go during non-school hours. Bennington youth should have ample opportunities to offer their input on what activities and services are offered in a teen center - the eventual success of this facility is dependent on this. In addition, an alternate name for a teen center should be created because this term tends to lead to failure as well. Possible teen center facilities may include billiard tables, ping pong tables, arcade games, homework tables (with volunteer "homework helpers" on site), computers (for homework), and vending machines.

** Vending machines and arcade games may offer a source of operational funding. It is not recommended that fees be charged to students wishing to check out equipment to play billiards, ping-pong, etc. This is likely to discourage use of the facility for people with little to no income.*

Senior Center: approx. 600 - 800 sq. ft.

In planning a senior center, input from Bennington's senior population is required in order to increase the likelihood of success of the facility. A senior center offers a place for seniors to enjoy social time with others, whether it is through playing cards, board games, or quilting. It also offers a place for seniors to receive information on services available to them. Equipment in a senior center may include card tables, bookshelves, reading chairs, coffee maker and mugs, and a few computers with Internet connections (among other uses, this offers seniors an opportunity to keep in touch with loved ones through e-mail). As part of enhancing inter-generational unity in the community, a senior center should provide opportunities for other age groups to interact with seniors. This can include volunteer opportunities for younger generations (for example, computer training for seniors). Operational costs for this type of facility are typically minimal. It is not recommended that fees be charged due to the limited income of most seniors. However,

a place for voluntary donations may be set up.

Miscellaneous Facilities: approx. 400 - 600 sq. ft.

Restrooms and a small kitchen may be shared by the above civic center facilities. If the building is two or more floors, restrooms should be offered on each floor. In addition, an elevator is needed for a building of two or more floors.

Alternatives

Alternative 1: All-Inclusive Recreational Center and Civic Center (1 facility)

This option allows the community to build all needed facilities at once. Obtaining one site for a large facility may be logistically easier for the City, but likely will not aesthetically fit into the small town character of Bennington. Funds to build this facility will be needed in a lump sum. This can be a positive because it will all be taken care of at once. This can be a negative because the sticker price of one large facility is psychologically harder to swallow. Creating a public/private partnership is one option for reducing the cost of this facility for the City.

Swimming Pool (7,250 - 8,000 sq. ft.)
Gymnasium (9,000 - 10,000 sq. ft.)
City Offices (1,500 - 2,500 sq. ft.)
Police Department (1,500 - 2,000 sq. ft.)
Village Hall (600 - 1000 sq. ft.)
Library (3500 - 7000 sq. ft.)
Teen Center (800 - 1000 sq. ft.)
Senior Center (600 - 800 sq. ft.)
Miscellaneous Facilities (400 - 600 sq. ft.)

Approximate building size:
High estimate: 33,000 sq. ft.
Low estimate: 25,200 sq. ft.

Sites available for this alternative: 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, or 8

Alternative 2: Recreational Center and Civic Center (2 separate facilities)

This option offers the City of Bennington the opportunity to recruit a development company to build the recreational facility, perhaps as a part of a continuing-care retirement community (CCRC). A CCRC provides an excellent example of public/private partnerships. The overall cost to the community is reduced and, thus, the range of services is significantly greater. The building and operational costs are reduced for the City, by providing incentives to a developer. This arrangement increases the feasibility of providing a greater range of services to all community members.

Recreational Center: Swimming Pool (7,250 - 8000 sq. ft.)
Gymnasium (9,000 - 10,000 sq. ft.)

Approximate building size
High estimate: 18,000 sq. ft.
Low estimate: 16,300 sq. ft.

Civic Center: City Offices (1,500 - 2,500 sq. ft.)
Police Department (1,500 - 2,000 sq. ft.)
Village Hall (600 - 1000 sq. ft.)
Library (3500 - 7000 sq. ft.)
Teen Center (800 - 1000 sq. ft.)
Senior Center (600 - 800 sq. ft.)
Miscellaneous Facilities (400 - 600 sq. ft.)

Approximate building size:
High estimate: 15,000
Low estimate: 9,000

Sites available for this alternative: 1, 2, 3, 7, or 8 (for the Rec. Center) with 4 or 5 (for the Civic Center).

Alternative 3: Recreational Center, Civic Center, and Library (3 separate facilities)

This option is similar to alternative #2. However, this option separates the library from the Civic Center. This may be seen as a negative because multiple projects end up competing for the support of the community. However, this would allow the library to locate in a place that may provide more room for expansion. When considering the location of a library, it is recommended to avoid locations that are isolated from community activity.

Recreational Center: Swimming Pool (7,250 - 8000 sq. ft.)
Gymnasium (9,000 - 10,000 sq. ft.)

Approximate building size
High estimate: 18,000 sq. ft.
Low estimate: 16,300 sq. ft.

Civic Center: City Offices (1,500 - 2,500 sq. ft.)
Police Department (1,500 - 2,000 sq. ft.)
Village Hall (600 - 1000 sq. ft.)
Teen Center (800 - 1000 sq. ft.)
Senior Center (600 - 800 sq. ft.)
Miscellaneous Facilities (400 - 600 sq. ft.)

Approximate building size:
High estimate: 8000 sq. ft.
Low estimate: 5400 sq. ft.

Library:

Approximate building size
High estimate: 7000 sq. ft.
Low estimate: 3500 sq. ft.

Sites available for this alternative: Same as Alternative # 2 except the Library may be sited on any proposed location.

Organization

General:

The community should remember that it takes more than money and a willing citizenry to build a community/civic center. The initiative to create a new community/civic center requires the cooperation of all government entities and a successful split of responsibilities with the understanding of the ultimate goal for each entity. In order to effectively complete the task of bringing a community/civic center to Bennington, we recommend that a Committee/Task Force be formed from a group of able and energetic people within the community.

Responsibilities of the Committee/Taskforce:

1. To conduct a more thorough needs assessment of the community to determine facilities and services needed for such a facility
2. To facilitate brainstorming sessions with community groups
3. Identify priorities
4. Decide on the number of buildings needed to meet community needs
5. To develop a vision for the community and/or civic center/library
6. To work with the City Council in determining site location(s)
7. To review and make recommendations to the City Council and Budget Committee on grants.
8. To investigate Federal, State, County and private funding for implementation of the proposed plan.
9. To act in an advisory capacity to the Mayor and City Council regarding development issues in relation to the community/civic center.
10. To foster public knowledge and support of the official community/civic center.
11. To develop and recommend site and building design guidelines to the City Council
12. To develop and recommend coordinated and supportive services programs in relation to the community/civic center.
13. To recommend community/civic center and supportive services priorities for the City.

Issues that a Committee/Task force should deal with:

- 1 Schematic Design Phase
- 2 Project Scope
- 3 Value Analysis
- 4 Project Budget
- 5 Project Schedule
- 6 Review Committee
- 7 Design Commission Review

Potential Sites

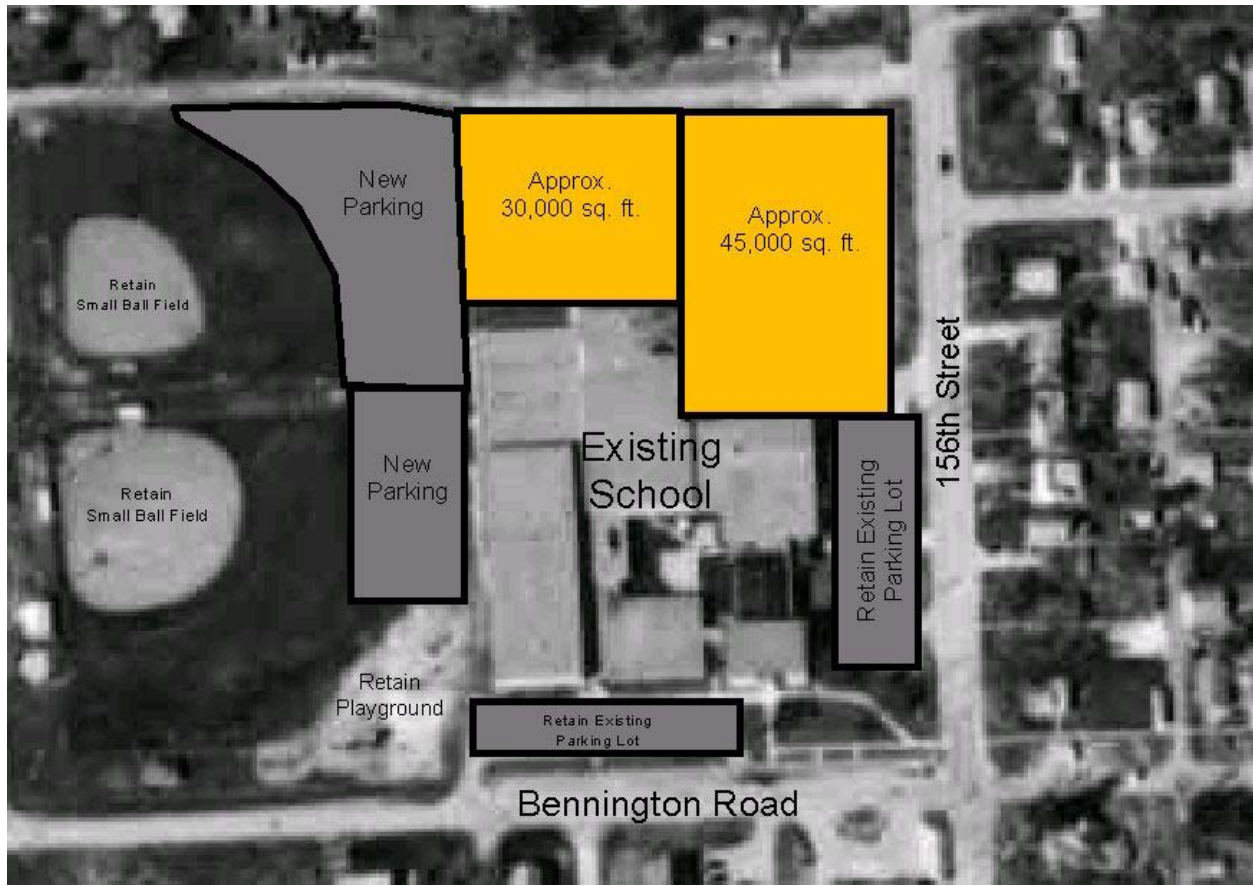
Alternative Site 1 (Figure 16): Near the Future High School



- A. Undeveloped Site
- B. Privately owned
- C. Approximately 435,600 sq. ft. (approx. 10 acres)
- D. Appraised land value at approximately \$11,254
- E. Outside of city limits
- F. Water and sewer lines? (These might be extended for the new high school anyway)
- G. Across from future high school

- H. Possible trail linkage with rest of town
- I. Out of the floodplain
- J. Prominent site at 168th and Bennington Road
- K. Easily accessible by automobile
- L. Not located near downtown
- M. Not located near existing neighborhoods

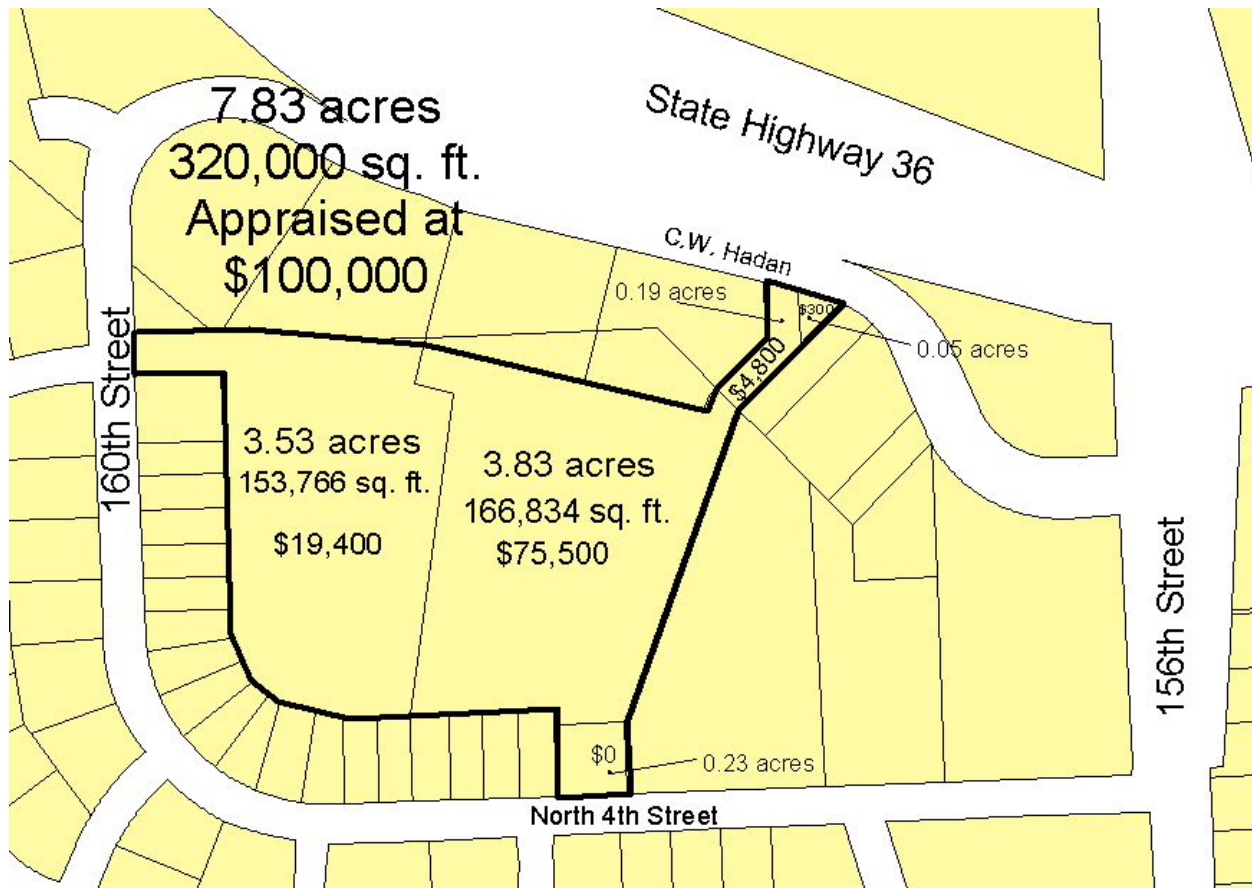
Alternative Site 2 (Figure 17): Incorporate with Existing School Site



- A. Underdeveloped Site (parking lots and open space)
- B. Publicly owned (school district)
- C. Approximately 75,000 sq. ft. plus parking west of existing building
- D. Appraised land value at approximately \$0 (public land)
- E. Inside city limits
- F. Water and sewer lines? Should be easily connected with existing system
- G. Located adjacent to the north side of existing school
- H. Possible trail linkage with rest of town would be simple
- I. Out of the floodplain
- J. Prominent site on 156th Street adjacent to existing school
- K. Central location in existing community
- L. Easily accessible by automobile, bike, wheelchair, or foot

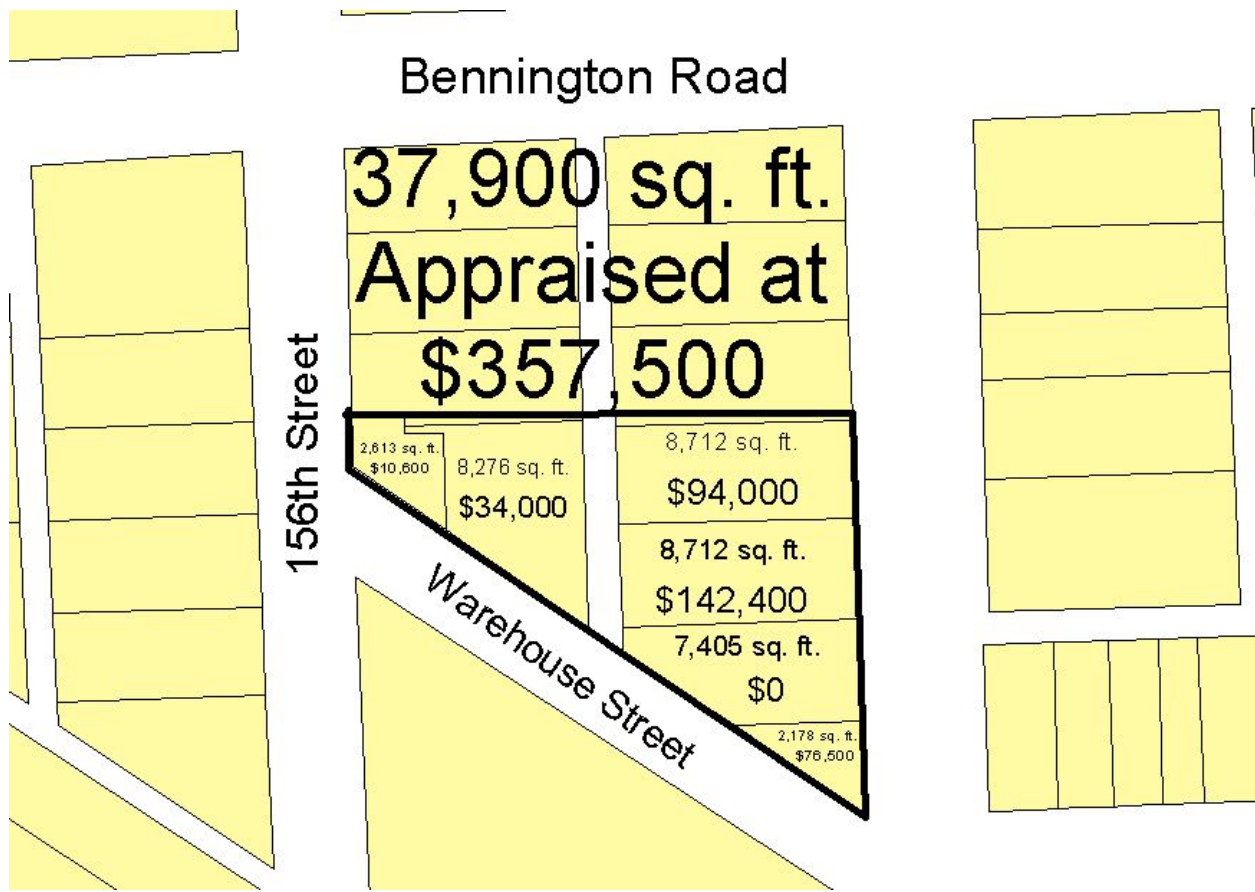
- M. Located within easy walking distance of downtown
- N. Located near existing neighborhoods

Alternative Site 3 (Figure 18): Near the Water Tower



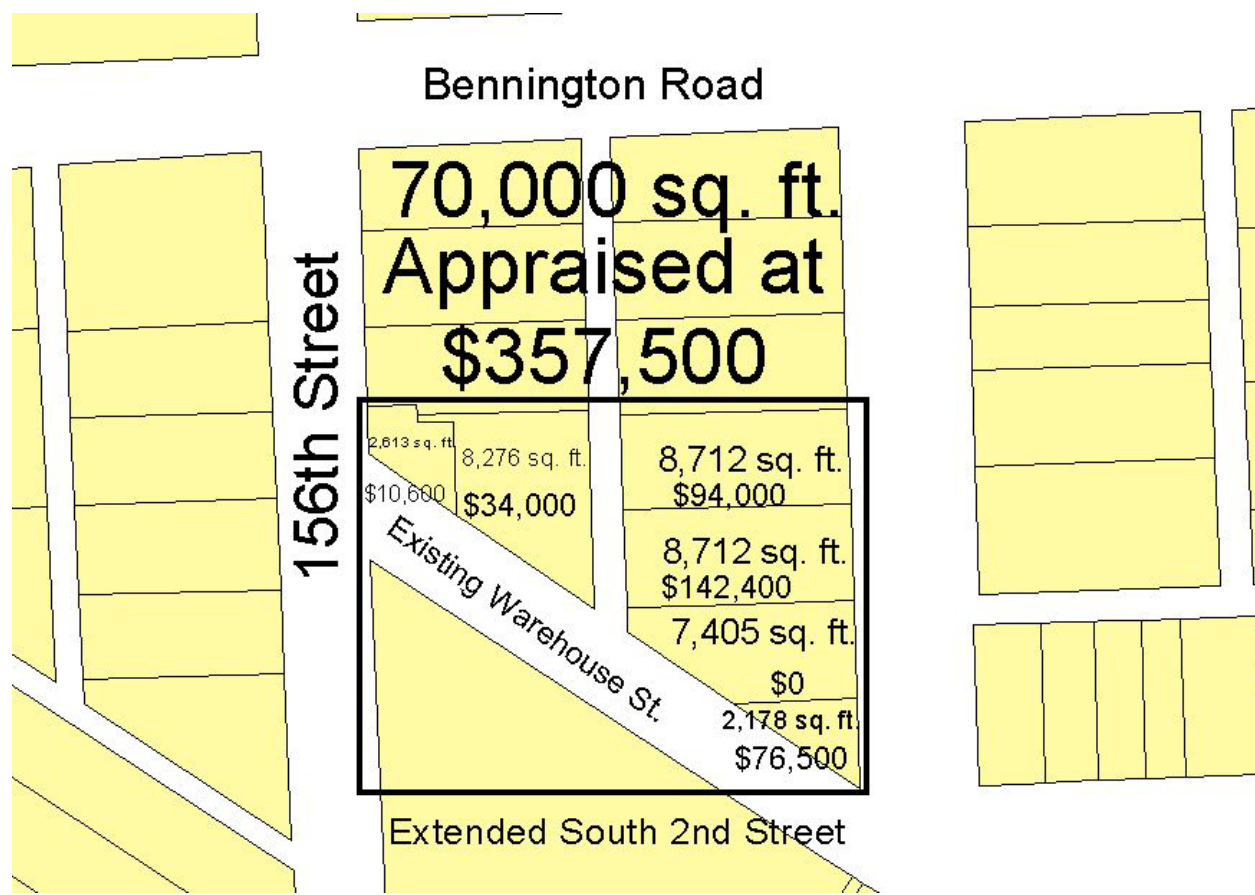
- A. Undeveloped Site
- B. Privately and publicly owned (public owns only the water tower parcel)
- C. Approximately 320,000 sq. ft. (approx. 7.83 acres)
- D. Appraised land value at approximately \$100,000
- E. Inside city limits
- F. Water and sewer lines? Should be easily connected with existing system
- G. Located near the water tower; south of Goodrich Deli
- H. Trail linkage with rest of town would be somewhat problematic
- I. Out of the floodplain
- J. Prominent site on top of hill, but not adjacent a major road
- K. Located on northern edge of the Bennington Park neighborhood
- L. Easily accessible by automobile, bike, wheelchair, or foot; however, the steepness of the hill may prove problematic for pedestrians in icy conditions and additional traffic may be undesirable to adjacent neighborhood
- M. Not located near downtown; located near Highway 36 strip development
- N. Located near an existing neighborhood

Alternative Site 4 (Figure 19): Downtown: 156th and Warehouse



- A. Developed Site
- B. Privately and publicly owned (public owns the city building parcel)
- C. Approximately 37,900 sq. ft.
- D. Appraised total value (of private property) at approximately \$357,500
- E. Inside city limits
- F. Water and sewer lines? Should be easily connected with existing system
- G. Located at 156th and Warehouse on north side of the street
- H. Trail linkage with rest of town would be easy
- I. Out of the floodplain
- J. Prominent site at entrance to downtown from 156th Street
- K. Located near existing neighborhoods
- L. Easily accessible by automobile, bike, wheelchair, or foot; however, additional parking may be necessary in addition to street parking
- M. Located at entrance to downtown
- N. Location could perform secondary function as a gateway to downtown

Alternative Site 5: Downtown (Figure 20): 156th and South 2nd Street



- A. Developed Site
- B. Privately and publicly owned (public owns the city building parcel, rights of way, and fire station/library parcel)
- C. Approximately 70,000 sq. ft.
- D. Appraised total value (of private property) at approximately \$357,500
- E. Inside city limits
- F. Water and sewer lines? Will require new infrastructure
- G. Located at 156th and an extended South 2nd Street on the north side
- H. Trail linkage with rest of town would be easy
- I. Out of the floodplain; fill may be needed for south side if in floodplain
- J. Prominent site at entrance to downtown from 156th Street
- K. Located near existing neighborhoods
- L. Easily accessible by automobile, bike, wheelchair, or foot; however, additional parking may be necessary in addition to street parking
- M. Located at entrance to downtown
- N. Location could perform secondary function as a gateway to downtown
- O. Replacing of infrastructure could be too costly
- P. Downtown will be visible from 156th Street
- Q. Requires removal of the fire station/library structure

Alternative Site 6 (Figure 21): Downtown, South 2nd Street



- A. Undeveloped Site
- B. Privately owned
- C. Approximately 7,400 sq. ft.
- D. Appraised total value at approximately \$3,700
- E. Inside city limits
- F. Access to existing water and sewer lines
- G. Located at center of downtown on South 2nd Street on the north side
- H. Trail linkage with rest of town would be easy
- I. Out of the floodplain
- J. Prominent site at center of downtown
- K. Located near existing neighborhoods
- L. Easily accessible by automobile, bike, wheelchair, or foot; however, additional parking may be necessary in addition to street parking
- M. Could be developed at same time as new wall
- N. Small site; maybe a single function such as a library or civic offices

Alternative Site 7 (Figure 22): Tim Ohrt Park



- A. Undeveloped Site; underutilized park
- B. Publicly owned
- C. Approximately 3 acres
- D. Appraised total value at \$0
- E. Inside city limits
- F. Access to existing water and sewer lines?
- G. Located at eastern edge of town on Bennington Road
- H. Trail linkage with rest of town would be easy
- I. Out of the floodplain
- J. Prominent site at edge of town
- K. Located near existing neighborhoods
- L. Easily accessible by automobile, bike, wheelchair, or foot; however, traffic circulation may be problematic

Alternative Site 8 (Figure 23): East of Town



- A. Undeveloped Site
- B. Privately owned
- C. Approximately 40 acres
- D. Appraised total value at \$32,000
- E. Outside city limits
- F. Access to existing water and sewer lines? New infrastructure might need to be extended
- G. East of town on Bennington Road
- H. Trail linkage with rest of town would be easy; site is next to a creek
- I. Out of the floodplain
- J. Prominent site at east of town
- K. Disconnected from existing neighborhoods
- L. Easily accessible by automobile and bike, wheelchair, or foot traffic may be difficult, especially for children
- M. Large site; possible public-private partnership for a Continuing Care Retirement Community

Timeline for Development

Form Committee/Task Force (January to February, 2004)

1. Task Force takes leadership in organizing and promoting to the public (February, 2004 to completion)
2. Hire a grant writer if determined a necessity (May 2004)
3. Task Force responsible for writing a request for proposals (RFP) for a design team: after “vision” is determined and site is located and purchased (Mid 2006)
4. Task Force evaluates RFPs and makes recommendations to the City for approval (Late 2006)
5. Task Force works with the design team and acts as a liaison to the community: From the hiring of the design team (Early 2007 to completion)

Community Visioning: Series of processes from the formation of the Task Force to completion

1. Focus Groups/charrets: identifying needs and formation of vision (May 2004 - August 2004)
2. Town review sessions: After architects submit design(s) for site(s) (Early 2007 to completion)

Funding: Simultaneous and on-going processes beginning with the formation of the Task Force

1. Identify local funding sources: May, 2004 to completion
2. Identify local funding mechanisms, such as taxes (May, 2004 to completion)
3. Fund raisers (August, 2004 to completion)
4. Hope for wealthy donors (anytime)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Overview

No planning study is complete without an economic development element. Without a strong economic base in Bennington other community development activities will struggle to be realized under fiscal pressures. Bennington, as a community, needs to take control of its economic future to insure proper and sustainable growth occurs. The community of Bennington has stated in public meetings that it has an interest in light industry and has zoned to facilitate growth in this area. This is a step in the right direction. Bennington now needs to address how to attract light industries to these zones.

Growth Options

Bennington is going to become even more appealing to developers in the near future as Omaha's westward expansion is running out of room as it near the Elkhorn River, an important geographic boundary that Omaha has claimed it will not cross. Development will rapidly switch from a westward expansion to a northwest direction with Bennington being the most logical destination. If Bennington does not take action to take hold of its economic development path now, it will not be prepared for the rapid development that is coming in the near future.

Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce:

Though there may be some fear of joining ranks with Omaha, Bennington should look into joining the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce (OCC) <http://www.omahachamber.org/> The OCC serves the City of Omaha and a three county region; Douglas, Sarpy, and Dodge county. When approached by a client looking for land for light industry, the OCC will show a site in Omaha and a site in one of the counties. This would give Bennington a chance to be represented by highly knowledgeable economic developers that can help market and sell Bennington as a place to develop light industry or any other type of business.

Economic Development Corporation:

Bennington should also look to form an Economic Development Corporation or an Economic Development Committee that can represent Bennington's economic development efforts. A group of this type should be made up of citizens, business owners and civic leaders to insure a good mix of needs and desires are represented. This group would also be responsible for developing economic development strategies and finding ways to better market Bennington as a business location. Concepts that will be useful when pursuing this option include:

- Improving the efficiency of existing firms (the retention and expansion of existing firms). Strategies might include: Assisting with the procurement of job training funds, sponsoring business seminars, encouraging collaborations and industry clusters.
- Improving the ability to capture dollars. Strategies in this area would focus on retaining retirement income in the community, increasing the amount of purchases made locally,

providing more services locally, etc.

- Encouraging the formation of new businesses (Encouraging and assisting entrepreneurs to form businesses, which respond to the changing needs of the community. The formation of investment capital, revolving loan funds, creation of incubators, building shell spec buildings and providing management assistance might assist these efforts)

The University of Wisconsin – Cooperative Extension provides an overview of some aspects of community EDCs, their structure, purpose and benefits. The web site is located at http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/economic_dev_corp_steps.htm

The Economic Development Corporation structure is a proven concept for Nebraska communities. Many county wide and community initiatives work to market their area for potential industries. Assistance is also given to accommodate and enhance the economic development potential of existing business partners. Bennington will find many benefits from the networking structure of an Economic Development Corporation. With those benefits come up front costs to community leaders and a steep learning curve for those members without experience in such an endeavor.

Alternative 1: Membership in the Sarpy County Economic Development Corporation

The closest EDC to Bennington is Sarpy County EDC which serves Sarpy County and the Greater Omaha Area. In this alternative, representatives from Bennington would contact that EDC to get a sense of how they could benefit from membership under that structure since Bennington is considered part of the Greater Omaha Area. As a member, industrial site locations will be posted to the web containing photos of the area, site services, and details. Further details and membership benefits can be described by contacting the Sarpy County EDC:

Toby Churchill
tchurchill@accessomaha.com
Sarpy County EDC
1301 Harney Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102
(402) 346-5015 ext.224
1-800-852-2622
FAX: (402) 346-7050

Alternative 2: Formation of Bennington Economic Development Board or Corporation

If the proper leadership is available within the community or time has been taken to educate a group of individuals about the details of an EDC, Bennington may seek to create its own. Minimum requirements include a Board of Directors, volunteer or paid staff, accounting, audits, organization structure and by-laws. The Bennington EDC would serve to provide membership to community businesses and residents interested in furthering the economic identity of Bennington. Examples of other, smaller, successful EDCs around the state include:

McCook, Nebraska <http://www.mccookne.org/>
York, Nebraska <http://www.comegrowwithyork.org/>
Central City, Nebraska <http://www.centralcityne.org/econ.htm>
Tilden, Nebraska <http://www.ci.tilden.ne.us/econ-dev.htm>

Alternative 3: Combination of Douglas County Communities into an EDC

This final alternative would engage many of the existing communities in Douglas, and perhaps Washington County, that do not currently belong to an EDC. A larger pool of resources would be available as a result of this venture, but there may be a further spread of opportunities as well. Considerable organization and recruitment would be necessary to develop this partnership.

Preferred Alternative:

Economic Development Corporations are local initiative, set up by concerned citizens and business leaders. In Bennington, there is not a lack of concern for the future development of the community. Many comments have been made concerning the recruitment of the “right” industry to Bennington. The “right” industry will only locate in Bennington if it is recruited successfully. Successful recruitment can be delivered through the EDC structure but there is currently a limited capacity for business support in Bennington. For this reason, it is recommended that Bennington leaders work to plug into the resources available through the Sarpy County Economic Development Corporation.

Bennington must realize the inevitable encroachment of Omaha by utilizing many of the benefits that come with their close proximity. The Omaha Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Omaha/Sarpy County EDC work out of the same offices and will provide a large competitive edge over what Bennington leaders could hope to secure. Through recruitment, advertising, financing incentives, and education, an economic development board for Bennington can work with the existing resources available in Omaha to pursue the “right” businesses for Bennington’s unique environment. This alternative should not be viewed as Bennington succumbing to Omaha, but rather capitalizing on available resources.

Site Development:

Another step to recruit the “right” businesses to Bennington would look at is site development. When industries are looking for site locations, a site that already has infrastructure in place is very appealing and with Bennington’s strategic location near Omaha and on major transit lines, prepared properties should be marketable. To prepare a site is expensive, but potentially quite lucrative. This objective is furthered through the structure of an Economic Development Corporation.

Funding:

So how can Bennington fund economic development? Bennington unfortunately does not meet the qualifications for most economic development grants. Bennington simply has too high of an employment rate and medium household income. Many communities have pursued Tax

Increment Financing (TIF) to fund site development, but in the state of Nebraska only sites that have been designated as “blighted and substandard” are available for TIF financing. There may be some small parcels that would qualify for TIF financing within the downtown area and should be pursued. Keep in mind a lawyer will need to be hired to work through the complicated legalities of TIF financing.

With grant opportunities being at a minimum and with the limited amount of parcels that could possibly be designated as blighted, Bennington needs to look to another way to finance economic development and therefore take control of its economic future. Bennington’s best possible funding source is LB 840/Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act. LB 840 is a property and/or sales tax increase that is used to fund local economic development projects. To date, 33 communities in Nebraska are already using this strategy to fund economic development. This is Bennington’s opportunity to generate funds to not only develop sites, but also to purchase development rights, market itself, start an economic development corporation, etc.

Refer to Appendix G for an overview of LB 840 structure. To order the "Guide to Implementing the Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act" and for additional information concerning LB 840, write or call:

Dave Miller
Email: dmiller@neded.org
Nebraska Department of Economic Development,
P.O. Box 94666,
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4666
Phone (402) 471-3775

Farmers’ Markets

Farmers’ Markets are one component of a holistic economic development plan with a multi-dimensional benefit to the city of Bennington. First, a farmers’ market provides a forum (or market) for local goods to be bought and sold, promoting economic activity at a micro level. Second, they allow producers and consumers to come face-to-face, allowing consumers to be confident of the quality of products they are purchasing. Thirdly, as community members come each week to the market they build community unity as they get to know each other and the gifts and talents of those in the community. Fourthly, the market serves as a spring board for other economic activity. For example, with a downtown farmers’ market, the consumers and producers will be exposed to the other businesses in the downtown area, whether it be a coffee shop, book store, or specialty shop.

There are four farmers’ markets in the Bennington area. They are two in downtown Omaha, one in Fremont, and one in Blair, which have markets on Saturday morning. While new development in the Bennington area creates a larger market potential for a farmers’ market, it is important to survey the community to find out the need and/or interest in a new market, when others currently exist in the area. A sample survey form can be found in the Farmers’ Market packet included as Appendix H. In order to reach the largest number of people, the survey should be distributed in key areas around Bennington such as Cubby’s, churches, and the school. It would also be wise to

include the survey in the school district newsletter which reaches everyone in the school district to get as high of a response rate as possible.

Once the survey is completed and the results are analyzed there are three possible alternatives that could be taken:

1. Start a Bennington Farmers' Market.
2. Partner with an existing farmers' market from Fremont, Blair, or Omaha to promote Bennington goods in those markets.
3. Do not start a farmers' market in Bennington.

If either alternative 1 or 2 is chosen, the following action plan will help guide the process:

Timeline for Farmers' Market

	January	February	March
Alternative 1 – New Bennington Farmers' Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey – survey community members on their skills and interests that could be used in developing a farmers' market (see Appendix H). Place survey at strategic locations where people frequent (Cubby's, school, church). Compile a list of additional people to contact who did not fill out survey, but have known skills/interest in the community. Review all literature provided and contact necessary agencies. Decide on alternative 1, 2, or 3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather survey results and compile a list of people and their selling interests. Contact these people and invite the public to a public meeting regarding the starting of a farmers market. This meeting will serve as an opportunity to inform the community of the rationale and plans for starting a farmers market as well as to get community feedback. Through this meeting and the survey results identify a market committee who will be responsible for spearheading the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee will become familiar with the provided literature and Nebraska guidelines for running a farmers market. Committee will contact other surrounding market organizers (see Appendix H). Committee will determine the time, location, season, rules, and regulations for the market. Committee will draft guidelines and develop appropriate vender forms for the market.
Alternative 2 – Partner with existing farmers' market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey – survey community members on their skills and interests that could be used in developing a farmers' market (see Appendix H). Place survey at strategic locations where people frequent (Cubby's, school, church). Compile a list of additional people to contact who did not fill out survey, but have known skills/interest in the community. Review all literature provided and contact necessary agencies. Decide on alternative 1, 2, or 3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather survey results and compile a list of people and their selling interests. Contact these people and invite the public to a public meeting regarding partnering with a surrounding market. This meeting will serve as an opportunity to inform the community of the rationale and plans for partnering with another farmers market as well as to get community feedback. Through this meeting and the survey results identify a market committee who will be responsible for spearheading the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee will become familiar with the provided literature and Nebraska guidelines for selling at a farmers' market. Committee will contact other surrounding market organizers to find a partnering market (see Appendix H).

	April	May	June
Alternative 1 – New Bennington Farmers’ Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vendor promotion – the committee will actively seek out residents who would like to sell at the market. ▪ The appropriate forms, permits, and permissions will be sought out and completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vendor promotion – the committee will actively seek out residents who would like to sell at the market. ▪ Promotion to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Start farmer’s market and continue through the established season
Alternative 2 – Partner with existing farmers’ market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vendor promotion – the committee will actively seek out residents who would like to sell at the market. ▪ The appropriate forms, permits, and permissions will be sought out and completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vendor promotion – the committee will actively seek out residents who would like to sell at the market. ▪ Promotion to the community of local vendor’s products at area markets. ▪ Area markets begin. 	
	July	August	September
Alternative 1 – New Bennington Farmers’ Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue farmers’ market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue farmers’ market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At the end of the season the committee and vendors will come together to re-evaluate and make change for the following season.
Alternative 2 – Partner with existing farmers’ market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue farmers’ market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue farmers’ market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At the end of the season the committee and vendors will come together to re-evaluate and make change for the following season.
	October	November	December
Alternative 1 – New Bennington Farmers’ Market			
Alternative 2 – Partner with existing farmers’ market			

TRANSPORTATION

Overview

The transportation System for Bennington involves different modes of transportation to achieve the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in an environmentally friendly manner.

The transportation network includes streets, sidewalks, bicycle routes. This component of the project will consider funding sources, action strategies / recommendations, and a time matrix for an implementation process. We would like this plan to acknowledge the transportation planning process as being both dynamic and ongoing, establishing a framework within which all possible transportation improvements are evaluated and prioritized for implementation. Here, these series of established refinements will move projects from the general to the specific and from a concept to a construction phase.

Funding

The 1962 Federal Aid Act required states and local governments to conduct cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing (“3C”) transportation planning to receive federal funding for highway and transit improvements. In 1973, an amendment to this act further required the governor of each state, with local concurrence, to designate a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for every urbanized area to coordinate area wide transportation planning. Three pieces of Federal legislation that dramatically impacts the way transportation planning is conducted in the United States include and must be in compliance with the following requirements: (1) Clean Air Act Amendment (CAA) of 1990; (2) Inter-Modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991; and (3) the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) of 1998. This established the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) in Douglass County. MAPA provides a forum for cooperative decision-making among responsible state and officials, public and private transit operators, and the general public. This MPO is also responsible for capital programming through an annually-updated multi-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), containing all federal and state funding for surface transportation projects and programs. The TIP becomes part of the State TIP (STIP), identifying regional TIPs that have been adopted by MAPA and develops into a comprehensive list of all highway and transit projects in urban and rural areas that propose to use federal funds.

In order for Bennington to maximize its opportunity for funding through MAPA or Nebraska Department of Roads for transportation projects, location as a strategic advantage must be considered. We recommend that access points from major arterials become a focal point for implementation. The access points that should be considered are Highway 36, Highway 31, Interstate 275, Interstate 680 and Highway 133. Improvements in accessibility from these arterials could contribute greatly to the overall objectives we have identified for Bennington. This will ensure that capital projects for public services are matched with available revenues and that transportation services are provided in an economical and effective manner and in coordination with the pattern of development planned in the Comprehensive Plan.

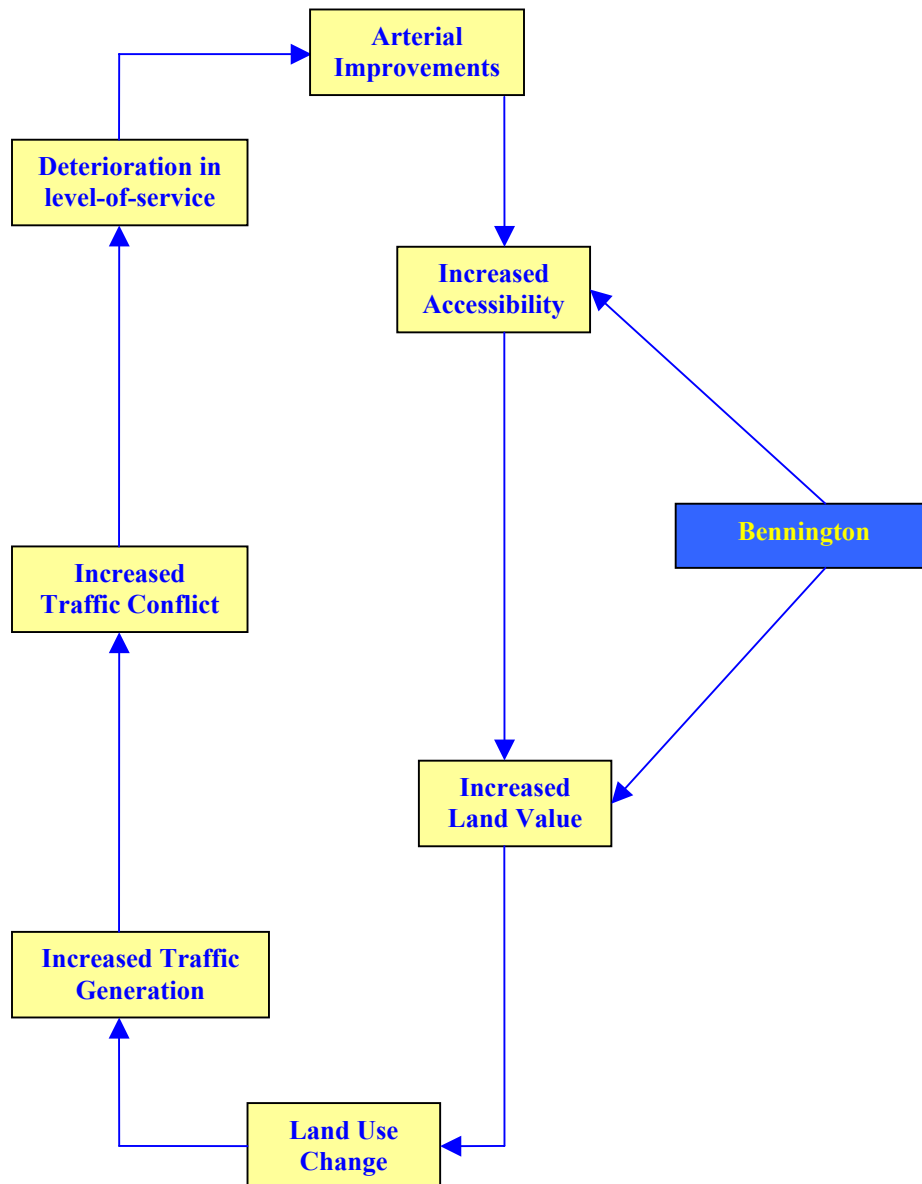
The overall objectives we seek identify in the Transportation Plan Include:

- Developing a balanced transportation system that meets the mobility needs of Bennington and supports Douglass County's land use projections and plans.
- Support the economic vitality of Bennington to enable global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
- Increase safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users in Bennington.
- Increase the accessibility options available to people and freight in Bennington.
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life in Bennington.
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight in Bennington.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

The overall objectives for the Bennington community act as a support system to guide decisions being made in a transportation system, moving people and goods around Bennington in a safe, efficient and convenient manner. This integrates the continuing transportation planning process of the 3C's requirements within federal legislation.

Land use plays a vital role in travel patterns and accessibility. The construction of new, arterial streets, or major reconstruction of an existing thoroughfare/highway near Bennington, will modify the accessibility of the area; this, in turn, eventually leads to development and increased traffic demands to support light industrial businesses. A strip development along a major arterial, such as Highway 36, with closely spaced or poorly designed access, creates numerous and overlapping conflict points. This will result in reduced capacity, traffic delays, high levels of motorist discomfort, accidents, and reduced levels of traffic service. In order to better accommodate the increased traffic demand, more improvements will be required, and a cycle of events generally occurs which requires continuing capital investment for arterial improvements or relocation as illustrated in the Figure 24. Reconstruction to increase the level of service of an existing arterial is generally very costly and, without careful access management, only provides temporary relief. Figure 24 graphically represents the phase of the land use cycle which the Bennington community desires to function within. Through careful management and prioritization, Bennington should be able to function efficiently with increased accessibility at major arterials, while increasing the land value within the community. Land use change should not take place in the improvement of access points to Bennington; therefore, performance measures should be put in place to monitor and evaluate travel patterns and zoning within the Bennington Region.

Figure 24 Land Use Cycle Diagram



Action Strategies

Transportation work programs usually work on a six year time frame. For Bennington, the suggested strategies work within the time interval for a capital programming cycle, represented by Fiscal year 2004 – 2009. Our recommended strategies include the following projects (see Table 2 for proposed timeline):

- **Pedestrian Plaza:** Incorporate “pedestrianism” as another mode to multi-modal transportation within Bennington. It will be based on German culture and character in

its continuity and pedestrian realm. German features and heritage will provide a pleasurable experience in order to choose walking over driving. Continuity will be created with the placement of trees, benches, vehicular movements, and ground texture.

- **Proper Arterial Signage:** Signage placed along arterial, directing vehicles to the economic district of Bennington. The signs should be elaborate and inviting, so riders will notice a break in continuity while riding along an arterial.
- **Establish Privatization in transportation Network:** Using successful small communities as model to incorporate a Jitney. This will encourage a welfare-to-work option, while providing service to the low-income, handicapped, and the elderly. The system will run throughout the day and be based on fixed routes at various times or fixed times on various routes.
- **Coordinate bike route signage, trails, and street improvement projects:** Should extend along the periphery of the city limits, allowing potential county to county or community to community connectivity to take place, and acting as a pull factor to through motorists who are unfamiliar with Bennington's existence, by visually capturing a sense of community life and activity. City funds are also allocated for bikeway/trails to improve bicycle/pedestrian traffic in conjunction with street improvement projects.
- **Establish Safety Mechanisms within school zone:** Traffic calming mechanisms, in the form of bubbles around the school zone, should be incorporated to shorten the distance that children have to walk across the street by narrowing the street in the school zone, reducing the risk of pedestrian accidents at an intersection.
- **Develop a continuous sidewalk network:** Improve sidewalks to link housing, schools, retail facilities, community buildings, jobs, recreational fields, and open spaces. It will feed into the pedestrian plaza.
- **Arterial Rehabilitation at access points:** Funds are often allocated for resurfacing and repairing pavement and curbs to maintain their serviceability.
- **Landscaping in Connection with Street Improvement Projects:** Funds allocated to provide appropriate roadway aesthetics in conjunction with street improvement projects.
- **Install or Modify traffic signal equipment and communication links:** Funds are allocated for replacement of signal controllers, poles, detectors, communication lines and other hardware which have exceeded their useful service life.

Table 3 Transportation Priority Project Matrix

Bennington, Nebraska Priority Matrix for Fiscal Year 2004 - 2009

Projects	Fiscal Year					
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Gateways to Bennington	P	P	P	P	P	P
Sidewalk Improvements			A	A		
Arterial Signage		P			P	
Bike Route Identification			P			
Privatized Transit		A	A	A		
Traffic Calming Devices						A
Access Point Improvements		P		P		P
Safety Mechanisms	P		P	P		
Implementation					P	P
Pedestrian Plaza	A	A		A		A

P Represents priority projects which should occur within 6 fiscal years.

A Represents alternative projects which should occur within 6 fiscal years.

FUNDING

Overview

It is necessary to discuss some funding sources for the long-term goals that have been discussed in this document. The long-term strategies outlined in this document are both extensive in scope and a significant expenditure for the community. Without proper funding sources, Bennington will not be able to accomplish the vision that they eagerly desire. While some sections of this document discuss project specific assistance sources, this section will describe broad scale funding sources. These funding sources will enable Bennington to fund a diverse array of projects and initiatives.

Nebraska Community Foundation Assistance

Description:

Through the program structure of the Nebraska Community Foundation, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, communities in the State are provided assistance in forming their own, affiliated Community Foundation. Forms of assistance include marketing, accounting, auditing, judiciary review, counseling, and insurance. By providing an established framework, affiliated communities are enabled to focus on one task; raise support.

Individual Community Foundations raise support by actually building wealth. This wealth is built by securing major gifts, planned giving, endowments, bequests and annual funding. This money is used to build interest, through savings account methods established through the Nebraska Community Foundation. At the same time the money is “growing on trees”, a portion is also being used to provide financial support for local initiatives and projects. According to State officials, this is the preferred method of funding because it provides a platform for retaining the money that already exists within every Nebraska community. Without a way to retain this money and use it to work for the community, it would migrate out and never be used for essential community building projects.

Benefits to the community:

The Nebraska Community Foundation web-site provides many great case examples of how specific communities have afforded projects through their foundation. These projects include scholarships for local students, community centers, parks, pools, and a host of other options. The community is able to decide what projects will be funded with the money generated by its Foundation. Guidance on what is and is not allowed is given by the Nebraska Community Foundation to keep affiliated communities out of trouble.

This method of financial support gathering falls in line with the unique character, inherent in lives of rural residents. As communities in Nebraska developed, it was the hard work, dedication, and personal sacrifice that helped grow the family farm and subsequently the community those people lived in. Nebraskans face a new era in community development.

Family farms are being sold off, and loyalties are transferring to more urban areas. Personal sacrifice is now, better served through financial sacrifice. Giving to a community foundation can help retain the specific aspects of a community that would otherwise be lost.

Table 4 Examples of Nebraska, Community Foundations

Foundation Name	Geographic Focus
<u>Fremont Area Community Foundation</u>	the area from Dodge/Howells to Oakland/Tekamah to North Bend, Arlington, and Cedar Bluffs, as well as Fremont, NE
<u>Grand Island Community Foundation, Inc.</u>	Grand Island, NE
<u>Hamilton Community Foundation</u>	Hamilton County, NE
<u>Hartington Community Foundation</u>	Hartington, NE area
<u>Kearney Area Community Foundation</u>	Kearney area, NE
<u>Lexington Community Foundation</u>	Lexington, NE
<u>Lincoln Community Foundation, Inc.</u>	Lincoln, Nebraska and Lancaster County, Nebraska
<u>Merrick Foundation, Inc.</u>	Merrick County, NE
<u>Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation, Inc.</u>	Mid-Nebraska
<u>Omaha Community Foundation</u>	Omaha metropolitan area, Southeast Nebraska, and Southwest Iowa
<u>Oregon Trail Community Foundation</u>	Scottsbluff, NE area
<u>The Phelps County Community Foundation</u>	Phelps County, NE

The Nebraska Community Foundation provides the needed 501(c)(3) status that is needed to allow tax-deductible giving. In other words, the community doesn't have to spend time learning about the process, jumping through the hoops, and hoping that it was done correctly. This is all done for affiliated communities as well as all the technical work needed to keep the organization running.

Also, a Community Foundation would enable Bennington to provide matching funds. As a source of matching funds, a Community Foundation may actually open the door for grant funding which often grades applicants on the amounts of monetary matching the community can provide

The Bennington Community Foundation will build community interest and excitement. Donors will become ever more engaged in community decisions and non-donors will become excited about all the benefits they receive from new developments in town.

Unlike one-time grants that many efforts depend on, the community foundation option provides a way for donated money to build itself into new wealth. In essence, donated money lives on in perpetuity because the money is managed to do so instead of being spent on a project and never

being seen again. Communities become less reliant on grant writers and grant funding and can utilize the resources of the Nebraska Community Foundation on a need/want basis.

Benefits to the donor:

An incentive is transferred to the donor because giving to the foundation is considered a tax deduction and can save significant amounts of money for those who wish to retire their estate. Giving to the Bennington Community Foundation not only gives to the community, but it also gives back to the donor. The financially savvy resident of Bennington will see this as a great opportunity to support the community and help themselves at the same time.

Individuals who truly identify with Bennington, either in the past, present, or future are given a way to say it with their money. Residents will find that their identity truly lies within the community when they drive to work and see a community center that they, their parents, or grandparents helped create. The opportunity to realize a person's values through community support is a very attractive option.

Research shows that the philanthropic spirit is inherent in nearly every person. It is only through the exchange of values that money will actually exchange hands. If individuals are not provided with options for giving that match their values, they do a combination of things. Many people give haphazardly and without direction, some will seek out other opportunities to give, and obviously others won't give at all.

Cost:

The Nebraska Community Foundation charges \$100 to all new affiliated communities to help them become established. On a quarterly basis, the community is charged \$75 to continue the services that are received. Additionally, to remain self-sustaining, the Nebraska Community Foundation receives a minimal percentage of funds received by the affiliated community foundation. This ensures their investment in your success.

Advisory Committee:

Each affiliated community must form a fund advisory committee that will volunteer its time and knowledge in setting-up and leading the foundation. These individuals should be strategically selected for their expertise and abilities. To encourage the inter-generational unity, it is recommended that one member of the committee be from the local high school. In all, the committee should have at least 5, but no more than 12 members that are committed to the success of the foundation. It is recommended that all members of the committee be financial supporters of the foundation, leading by example.

Timeline For Funding Coordination

December – Establish a think group, consisting of four to six individual that can come up with potential committee members. Nominations should be made for individuals with specific talents and abilities. Send out invitations personally before Christmas to give nominees time to think

about their ability to commit to this project. One person from the think group must take responsibility for contacting Doug Friedli with the Nebraska Community Foundation to discuss when he will be available for initial guidance. Coordinate this with the first meeting of committee members in January.

January – Hold a confirmation meeting to engage all committee members. Make final decisions about who will serve on the committee. Utilize support from Nebraska Community Foundation to establish “Articles of Operation”. Begin to identify specific funding initiatives for promotion in the early stages of the Bennington Community Foundation.

January through March – Continue to receive start-up assistance from the Nebraska Community Foundation on a regular basis. Committee should meet at a minimum of bi-weekly to make sure the Bennington Community Foundation is ready for its inaugural annual funding drive.

April – Complete the inaugural Bennington Community Foundation annual fund drive. Solicit a major donor to establish a community challenge grant through the Legacy Challenge program. Committee can now begin meeting on a monthly basis. If possible, make a scholarship grant to a local high school student to help defray the cost of college.

May – Make a visual recognition, thanking those who stepped up to support the initial effort and to encourage them to keep informed through the Nebraska Community Foundation web-site. Make sure everyone is aware if a challenge grant has been made.

Summer – Committee will use summers to contact past residents of Bennington who may have moved away. Class reunions are appropriate times to distribute information. Also contact families of residents who lived in town and may want to donate in their family members’ memory. Solicit support from local businesses and property owners. Continue to promote the challenge grant initiative. Promote spring fund-raising event to community members.

Spring – Hold a fund-raising event that will generate funding for the Bennington Community Foundation. Ideas may include a basketball tournament at the site of a proposed recreation center (even if it still a wheat field), a golf tournament, a “History of Bennington” seek and find competition (where residents, young and old, roam the city to identify historical sites and people, complete with disposable cameras!).

Winter – Keep community aware of the opportunities provided through the foundation. Let them know where the scholarship winner went and how he/she is doing.

Years 2 through 4 – Committee should attempt to plan two fund-raiser events per year. Annual funding can occur at the same time as Year 1. Alternatively, research indicates that another good time to raise support is during early September. Based on the demographics and enthusiasm of Bennington residents as well as case examples of similar communities, significant funding can be expected during the first 2-3 years. This funding will allow the committee to grant money for more expensive projects. Projects should be strategically prioritized to generate interest for residents and visitors alike.

Contact:

Nebraska Community Foundation
www.nebcommfound.org

Doug Friedli
Development Director
317 South 12th Street, Ste. 200
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
(402) 323-7330
dougfriedli@nebcommfound.org

Community Funding Project

The other option proposed here, a broad-based community funding project, is not mutually exclusive from the Community Foundation funding source. By a broad-based community funding project, the UNL group is referring to a formalized voluntary donation program which is a step up from fund raising events. As an example in Lincoln, the Parks and Recreation Department partnered with Lincoln Electric System to formulate the “Lincoln Cares” donation program. The “Lincoln Cares” program enables customers of the Lincoln Electric System (LES) to add \$1 to their monthly bills to fund community projects. The surplus payment is deposited toward “Lincoln Cares” programs. Some projects funded, in part, by the “Lincoln Cares” program include:

- Scholarship programs for children from low-income families to participate in Lincoln Parks and Recreation programs.
- Restoration of the Sunken Gardens at 27th and Capitol Parkway to provide a facelift to the nearly 70-year-old garden and make it accessible to all.
- Renovation of the Four Wars Memorial in Antelope Park to restore the historic sculpture, which has been damaged by 70 years of exposure to extreme weather.
- Providing air conditioning at the enclosed Bethany Park shelter to enhance participation at the summer day camp and other community activities at the shelter.

To model this program in Bennington, the community should identify a potential partner, such to play the role of Lincoln Electric System. For example, local refuse service or landfill operations might be a viable partner with whom a broad base of the Bennington population interfaces. Offer community members the potential to donate a dollar per bill, or some other monetary figure, and accumulate the funds toward more costly or longer-term strategies detailed in this plan.

The Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department, given their experience, might serve as a mentor for Bennington in setting up a project of this sort. A contact phone number for the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department is: 441-8264.

Grant Writing

Background:

Before applying for any grant funding or individual private donations, Bennington will need to update its community profile and complete a strategic funding plan. Found at the Nebraska Public Power District website and also on the Nebraska Department of Economic Development website, a community profile contains current data available about communities throughout Nebraska. Communities can easily update and add information about their community, along with their own links to additional sites of interest. A city manager can activate the community profile and update it regularly. The best thing about this service is that it is easy, fast, and free. For assistance in getting a community profile updated, contact the following agencies:

- Nebraska Department of Economic Development www.neded.org
- Nebraska Public Power District, Economic Development Department www.nppd.com

Along with the community profile, Bennington also needs to complete a strategic funding plan. The nature of grant writing has drastically changed over the past decade. Even though more money is available for philanthropic needs, it has become increasingly labor intensive to justify the need for funding and document its specific use. A strategic funding plan will provide a framework by which Bennington can seek out grant funding for specific projects. There are a couple of ways for Bennington to complete a strategic funding plan, each of which will require a different pool of resources. If the community decides not to hire a professional grant writer, appendix A contains some tools to help a fund advisory group complete the process.

Applying for funding:

There are numerous grants, organizations and agencies available throughout the United States that provide aid for community projects. These projects can take many forms including downtown façade improvement, community art projects, and trail development. Grant funding should be considered for all aspects of community improvement, but not without understanding that obtaining grants is a difficult and time consuming process. Bennington needs to develop a fund advisory committee or employ outside assistance to help aid the community in their fund raising process. Several action strategies and alternatives are listed below to help Bennington begin.

Alternative 1: Establish a volunteer fund advisory committee focused solely on research and application for available funding. Information will be gained through use of the internet and making contacts with local and state agencies and individuals. This committee should include a variety of people who are dedicated, motivated and committed to improving the City of Bennington. The committee should work together in establishing distinct roles and job duties, along with goals and visions.

Benefits:	Local citizens understand Bennington and its needs, easy to establish, easy for community citizens to express information and ideas to this individual, volunteers-no cost.
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Drawbacks: Volunteers are not “experts” in this area, results are dependent on the proficiency of the individuals, and community redevelopment ideas may not be unanimous.

Alternative 2: Hire and/or train a city volunteer or employee to become Bennington’s “professional grant writer”. This can be a person already employed by the City who would be willing to dedicate time to learning and producing grant funding proposals. Alternatively, there may be a citizen with extra time available that could be dedicated to the betterment of their entire community through learning the fund raising process and requirements.

Benefits: Local citizen is familiar with Bennington and its needs/wants, easy for community citizens to express information and ideas to this individual, creates a new job and vested interest in community, moderate expense.

Drawbacks: May require a new staff position to be created or the expansion of duties for person already working for the city, training may take time, results are dependent on the proficiency and dedication of the individual, costs.

Alternative 3: Hire a professional grant writer to walk Bennington through the entire process of strategic planning and grant seeking. Individual would be under contract to help Bennington identify available funding and assistance over a set amount of time.

Benefits: A professional is responsible for seeking out available funding, no need to train and educate someone else. Contract provides for reliable outcomes.

Drawbacks: Expensive, communication of grant writer and community may be lacking, money flows out of the community.

Alternative 4: Join with other local communities in hiring a regional grant writer.

Benefits: A professional is responsible for seeking out available funding, no need to train or educate someone else, communication between communities may create new ideas and relationships.

Drawbacks: Expensive, communication of grant writer and community may be lacking, money flows out of the community, and grant writer has multiple communities to help.

Recommendation:

Alternative three would be the ideal choice for any community; however, this option is the most expensive of the four ranging between \$18-30,000 for a complete strategic plan. Because of this, Bennington should begin with alternative one to establish a fund advisory committee identified in the Bennington Community Foundation option. This recommendation provides continuity within the project funding program, ensuring that there are no duplicate efforts or gaps.

Engaging volunteers from different stages of life helps to instill the sense of pride within Bennington residents that the vision is working toward. Depending on the committee's success, this process could either continue, or another alternative could be selected.

There are many organizations around Nebraska dedicated to helping towns, villages and cities maintain and even increase their quality of life. These efforts can focus on downtown revitalization, as with the Nebraska Lied Main Street, or the organizations can focus on economic development, as with the Nebraska Community Development Assistance Act. Bennington should use these resources to the fullest, because they were created to help communities improve themselves in a cost efficient manner.

Available Contacts:

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED): An amazing resource available to Nebraska citizens. Facts, information, links, on-line assistance, grant writing information and contact information are all available on their website. <http://www.neded.org/>

Contacting the regional economic development consultant is another important step in discovering what tools are out there to help a community. For the Southeast region, the contact is Courtney Dunbar. She will be willing and able to identify the areas which Bennington can improve itself on, while providing educated action strategies, funding alternatives and implementation alternatives.

Courtney Dunbar
Nebraska Department of Economic Development
Southeast Nebraska Development Consultant
Cell (402)-657-2784
cdunbar@neded.org

Appendix A:

Community Funding Planner Worksheet

Modified from a Document Developed for TechSoup by Marc Osten of Summit Collaborative
<http://www.techsoup.org/products/downdetails.cfm?downloadid=148>

Building a Great Case Statement

Use this worksheet to help you build a compelling case statement that clearly articulates the Community vision, how a specific project can help accomplish it effectively, and why the foundation or donor you are approaching should fund the proposal.

The case statement should be clear and concise—as short as a few paragraphs and no longer than a page at most. Frame it so that it describes the **benefits resulting from your work** and the project you are seeking funding for.

Step 1 - Getting Started

LEARNING – How did you get to the point of identifying that you had a specific challenge in front of you? Did you discover something during an assessment? Was it the promise of funding for a new project? Whatever the trigger, explain what you did (research, assessment, surveys, etc.) to clarify what the challenge is and confirm the details.

CHALLENGE – Describe the current challenges that you are trying to address. BE SPECIFIC. This could be a any project that is challenging the expansion of the community vision such as lack of a certain amenity or infrastructure type that is excluding a stakeholder group. Whatever the challenge, articulate what it is as specifically as possible.

RAMIFICATIONS - Explain what will result if you do not meet this challenge. What will happen if you do not take advantage of the opportunity before you or solve the problem that hinders you?

Step 2 - A More Positive Future

In step 1, you took a look at the challenge and how you came to understand it. Now it is time to look ahead to detail what the total value of completion to your community is of a particular project or program. What will be different a year after the new project is completed or program is underway? How will the vision be attained? Will you be able to market the community better? Will you be able to mobilize citizens to take action or get involved? Whatever the benefits are, it is your job to articulate that value to yourself, your board, funders and any other stakeholder group.

THE OBJECTIVE - What is the initiative you are planning or pursuing? This can be framed as a technology project such as launching a new Web site to serve your community. It could also be described in physical terms, such as improving community visibility through establishment of gateway icons. The key is to be clear and concise in describing what you are doing and why. It will be a proactive and assertive statement that makes clear to any reader exactly what you intend to do.

Here are some examples of strong objective statements.

<> Our objective is to make Bennington a destination point for visitors by providing age appropriate activities that engage them and make them feel valuable.

<> Develop an identity that is consistent with our heritage and points toward the opportunities available tomorrow.

<> Engage residents in healthy activities by providing access to alternative modes of transportation and diverse recreational opportunities.

YOUR VISION of VALUE - How will this effort be beneficial? What will be the outcomes? For whom? Be specific! These must be powerful statements that justify your direction.	
Will this new initiative or improvement result in new community preservation or enhancement ? For whom? Why does that matter?	
Will there be improved coordination, cooperation and/or collaboration ? Between whom? What would that result in?	
Will sustainability be enhanced or productivity increase in some way that is notable? What types of developments could this result in?	
Will there be any improvement in the amount of safety provided ? What will this mean for community citizens?	
Will your ability to market the community be vastly improved in some way? What could result from this?	
Will initial funding enable the community rely on less outside funding in the future?	
Other Benefits	

Step 3 - Matching Value to the Funders Interest

For each of the funder targets you identify, you need to ask: "What needs of this donor will be met by making a contribution or grant to our community?" "Will a grant to my community further the foundation's objectives? How? When there is an **exchange** of values, that is when money **exchanges** hands!

THE CASE STATEMENT - Look back in this worksheet to the details in steps 1 and 2. Based on the funder you are approaching and your knowledge of their interests; craft a short case statement that clearly articulates your vision, how specific projects can accomplish it better and why the foundation or donor you are approaching should fund the proposal.

Appendix B:

Community Art Policy

It is the intent of the City of Bennington to create in the city environments which are comfortable, functional, and aesthetically pleasing. To that end, gifts of works of art are welcome and may be accepted under the conditions established by this policy. From time to time, the City may purchase a work of art to enhance the facilities. This policy applies to all public properties, including the downtown area, parks, roadways, and schools.

The Mayor is authorized to accept on behalf of the City works of art that meet the criteria herein established. Gifts that do not meet the criteria will not be added to the City's collection. The Mayor or his or her designee is also authorized to purchase art that meets these criteria.

The Mayor will establish a committee to evaluate potential gifts of art using these criteria and will assist in the acceptance process. The committee will advise the Mayor in the selection process for purchased works of art.

The Committee:

The committee will be composed of a combination of persons with expertise in art and persons who know and understand the City environment. The committee may include government staff, City Council members, Planning Commission members, working professional artists or other community members knowledgeable about art.

Appraisals:

Appraisals are the responsibility of the donor. The City is not in a position to provide value estimates on gift material. The City will provide receipts for any gifts for income tax purposes, such receipts identifying and acknowledging the gift without appraising the work of art.

Conditions of Acceptance:

Gifts of works of art will be accepted without limitations or conditions placed on the City by the donor or artist unless those limitations or conditions are approved by a majority vote of the Committee and accepted by the Mayor.

Title:

Title to all gifts of art will pass to the City of Bennington. Gifts to the City remain outright and unrestricted donations to be used according to the sole discretion of the City. Such art works will be used to the best interest of the City.

Long Term Loans:

The Mayor or his/her designee is empowered to accept the loan of works of art not titled to the City of Bennington. Such a loan will be covered by a written agreement that includes the details for duration, insurance, placement, security and return of the item when the loan is over. Title of

loaned materials will remain with the donor.

Maintenance:

The City will take reasonable care to maintain works of art in a manner that will preserve their value.

When accepting a work of art, the City of Bennington reserves the right to--

- Refuse any work of art offered for sale or as a gift.
- Exhibit any donated object in a manner that is consistent with its policies, needs and available space. Acceptance of an object does not imply that it will be on permanent public display.
- Move and relocate art work for any reason it deems necessary.
- De-access, dispose and sell a work of art upon approval of the City Council.

Selection Criteria

Quality: When the piece is judged by the art committee, it is found to have a standard of quality suitable for long term location in a public location.

Style and nature: The art should be appropriate in scale, material, form and content for the city environment.

Elements of design: Public art may have other functions besides aesthetic enjoyment. For example, a work of art may establish a focal point, modify, or enhance a space or identify a building function. The work of art should complement the building or space and its purpose.

Durability: Works of art will be examined for durability taking the city's environment into consideration. Extremely fragile items or those that are particularly attractive to vandalism are not appropriate for the City setting.

Maintenance costs. When selecting a work of art to purchase or determining if a gift may be accepted, the City will take into consideration the cost of maintaining it over its life time. Start-up and on going costs for cleaning, mounting, and insurance will be considered.

Public liability: Works will not be selected or accepted that create unsafe conditions or contain other factors that may bear on public liability.

Conditions of acceptance: In the case of gifts or donations, the donor's conditions may affect whether or not the gift will be accepted.

Appendix C:



**American Association
of Homes and Services
for the Aging**

AAHSA Business Members

Here are your search results for:

Category is

--CONSULTING/DEVELOPING/MANAGEMENT/MARKETING--

the Description is CCRC

Sharon Brooks & Associates, Inc.
207 West Franklin Street Richmond, VA 23220-5011
phone: (804) 649-3704
fax: (804) 649-3730
email: sbaadv@aol.com
CONSULTING/DEVELOPING/MANAGEMENT/MARKETING
Description: Approximately 60% of the firm's business is concentrated in the field of retirement and senior product marketing, advertising and public relations. We have worked with over 75 CCRCs, congregate facilities, assisted living communities and nursing homes throughout the United States and in Canada with consistently strong results. We have served non-profit and proprietary organizations and have worked both directly with facility management and in tandem with management consulting firms. In addition, we conduct marketing audits and research studies, develop marketing strategies, and provide sales training and sales management. We are experts on industry benchmarks such as cost per lead, conversion from lead to sale, and cost per sale. As a results oriented firm, all our recommendations are based on optimizing your cost per sale.
Haskell Community Developers
111 Riverside Avenue Jacksonville, FL 32202-4921
phone: (904) 791-4637
fax: (904) 357-4867
email:
CONSULTING/DEVELOPING/MANAGEMENT/MARKETING
Description: Developer of senior housing, including CCRCs, congregate housing, skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities. We provide a full spectrum of development, marketing and management services. While HCD's specialty is concept-to-completion retirement communities, "unbundled" consulting services are also available. Individually or in any combination, these varied services are particularly valuable for start-up communities, expansions or modernizing of existing communities. We also provide financial advisory services, including assistance in securing development capital and project financing. HCD has one additional advantage that no other retirement housing developer can offer -- the resources of one of the nation's foremost design-build organizations, The Haskell Company, which provides complete pre-design, architectural, engineering, construction, real estate and interior design services. This team approach and dedication to excellence allows HCD to provide our clients the finest service in the senior housing industry.
The Wirthwein Corporation
578 Main Street East Aurora, NY 14052-1725
phone: 716-652-4788
fax: 716-652-3901
email:
CONSULTING/DEVELOPING/MANAGEMENT/MARKETING
Description: Full service marketing company having served over 100 retirement communities in 24 states. The client list includes CCRCs, life care, rental, co-ops, assisted living and skilled nursing facilities. Services provided

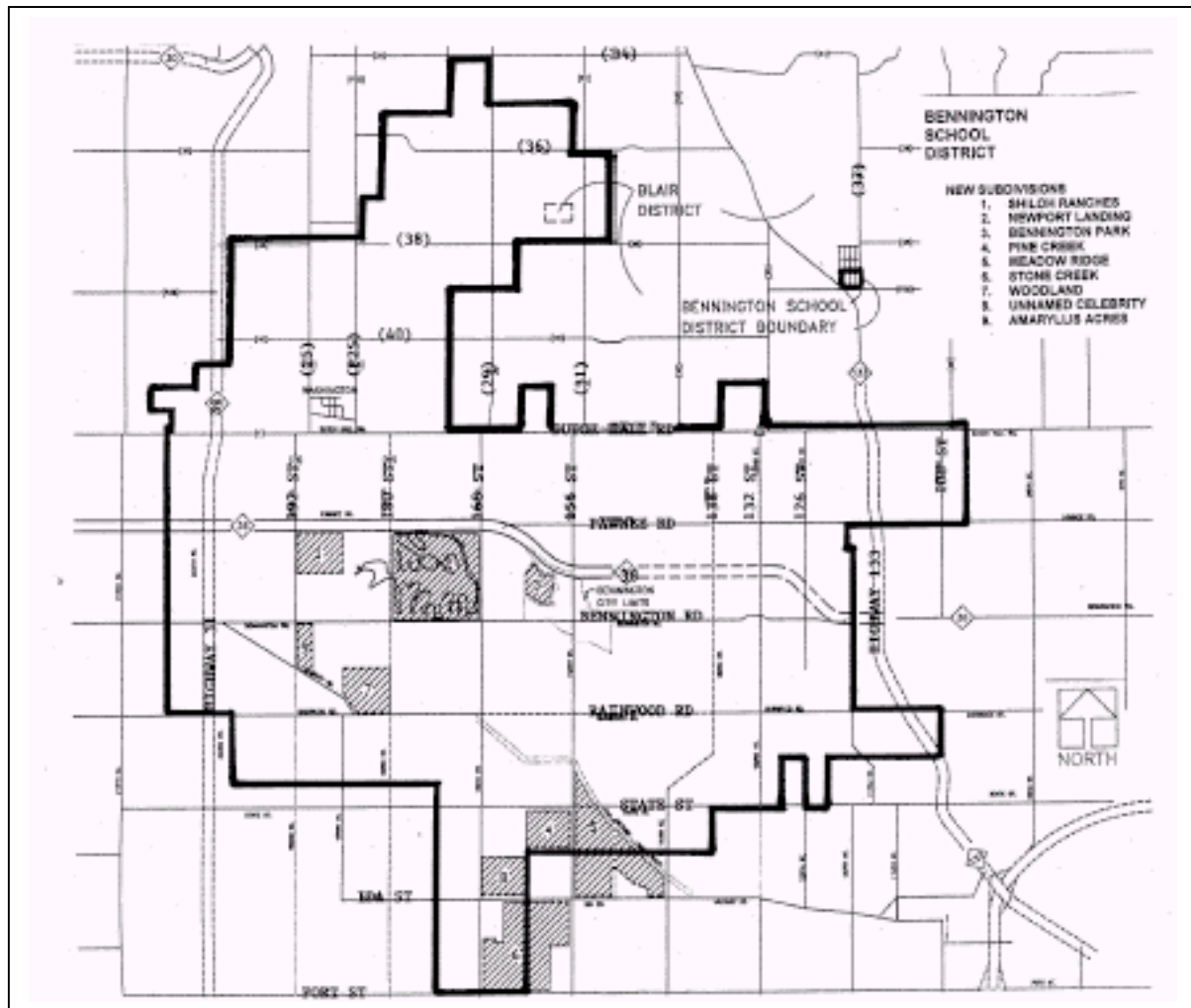
include strategic planning, image building, quantitative and qualitative market research, sales recruitment and sales training, marketing plan and budget development, collateral materials, advertising, marketing assessments, lead fulfillment and move-in coordination to stimulate and maintain maximized occupancy levels.
Third Age, Inc.
722 Springdale Drive Suite 300 Exton, PA 19341-2873
phone: (610) 594-8100
fax: (610) 594-8105
email:
CONSULTING/DEVELOPING/MANAGEMENT/MARKETING
Description: Strategic planning, market research, marketing, financial regulatory and management services for CCRCs, assisted living and long-term care providers.
PRAXEIS, LLC
4250 Lakeside Drive Suite 214 Jacksonville, FL 32210-3358
phone: (904) 381-0431
fax:
email: info@praxeis.com
CONSULTING/DEVELOPING/MANAGEMENT/MARKETING
Description: Consulting, development, marketing and management services to organizations involved with senior housing and CCRCs. Staff are experienced CEOs, CFOs, administrators, marketers and developers who professionally and competently assist organizations in implementing their mission.
American Retirement Corporation
111 Westwood Place Suite 200 Brentwood, TN 37027-5021
phone: (615) 221-2250
fax: (615) 221-2280
email: arc@arclp.com
CONSULTING/DEVELOPING/MANAGEMENT/MARKETING
Description: Management, marketing and development services for start-up and existing retirement communities (congregate CCRC, life-care communities and assisted living communities).
Spectrum Marketing, Inc.
1349 B. East Garrison Boulevard Gastonia, NC 28054-5142
phone: (704) 865-6300
fax: (704) 861-8509
email:
CONSULTING/DEVELOPING/MANAGEMENT/MARKETING
Description: Serving Non-profit Retirement Communities Since 1978. Spectrum is a specialized, full-service consulting firm serving non-profit sponsors of retirement communities with marketing and sales, marketing research and strategic planning, and development management. Our clients include new communities, expanding existing communities and communities that are restructuring. We have represented over 85 CCRC's throughout the United States and are recognized for our unique ability to strategize, individually tailor our services to every client, while helping to carry out each community's mission. Spectrum has focused on this industry niche, concentrating on building a strategic, specialized capability to provide our clients with professional expertise not found in other consulting firms.

Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Services
169 Ramapo Valley Road Lower Level Oakland, NJ 07436-2531
phone: (201) 405-0075
fax: (201) 405-2110
email: rcioffe@hhcsinc.com
CONSULTING/DEVELOPING/MANAGEMENT/MARKETING
Description: National consulting firm, HCS publishes The Nursing Home Salary and Benefits Report, CCRC Salary and Benefits Report and Assisted Living Salary and Benefits Report in cooperation with AAHSA. In addition to its annual publications, HCS provides full consulting service in human resource management to the healthcare industry.
Retirement Dynamics, Inc.
P O Box 2681 Gastonia, NC 28053
phone: (704) 868-2749
fax: (704) 868-2779
email: bblair@retirementdynamics.com
CONSULTING/DEVELOPING/MANAGEMENT/MARKETING
Description: Marketing consulting firm specific to the CCRC industry. The expertise of the firm lies in marketing start-ups, expansions or challenged communities.
Sokolove Development, LLC
14 Via Mirage Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688
phone: (949) 635-0673
fax: (949) 635-0681
email: stan21044@yahoo.com
CONSULTING/DEVELOPING/MANAGEMENT/MARKETING
Description: We are a single point of contact development company, simplifying the process of development of CCRCs and senior housing communities. We will carefully listen to your description of your goals, objectives and mission, and then structure a plan for success built around your strength. A single person assigned to work with you will assure simplicity, continuity and accountability in achieving your goals and assuring a positive financial outcome. A unique relationship of trust will be established and maintained throughout project duration. Depending upon your needs, we will a)develop and turn over a project to you on a "turnkey"basis, b)joint-venture or co-develop with you or c) simply be your Owner's Representative. Whichever works best for you, we will provide a single point of responsibility and the team leadership needed to assure a successful project which meets the needs of your residents within financial limitations. You will not need to divert your attention from operations while undertaking the development of new construction, additions and/or renovations. The President of Sokolove Development LLC is a Board and Finance Committee member of a CCRC which has been transformed from troubled to highly successful with 95% occupancy. Over a 20 year period, he has served as Owner's Representative for many not-for-profit providers on a national basis. He has more than 20 years of experience with the development of CCRCs, congregate and senior housing. He serves on the Senior Housing Council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and is an educator in the development of CCRCs, including a program for the John Hopkins Medical School.
Caring Communities Shared Services
708 Florsheim Drive Suite 14 Libertyville, IL 60048
phone: (847) 549-8225
fax: (847) 549-8095
email: gjccai@aol.com
CONSULTING/DEVELOPING/MANAGEMENT/MARKETING

Description: Caring Communities Shared Services (CCSS) provides management consulting services to Caring Communities Insurance Company (CCIC), which is a multi-owner captive insurance company licensed and domiciled in the Cayman Islands, these services are exclusively to CCIC. Established in 2002 CCIC provides Professional, General and Umbrella Liability to its shareholders, primarily CCRC communities. Each of the current 25 shareholders has numerous facilities including CCRCs, independent and assisted living facilities, skilled nursing, all are not-for-profit and faith-based facilities located across the United States. Consulting services include underwriting, risk and claims management, reinsurance placement and general governance assistance (e.g. assistance in establishing CCIC committees and boards).

Appendix D:

Map of the Bennington School District



Appendix E:

Bennington High School Course Descriptions

Computers I 0881 (1 full year—2 credits, one credit per semester)

HS Requirement Grades 9-12

Efficient keyboarding skills are highly recommended for this course. Students will learn basic skills in the areas of word processing, database management, spreadsheet, Internet, and web design. Students will learn to create, access, manipulate, and analyze information using these skills.

Prerequisite: Computers 7 and Computers 8

Computers II 0882 (1 full year—2 credits, one credit per semester) Grades 10-12

Students will obtain a level of advanced skills using **presentation software and designing web pages**. Complex projects will be completed and presented to the class throughout the year.

Prerequisite: Computers I

Computers III & IV 0883 / 0884 (1 full year—2 credits, one credit per semester) Grades 11-12

These advanced computer classes are offered to students who successfully complete Computers I and II. Students will increase their skill level using various computer programs. Areas of study include, **HTML, advanced web design, E-commerce**, and programming.

Prerequisite: Computers II

Journalism I 0015 (full year – 2 credits, one credit each semester) Grades 11 – 12

This course provides an opportunity to write factually, to share ideas and criticisms through class analysis, and to exhibit sensitivity for the language and people while examining newsworthy issues in the school, community, and the world. **The primary function of the class will be to produce the school news publication, and the school yearbook.** Students will experience many skills required for **publication production** including interviewing, editing, desktop publishing, photography, and dark room skills. Students should understand that this class requires a significant dedication of time outside of the normal class period in completing both publications. This class will be limited to 18.

Prerequisite: "B" average in English during the sophomore year, and Instructors approval.

Journalism II 0016 (full year – 2 credits, one credit each semester) Grade 12

This course expands on the skills learned in Journalism I.

Prerequisite: "B" average in Journalism I, and Instructors approval.

Appendix F:

Bennington's Businesses

All Types Home Emporium	American Legion	Appolo Mini Storage
At Your Disposal	Auto Sales and Service	B Green Lawn Service
Bacino, Paul, DDS	Badger Car Wash	Bank of Bennington
Bellaire Nursery	Bennington Crown and Bridge	Bennington Flower and Gifts
Bennington High School	Bennington Implement	Bennington Plumbing
Bennington Realty	Bennington Senior Center	Bennington Small Engine
Best Cut Grass	Bill's Highway Service	CBS Real Estate
City of Bennington	Courtesy Real Estate	Cubby's
Cutting Edge	Cure Plumbing	DDK Fence
Dale's Trash Service	Dee Michael	Douglas County Landfill
Douglas Co. Mutual Insurance	Elec Trol, Inc.	Flemming Grading Service
Gilbert's Boarding Kennels	Goodrich Dairy	Grass Pro
Great Plains Paper Hg.	Guinan and Scott, Attorneys	H & R Construction
Hamilton General Contractor	Hauptman Concrete Casting	Home Scents
In Style	KTS Courier Services	Keno Cabana
Koala T Daycare	Kundsen Oil and Feed	Legrand Dress Making
Let It Snow	Marcorp Electric	McDonald Plumbing
Mohr Electric	Nabity Perry Insurance	Nebraska Storage
Omaha Silk Screen	Packers Insurance Agency	Potthoff Industrial Supply
Pro-Cat Painting and Wall	Reichmuth Funeral	Rob's Oil Company
Southwest Heating and Air	South Park Storage	Sportsman's Bar and Grill
Stain-N-Grain	Stephen's Auto Repair	Sunrise Homes
Sweetie Pies	Turner Auto Body	Two Men and A Shop
Van Arsdell Plumbing		

Appendix G:

Summary of LB 840/Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act

The Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act (**LB 840, 1991**) authorizes incorporated cities and villages to collect and appropriate local tax dollars (sales and/or property tax) if approved by the local voters, for economic development purposes. The Act went into effect on September 6, 1991. **The Act has been modified by LB719A in 1992, LB732 in 1993, LB 1188 in 1994, LB207/LB490 in 1995, LB989 in 1998, LB87 in 1999, LB LB1116/LB1258 in 2000, and LB827/LB362/LB362 in 2001.**

The Act involves the formulation of the local economic development program plan. The plan forms the foundation for the collection and expenditure of local tax revenues for economic development and, if the voters approve the plan, the provisions of the local plan becomes the basis under which the municipality's program operates.

Communities which have voted to create LB840 programs include:

Albion	Alliance	Atkinson	Bayard	Beatrice	Blair
Burwell	Central City	Chadron	Cozad	Fairbury	Falls City
Fremont	Gering	Grand Island	Holdrege	Holdrege	Kimball
Lexington	Louisville	Milford	Mitchell	Nebraska City	North Platte
Ord	Oshkosh	Plattsmouth	St. Paul	Scottsbluff	Seward
Sidney	Superior	Tecumseh			

Only the above communities are currently in a position to offer the loans, grants and other activities under the LB840 statutes.

Eligible Communities

All Nebraska cities and villages, as well as any group of two or more cities acting under the Interlocal Cooperation Act, are eligible.

Eligible Activities

Activities eligible for local funds collected for the economic development program would include any project or program for the purpose of providing direct or indirect financial assistance to a qualifying business, or for the payment of related costs and expenses.

An economic development program may include, but is not limited to, the following activities:

1. Direct loans or grants to qualifying businesses for fixed assets and/or working capital;
2. Loan guarantees for qualifying businesses;
3. Grants for public works improvements which are essential for the location or expansion of a qualifying business;
4. Grants or loans for job training;

5. The purchase of real estate, options for such purchases, and the renewal or extension of such options;
6. Payments for salaries and support of city staff or the contracting of an outside entity to implement the economic development program;
7. Bonding used to carry out program activities.

An economic development program may also include grants or loans for the construction or rehabilitation for sale or lease of housing for persons of low to moderate income.

Qualifying Businesses

In cities with a population of more than 10,000, a qualifying business is any corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or sole proprietorship which derives its principal source of income from manufacturing; research and development; the processing, storage, transport, or sale of goods or commodities which are sold or traded in interstate commerce; the sale of services in interstate commerce; headquarters facilities relating to eligible activities; telecommunications activities; and/or tourism-related activities. In cities other than Lincoln and Omaha, a business shall also be eligible if it derives its principal source of income from the construction or rehabilitation of housing.

In cities with a population of 2,500 to 10,000 inhabitants, a qualifying business shall be the same as above plus, a business shall also be a qualifying business if it derives its principal source of income from retail trade. No more than 40 percent in any 12-month period, nor more than 20 percent in any five-year period, of program funds shall be used for retail trade businesses.

In cities with a population of 2,500 inhabitants or less, a business shall be a qualifying business regardless of their principal source of income.

Steps for Implementation

1. prepare a general community and economic development strategy,
2. prepare the proposed plan,
3. schedule and hold a public hearing,
4. adopt the plan by a resolution and file the plan with the city clerk making it available to the public,
5. file the resolution with the election commissioner or county clerk,
6. hold an election,
7. establish the economic development program by ordinance,
8. appoint a citizen advisory review committee,
9. include the amount to be expended in the annual budget,
10. establish an economic development fund, and
11. provide regular meetings, public hearings, and annual audits.

Balloting/Election Steps

The question on the ballot will briefly set out the terms, conditions, and goals of the economic

development program, including the length of time the program will be in existence, the years and sources from which the funds are to be collected, the total amount that is to be collected, and whether bonding will be permitted. If the funds are to be derived from a property tax levy, the ballot question must also state the annual cost per ten thousand dollars of assessed valuation.

If a majority voting on the issue vote in favor of the question, the economic development program will be implemented upon the terms of the economic development plan.

Source and Amount of Funds

Local sources of revenue that may be collected through the Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act are local property taxes and local option sales taxes.

After the economic development program is established the amount to be expended on the program for the ensuing year shall be fixed in an annual budget.

Limitations include:

1. No city shall appropriate in any year, an amount in excess of .4 percent of the actual valuation of the city in the year in which the funds are collected;
2. No city shall appropriate an amount in excess of the amount approved by the voters at the election;
3. No city of the **metropolitan or primary class** shall appropriate more than **\$3,000,000** in any one year;
4. No city of the **first class** shall appropriate more than **\$2,000,000** in any one year; (2000 - LB1258.
5. No **second class city or village** shall appropriate more than **\$1,000,000** in any one year.

Limitations exclude:

1. Reappropriations (funds that were appropriated but not expended during previous fiscal years., and
2. Funds not derived directly from the sales or property tax such as interest, loan repayments, sale proceeds, etc.

Appendix H:

Farmers' Market Sample Community Survey:

Name
Address
Phone #
E-mail

1. Have you purchased goods from a farmers' market in the past year? ___ YES ___ NO
2. If yes, where? If no, why not?
3. Would you purchase goods from a farmers' market located in Bennington? ___ YES ___ NO
4. Would you like to sell items (food, fresh produce, jams, crafts, photos, etc) at a farmers' market located in Bennington? ___ YES ___ NO
5. If yes, what items would they be?
6. Would you like to be contacted by someone regarding selling items at a farmers' market located in Bennington? ___ YES ___ NO

Area Farmers' Markets & Contact Information

Omaha Farmers Market I

11th & Jackson Streets
Omaha, NE 68108
Contact: Adrienne Millhollin
(402) 345-3401
E-mail: adrienne@vgagroup.com
OPEN-AIR/SEASONAL
May-October
Wednesday, 4:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.
Saturday, 8:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
WIC Coupons

Omaha Green Market II

30th & Lake Streets
Omaha, NE 68108
Contact: Adrienne Millhollin
(402) 362-2630
E-mail: adrienne@vgagroup.com
OPEN-AIR/SEASONAL
May-September

Blair Farmers Market

103 South 12th Street
Blair, NE 68008
Contact: Diane Vanecek
(402) 426-5971
OPEN-AIR/SEASONAL
May-October
Wednesday, 3:30 p.m.-6:00 p.m.
Saturday, 8:00 a.m.-12 noon

Lincoln Haymarket Farmers Market

Haymarket District
Lincoln, NE 68508
Contact: John Cunningham/Linda Hubka
(402) 435-7496
www.downtownlincoln.org/fmarket.html
OPEN-AIR/SEASONAL
Saturday, 8:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

