Bennington

Comprehensive Plan

Adopted: February 12, 2018
Ordinance: 457

JEO CONSULTING GROUP INC

Project #: 151397.00


BENNINGTON
NEBRASKA
1892
1992
FOND MEMORIES TO RECALL, NEW MEMORIES TO MOLD
CENTENNIAL

Acknowledgments

CITY COUNCIL

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Larry Arp, Council President
Zac Johns
Kaye Bridgeford
Chris Foltz

CITY STAFF

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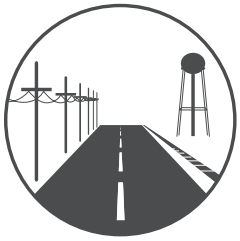

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1 Introduction

BENNINGTON

[section 1.1]

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Bennington is a community with a population of 1,458 (2010 Decennial Census). Located northwest of the City of Omaha, Nebraska the community has experienced rapid growth for the past 50 years. Bennington's location within the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) provides unique opportunities and challenges relating to community growth and economic development. The short distance has lead to a rise in a commuting population and economic leakages for retail opportunities elsewhere in the Metro.

Through this Comprehensive Plan, Bennington will seek to balance the benefits associated with growth and the small-town quality of life valued by current residents.

History

Early in the 1870's, a grocery store, a blacksmith shop, and a post office were established in the area and called "Hayes." During the mid-1880's, the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad purchased land to construct a railroad line between Omaha and Fremont. Due to the establishment of the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad, Bennington was platted two miles south and one mile east of Hayes, causing the community to disappear.

Bennington was originally platted in 1887 by the Pioneer Town Site Company. The community was named for Bennington, Vermont. The post office established its first facility in the community on January 30, 1888. Initially the town was called "Bunz Town," named by the settlers that were predominately of German lineage.

It is stated that Bennington was officially incorporated on April 15, 1892, when the community's census swelled to the required 100 persons by counting all the railroad workers, which were camped near the community. For the next thirty years, the community continued to grow and expand. For a time, Bennington had six passenger trains per day passing through the community.

Photo courtesy Bennington Historical Society

The City of Bennington has had a colorful past, not unlike a number of smaller Nebraska communities. The present character of Bennington was shaped by people and personalities of the past, as well as the new families moving to the community. As the community grows, it is important to remember the roots and the ancestry of those who established it, thus preserving the sense of community in Bennington.

Governmental and Jurisdictional Organization

Bennington, a Nebraska second-class city, has a mayor-council form of government. Four City Council positions are elected by two election wards. Bennington has a seven member planning commission. Members are appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council to serve three-year terms.

The planning and zoning jurisdiction for incorporated communities that have adopted Comprehensive Planning and Zoning Ordinances, include an area of one mile from their corporate limits for cities of the second class, an area two miles from their corporate limits for cities of the first class, and metropolitan class cities have a three mile jurisdiction from their corporate limits as written under the authority of the Nebraska Revised Statutes, 1943 (as amended).

As a second-class city, Bennington's zoning jurisdiction extends one-mile beyond its corporate limits with the exception of the Newport Hill subdivision, which on agreement with Douglas County, Bennington assumes jurisdiction of, and areas south of corporate limits which fall in Omaha's zoning jurisdiction.

[section 1.2]

THE PURPOSE OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Comprehensive plans are created to promote orderly growth for municipal and county jurisdictions. The Bennington Comprehensive Plan focuses on the city's jurisdiction, but involves the coordination between multiple jurisdictions of the growing area. The respective comprehensive plans and related studies for the City of Omaha, Douglas County, and regional partners were all utilized in the creation of this document. Bennington leadership realizes future opportunities will arise in the area that will necessitate further coordination of these entities.

This Comprehensive Plan serves as a guideline to the community and its decision makers. The document's intention is to serves as a "road map" for future development locations and civic investments. It can also be utilized for educational purposes and informing future decision makers and vested community stakeholders.

The Bennington Comprehensive Plan creates a framework to support the community's endeavor to accomplish the goals, objectives, and policies created within the planning process. The ultimate goal of any comprehensive plan is to ensure the well-being of residents. Promoting economic development will also be a component of the document.

A comprehensive plan provides the legal basis for the establishment of zoning and subdivision regulations. These two efforts are used in conjunction with the comprehensive plan to implement the community vision established in the planning process. The foundation for community growth is created in the Bennington Comprehensive Plan and the corresponding zoning and subdivision regulations should be utilized to reinforce the recommendations to implement this vision.

[section 1.3]

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

Comprehensive planning begins with data collection that establishes a "snapshot" of the past and present community conditions. Further analysis provides the basis for developing forecasts for future land-use demands.

The second step in the planning process is the development of general goals and policies, based upon the issues facing the community. Public input and focus groups are brought together to walk through strengths and weaknesses of the community. These sessions establish practical guidelines for improving existing conditions and managing future growth.

This document begins to take shape with the collected data and collaborative vision. Text, graphics and tables explain and display the desires of the community. The draft goals are designed to identify, assess, and create actions and policies in the areas of population, land use, transportation, housing, economic development, community facilities, parks and recreation, and utilities. The finalized vision and recommendations are created, reviewed, and revised through multiple meetings with the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC).

The final phase is creating a step-by-step guide for implementation. It establishes a broad range of development policies and programs required in order to implement the plan. This process identifies the tools, methods, and programs necessary to carry out the recommendations. Nevertheless, implementation of the development policies contained within the comprehensive plan is dependent upon the adoption of the Plan by the governing body. After adoption, continued effort is necessary to achieve these goals by current and future leadership, whether elected or appointed.

Overall, this Comprehensive Plan records where Bennington has been, where it is now, and where it likely will be in the future. The Bennington Comprehensive Plan is an information and management tool for city officials and community leaders to use in their decision-making process when considering future developments. The comprehensive plan is not a static document; it should evolve as changes in the land-use, population, or local economy occur during the planning period. This information is the basis for Bennington's evolution as it achieves its physical, social, and economic goals.

This plan was prepared under the direction of the Bennington city staff and the Planning Advisory Committee, with participation by the citizens of the Bennington area. The expected time for achieving goals, programs, and developments identified in this process is twenty years. However, the city should review the plan annually and update the document more frequently, as needed. Updating the comprehensive plan will allow the community to incorporate new ideas and unknown developments from the previous update.

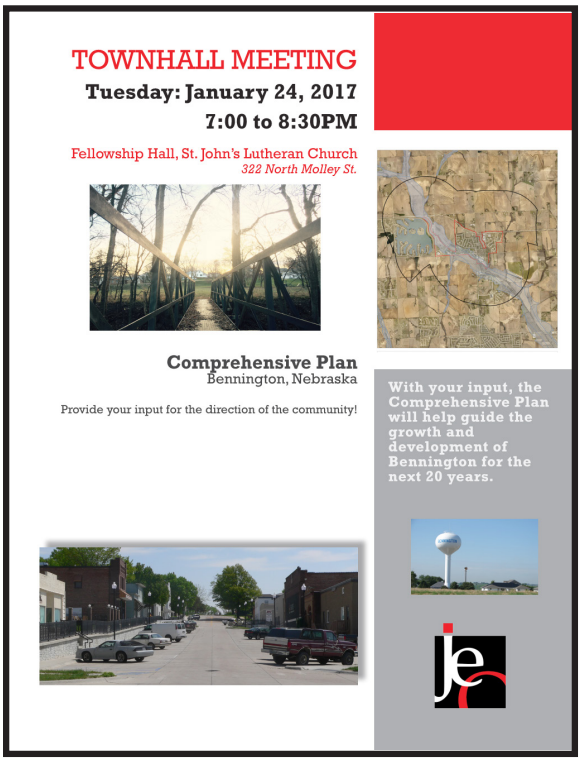
Through periodic monitoring, the city can adapt and adjust to change at the local level. Having the ability to adapt to socio-economic change allows the city to maintain an effective comprehensive plan for the future to encourage efficient infrastructure development, respond to growth pressures, and enhance economic resiliency for shared success amongst all residents and stakeholders of Bennington.

Public Participation

In order to gain the input of Bennington stakeholders, the consulting team conducted focus group meetings of varying topics relating to the community, held one-on-one interviews with critical stakeholders, and held a public workshop meeting. These face-to-face meetings were complemented with the use of online technology to reach out to Bennington residents. Individuals also participated as part of the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC). The full list of PAC members can be found in the preface of this plan (page iv-v). The following is an overview of the primary points of contact with the public and the PAC. The results of these discussions are detailed in the Envision section of each respective chapter of the document.

Focus Group Meetings

The consultant team facilitated four focus group meetings throughout the planning process. The meeting topics included Housing, Business and Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, and a Youth/Student Focus Group. Those invited to participate in these groups are directly involved in each sector. During this process, the team also reached out to stakeholders, those that are highly involved in the community that may not have participated in a focus group.



The Envision section of each chapter details the relevant information from each focus group. In some cases a focus group was specific to each chapter-subject, i.e. Housing, Economic Development, or Parks and Recreation. The discussion from each of these subjects are written in-full. For other chapters, only the relevant discussion from these groups are provided.

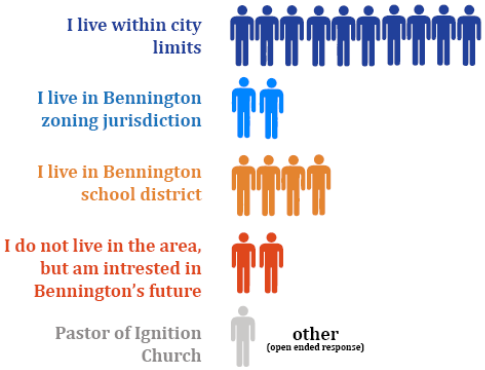
Town Hall Meeting

The consultant team conducted a town hall meeting on January 24, 2017 at St. John's Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall. After a brief presentation, interactive station exhibits were on display with members of the consulting team available to solicit input and answer questions. Attendees were free to discuss their thoughts and ask questions relating to the areas of growth and development, land use, parks and recreation, and utilities and infrastructure.

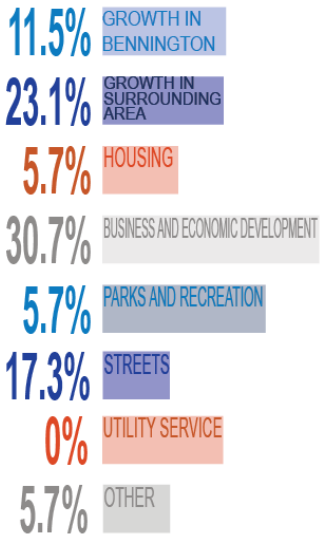
Online Interaction

The MySidewalk site, www.buildbennington.mysidewalk.com, served as an on-line public forum to supplement the traditional public participation process. The platform facilitates community participation over the web to build upon input typically received during public meetings, town halls, and focus group meetings. The MySidewalk site operates as a convenient, and user-friendly process for citizens to utilize at their convenience, from the comfort of their homes or a mobile device. The Build Bennington site served as a virtual town hall, where users can respond to questions and polls, generate ideas, and discuss other users' ideas. The site generated 2,800 total page views and over 150 responses to questions and ideas.

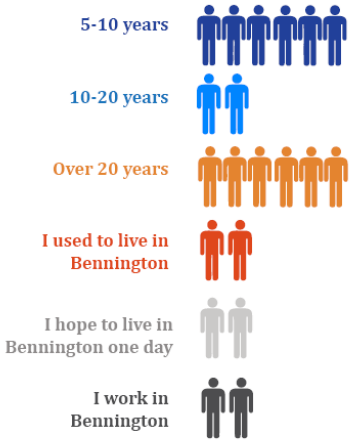
Q Do you live in city limits?



Q What is the biggest issue facing Bennington today?



Q How long have you lived in Bennington?



[section 1.4]

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPONENTS

Nebraska statutes require five elements within a comprehensive plan. These elements; Public Facilities, Land Use, Annexation, Transportation, and Energy, as well as other study areas are contained within nine chapters detailed below. These independent, but related chapters, are organized in a Profile, Envision, Achieve, and Implement format to include the analysis of existing conditions, public input, and recommendations within each topic-specific chapter.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The first step is to gather demographic data to identify trends, including demographic, housing, socio-economic trends, and future population projections. Projections and forecasts are useful tools in planning for the future; however, these tools are informed estimates and may change due to unforeseen factors.

Chapter 2: Facilities & Services

This chapter highlights the current facilities and services available to the residents of Bennington as well as identifies future needs.

Chapter 3: Parks & Recreation

This chapter provides an inventory of existing parks and recreation facilities available to Bennington residents. A summary of public participation, including a Parks and Recreation focus group is included as the basis for recommendations for improved recreation facilities in Bennington.

Chapter 4: Utilities & Infrastructure

This chapter focuses on strategies to ensure adequate public and private utilities and supporting infrastructure are available to serve a growing community. The section covers the regional sanitary sewer, water, solid waste, gas, and electric utilities and services needed to manage the direction of future growth.

Chapter 5: Housing

The Housing Chapter provides an analysis of the current and historic housing trends and the ability of the housing stock in Bennington to support population growth.

Chapter 6: Economic Development

This chapter focuses on the strategies to ensure that Bennington develops in an economically sustainable manner and to ensure that growth is matched with the community's ability to provide infrastructure and services.

Chapter 7: Energy Element

The Bennington Energy Element outlines a series of goals and strategies for the community in the areas of urban form and transportation, energy generation, buildings, food and agriculture, civic operations, and education as they relate to energy use. The Energy Element is a framework to guide the community when making energy-related decisions as a component of the existing Comprehensive Plan.

Chapter 8: Land Use & Growth Management

Chapter 8 helps to guide future residential development, commercial and industrial activity, and zoning within Bennington's regulatory boundaries. This section also addresses the rapid pace of urbanization occurring in the area and identifies the most ideal growth strategy to fit public input.

Chapter 9: Goals & Objectives

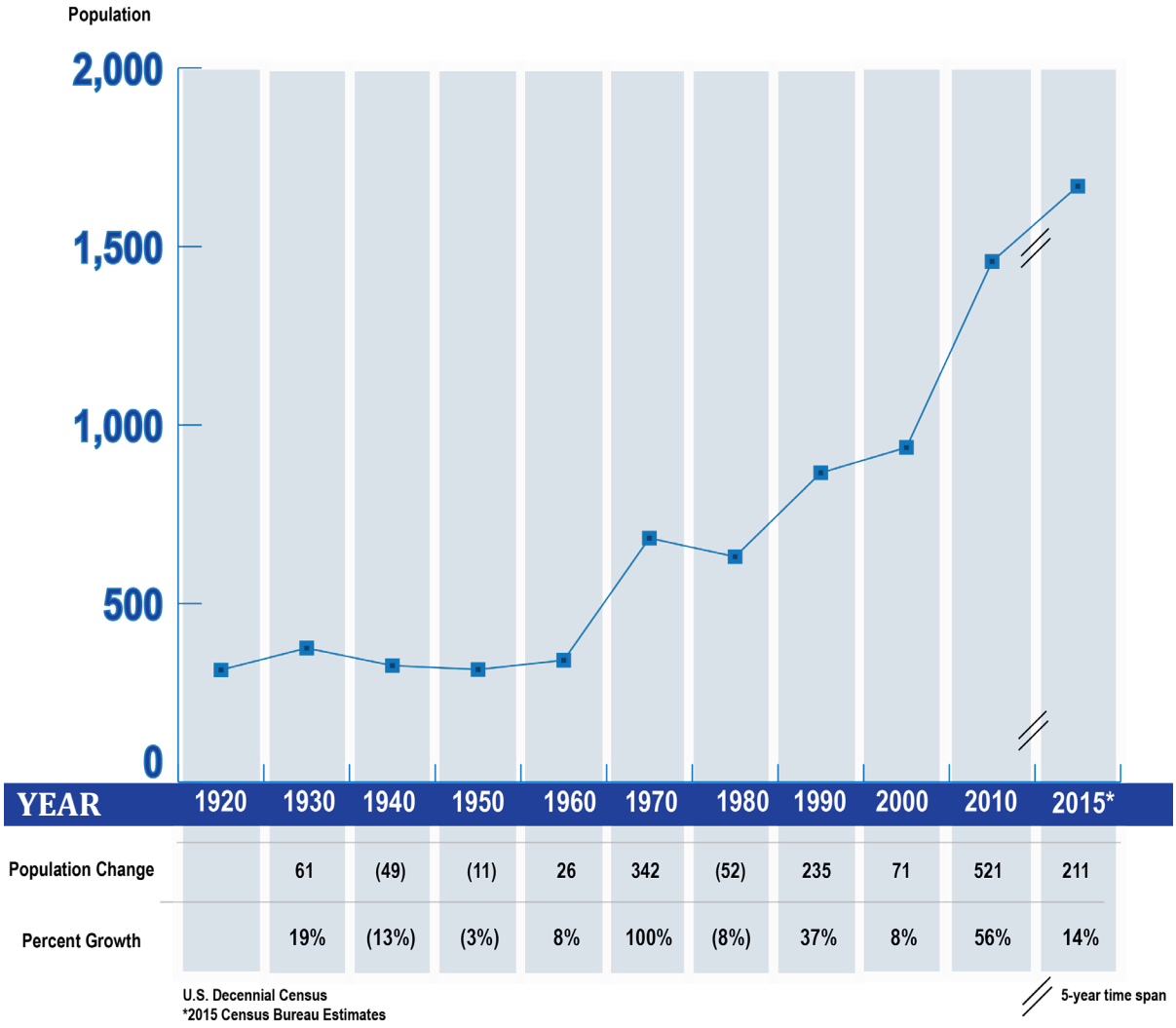
The Goals & Objectives section is the primary tool for implementing the goals of the city. This chapter identifies the action steps that are necessary to achieve the community's envisioned goals.

[section 1.5]

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The demographic analysis is aimed to serve as the baseline for understanding how Bennington has grown and the projections for future growth. The final recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan are all driven by these trends and projections.

Figure 1: Historic Population



YEAR	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015*
Population Change		61	(49)	(11)	26	342	(52)	235	71	521	211
Percent Growth		19%	(13%)	(3%)	8%	100%	(8%)	37%	8%	56%	14%

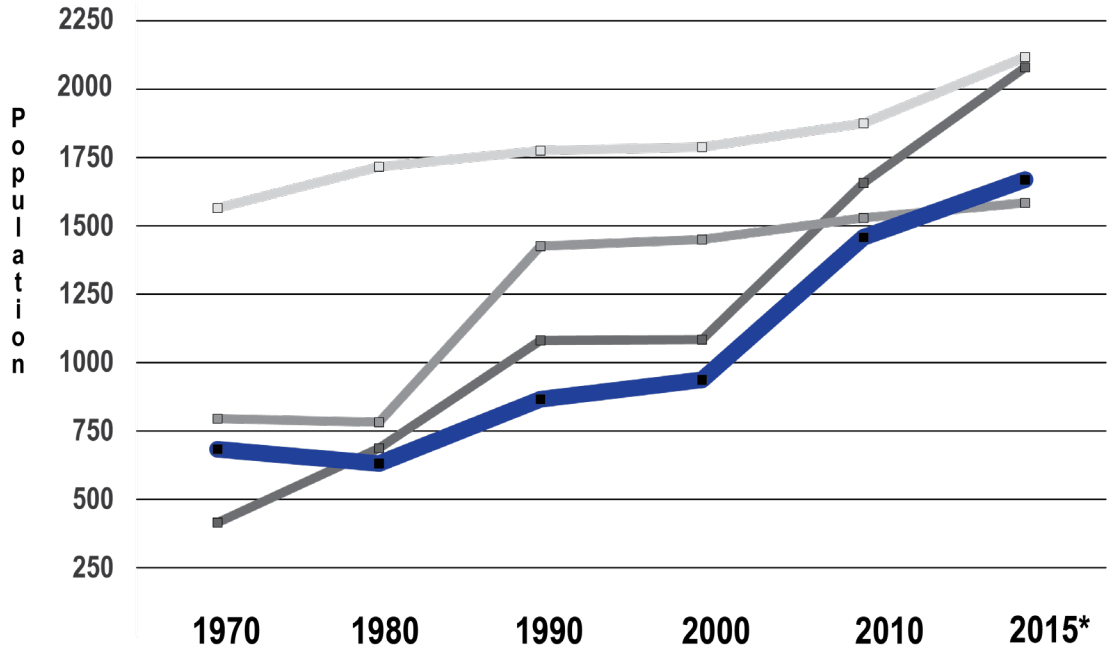
U.S. Decennial Census
*2015 Census Bureau Estimates

5-year time span

Bennington Historic Population

Since the 1980's, Bennington has experienced rapid community growth with each following decade. The growth within the community's corporate limits are depicted in Figure 1. This growth does not factor the growth within the zoning jurisdiction or surrounding area, which has a large impact on the community. The 56% growth between 2000 and 2010 was largely a result of the annexation of the Bennington Park Sanitary Improvement District. More recently, annexation of the Ridgewood neighborhood has also provided growth opportunities.

Figure 2: Historic Growth Comparisons



	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015*
Bennington	683	631	866	937	1,458	1,669
Valley	1,565	1,716	1,775	1,788	1,875	2,117
Springfield	795	782	1,426	1,450	1,529	1,584
Hickman	415	687	1,081	1,084	1,657	2,079
Douglas County	389,455	397,038	416,444	463,585	517,110	550,064

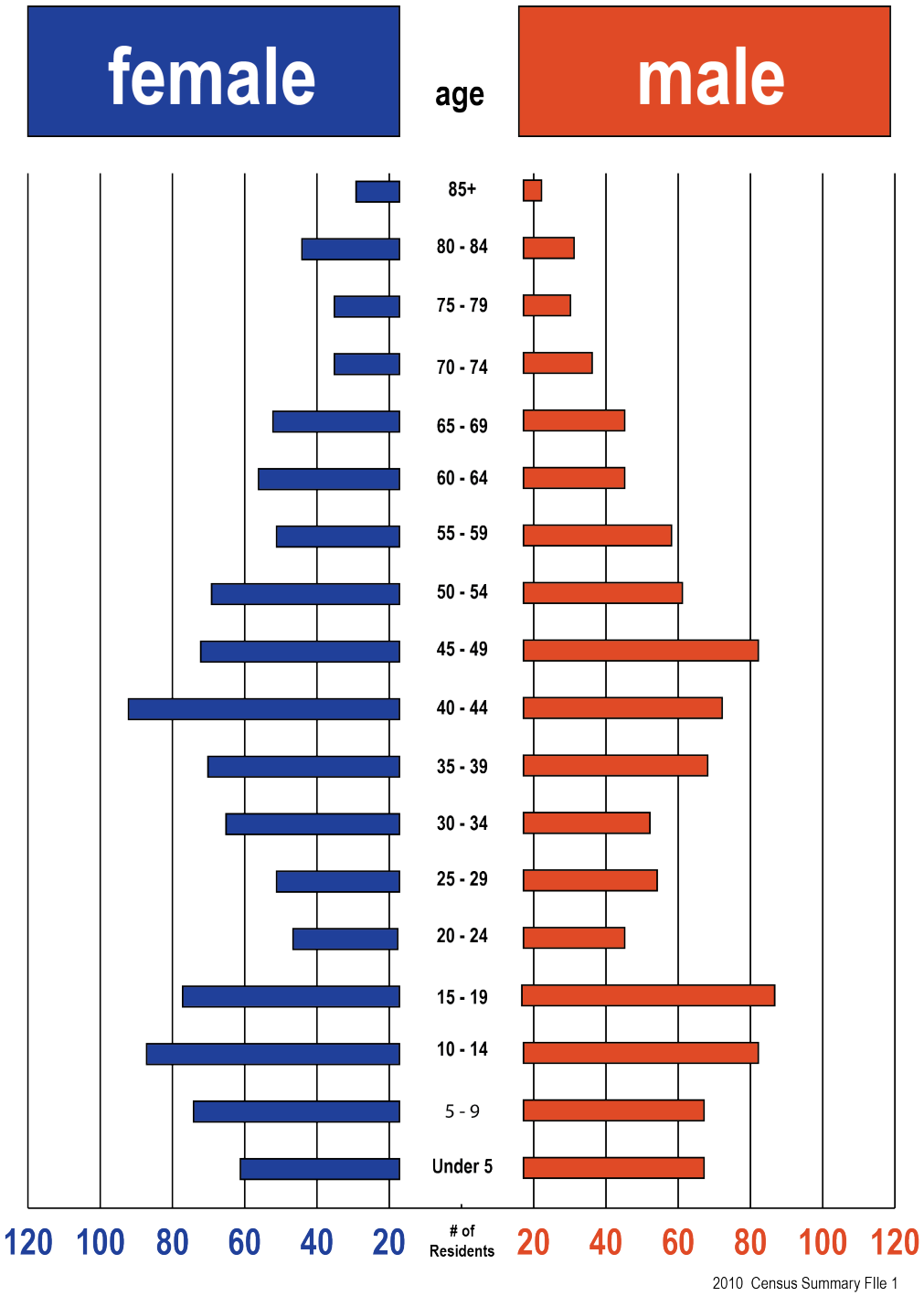
United States Decennial Census
*2015 United States Census Estimate

Historic Growth Comparisons

Figure 2 compares Bennington's growth to communities of similar size and geographic situation. The comparison communities of Valley, Springfield, and Hickman are all situated within a few miles of larger metropolitan areas. The influence of these metro's create a unique growth demand that most rural communities of similar size do not experience.

Bennington's relationship to the City of Omaha creates a unique set of opportunities and challenges to be addressed with this Comprehensive Plan. Due to the accessibility of the community to major employment centers throughout the Metro, Bennington experiences growth pressures that most communities do not. However, the community also faces a greater amount of competition for local business. Retail and service stores otherwise drawn to a community of Bennington's size may elect to locate within Omaha for greater traffic and population base.

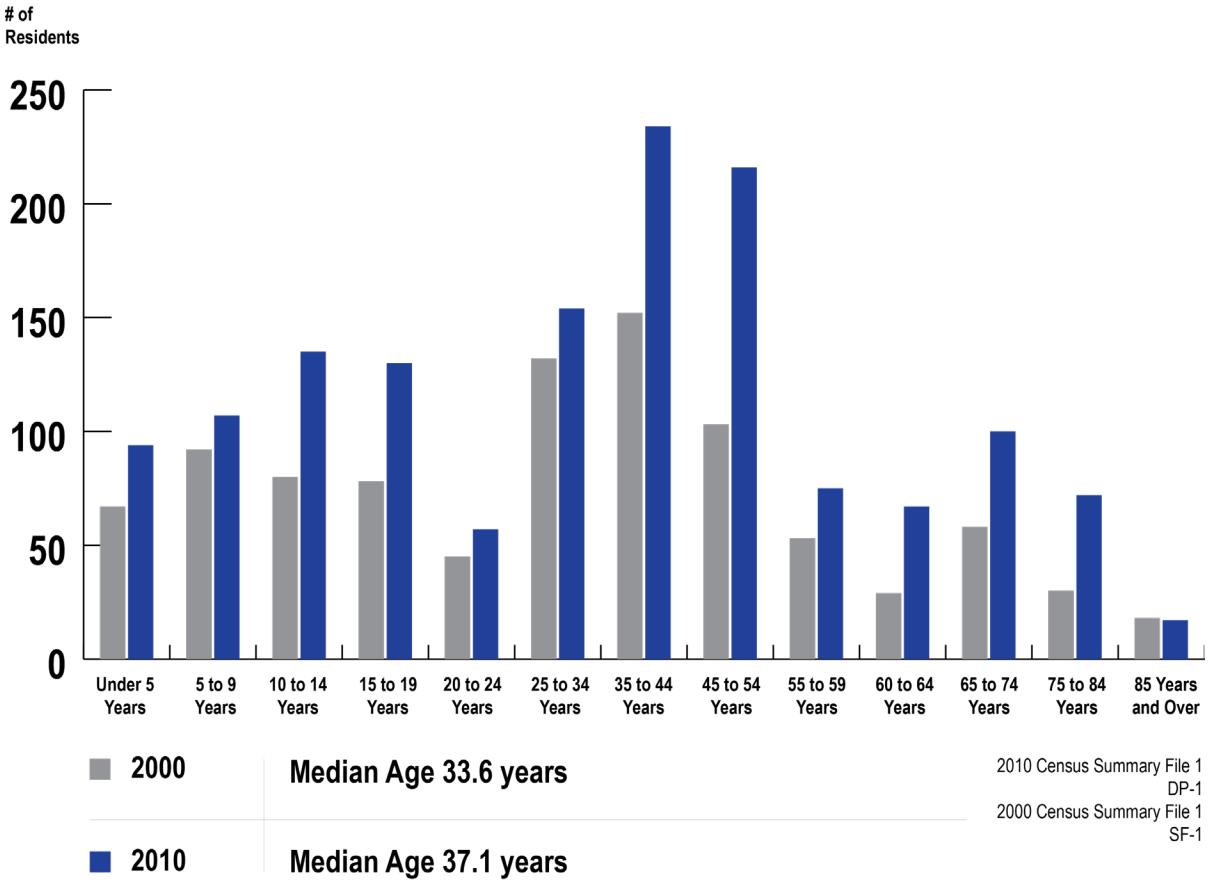
Figure 3: Age Cohorts



Bennington Age Cohorts

An age cohort pyramid, depicted in Figure 3 is a visual representation of Bennington's population broken out by 5-year age cohorts and gender. The analysis of the pyramid provides context to the past growth of the community and its ability to sustain natural growth in the future. The predominance of population below the age of 19 and in between the ages of 35 and 54 indicate that much of Bennington's population consists of families with school aged children.

Figure 4: Age Trends



Bennington Age Trends

The high rate of growth of adults between the ages of 35 and 54 drove much of Bennington's growth since 2010. Senior citizens of at least 65 years was another group that experienced significant growth since 2000. This growth was likely due to the development and annexation of the Ridgewood Senior Living Center in eastern Bennington. This growth also contributed to the increase in the community's median age, despite an increase in children and young adults.

Figure 5: Population Composition Comparison

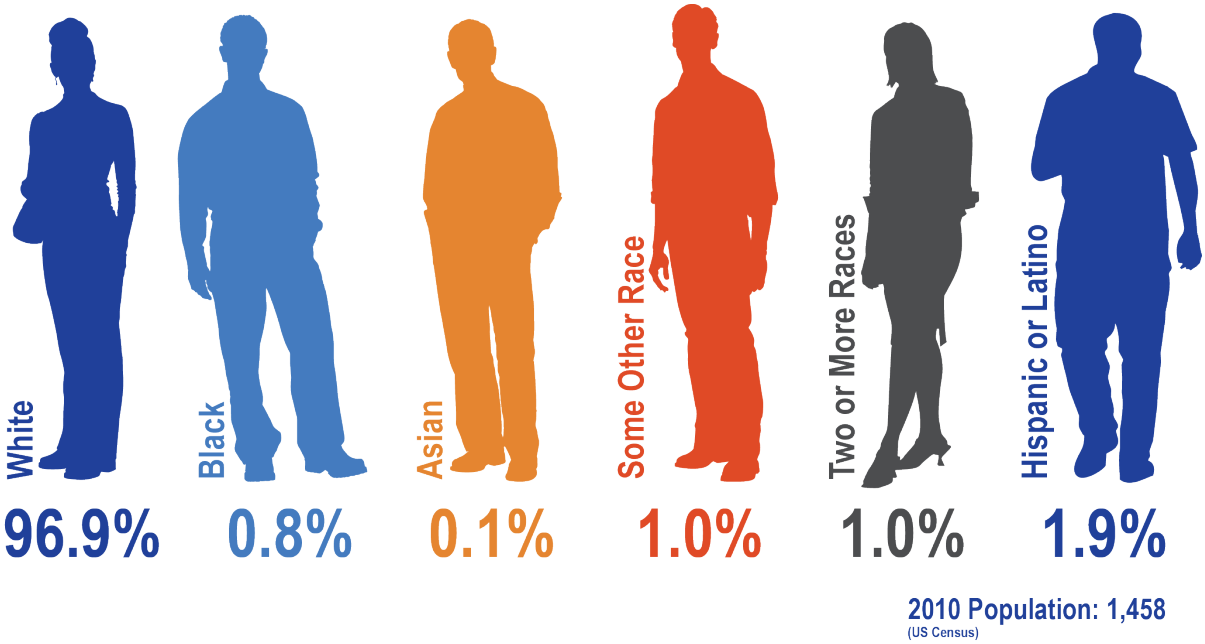
Age Cohort	Bennington	Valley	Springfield	Hickman	Douglas Co.	Nebraska
0 to 4	6.4%	6.9%	7.4%	6.2%	7.8%	7.2%
5 to 9	7.3%	7.0%	7.3%	5.8%	7.4%	7.1%
10 to 14	9.3%	6.4%	8.2%	4.8%	6.9%	6.7%
15 to 19	8.9%	5.7%	7.7%	3.4%	6.8%	7.1%
20 to 24	3.9%	5.4%	5.2%	1.8%	7.5%	7.1%
25 to 29	4.9%	5.9%	6.0%	3.2%	8.5%	7.1%
30 to 34	5.7%	5.0%	5.4%	5.2%	7.2%	6.4%
35 to 39	7.1%	4.7%	5.8%	3.1%	6.6%	6.0%
40 to 44	8.9%	6.6%	6.3%	3.2%	6.4%	6.0%
45 to 49	8.2%	5.9%	9.3%	3.1%	6.9%	7.0%
50 to 54	6.6%	10.5%	6.6%	3.1%	6.7%	7.1%
55 to 59	5.1%	7.5%	7.5%	3.3%	6.0%	6.4%
60 to 64	4.6%	4.7%	6.1%	2.1%	4.7%	5.2%
65 to 69	4.3%	4.1%	3.8%	0.8%	3.2%	3.8%
70 to 74	2.5%	3.5%	3.0%	0.7%	2.3%	3.0%
75 to 79	2.1%	3.8%	2.2%	0.7%	2.0%	2.5%
80 to 84	2.8%	2.8%	1.3%	0.2%	1.6%	2.1%
85+	1.2%	3.6%	0.9%	1.0%	1.6%	2.2%
Median Age	**37.1**	**42.3**	**37.3**	**31.8**	**33.5**	**36.2**

2010 Census SF-1 DP-1

Population Composition Comparison

Figure 5 compares the age breakdown of Bennington residents with similar communities, Douglas County, and the state of Nebraska. Despite the comparatively high number of school-aged children, Bennington's median age is among the highest in the comparison. In 2000, Bennington's median age was 33.6, increasing to 37.1 in 2010. Again, the development of the Ridgewood area likely explains the large increase in median age.

Figure 6: Race Characteristics



Bennington Race Characteristics

Bennington is a predominantly white community. Its recent growth has not resulted in a relative increase in community diversity in the context of both race and ethnicity. Reported race is an indication of genetics while ethnicity is a function of cultural background. Figure 6 indicates a 1.9% Hispanic or Latino ethnicity in Bennington.

Chapter 2

Facilities & Services

2 Facilities & Services BENNINGTON

[section 2.1]

PROFILE

Public facilities represent a wide range of buildings, utilities, and services that are provided and maintained by the different levels of government. These facilities are provided to insure the safety, well-being and enjoyment of the residents of a jurisdiction, in this case, the City of Bennington. Facilities and services provide city residents with social, cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities, as well as law enforcement and fire protection services designed to meet the public need. It is important for all levels of government to anticipate the future demand for their goods and services if they are to remain strong and vital.

The first step in establishing the Profile of community facilities and services is to evaluate the ability of the city to meet existing and future demand while determining the level of services that will need to be provided. The analyses of existing facilities as well as the future demand for services are contained in this section. Alternatively, in some instances, there are a number of services not provided by the local or state governments but are provided by non-governmental, private or non-profit organizations for the community. These organizations are equally important providers of services to the community and therefore should not be overlooked.

Community Facilities

The Community Facilities component of the Bennington Comprehensive Plan reviews present capacities of all public and private facilities and services. This section evaluates the current demands and accepted standards to determine whether capacity is adequate, as well as determine what level of service is required to meet future demands within the planning period. Finally, recommended improvements for community facilities and services that are not adequate for present or future needs are provided in the Achieve and Implement sections.

The Community Facilities for Bennington are divided into the following categories:

- City Buildings
- Fire and Police Protection
- Educational Facilities
- Health Facilities

City Hall

Bennington City Hall is located at 15512 Warehouse Street. The facility holds office space for the City Clerk and Treasurer as well as a small meeting space. This office will be vacated by the City upon completion of the Bennington Library Expansion as city services will be housed in a section of the completed facility.

City Library

The Bennington Public Library is located at 15505 Warehouse Street, adjacent to Centennial Park. The facility also houses the Community Room, a meeting facility available for reservation for residents, community organizations, and also houses City Planning Commission and City Council meetings.

The 1,500 square foot library is currently in the process of renovating for an expansion into the vacated Fire Hall bay. Upon completion, the renovation will result in a nearly 11,000 square foot facility housing the modernized library, a new 2,000 square foot community meeting room, a small conference room, garage space for city vehicles, and two offices to be utilized by the City.

Source: Omaha World Herald

City Maintenance Facility

The City Maintenance Facility is located near the city ballfields off of North 2nd Street. The facility houses city maintenance equipment and an office. The facility was constructed in 1998 – 1999. As the community grows and adds maintenance staff and equipment, on-site expansion, or new facility, may be necessary.

Postal Facility

The Post Office in Bennington is located at 124 S. Stark Street. The General Services Administration leases the facility to the Postal Service. The facility is presently adequate for the needs of the community. However, if expansion became necessary, space is not adequate for an addition.

Police Department

The Bennington Police Department is located at 11402 North 156th Street, in a renovated building at the former sewer plant site. The Department is comprised of two full-time officers, four part-time officers, and three reserve officers. A fleet of three police cruisers serves the department's needs.

Fire Department[1]

The Bennington Fire and Rescue Department is a 100% volunteer fire department and services roughly 42 square miles of northwestern Douglas County, including the City of Bennington, and 6 square miles of southern Washington County.

The transition of its service area, from rural to urban use, has changed the makeup of the Rural Fire Department as well. The Department currently operates two class "A" pumpers and a 4x4 grass-fire truck. The addition of reservoirs in the district necessitated the investment in water/ice rescue equipment as well. A Zodiac rescue boat was donated by a local lake development.

The growing needs of the district resulted in a new department facility, located at 10801 N. 156th Street, just south of corporate limits. The facility was completed in 2015. The Department is staffed by over 50 volunteers.

The level of population growth in the district has increased demand for services for fire and rescue. In 2016, the Department responded to 195 fire calls and 537 rescue calls.

[1] www.benningtonfirerescue.com

Source: *www.benningtonfirerescue.com*

Education Facilities

Much of Bennington's recent growth has been influenced by the ability for a commuting population to take advantage of a smaller school district than what is typically found in the Omaha Metro. For this reason, education providers in the community are a key partner in sustaining population growth in the future.

Bennington Public Schools

The Bennington Public School District is an independent suburban school system. The K-12 district enrollment was 2,080 students at the start of the 2015-16 school year, served by nearly 285 district employees in four facilities.

The growth and development within the school district boundaries has tripled the enrollment since the 2005-06 school year (704). Three of the four school facilities are less than 10 years old, with a fifth facility (middle school) opened for the 2017-18 school year.

Grade Level	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
2015-16 Enrollment	38	204	196	181	180	187	176	182	127	159	141	128	109	93	2,101

*** 2015-16 Statistics and Facts about Nebraska Schools - Nebraska Dept. of Education**

Bennington Elementary - 11620 North 156th Street
For nearly 70 years, the Bennington Elementary facility housed the only school facility in Bennington. Constructed in the 1940's, the expanded facility housed K-12 classes and administration until the completion of the Bennington Jr./Sr. High in 2005. Currently, the original 1940's building houses District offices. The remainder of the additions currently house Bennington Elementary.

Pine Creek Elementary - 7801 N. HWS Cleveland Blvd.
The construction of Pine Creek Elementary was completed in 2009 to support rapid growth in the southern portion of the school district. The K-6 facility enrolled over 400 students in 2015.

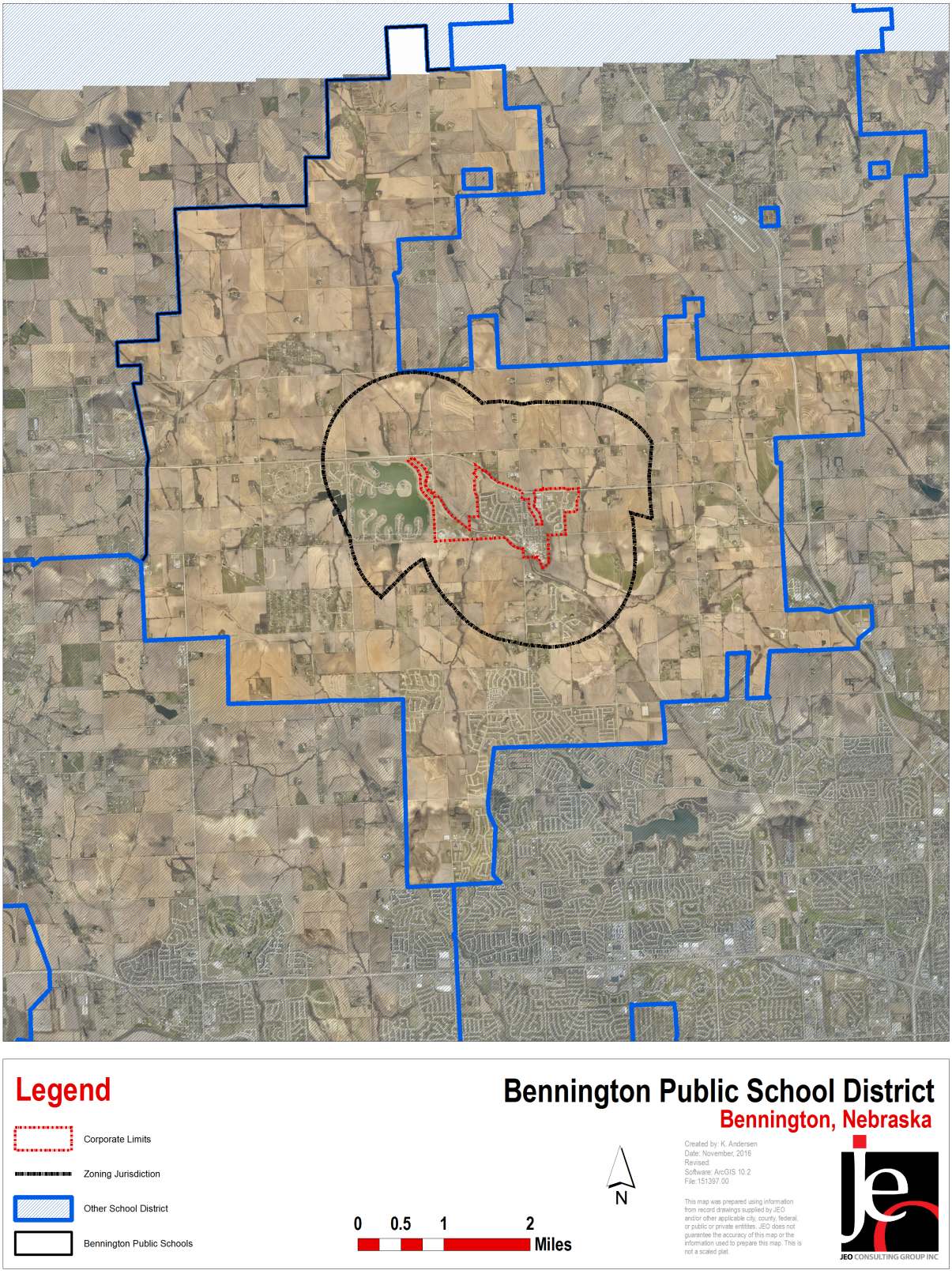
Heritage Elementary - 9950 Rosewater Parkway
Completed in 2012, Heritage Elementary is the newest facility of the Bennington Public School District. Located southwest of the city, Heritage is a Pre-K-6 facility with over 350 students in 2015.

Bennington Middle School - 16610 Bennington Road
Construction of a new $29 million middle school facility was completed in August, 2017. With a capacity for 750 students, the school serves sixth-graders from the three elementary schools and seventh, and eighth-graders.

Bennington High School - 16610 Bennington Road
Constructed in 2005, Bennington High School has an enrollment capacity of 750. Previously exceeding that capacity, more space has become available upon the completion of Bennington Middle School immediately to the south. An expansion of athletic and physical education facilities is set to be completed in 2017, following the 2012 expansion which included an auditorium and outdoor athletic facilities.

Bennington Public Schools Administration Building

Map 1: Bennington Public School District



Health Facilities

Access to healthcare opportunities is necessary for community growth. A growing population needs a broad spectrum of healthcare options for a diverse community demographic. Young families with children and elderly citizens have differing, but equally important healthcare needs. Limited healthcare opportunities are provided locally, but Bennington's proximity to Omaha provide a wide variety of opportunities for health care immediately accessible for its residents.

Hospitals

The Omaha Metro Area provides ample full-service hospitals accessible to Bennington residents. Among the closest in proximity to Bennington include:

- CHI Health Immanuel Medical Center - 6901 N. 72nd Street
- Methodist Women's Hospital - 707 N. 190th Plaza
- Boys Town National Research Hospital - 14000 Boys Town Hospital Road
- CHI Health Lakeside Hospital - 16901 Lakes Hills Court

Assisted Living

Senior and Assisted Living Housing opportunities allow older residents to maintain residence and independence in the Bennington area. Ridgewood Senior Living, 12301 N. 149th Circle, offers the spectrum of independent living, assisted living, and memory care.

Other Health Services

The Omaha Metro Area provides ample full-service hospitals accessible to Bennington residents. Local services include:

- Quality Dental - 15813 Center West Hadan Drive
- Paul Bacino DDS - 132 South Stark Street
- Health Mart Pharmacy - 15817 Center West Hadan Drive

Ridgewood Senior Living Community

[section 2.2]

ENVISION

The Bennington community is in a unique situation given its proximity and connectivity within the Omaha Metropolitan Area. In a sense, the community is competing for growth with Omaha, and surrounding communities. These residents have a wide locational choice in that they can live in a number of varying areas and scenarios and still enjoy connectivity to the larger job market.

Quality of life amenities facilitate population growth in Bennington. Accessibility to quality civic assets such as schools, safety and emergency response, and civic centers often drive location choice for potential residents. As an example, Bennington's highly rated school system has been a large catalyst for growth over recent decades.

To facilitate public input regarding community facilities, the consulting team hosted a broad-based town hall meeting, a portion of which was dedicated to recreation; various topic-specific focus group meetings, and specific questions on the Build Bennington MySidewalk platform. The relevant discussion points from each meeting are detailed below.

Focus Group Meetings

Economic Development Focus Group

Community Strengths

First and foremost, the Bennington Public School District was identified as one of the greatest assets to the community. The highly rated school system was determined to be a driver for a lot of the growth Bennington experiences within and outside of its corporate limits.

Bennington's small-town nature invokes a lot of community pride. Participants viewed it as an asset that people know not only their neighbors, but community leaders such as the Superintendent of Schools, Police Chief, etc. on a personal basis.

Community Weaknesses

The relevant community weakness identified in the Bennington area was that many of the users of local facilities such as the library, parks, and athletic facilities, are not residents within the corporate limits, and don't pay a proportional share of their taxes towards maintaining and improving these facilities. The focus group discussed various means to monetize this usage.

Community Needs

A greater online presence was discussed at length to improve the perception and level of service in Bennington. Whether through a traditional web-site, or a mobile-based application, the discussion revolved around various ways it could be utilize to promote amenities, events and opportunities in the community.

Magic Wand

The magic wand question challenges participants to think of their dreams for their community without the restrictions of cost or implementation barriers. The ideas generated from this discussion are meant to the reviewed, and if desired, scaled appropriately to meet these constraints.

- A joint city and school facility with a community center, library, and recreation function
  - Similar to Common Ground in Elkhorn

Student/Youth Focus Group

Community Engagement

Youth and students feel disengaged with local community activities and services. They have a great passion for their community and would appreciate an opportunity to have their voice and opinions heard. Relating to Facilities and Services, the students value the Library, and look forward to the opportunity for a modern library with options for technology, reading, and activities.

Parks and Recreation Focus Group

Community Strengths

The tie between the parks system in Bennington is closely connected to its school-system. Identified as a community strength in the focus group, the Bennington Public Schools drives the attraction of young families to the Bennington area. These families are those that most actively utilize park infrastructure and recreation programming.

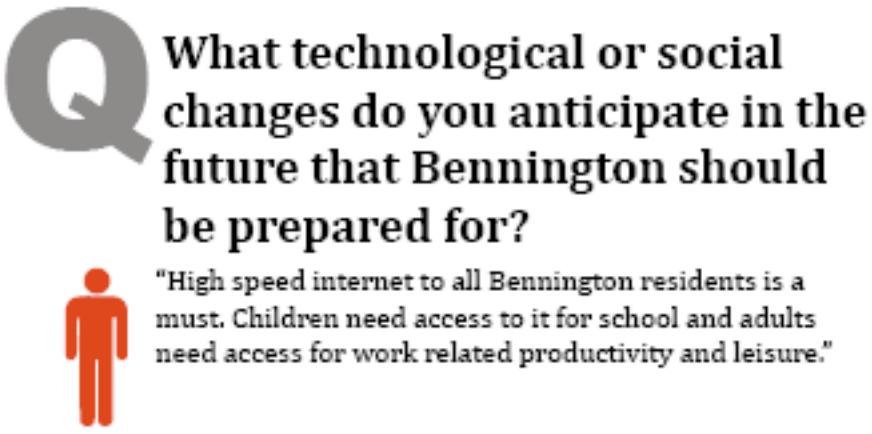
Town Hall Meeting

On January 24, 2017 a community-wide town hall meeting was held to discuss a variety of issues. After a presentation and input from the audience in its entirety, the remainder of the evening was broken into a topic-specific open house. Various stations relating to land use, housing, economic development, and parks and recreation were established for attendees to visit, ask questions, and provide input.

Input from the town hall meeting relating to Facilities and Services were centered on questions and support for the new library construction project.

Online Platform

The MySidewalk site, www.buildbennington.mysidewalk.com, served as an on-line public forum to supplement the traditional public participation process. The platform facilitates community participation over the web to build upon input typically received during public meetings, town halls, and focus group meetings. The MySidewalk site operates as a convenient, and user-friendly process for citizens to utilize at their convenience, from the comfort of their homes or a mobile device. The Build Bennington site served as a virtual town hall, where users can respond to questions and polls, generate ideas, and discuss other users' ideas. The site generated 2,800 total page views and over 150 responses to questions and ideas.



[section 2.3]

ACHIEVE

This section aims to set the goals and policies relating to Bennington's community facilities and services. The goals established in the Achieve process are the consensus priority of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee and civic leadership. Community facility goals are broad-based statements reflecting the vision of services provided by the city and its partners. Goals are then broken down into specific policies aimed to guide the decision making process for Bennington leadership. Successfully implementing these policies, combined with successful completion of the relevant Implement Bennington objectives will likely result in the successful accomplishment of Bennington's established goals.

Facilities and Services Goals and Policies

Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps, and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions.

Increase the level of community collaboration to improve the delivery and efficiency of public services.

The city should continuously examine areas where the consolidation of services and facilities through inter-local agreements would result in efficiencies. These collaborations may include law enforcement, street and road maintenance, recreation programming, and other public services.

The city should prioritize efforts to provide the most modern and up-to-date access to technology and high speed internet throughout the community and within community facilities.

The city and Bennington Public Schools should cooperate and coordinate in expanding public uses of city and school facilities.

The school district and rural fire district should be informed of all new development proposed within the zoning jurisdiction of Bennington to accommodate future populations.

Improve public engagement on civic issues in Bennington

Bennington should strive to broaden public participation and engagement in local government issues. Youth and students should be prioritized in this effort.

[section 2.4]

IMPLEMENT

Considering the findings of the previous sections, the Implement section offers guidance on how to manage future growth and development of the city. This section outlines the goals, objectives, and action steps for Facilities and Services. Action steps describe the activities needed to achieve the desired goals of the city. The adopted action steps synthesize the information from the existing profile of the city and public input from the visioning component of the Comprehensive Plan. Action steps are a means to achieve the goals established by the community and imply a clear commitment to the city's future development.

Goal

Increase the level of community collaboration to improve the delivery and efficiency of public services

Objective

- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the creation of a City Administrator position in the community.

Action Steps

- Create a committee to oversee/complete the analysis.
- Committee members should consult resource providers (League of Municipalities, UNO School of Public Affairs, Nebraska City Managers Association, etc.) to help develop a job description and salary range for the position.
- Detail specific parameters, qualifications, and expectation for the new position for continued community prosperity and effective governance practices.
- Consider what metrics will be used to measure the effectiveness of position.
- Review gathered material to understand advantages the position brings to the community.

Responsible Group/Agency
City Council, appointed committee, City Attorney, City Clerk

Potential Resources
League of Municipalities, UNO School of Public Affairs, Nebraska City Managers Association, peer communities

Goal

Improve public engagement on civic issues in Bennington

Objective

- Establish a youth leadership council to improve engagement of Bennington students in public issues and events

Action Steps

- Create the Bennington Youth Leadership Council in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce.
- Incorporate the Council in the public processes of the community.
- Partner with Bennington schools to create Youth Leadership Academy and program that:
  - Opens communication with community leaders;
  - Create awareness of community opportunities and challenges; and
  - Provides an opportunity to assume leadership roles.

Responsible Group/Agency

Mayor, City Council, Bennington Public Schools, Bennington Community Foundation, Bennington Jaycees, Bennington Chamber of Commerce

Potential Resources

Youth Leadership Omaha program, Leadership Omaha program, Omaha Chamber of Commerce, Greater Omaha Young Professionals, Local businesses

Chapter 3

Parks & Recreation

3 Parks & Recreation
BENNINGTON

[section 3.1]

PROFILE

Bennington's growth has been driven by young families. This growth necessitates ample recreation opportunities for children and young adults. The existing park system is inventoried in this section. Bennington has also maintained a Parks and Recreation Master Plan which serves as the basis for the inventory and park recommendations.

Existing City Recreation Facilities

Map 2 on page 45 visualizes the distribution of recreation opportunities in Bennington. This section will inventory park and recreation amenities in Bennington. Later in this chapter, the Achieve section will provide recommendations for improvements to better serve the existing and projected recreation needs in Bennington.

Centennial Park *approx. 1 acre*

Centennial Park is a mini-park located on the south side of Bennington, adjacent to the downtown district. There are two access points to the park. The primary entrance is located on Warehouse Street, just east of the Bennington Public Library. There is exclusively on-street parking along Warehouse Street for this park. The other possible entrance is for pedestrian access on the west side of the park along 156th Street. The entrance has a paved parking area.

Centennial Park amenities include a gazebo, play structures, and open play areas. The Bennington Veteran's Memorial is located at the southern portion of the park

Johns-Bohn Park and Soccer Complex *approx. 9 acres*

Johns-Bohn Park is classified as a neighborhood park and is located on the west side of Bennington. The park is bounded to the north and south by the Big Papillion Creek and Bennington Road. There are a total of five access points to the park. Two vehicular entrances are located on Bennington Road on the east and west ends of the soccer area, both leading to crushed rock parking lots with space for approximately 80 vehicles. Neither lot is handicap accessible. The other three entrances provide pedestrian access from the the Bennington Lake Trail that winds through the park. A pedestrian bridge spans the Big Papillion Creek and connects Johns-Bohn Park and the Bennington Lake Trail to the Ball Complex to the north.

The park is comprised of two sections. The western portion is a soccer complex with youth soccer fields. The eastern portion is furnished with a variety of playground equipment, tennis/basketball courts, sand volleyball courts, and a picnic shelter.

Tim Ohrt Park *approx. 5.5 acres*

Tim Ohrt Park is a neighborhood park located on the east side of Bennington along Bennington Road. There are three access points to the park. The primary entrance is located on Bennington Road, just east of a tributary of the Big Papillion Creek, which leads to a crush rock parking lot with space for approximately 40 vehicles. The parking lot is not currently handicap accessible. The two other entrances provide pedestrian access and are located at the south end of the park (along Bennington Road) and in the northwest corner of the park at the east end of North 2nd Street.

The park is bisected by the tributary of the Big Papillion Creek with the two portions connected by a pedestrian bridge. The northeast part of the park consists of a nearly-level open space with scattered tree-cover. The western section of the park contains a large play area with a ball backstop, a play set, and a picnic shelter.

Bennington Athletic League (B.A.L.) Sports Complex *approx. 20 acres*

The BAL Sports Complex is located west of 156th Street between North 2nd Street and the Big Papillion Creek. The complex features five ball fields of varying size, a basketball court, a covered play set, batting cages, two concession and restroom facilities, and open play areas. The Bennington City Maintenance Building is also located on the site. A paved trail connects many of the fields and facilities to the pedestrian bridge spanning the Big Papillion Creek, effectively linking the complex to Johns-Bohn Park and the Bennington Lake Trail.

Logemann Park *approx. 12 acres*

Logemann Park consists of 12 acres donated by the Darrel and CoeLeta Logemann family in 2017. While currently undeveloped, plans for the park consist of soccer fields, baseball fields, and parking to serve the new facilities as well as the existing B.A.L. Sports Complex.

Bennington Elementary School *approx. 16 acres*

Bennington Elementary School houses students in Kindergarten through 6th grade. The school is located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Bennington Road and 156th Street. Pedestrian access is available from all sides of the campus, most importantly from the residential areas to the north and east. The school is also connected to the Bennington Lake Trail.

Recreation facilities in the school include a gymnasium with adjoining stage, multi-

purpose room, and locker rooms. These spaces and classrooms, media center, student commons, and cafeteria area may be used for community meetings and activities with prior arrangements. Outdoor facilities include a playground, basketball court, lighted baseball/softball field, football field, and 7-lane track. The playground is open to the public throughout the year. Churches have met regularly in the gymnasium and stage. The gym and athletic facilities are used regularly by the YMCA, Bennington Athletic League, Bennington Youth Football, and other organizations.

Heritage Elementary School Park *approx. 13 acres*

Located east of 156th Street on Rainwood Road, the playground at Heritage Elementary primarily serves the Heritage Subdivision in the area. The school facility also has a gymnasium and a multi-purpose/classroom available for community meetings and events with prior arrangements with the school.

Bennington Lake Trail

The Bennington Lake Trail is a 5-mile concrete trail that extends from 156th and Bennington Road by Bennington Elementary to and around Bennington Lake. From Bennington Lake, the trail provides access to the Prairie View Recreation Area and its 1.5-mile, crushed rock trail.

Key public facilities are located along the Bennington Lake Trail.

- Bennington Elementary
- Johns-Bohn Park
- Bennington Athletic League Sports Complex
- Bennington High School
- Bennington Middle School
- Bennington Lake and Newport Landing housing subdivision
- Prairie View Recreation Area and Newport Hill housing subdivision

Map 2: Bennington Parks & Recreation Map

Regional Recreation Facilities

The Omaha Metro provides a number of recreation options accessible for Bennington residents. This section details those in closest proximity to Bennington.

Prairie View Recreation Area

Prairie View Recreation Area is located at 180th Street, one-half mile south of NE Highway 36. The recreation area encompasses 84 acres, including a 42-acre lake. Land for the park was donated to the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resource District by the Horgan Development Company as part of the Public/Private Partnership with the NRD for flood control at Newport Landing and public recreation at Prairie View Lake.

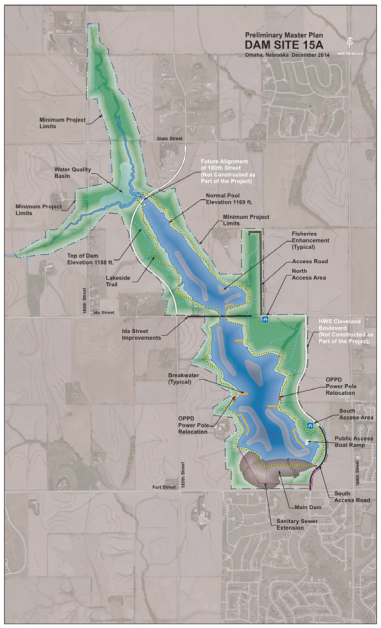
The recreation area is open year-round and includes a public boat ramp, parking, restrooms, a picnic shelter, and a 1.5-mile trail.

Glenn Cunningham Lake

Glenn Cunningham Lake is an Omaha City Park located at 8305 Rainwood Road. The Lake provides trails, no-wake boating, fishing, camping, and picnicking. The Neighborhood Offshore shack provides rentals of kayaks, paddle boards, and bicycles. More than 1,050 acres of park land surround the lake, including 450 acres of designated wildlife area north of Highway 36.

Flanagan Lake

Flanagan Lake is a project set for completion in 2018. The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resource District (NRD) project will result in a 220-acre lake to provide significant flood protection to downstream areas. The total parkland on the property will be approximately 700 acres with hiking/biking trails, boating and fishing, picnicking, and other outdoor recreation and wildlife viewing opportunities for metro residents. The park component will be managed by the City of Omaha.



NRD Dam Site 15A - Flanagan Lake

Standing Bear Lake

Standing Bear Lake was originally developed as an NRD dam site at 6404 North 132nd Street. The City of Omaha Park is a 135-acre lake with no-wake boating in the summertime and ice skating/fishing in the winter. The park and recreation area covers almost 400 acres of land surrounding the lake with a 131 acre wildlife area. Park amenities include, trails, a playground, picnic shelters, and a radio-controlled airplane runway facility.

[section 3.2]

ENVISION

The access to the employment center within the entirety of the Omaha Metro reinforces the prioritization of quality of life amenities in Bennington. Because residents have a wide variety of location-choice for their residence, population growth will be facilitated by amenities such as recreation options within close access. Similar to employment centers, Bennington residents enjoy recreation options not generally offered to a community of similar size. Within a short drive, a resident can access sport stadiums, a national zoo, museums, and outdoor recreations.

Bennington's recreation options must be accessible to be fully utilized. Accessibility can be ensured by providing parks, trails, and other amenities within close proximity to residential areas, and well-connected by a comprehensive trail or other pedestrian system.

To facilitate public input regarding Parks and Recreation, the consulting team hosted a broad-based town hall meeting, a portion of which was dedicated to recreation; a Parks and Recreation Focus Group, specific questions on the Build Bennington MySidewalk platform; and representation on the Advisory Committee by members of the Parks and Recreation Committee.

Focus Group Meetings

On January 31, 2017, the consulting team gathered members of the Bennington Parks and Recreation Committee, local youth sports and activities organizations, city staff, and other interested stakeholders of Bennington Parks. Approximately 12-15 people were in attendance to provide input.

The goal of the meeting was to identify the strengths of the existing park system, to enhance and identify weaknesses or opportunities for additional recreation options, and to derive action plans to address improvements. To achieve this goal, the group was asked about overall community strengths, strengths of the parks system, both "needs" and "wants" of the recreation system, ideas for improving recreation options, and the "Magic Wand" question.

Parks and Recreation Focus Group

City-Wide Strengths

- A close-knit community
  - Good level of volunteerism
- Quality school system
- Forward-thinking community leadership
- Unique community with independent and niche businesses

Parks and Recreation Strengths

- The Lake Bennington Trail
- The pedestrian bridge connecting ballfields, soccer fields, and Lake Bennington Trail

Parks and Recreation Needs

- Modern playground equipment in all parks
- Additional picnic shelters in all parks
- Expanded walking/biking path network
- Additional parking at athletic complexes

Parks and Recreation Wants

- Comprehensive trail network connecting:
  - Potential NRD recreation areas
  - All Bennington Public Schools
  - Existing and any new parks
- Water park with amenities:
  - Pool
  - Splash pad
  - Modern play equipment
  - Small-child area
- Improvements to Tim Ohrt Park
  - T-ball field
  - Sidewalk/trail access
- Park and amenity reservation process
- Events that promote the community:
  - Flower shows promoting the Sass Iris
  - Car shows
  - Food festivals

Magic Wand

- Aquatic Center
  - Pool
  - Splash pad
- Systemic park updates
  - Equipment upgrades
  - Trail connectivity
- Community center and event space

Economic Development Focus Group

Bennington's sports and recreation facilities were identified as a strength for the community. According to discussion, recreation was also one of Bennington's best opportunities for economic development. Youth sports events or a recreation attraction, similar to a YMCA, or The Mark facility in Elkhorn, provide an opportunity to draw visitors to Bennington, enhancing restaurants and retail in the area.

Student Focus Group

Bennington's youth and students recognize the importance of recreation in retaining young families in the area. They feel that youth sports and school activities provide their top connection to the Bennington community. With that, they prioritize the implementation of quality, modern facilities in the local parks and recreation

programming. To assist in proving year-round activities for training and recreational athletics, the student group cited an indoor-activity center focused on athletics as a community need for year-round recreation.

Apart from athletics and activities, more passive recreation opportunities are valued by the community's youth. The library is a source of information and recreation for students who are excited about the current expansion project. Accessibility to technology is a staple for the younger demographic. With that in mind, wifi availability in parks and other community facilities was mentioned as an attractive possibility. However, students also expressed the desire to utilize the outdoors as an escape from technology and an opportunity to relax. A comprehensive trail network was cited as a priority for this reason.

Town Hall Meeting

On January 24, 2017 a community-wide town hall meeting was held to discuss a variety of issues. After a presentation and input from the audience in its entirety, the remainder of the evening was broken into a topic-specific open house. Various stations relating to land use, housing, economic development, and parks and recreation were established for attendees to visit, ask questions, and provide input.

A parks and recreation station was established to gather input relating to desired park improvements, and recreation amenities requested by the public. The following topics were brought forward by participants of the open house, with descriptions of each topic based on public input.

Trails

- Would like to see accelerated plans for the potential NRD trail along the Big Papillion Creek
  - When implemented, there is a desire to connect that trail immediately to downtown with a bridge near the fire station
  - Utilize this trail as a regional connection of local trails to the greater Omaha Metro.
- Downtown Bennington should be a central hub for all local trails
- The Ridgewood subdivision and Tim Ohrt Park should be better-connected with trails and sidewalks with the rest of the community

Swimming Pool

- There lies a strong desire for a local swimming pool or aquatic center

Seasonal Recreation

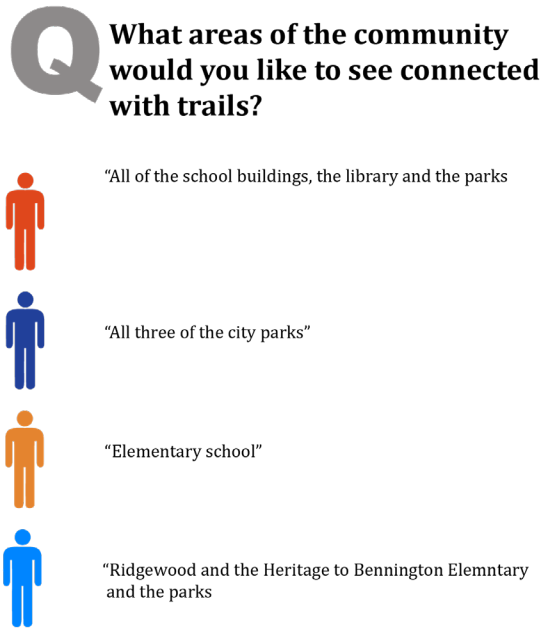
- A year-round facility was desired to provide recreation options during all seasons
  - A YMCA-like facility where adults and children can have separate activities simultaneously
- Adult athletic leagues
  - basketball
  - softball
  - volleyball
  - etc.

Funding

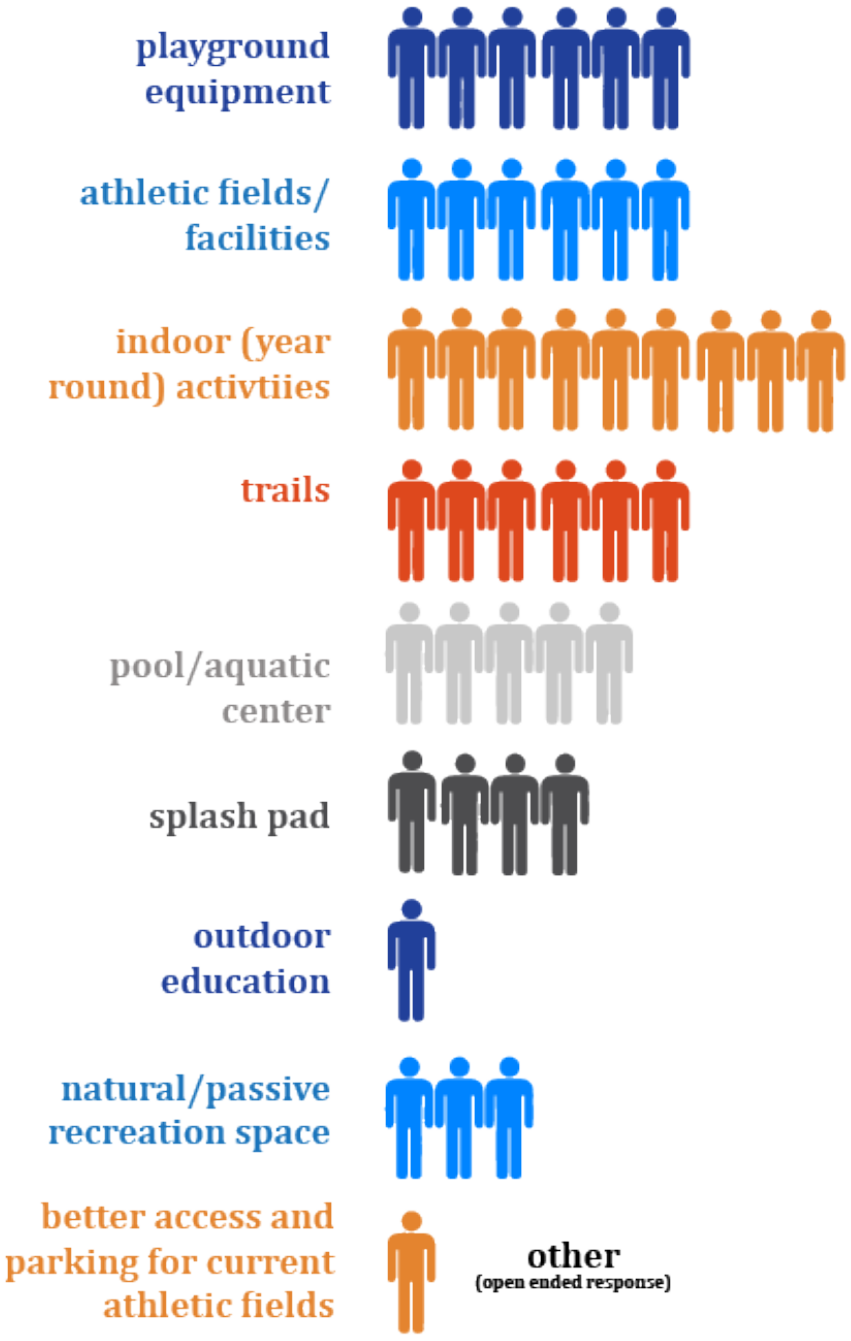
Due to the number of nearby residents outside of the corporate limits of Bennington and the involvement of youth sports and other activities, there is a large usage of Bennington park infrastructure by non-residents. There were questions and discussion relating to how and if the city should look for opportunities to monetize that usage.

Online Platform

The MySidewalk site, www.buildbennington.mysidewalk.com, served as an on-line public forum to supplement the traditional public participation process. The platform facilitates community participation over the web to build upon input typically received during public meetings, town halls, and focus group meetings. The MySidewalk site operates as a convenient, and user-friendly process for citizens to utilize at their convenience, from the comfort of their homes or a mobile device. The Build Bennington site served as a virtual town hall, where users can respond to questions and polls, generate ideas, and discuss other users' ideas. The site generated 2,800 total page views and over 150 responses to questions and ideas.



Q What physical parks and recreation improvements would you like to see in Bennington?



[section 3.3]

ACHIEVE

Largely derived from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the guidance established in this section updates and builds upon the recommendations of that plan with the additional input received from the Envision Bennington process.

Park and Recreation Master Plan

The 2008 Bennington Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides a set of park standards established within the planning process by the Bennington Parks Committee. The plan utilizes park classifications to satisfy different park and recreation needs of the community. These park classifications include:

- Mini-Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks
- School Parks
- Special Use Facilities
- Sport Complexes
- Trails/Greenways

Standards are established for each of these park classifications in terms of required and optional facilities and services. Each existing or proposed park, facility, and trail is identified according to this classification and specific recommendations are provided.

Recreation Facility, Amenity, and Service Standards

Based upon public input and policies, the 2008 Bennington Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides basic requirements and optimal facilities or services of each park classification in Bennington's jurisdiction. These requirements/options are listed in Table 1 and are divided into three categories, including:

- Parks and Recreation Facilities, such as play structures and basketball courts
- Park and Recreation Amenities such as security lighting and drinking fountains
- Park and Recreation Services, such as reservation requirements and maintenance

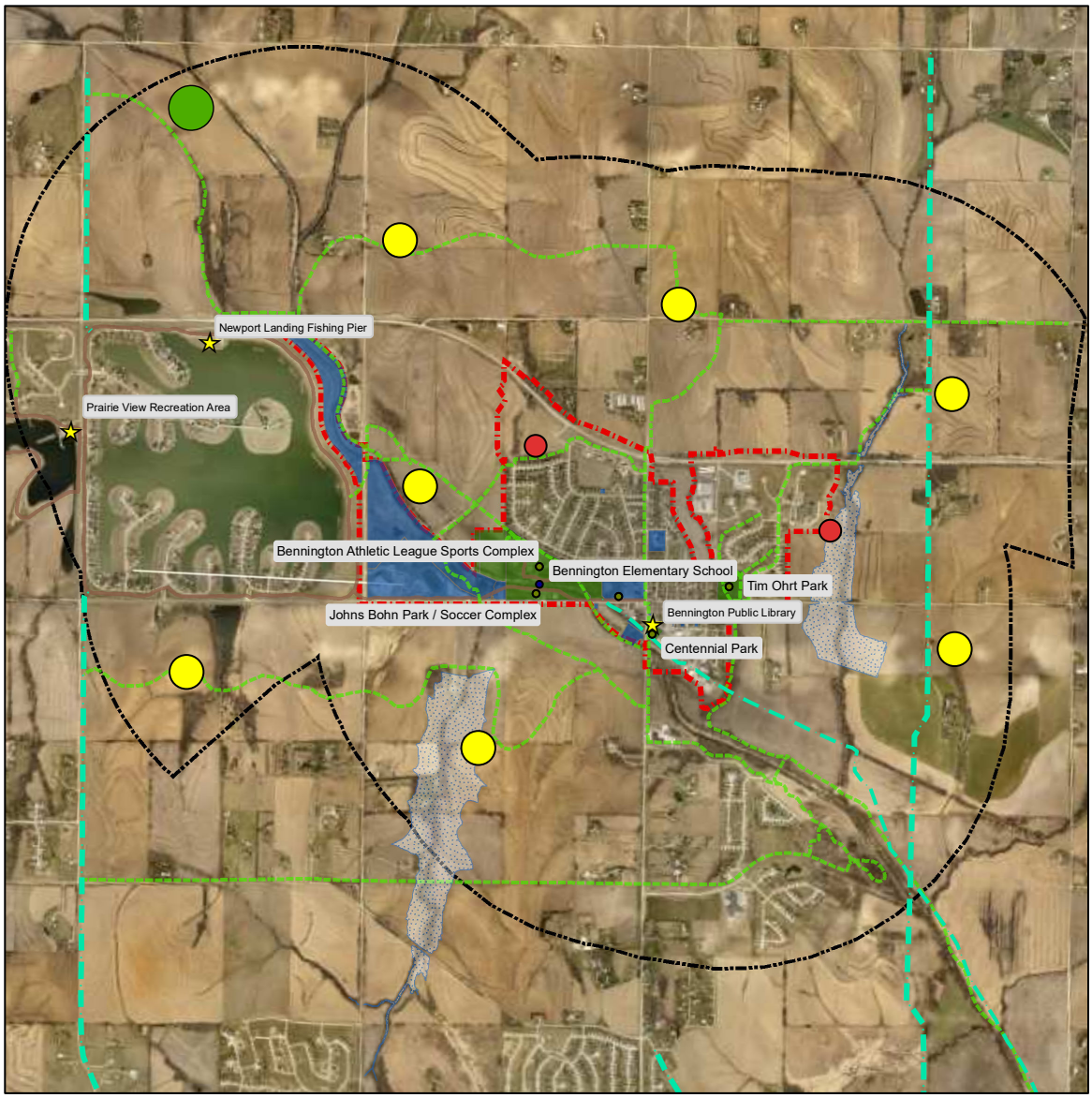
These standards are to serve as a guide for the City of Bennington. It is the responsibility of the city to determine which facilities, amenities, and services are or are not feasible in existing and proposed parks. Along with Figure __, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides an analysis of each existing park facility in Bennington based on these standards.

Table 1: Park Standards

Facilities, Amenities, and Services	Mini-Park	Neighborhood Park	Community Park	School-Park	Special Use Facility	Sports Complex	Trail/Greenway
Park and Recreation Facilities							
Play Equipment/Structures	R	R	R	R	O	O	O
Open Play Area	R	R	R	R	O	O	O
Soccer Fields	NA	O	O	O	O	O	NA
Softball Fields	NA	O	O	O	O	O	NA
Baseball Fields	NA	O	O	O	O	O	NA
Paved Multi-use Areas	O	R	R	R	O	O	NA
Tennis Courts	O	O	O	O	O	O	NA
Basketball Courts	O	O	O	O	O	O	NA
Volleyball Courts	O	O	O	O	O	O	NA
Multi-Purpose Trails	O	R	R	R	O	O	O
Picnic Facilities (shelters)	R	R	R	O	O	O	O
Special/Unique Features	O	R	R	O	O	R	O
Natural Areas	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Trees/Shaded Areas	R	R	R	R	O	R	R
Special Use Facilities	NA	O	O	O	R	O	O
Swimming Pool	NA	O	O	O	O	O	NA
Aquatic Center	NA	NA	O	O	O	O	NA
Wading Pool	O	O	O	O	O	NA	NA
Ice Skating Rink	NA	O	O	O	O	NA	NA
Amphitheater/Outdoor Gathering Area	NA	O	O	O	O	NA	O
Arboretum/Botanical Gardens	NA	O	O	NA	O	O	O
Fine Arts Facility/Public Art Displays	NA	NA	O	NA	O	NA	O
Community Center or Indoor Rec.	NA	O	O	O	O	O	NA
Camping Facilities (RV facilities)	NA	NA	NA	NA	O	NA	NA
Dog Park	NA	NA	O	NA	O	NA	O
Horseshoes	O	O	O	O	O	O	NA
Disc/Frisbee Golf	NA	O	O	O	O	O	O
Roller Hockey	O	O	O	O	O	O	NA
Football/Rugby Field	NA	NA	O	O	O	O	NA
Outdoor Exercise Circuit	NA	O	O	O	O	O	O
Skating Facility (in-line/skateborad	NA	O	O	NA	O	O	O
High-Risk Area	NA	NA	O	NA	O	O	NA
Golf Course	NA	NA	O	NA	O	O	O
Youth Sports Complex	NA	O	O	NA	O	O	NA
Competitive Sports Facility	NA	NA	O	NA	O	O	NA

Facilities, Amenities, and Services (continued)	Mini-Park	Neighborhood Park	Community Park	School-Park	Special Use Facility	Sports Complex	Trail/Greenway
Park and Recreation Amenities							
Security Lighting	R	R	R	R	R	R	O/R*
Activity Lighting	O	O	R	O	O	R	NA
Public Telephones	O	O	R	R	R	R	O
Off Street Parking	O	R	R	R	R	R	O/R*
Bike Racks	R	R	R	R	R	R	O/R*
Restrooms	O	R	R	R	O	R	O/R*
Drinking Fountains	R	R	R	R	R	R	O/R*
Benches	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Picnic Tables	O	R	R	O	O	R	O
Signage	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Information Kiosks	NA	NA	O	NA	O	O	O
ADA Accessibility	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Park and Recreation Services							
Security**	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Emergency Telephone Service	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Reservations for Facility Use (shelters, group picnics, sports leagues, for-profit use)	R	R	R	R	R	R	NA
Activities/Facilities for Groups, Companies Teams	NA	O	R	O	O	R	O
Special Events (programs, concerts, fairs)	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Facilities and Grounds Maintenance	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
R - Required Facility/Service							
O - Optional Facility/Service							
NA - Not Appropriate							
* Optional for Greenway, Required for Trail							
** May include, but not limited to, police patrols, private security, neighborhood watches, park design to eliminate hidden places, structure design and lighting, and/or location markers on trail.							
Note: This does not preclude the addition of other unlisted facilities and services as optional.							

Map 3: Bennington Existing and Proposed Parks



Parks Recommendations

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides specific recommendations for improvements of each existing park facility in Bennington. The plan also recommends the development of new park facilities within the community and in established growth areas. Map 3 provides a depiction of existing and proposed parks and facilities in Bennington's jurisdiction.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan adopted by Ordinance No. 378 in May 2008, as amended by Ordinance No. 423 in June 2014, is the current Parks and Recreation Master Plan, as supplemented hereby.

Parks and Recreation Goals and Policies

Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps, and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions.

Expand access to trails for Bennington residents

The city should maintain a current Trails Master Plan.

In accordance to land use policies and a Trails Master Plan, new developments should connect to existing or future sidewalk and trail systems through the dedication of right-of-way or easements.

In accordance to regional transportation plans, Bennington should collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions to develop and maintain a regional trail system.

Expand recreation amenities throughout the community

Areas identified in the 100-year floodplain in Bennington's jurisdiction should be prioritized for the implementation of recreation amenities where possible.

The city park system should be accessible to all residents in the corporate limits by means other than a motor vehicle.

A diverse system of recreation facilities should offer year-round services for Bennington residents of all ages.

The city shall maintain and implement a current Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

[section 3.4]

IMPLEMENT

Considering the findings of the previous sections, the Implement section offers guidance on managing future growth and development of the city. Here the goals, policies, and action steps are outlined for Parks and Recreation. Policies and action steps give more detail and describe the activities needed to achieve the desired goals of the city. Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps, and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions. The adopted action steps synthesize the information from the existing profile of the city and public input from the visioning component of the Comprehensive Plan. Action steps are a means to achieve the goals established by the community and imply a clear commitment to the city's future development.

Goal

Expand recreation amenities throughout the community

Objective

- Explore the viability of an aquatic center in Bennington

Action Steps

- Form a steering committee to explore options for development of a future aquatic center.
- Identify the future usage of the facility including special demands and needs for physical amenities.
- Inventory centers recently built in the region. Visit with local officials to determine lessons learned.
- Present the physical needs and expectations to City Council and the public.
- Procure the services of a licensed architecture firm to assist in assessing all potential options for the center.
- Inventory available land or buildings within the community that meet the spatial needs of the facility.
- Prepare architectural rendering and opinion of costs for renovating potential structures for the construction of a new facility, emphasizing energy efficiency and accessibility.
- Present the renderings and opinion of costs to the public for review and comment; modifying as necessary.
- Determine the long-term ownership and operational structure of the facility.
- Identify potential resources for the construction financing of the center.
- Utilize the architect to develop final plans and specifications for the project as well as construction management services.

Responsible Group/Agency:
City Council, Appointed Steering Committee, Bennington Public, City Engineer, Bennington Community Foundation

Potential Resources:
Municipal Bonds, Local Option Sales Tax, Fundraising, USDA-RD, Civic and Community Center Financing Fund, Community Development Assistance Act (CDAA), Keno Funds, Usage Fees, Community Foundation

Objective

- Explore options for a multi-purpose recreation facility in Bennington

Action Steps

- Form a steering committee to explore options for development of a future multi-purpose recreation facility.
- Identify the future usage of the facility including special demands and needs for physical amenities.
- Inventory facilities recently built in the region. Visit with local officials to determine lessons learned.
- Present the physical needs and expectations to City Council and the public.
- Procure the services of a licensed architecture firm to assist in assessing all potential options for the facility.
- Inventory available land or buildings within the community that meet the spatial needs of the facility.
- Prepare architectural rendering and opinion of costs for renovating potential structures for the construction of a new facility, emphasizing energy efficiency and accessibility.
- Present the renderings and opinion of costs to the public for review and comment; modifying as necessary.
- Determine the long-term ownership and operational structure of the facility.
- Identify potential resources for the construction financing of the center.
- Utilize the architect to develop final plans and specifications for the project as well as construction management services.

Responsible Group/Agency:
City Council, Appointed Committee, Bennington Community Foundation, Bennington Public Schools, Bennington Athletic League, Bennington Soccer Club, Bennington Legion Baseball, Bennington Jaycees

Potential Resources:
Municipal Bonds, Local Option Sales Tax, Fundraising, USDA-RD, Civic and Community Center Financing Fund, Community Development Assistance Act (CDAA), Keno Funds, Usage Fees, Community Foundation

Chapter 4

Utilities & Infrastructure

4 Utilities & Infrastructure
BENNINGTON

[section 4.1]

PROFILE

This chapter's focus is on public and private utility services - sewer, water, electric, natural gas, and telecommunications - that serve Bennington. The location, quality, capacity, and planned improvements to these utilities will influence the pattern and phasing of future development. This section provides inventory of existing utilities and infrastructure.

Utilities

Bennington finds itself in a unique situation with its utility system being entirely serviced outside of its own governmental structure. Water, and gas are served by Omaha's Metropolitan Utilities District, with electric being served by the Omaha Public Power District. Sanitary sewer mains and right of way are owned by the City of Bennington, with treatment connected to, and served by, the City of Omaha.

Sanitary Sewer

The sanitary sewer system for the City of Bennington collects the flow from residential and commercial users and conveys the wastewater south to an interceptor sewer owned by the City of Omaha Public Works. The system contains three trunk sewers that flow by gravity to the Omaha trunk sewer, which then leads to the Papillion Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility (Omaha Public Works).

Water

Water service in Bennington is provided by the Metropolitan Utilities District (MUD). System-wide, MUD serves over 200,000 customers an average of 90 million gallons of water per day. Sources of MUD tap water include the Missouri and Platte Rivers, and the sandstone aquifer. Water is pumped from intakes and wells maintained by the District. Treatment is provided by three water treatment plants.

Electric

Omaha Public Power District provides electric service in the Bennington area. OPPD's generating capacity is 3,237 megawatts (MW). Chapter 7 further explores electric service and usage as an energy source in Bennington.

Natural Gas
Natural gas service is available in select areas of the community, provided by MUD. MUD is the fifth largest public gas utility in the country, providing service to more than 225,000 gas customers in the Omaha area.

Telecommunications
Cox Communications is the primary telecommunications provider in the Bennington area. Cox advertised scalable internet and cable television service with download speeds up to 300 Mbps and upload of 30 Mbps. DSL service is offered by CenturyLink and American Broadband.

Transportation
Bennington's transportation system, both within and externally, needs to continually evolve with the future growth and development of the community and the region. In order to accommodate the planned future growth of Bennington, a transportation network needs to established to provide mobility and connectivity in a safe manner. This section will examine the city's existing system and propose transportation policy to serve existing and future development.

Federal Functional Classifications
The functional classification is the process which categorizes streets and highways into classes, according to the character of service they are intended to provide. The federal functional classifications in Bennington include:

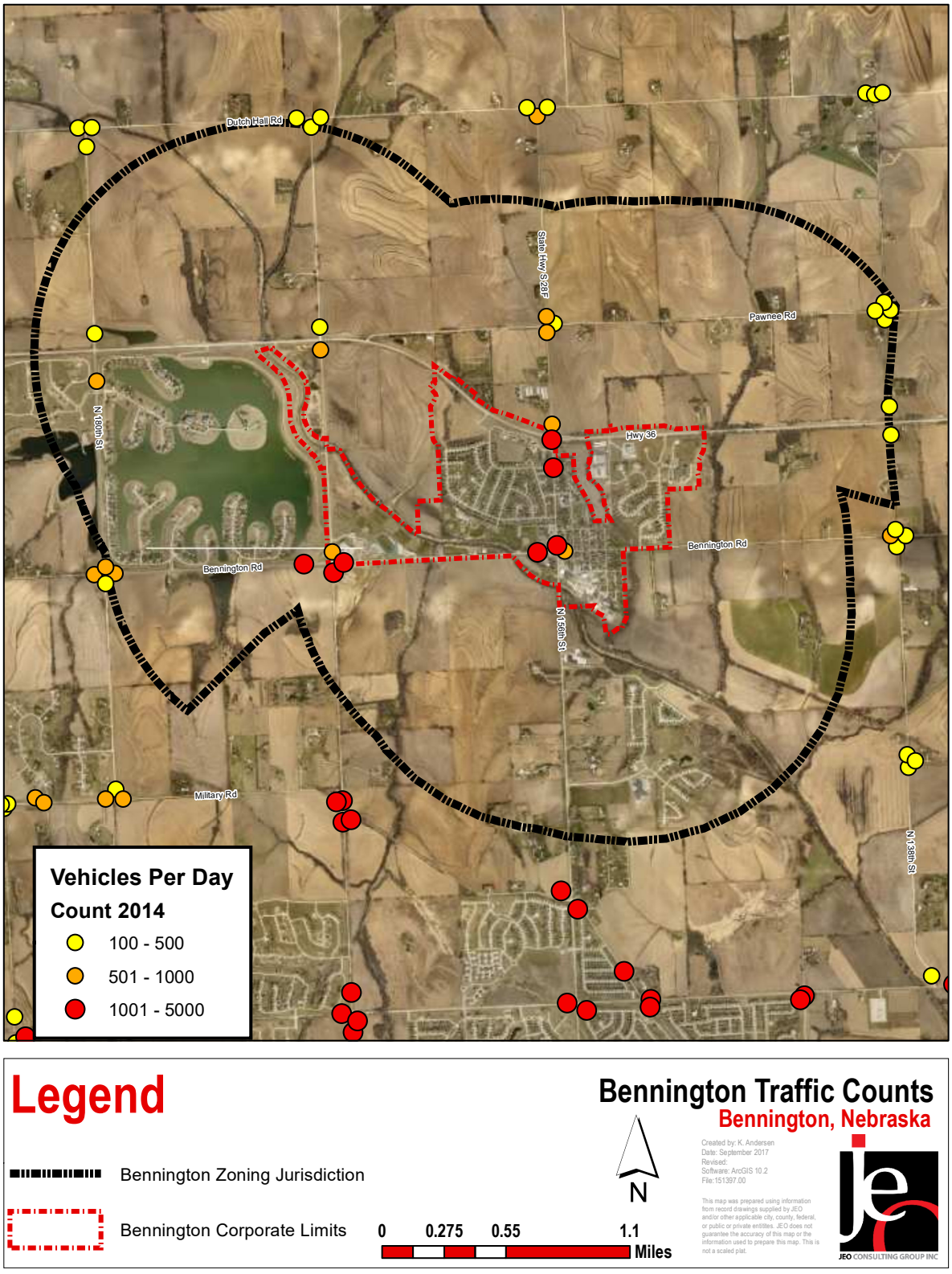
FREEWAY AND EXPRESSWAY
Freeways and expressways provide a high degree of mobility, similar to interstates. However, freeways provide access only at-grade-separated interchanges, while expressways also provide limited at-grade access to intersecting major streets.

ARTERIAL
Arterials collect and distribute traffic flow through urban areas and between major destinations. Principal arterials carry a high share of urban travel and focus on movement as the primary function, not necessarily localized access.

COLLECTOR
Collectors provide for land access and traffic circulation within and between residential neighborhoods and commercial or industrial areas. Collectors also distribute traffic movements from these areas to arterial streets. Collectors do not typically accommodate long through-trips and are not continuous for long distances.

LOCAL ROAD
Local roads offer the lowest level of mobility and highest level of local property access. Local streets typically make up the largest percentage of street mileage and provide direct access to adjacent land uses.

Map 4: Bennington Traffic Controls



Traffic Volumes

Traffic counts for existing conditions in Bennington is provided by the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA). Figure 4 represents the 2014 average annual weekday traffic from portable counts in Bennington.

Air Service

There are three public air services accessible to Bennington. Eppley Airfield in Omaha, North Omaha Airport, and the Blair Municipal Airport

Eppley Airfield, located north of downtown Omaha, serves eight commercial carriers;

- Alaska Airlines,
- Allegiant Air,
- American Airlines,
- Delta Air Lines,
- Frontier Airlines,
- Southwest Airlines,
- United Airlines, and
- US Airways.

There were over 4.1 million total passengers in 2014, and the airport averaged 260 aircraft operations per day during the one-year period from April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016. Aircraft operations during this time included 46% for commercial use, 23% for air taxi, 20% for transient general aviation, 6% for local general aviation, and 5% for military.

North Omaha Airport is a privately owned, public-use airport with one concrete runway measuring over 3,000 feet in length. The facility averaged 39 aircraft operations per day in 2015. The North Omaha Airport is located near the intersection of 72nd Street and Nebraska Highway 36, approximately seven miles east of Bennington.

The Blair Municipal Airport is located approximately seven miles south of Blair, NE on Nebraska Highway 133. By road, the facility is 10 miles from Bennington. The airport is operated by the Blair Airport Authority. Airport consists of one 4,200 foot concrete runway and averaged 42 aircraft operations per day in 2005.

[section 4.2]

ENVISION

Utilities and infrastructure are necessary for any new growth in the community. They also provide a means of quality of life for existing residents and businesses. By providing and maintaining quality utility services, Bennington can meet the needs of its residents. The Envision section of the planning process is the formal means for public participation in this section of the plan.

Infrastructure can be a difficult subject area to derive public input. Utility service often goes unnoticed until such a time where it fails or no longer meet the needs of residents and businesses. For this reason, one major goal of public participation in a comprehensive planning process is public education on the importance of infrastructure investments.

Focus Group Meeting

Business and Economic Development

The lack of developable land was identified as the top barrier for business and economic development by the focus group. The price of adjacent farmland was the largest impediment for investment in commercial or industrial lots. Another impediment was the cost of extending infrastructure to areas of development. When the cost is born by developers, the increase in overhead often deters the investment. Cost-sharing or speculative extension of utility infrastructure was determined to be strategy for encouraging private-sector investment in Bennington.

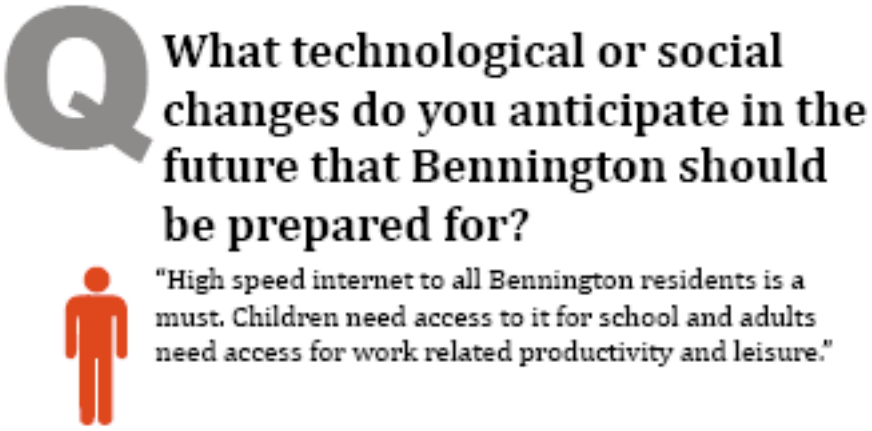
Student Focus Group

The student group was not immune to the infrastructure needs of the community. The biggest impact to the students was traffic congestion at peak times. Specifically the group mentioned three areas that were issues at peak times; mornings, after school, and at community events:

- Downtown
- 156th and Bennington Road
- 168th and Bennington Road

Online Platform

The MySidewalk site, www.buildbennington.mysidewalk.com, served as an on-line public forum to supplement the traditional public participation process. The platform facilitates community participation over the web to build upon input typically received during public meetings, town halls, and focus group meetings. The MySidewalk site operates as a convenient, and user-friendly process for citizens to utilize at their convenience, from the comfort of their homes or a mobile device. The Build Bennington site served as a virtual town hall, where users can respond to questions and polls, generate ideas, and discuss other users' ideas. The site generated 2,800 total page views and over 150 responses to questions and ideas.



[section 4.3]

ACHIEVE

The availability and quality of public utilities (water, sewer, power) significantly influences development patterns. As a general policy, new development should occur where utility services are available. In relationship to this policy, the growth areas of the community identified in the Land Use and Growth Management Chapter, directly relate to areas that are readily accessible to utility services.

Growth Areas

To facilitate growth, service extensions must be made for public utilities to serve any residential, commercial or commercial development. Typically, the availability of sanitary sewer is the primary driver of growth in that it necessitates the greatest degree of planning and investment. By nature, sanitary sewer follows drainage basins to take advantage of gravity flows as opposed to investing in lift stations and pumping infrastructure.

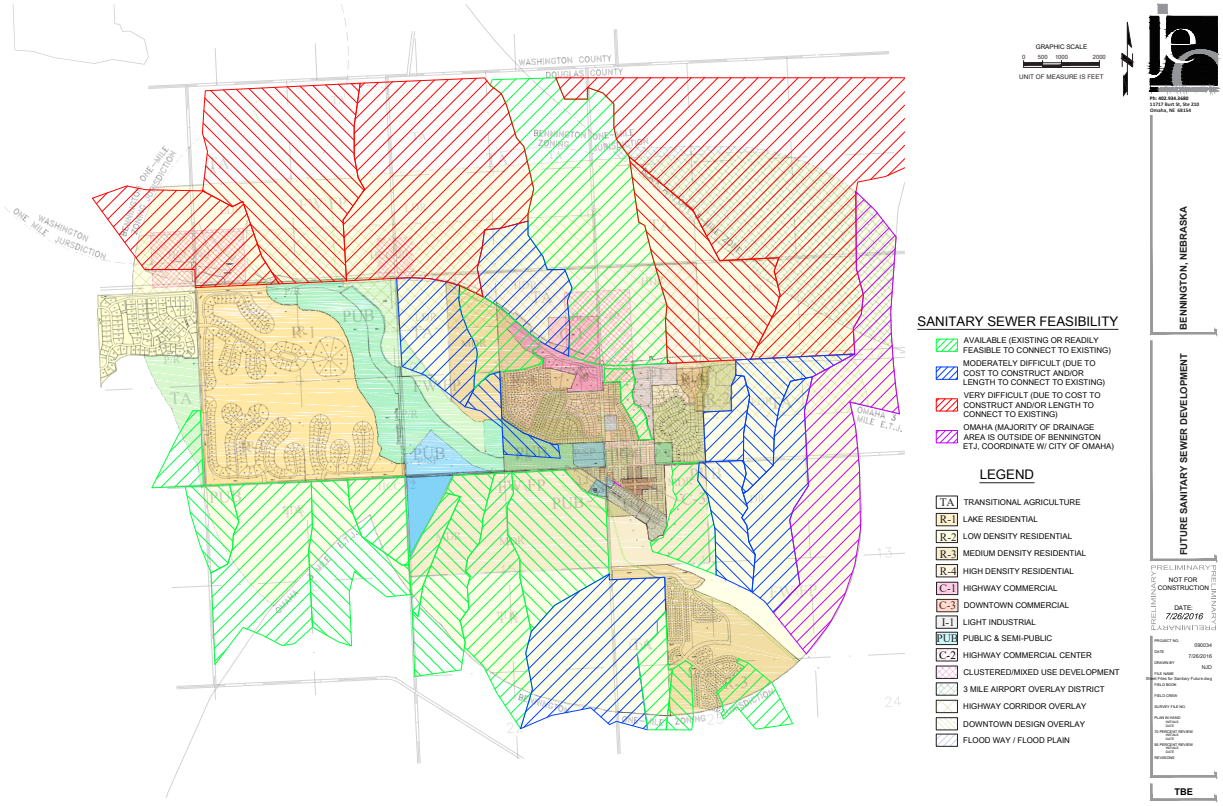
Map 5 is a depiction of the anticipated growth model of sanitary sewer interceptor lines in the Bennington area. Growth is development driven, developers investing in greenfield development may pay a pioneering fee to extend sanitary sewer mains along the interceptor system. As the new lines are hooked onto, that developer or the resulting sanitary sewer district is reimbursed pro rata.

Policies managing the extension of sanitary sewer in Bennington's jurisdiction can effectively manage the rate, and location, of growth.

Map 6 represents the relative feasibility of the implementation of sanitary sewer in Bennington's jurisdictions. This analysis is based on natural drainage topography and the relative ease to which areas can be served by sanitary sewer. More difficult areas will require more investment in lift stations and pumping infrastructure.

Map 5: Bennington Sewer Buildout

Map 6: Bennington Future Sanitary Sewer Development



Utilities and Infrastructure Goals and Policies

Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps, and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions.

Balance the extension of utilities and infrastructure with the investment and maintenance of existing systems in Bennington's corporate limits

Maintain a current engineering report on all utility and infrastructure systems to provide a current analysis of infrastructure needs.

The City of Bennington should coordinate all subterranean work to provide opportunity to maximize the investment of public funds.

The cost of extending infrastructure and increasing capacities should be shared by the development generating the needs for such improvements.

Utility service and extensions will be a primary measure for enforcing the land use plan in Bennington.

The city should manage development and stage infrastructure investments in a manner that supports contiguous land development for a fiscally responsible implementation cycle.

Bennington shall maintain a policy to encourage competition among internet service providers to ensure effective and affordable telecommunication services for residents and businesses.

Transportation System Plan

Transportation Relationship to Land Uses

The Future Transportation Plan is the collective result of the intentions and predictions of where the community will develop and logical areas for city investment. The Future Land Use is the basis for developing the future transportation network in and around Bennington. The success and viability of development in Bennington is dependent on the connectivity of land uses both within the community and on a regional basis.

Commercial uses and activities are most sensitive to accessibility since their success often depends upon the ease with which potential customers can identify and access their location. Therefore, commercial land uses are generally located along transportation corridors, key intersections, and clustered within a business district. Clustering commercial uses is an advantage, allowing for traffic control, shared parking, and pedestrian connectivity.

Residential uses are very sensitive to traffic patterns. Commercial and industrial traffic should not travel through residential areas in order to access their destination. In residential areas speeds are slower, and roads are typically narrower to encourage safer driving habits. Pedestrian safety is a priority when planning transportation routes through residential areas.

Industrial uses are highly dependent on transportation access. While visibility is not as critical for an industrial business, such uses often need access to more specialized transportation facilities such as railroad lines, highways, and reinforced roadways built for heavy truck traffic. Surrounding land uses must not be adversely affected by the heavy-duty and intense traffic circulation of service and delivery vehicles.

Public uses, such as city offices and parks, also require efficient and clear access routes. The public should be able to locate and utilize public services and facilities without difficulty. Facilities such as schools, community centers, and regional parks may generate significant traffic loads, especially during events, and need to be located near arterial streets. Trail and pedestrian accessibility to these public uses is also very important and trails should be designed to connect such uses to residential areas of the community.

Functional Classifications

Streets are classified based upon the function they serve. All streets fall within one of four classifications. Utilizing street classifications allows a community to examine their transportation system and identify weaknesses. Using a hierarchical classification system, street facilities and improvements can be planned to address existing and future transportation needs as well as influence land use patterns. As an alternative transportation option, trails are also identified within the Proposed Transportation Plan.

Arterials
Arterial classified streets permit traffic flow through urban areas and between major destinations. Generally planned and maintained by the Nebraska Department of Roads, highway arterials are regulated outside of the city's jurisdiction, which can limit access and activity within the right-of-way. Highway arterials are characterized by heavy traffic volumes.

Collector Streets
These streets serve as a link between local streets and the arterial system. Collectors provide both access and traffic circulation within residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Collector streets also provide more direct routes through neighborhoods for use by transit, pedestrians, and cyclists. Moderate to low traffic volumes are characteristic of these streets.

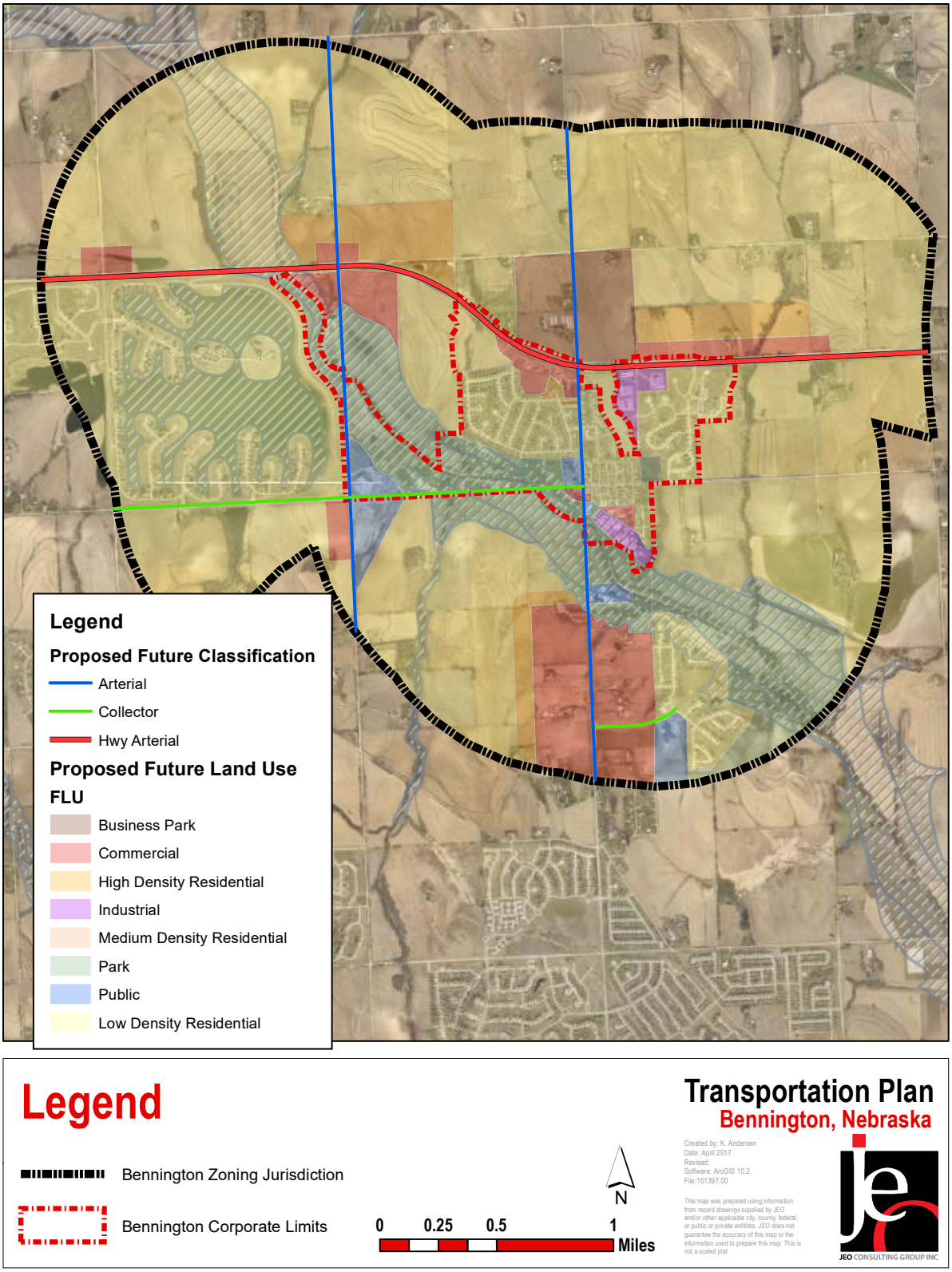
Local Streets
Local streets are composed of all lower order facilities that essentially serve as a conduit between abutting properties and higher order streets. Local streets provide the lowest level of mobility in terms of vehicular speeds and generally exhibit the lowest traffic volumes.

Future Transportation Plan
Map 7 is a depiction of the proposed Transportation Plan for Bennington. The proposed street classifications are designed to serve existing transportation needs and the needs of the transportation system to serve the growth plan for Bennington in the future. The incremental phasing of improvements will encourage contiguous and manageable growth and the proper transition of land uses.

As Bennington develops and grows, it will be important to plan for the necessary street improvements to support the development. To facilitate these street improvements, the appropriate right-of-way will need to be acquired. Right-of-way will be obtained through purchase, either outright or through condemnation. However, when land subdivision projects are proposed along routes identified for future improvement, the city can require the dedication of the right-of-way necessary to support the improvement.

The required right-of-way width will vary according to the classification of the street being developed or improved, the nature of any public utilities that will share the right-of-way with the street, and any sidewalk and trail requirements along the corridor. Additional right-of-way may be needed for boulevards where landscaping is required or encouraged. Future right-of-way on proposed road classifications should be protected through corridor protection overlays and increased setbacks should be implemented to reduce potential conflicts.

Map 7: Bennington Transportation Plan



Chapter 5

Housing

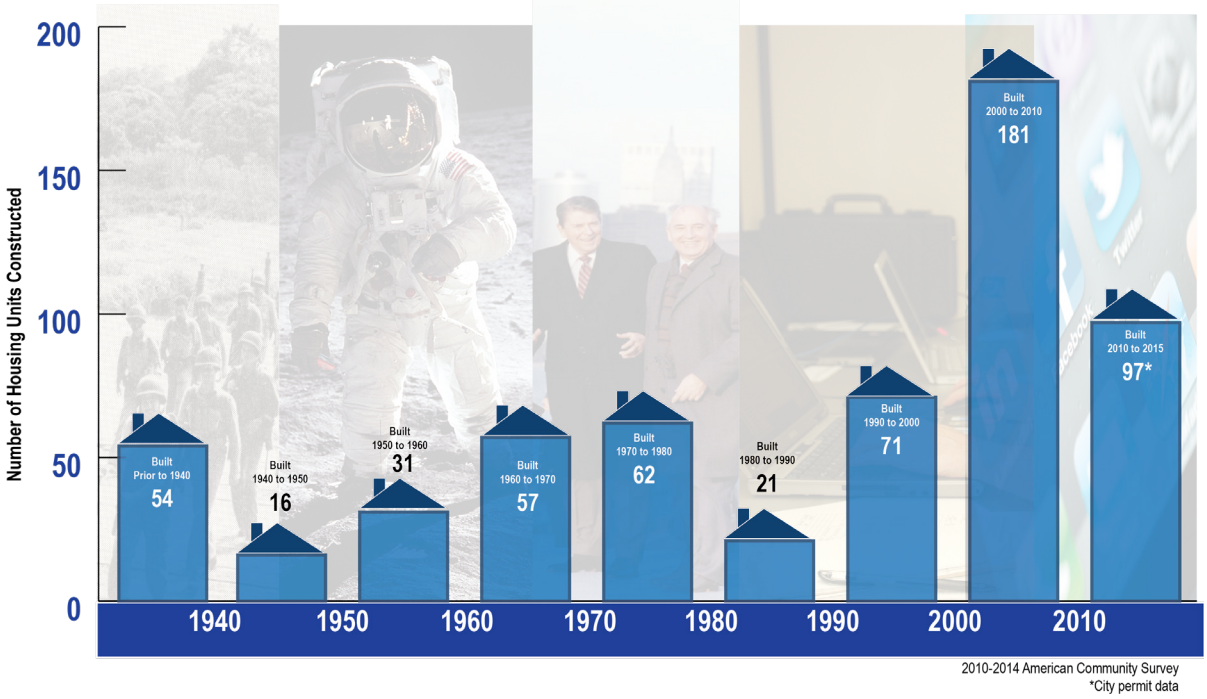
Housing 5 BENNINGTON

[section 5.1]

PROFILE

Bennington's recent growth has been facilitated by rapid additions to the housing stock. The community's ability to grow will be dependent on its ability to continue to supply adequate housing options that meet current demands.

Figure 7: Housing Stock Age

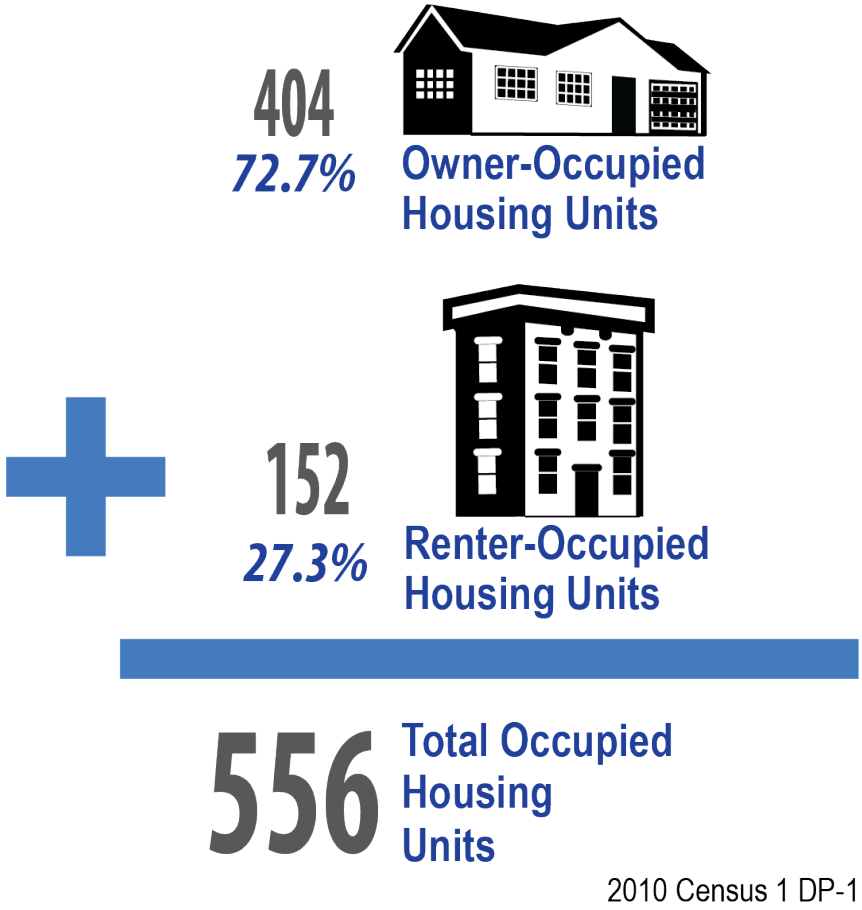


2010-2014 American Community Survey
*City permit data

Bennington Housing Stock Age

Bennington's growth by annexation largely contributes to the high number of homes built in the last 20-25 years. Over 60% of Bennington's housing stock is less than 25 years old.

Figure 8: Housing Occupancy Tenure

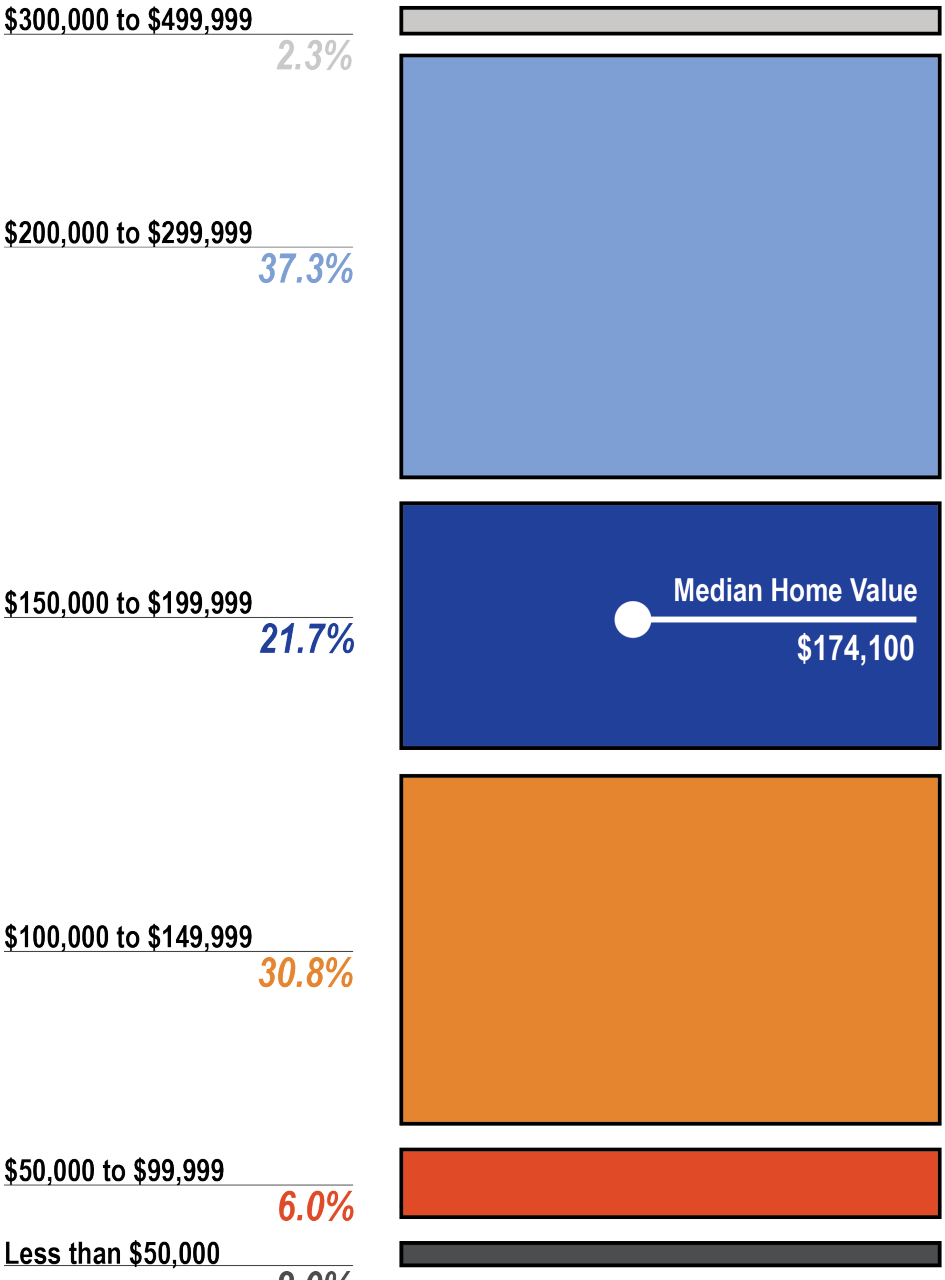


Bennington Housing Occupancy Tenure

Figure 8 reflects the tenure of occupied housing in Bennington. The majority of housing is occupied by owners, with a limited tenure and supply of rental households. A typical balance of home owners to renters is around 67%. At 72.7%, Bennington lies higher in its ratio of home ownership. While home ownership is an ideal situation for residents and the community, rental opportunities have an important place in community growth.

Rental opportunities can provide a source of transitional housing for young professionals, new residents, and lower income residents. Renting can facilitate community growth by allowing these households to save for homeownership or seek new housing for new residents. The majority of multi-family housing in Bennington is income-subsidized. Bennington should seek to add market-rate rental opportunities to facilitate sustained community growth.

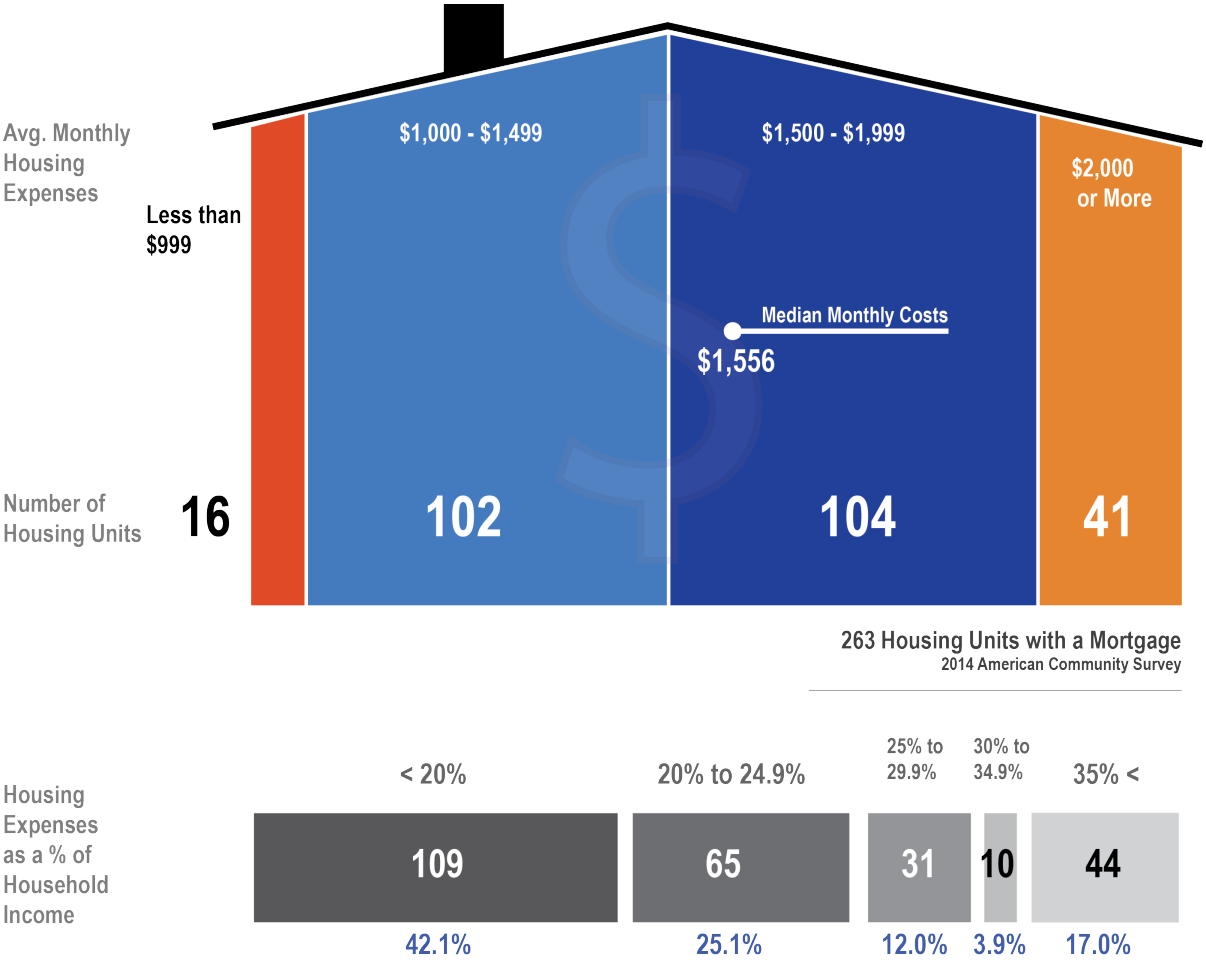
Figure 9: Owner-Occupied Unit Value



Bennington Owner-Occupied Unit Value

The reported number of owner-occupied units in Figure 9 differs from the reported figures in Figure 8 due to the differing data sources. The intent of this figure, is to depict the estimated distribution of home-values of owner-occupied units in Bennington. The estimated median home value in Bennington was just under $175,000 in 2014. The statewide median value over the same period was just over $130,000. While a positive indicator for the welfare of the community, a high home value may "price out" young families, senior citizens, or other demographics and limit community growth.

Figure 10: Owner Housing Costs



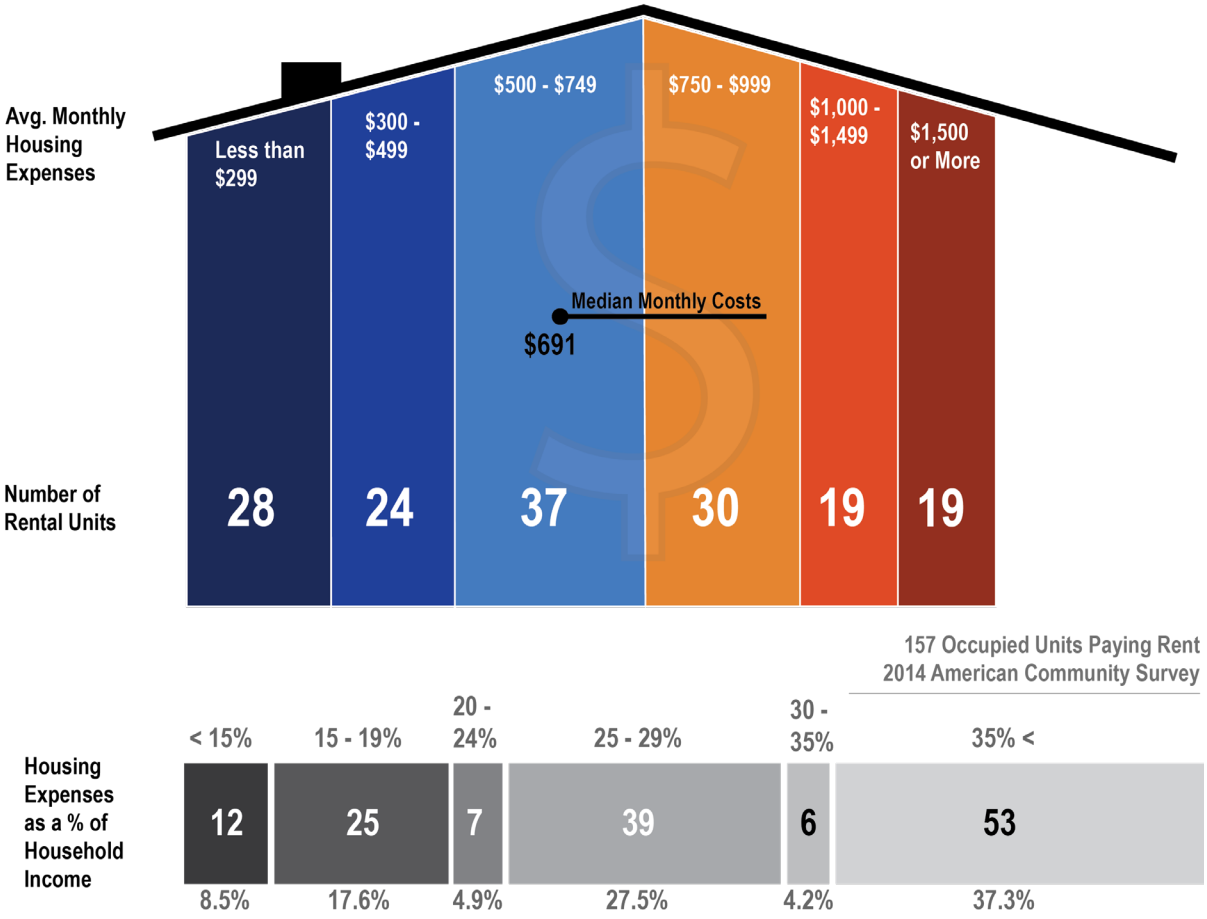
Bennington Owner Housing Costs

The two graphics depicted in Figure 10 are an indication of the cost of home ownership in Bennington. The first is a representation of the distribution of the costs of owning a home. These costs include a monthly mortgage, utilities, insurance, and taxes. The median monthly cost of owning a home in Bennington is around $1,550.

The bottom graphic compares the cost of owning a home with the estimated household incomes of Bennington residents. The percentage of income committed to housing costs is an important data set of the economic well being of a community and its residents. The Census Bureau indicates that a household paying more than 35% of its income on housing costs carry a housing burden. Almost 70% of Bennington households pay less than 25% of their income on housing costs.

A relative low commitment of income to housing costs frees additional income for discretionary spending and distribution back to the community. Ensuring an adequate housing stock that reflects market demands will sustain positive trends for housing costs relative to income.

Figure 11: Renter Housing Costs



Bennington Renter Housing Costs

The positive trends depicted for home owners are countered by trends in rental costs. The cost of renting a home in Bennington includes monthly rent, insurance, and utilities. The median rent of nearly $700 is compared to household income of Bennington renters in the bottom graphic. Almost 40% of renters in Bennington carry a housing burden as defined by the Census Bureau.

The majority of multi-family rentals in Bennington is income subsidized. This skews the high ratio of renting households paying more than 35% of their income on housing costs. This trend and a reportedly low distribution of rental occupied housing units in Bennington warrant commitment to adding appropriate rental opportunities in the community.

[section 5.2]

ENVISION

The growth demands Bennington has experienced over the past several decades have impacted the housing market tremendously. The aim of the housing focus group and discussions relating to housing for other focus groups were to get a better understanding of the needs, opportunities, and issues facing Bennington's housing stock.

Focus Group Meetings

Housing

Community Assets

Good public school system
Small town atmosphere
Short commute to Omaha
High quality of life
Capacity of utility infrastructure

Community Weaknesses

Lack of available land for growth and development
Floodplain limits developable areas
Highway 36 serves as a barrier for development to the north

Development Opportunities

Growth to the south presents best opportunity
Gravitational pull based on development coming from Omaha
More housing diversity
Lower price points (starter homes)
More housing styles needed (multi-family, etc.)
Rental opportunities needed

Housing Needs in Bennington

Downtown housing
Apartments
Lower price points and starter homes

One last point of the Housing focus group is that Bennington appeals to families originally from small towns but moving to the Omaha area for employment.

Business and Economic Development

Bennington's proximity to Omaha was identified as the top issue for development in the community. It provides a tremendous asset to the community with the proximity to job centers and employment opportunities, but it's also seen as a barrier for commercial development in the community itself. The community was seen more as a bedroom community rather than a "business friendly" community.

The perspective of Bennington being a bedroom community creates potential conflicts for economic development. First and foremost, the dominant land use in the area is single-family residential. This leaves little opportunity for commercial property, as only a small handful of commercial lots are currently available. These lots have seen some resistance to development based on their proximity to neighboring residential lots. Land use conflicts also create a barrier for commercial and economic growth.

In addition, land use conflicts create issues for the marketability of land and business within Bennington. A "bedroom community" perception limits what local business can do for signage and promotion. Regulations on signage in primarily residential areas prevent accessible areas for signage and wayfinding towards local businesses for outside traffic.

One remaining economic development issue in relation to housing is workforce development. More affordable options, including multi-family residential were desired in order to house the workforce needed to fulfill jobs for local employers.

Town Hall Meeting

On January 24, 2017 a community-wide town hall meeting was held to discuss a variety of issues. After a presentation and input from the audience in its entirety, the remainder of the evening was broken into a topic-specific open house. Various stations relating to land use, housing, economic development, and parks and recreation were established for attendees to visit, ask questions, and provide input.

Areas of discussion relating to housing during the Town Hall meeting revolved around the location for new housing growth. Specifically, there was a general support for multi-family housing development if developed in appropriate areas. These areas were identified to be near major road intersections and along currently undeveloped areas of key corridors; 156th Street south of the community and along Highway 36.

[section 5.3]

ACHIEVE

Availability of housing choice was at the core of the Bennington housing discussion. Housing vacancy is very low in Bennington, both for owner-occupied and rental, leading to a need for new housing. Public input notes the desire for steady growth with a broad focus on serving a wide variety of demographic types. However, various single-family home types were identified to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Though single-family housing is the most marketable housing type, there may be a need for attached housing such as condos and townhomes. In time, the city will need housing options to accommodate an increasing elderly population that does not want or cannot maintain a large detached home. Attached housing may even be preferable to empty-nesters or those simply looking to downsize. Multi-family housing accounts a smaller proportion of total housing over the last three decades, but is still a necessary option to build the population.

As the city looks to grow, higher density residential may be a tool used to diversify housing types. Within medium density residential land use, the city would look to include housing types that include duplexes, townhomes, apartments, etc. Additional housing options will enhance what is already existing in Bennington. These changes should be considered and implemented through zoning ordinance updates.

Housing affordability and quality will be indicators worth monitoring, especially in terms of attracting and retaining younger talent. There is housing demand in the community, but older homes may require maintenance. The city may look to develop a housing rehabilitation program to improve and modernize older housing stock and enhance local appearance and character.

Housing Goals and Policies

Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps, and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions.

Promote the attraction and retention of a diverse population by increasing the range of housing types and price points in Bennington

Housing opportunities for residents with special needs, including elderly housing should be provided in large-scale housing developments.

The city should encourage the establishment of rehabilitation programs to maintain and improve the existing housing stock.

[section 5.4]

IMPLEMENT

Considering the findings of the previous sections, the Implement section offers guidance on how to manage future growth and development of the city. Here we outline the goals, policies, and action steps for Housing. Policies and action steps give more detail and describe the activities needed to achieve the desired goals of the city. Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps, and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions. The adopted action steps synthesize the information from the existing profile of the city and public input from the visioning component of the Comprehensive Plan. Action steps are a means to achieve the goals established by the community, and they imply a clear commitment to the city's future development.

Goal

Promote the attraction and retention of a diverse population by increasing the range of housing types and price points in Bennington.

Objective

- Diversify the housing stock in Bennington to provide housing options and multiple price points to serve families of all economic backgrounds.

Action Steps

- Review existing zoning and building codes to ensure flexibility to develop diverse housing options, including: townhomes, condominiums, cottage homes, ADA accessible, corporate housing, etc.
- Market opportunities in Bennington to developers specializing in special-needs, and affordable housing, i.e. Habitat for Humanity, elderly, disabled veterans, modular, etc.
- Review and package financial incentives for housing rehabilitation, i.e. owner-occupied rehabilitation, rental rehabilitation; prioritize older and blighted housing stock for implementation.
- Consider utilizing tax increment financing (TIF) to incentivize and stimulate under-served housing development, prioritizing affordability and special needs housing (senior, ADA accessible, etc.).

Responsible Group/Agency:
City Council, Planning Commission, Chamber of Commerce, area housing professionals

Potential Resources:
Nebraska Department of Economic Development, USDA-RD, Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, General Funds

Objective

- Increase the number of multi-family units available to residents in Bennington

Action Steps

- Maintain a current Housing Market Study to analyze the building stock and projected opportunities/needs for multi-family housing in and around Bennington.
- Facilitate a series of discussions with key housing stakeholders to discuss the opportunities and constraints of developing multi-family units in Bennington.
- Review existing zoning regulations to remove any barriers towards the development of desired multi-family units and their location within identified areas of the Future Land Use Plan.
- Acquire options and/or purchase agreements for land identified as opportunities for multi-family housing.
- Market the prioritized opportunities and results of the Housing Study to area developers; including financial incentives such as tax increment financing (TIF) to encourage a leveraged investment

Responsible Group/Agency:
City Council, Planning Commission, area housing professionals

Potential Resources:
Local monies, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), NIFA Programs, USDA Rural Development Programs, private funds, and local lending institutions

Chapter 6

Economic Development

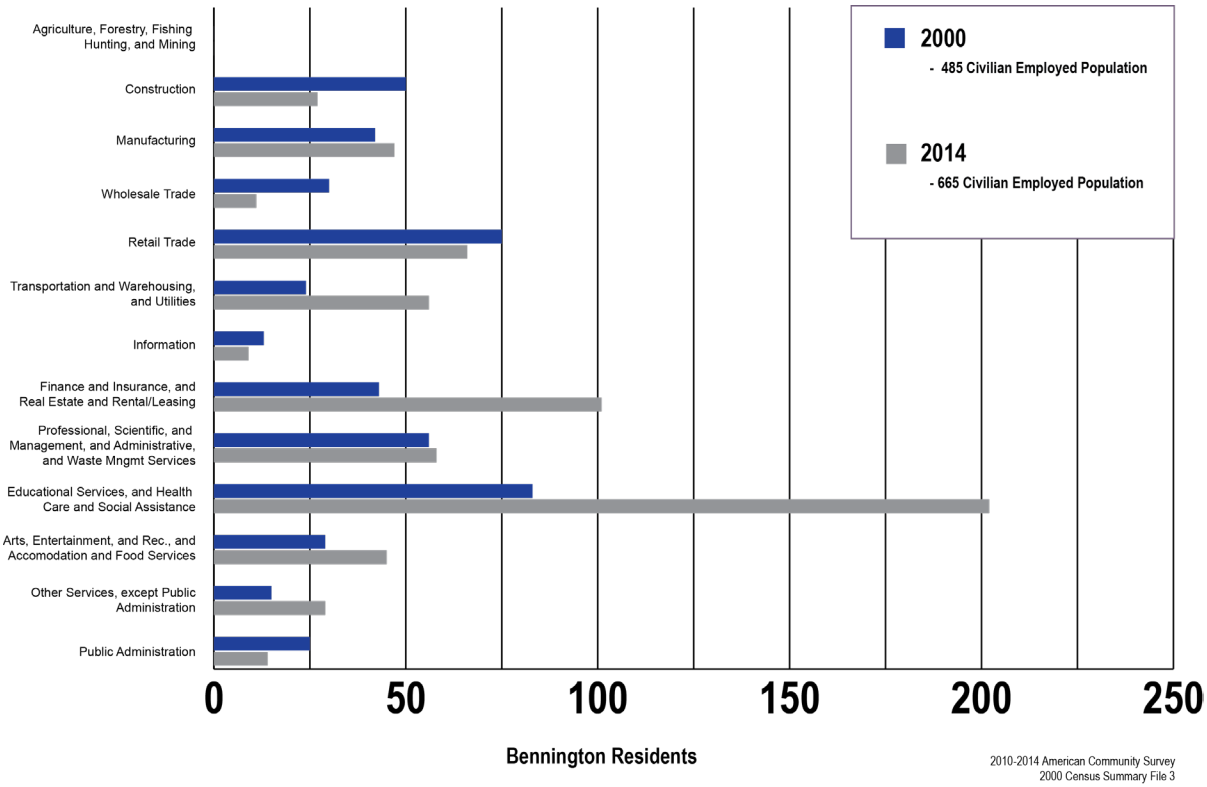
6 Economic Development
BENNINGTON

[section 6.1]

PROFILE

This section will explore the economic trends of the community. As a community within a greater metro area, Bennington has a unique economic history. Omaha has grown closer to the Bennington area and the economic opportunities have shifted accordingly. This section will establish an understanding of that relationship.

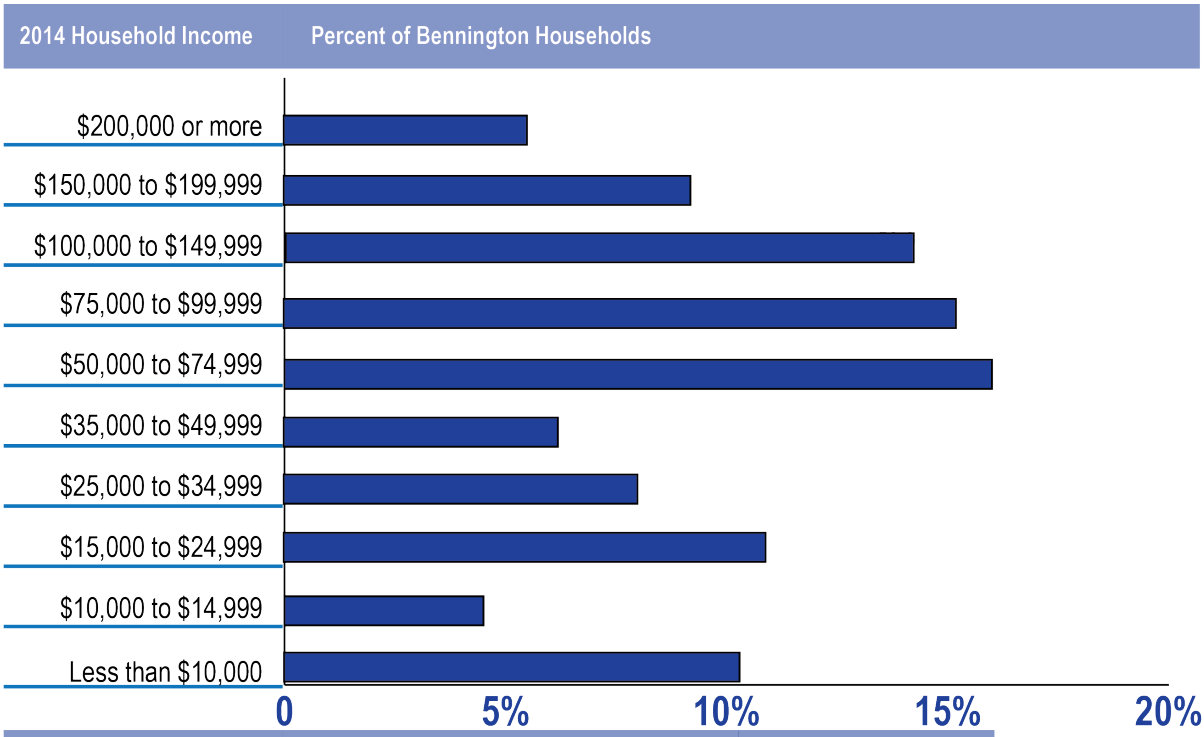
Figure 12: Employment



Bennington Employment

In the period between the year 2000 and 2014, Bennington was estimated to increase its employed population by nearly 75%. Most of this growth occurred in professional workforce including Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance; and the Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental Leasing job categories.

Figure 13: Household Income



Income Source	Percentage of Bennington Households	Mean Income
Earnings	74.3%	$87,713
Social Security	33.7%	$18,819
Retirement Income	17.2%	$24,397

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	$65,625
MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME	$78,125

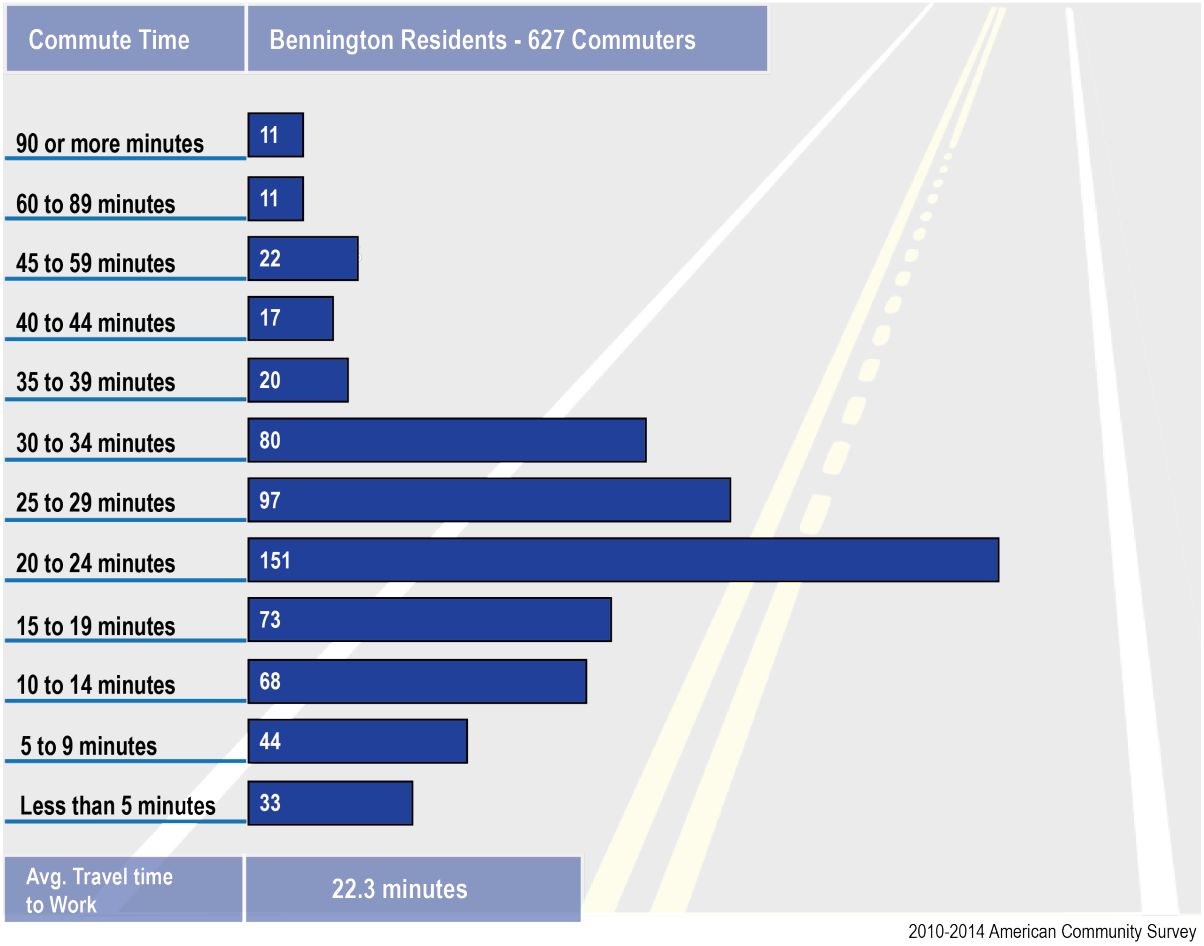
2010-2014 American Community Survey

Bennington Household Income

The estimated 2014 median household income was $65,625 for Bennington households. This compares favorable to the statewide median household income of $52,400 for Nebraska. Bennington's access to the larger job market of the Omaha metro provides ample employment opportunities for residents.

The primary source of income in Bennington was directly from earnings, or workforce participation, with almost 75% of the population receiving income from earnings. However, over 50% of Bennington households derive income from a combination of Social Security or Retirement Income. With a range of ages throughout the population, Bennington's young workforce population is complemented by a large number of retired households as well.

Figure 14: Commuting Times



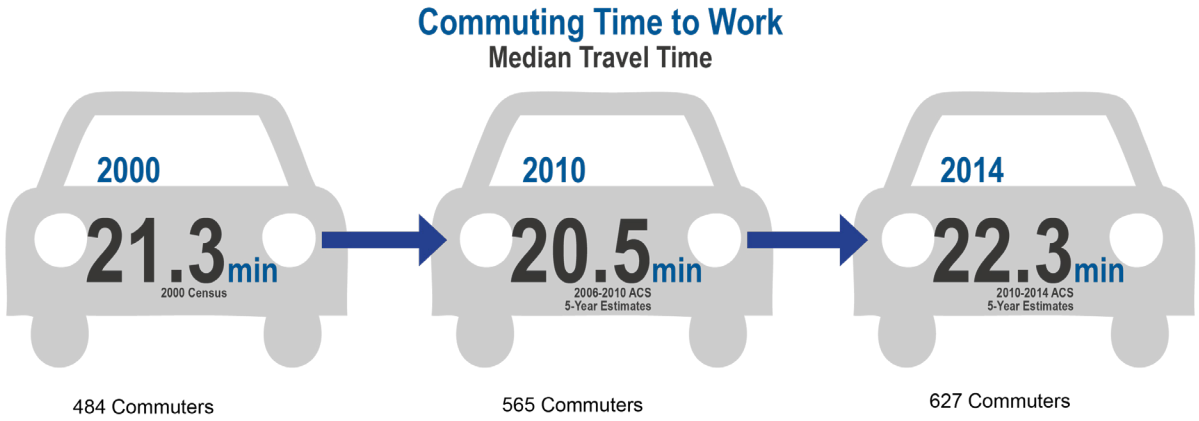
2010-2014 American Community Survey

Bennington Commuting Times

The larger number of Bennington residents commuting over 10 minutes to work reinforces the trends of a large commuting population. Most employed residents are likely to work in Omaha, where most areas of the city are accessible within 20-30 minutes.

Bennington leadership should look to prioritize the addition of local job centers within the Bennington jurisdiction. Providing ample land and infrastructure dedicated towards commercial and compatible industrial development will facilitate local job investment and additional quality of life in the Bennington area.

Figure 15: Commuting Trends



Bennington Commuting Trends

A large commuting population necessitates considerable thought and planning to the transportation network connecting Bennington to other places within the Omaha metro. As suburban Omaha grows closer to Bennington, additional traffic and traffic control infrastructure will increase commute times. This increase can diminish the quality of life found in Bennington and make it a less attractive area for commuters. For this reason, local transportation decisions should always be made with consideration to regional context and prioritize regional connectivity for the Bennington area.

[section 6.2]

ENVISION

Economic Development in Bennington is unique from other communities of similar size. The proximity of the community to the Omaha Metro creates unique opportunities and constraints for jobs and retail options. Bennington's workforce is largely composed of a commuting population, with an average commute time of over 20 minutes. The connectivity to job centers outside of the Bennington corporate limits leads to two distinct economic development opportunities for the community: create more local job opportunities and create more local retail opportunities.

Both local jobs and local retail provide an opportunity to enhance the quality of life for Bennington residents. More of these services in closer proximity will reduce commuting and travel times for everyday trips.

Focus Group Meetings

A series of topic specific focus group meetings were facilitated to discuss community issues. One of which was a Business and Economic Development focus group held on January 18, 2017. This meeting included representatives of the Bennington Chamber of Commerce, local business owners, bankers, and civic leadership. The aim was to discuss the opportunities and challenges for business retention and development in the community.

Economic development is broad-topic with important implications for other facets of the community. Relevant discussions of the other focus groups are also detailed below.

Business and Economic Development

Community Assets

- The community's location
  - Proximity to Omaha and the job/retail options available to the small community
- Small-town feel
  - The perceived safety and quality of life via accessibility of amenities
  - Accessibility and familiarization with neighbors and community leadership like the School Superintendent, Chief of Police, etc.
- Sports and athletic facilities

Community Weaknesses

- The prevalence of development outside of corporate limits
  - These residents utilize the community's resources and amenities but do not contribute with property taxes
- Lack of growth areas outside of corporate limits
  - limited by floodplain
  - high land prices
- Under-utilized land in the downtown district
  - Prevalence of storage units
  - Single-family residential

Barriers to Economic Growth in Bennington

- Signage and advertising
  - Strict and antiquated sign regulations in zoning ordinance
  - Lack of wayfinding guiding visitors to business districts and areas of interest
- Building codes
  - Various entities managing different phases or regulations of the development process
- Lack of commercial property
  - No commercial property available in the community
  - Downtown and highway commercial property needed
- Expense and difficulty of extending infrastructure to developable areas
  - Will add to cost for developer on top of expensive land
- Affordable housing opportunities for a local workforce

Economic Development Opportunities

- Light industrial job centers
  - Heavy industrial growth likely not the best "fit" for Bennington
- Commercial growth and retail
  - Sales tax would be the best form of revenue generation for the community
- Entertainment center or similar attraction
  - A center aimed towards attracting visitors from outside the community
  - Aquatic center
  - Comprehensive recreation center
  - Unique community events
- Community web-presence
  - A website and corresponding mobile application to promote the community, community amenities and events, development opportunities, and local businesses
- Community entrances
  - Creating better gateways into the community along main transportation corridors would promote the community and reflect its high quality of life

Housing Needs

- Market-rate multi-family apartments
- First-time home-buyer housing for young professionals
- Attached single-family housing
- Duplexes and townhomes for young professionals and seniors alike

Magic Wand

The magic wand question challenges participants to think of their dreams for their community without the restrictions of cost or implementation barriers. The ideas generated from this discussion are meant to the reviewed, and if desired, scaled appropriately to meet these constraints.

- Joint multi-purpose recreation and community center in conjunction with the school district

- Shovel-ready land for commercial development
- Office space or business park
- Commercial gateway entrance at 156th and Warehouse Street
- Family entertainment center, similar to a YMCA or The Mark in Elkhorn
- Better local business marketing
- Improved telecommunication infrastructure
  - Fiber broadband internet
- Vibrant downtown destination
  - Boutique shops
  - Antique stores
  - Restaurants and bars

Students

The students largely echoed the prioritization of providing more retail options in the Bennington area balanced with the addition of local jobs. Specifically, the group desired more recreation opportunities such as theaters, or a gym. Creating an attraction, such as an outlet mall, would enhance the image of the community according to the group's consensus. A revitalized and vibrant downtown could create this effect as well. Nearly all students desired to return to the Bennington area if appropriate career opportunities were available.

Build Bennington MySidewalk Page

The MySidewalk site, www.buildbennington.mysidewalk.com, served as an on-line public forum to supplement the traditional public participation process. The platform facilitates community participation over the web to build upon input typically received during public meetings, town halls, and focus group meetings. The MySidewalk site operates as a convenient, and user-friendly process for citizens to utilize at their convenience, from the comfort of their homes or a mobile device. The Build Bennington site served as a virtual town hall, where users can respond to questions and polls, generate ideas, and discuss other users' ideas. The site generated 2,800 total page views and over 150 responses to questions and ideas.

Q What should be the economic development priority for Bennington?

More local jobs

More local retail options

Downtown vibrancy

All of the above

Q What would you prefer retail and employment centers to look like in and around Bennington?

Major center at key transportation intersections

Commercial corridors served by frontage roads along with transportation arterials

Small neighborhood centers disbursed throughout the jurisdiction

One majorcommercial hub serving the entire Bennington area

[section 6.3]

ACHIEVE

The Achieve section provides a summary of the previous sections and identifies priorities needed for future growth and development. Economic development and the revitalization of downtown were identified as major priorities for the community. Bennington can build on its strengths by investing in improvements to the downtown while also providing space for new business. There is limited space within the community as a whole for new business growth. Identifying new areas for this growth is part of the Land Use & Growth Management Chapter. By supporting existing and welcoming new business, Bennington expects to grow its job base while also providing desired services and amenities for the community.

There is a growing capability in today's workforce for employees to work from home or "telecommute." One advantage of telecommuting is that it gives an employee more freedom to choose where they live. Fast and reliable internet is also an essential element to quality public education across all grade levels. Deficiencies related to internet service have been noted throughout the Plan update. In order for Bennington to be an attractive and viable location for employers and employees, an emphasis will need to be made to close the broadband gaps that currently exist.

A focus to encourage and develop local entrepreneurs should be created to continually inspire local youth current in school to pursue these aspirations. Education programs focused on encouraging forward thinking students at an early age of development is suggested. As early as first grade, introduction of the learning frames of entrepreneurship, rural community leadership, and mentoring should be considered. Creating an environment of enriched understanding of community leadership and creativity should be encouraged to develop a stronger entrepreneurial atmosphere. Providing ways for youth and younger families to align themselves into leadership positions is very important to allow active volunteerism and future growth of community activity within Bennington.

As by the year 2020, over 75% of the workforce will employ 'millennials'. Due to the different nature of this workforce's needs, stimuli, and community activities; it would be wise for all communities, including Bennington, to actively survey this demographic in the community and incorporate pathways that would engage them more effectively. Creating a community environment with positive elements that attract this demographic will be critical to workforce replacement within the community, but also to encourage business growth with millennials as owners of those businesses.

Economic Development Goals and Policies

Establish a community marketing effort to assist in promoting Bennington and Bennington businesses locally and externally

Bennington should have a consistent marketing effort that highlights its quality of life and unique amenities within the Omaha Metro.

The city should look to the Bennington Chamber of Commerce and Bennington Public Schools as partners in economic development efforts in marketing the community and workforce development.

Recreation should be promoted as a continuing means of economic development in Bennington.

The City of Bennington should have a strong web presence.

Bennington should work towards regional collaboration in economic development efforts.

Implement functional improvements at community entrance corridors to encourage investment and viability

156th Street, Bennington Road, and Highway 36 should be recognized as gateway corridors for prioritized functional and aesthetic improvements in right of way and surrounding land uses.

Development in gateway corridors should be built of high architectural and aesthetic quality.

Encourage the development of small businesses and retail opportunities that enhance the quality of life found in Bennington

The city should maintain and implement an integrated land use plan that supports economic development.

The city should encourage and promote the development of home-based businesses and telecommuting based upon high technology communication infrastructure.

The city should enforce zoning regulations that will provide for quality design and aesthetics for new commercial and industrial construction.

[section 6.4]

IMPLEMENT

Considering the findings of the previous sections, the Implement section offers guidance on how to manage future growth and development of the city. Here we outline to goals, policies, and action steps for Economic Development. Policies and action steps give more detail and describe the activities needed to achieve the desired goals of the city. Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps and define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions. The adopted action steps synthesize the information from the existing profile of the city and public input from the visioning component of the Comprehensive Plan. Action steps are a means to achieve the goals established by the community, and they imply a clear commitment to the city's future development.

Goal

Establish a community marketing effort to assist in promoting Bennington and Bennington businesses locally and externally

Objective

- Develop a new community website

Action Steps

- Outline purpose and guidelines of finished website. Understand what does and does not work on existing site.
- Identify brand to be promoted by the website.
- Identify person or group capable of creating and keeping website current.

Responsible Group/Agency
City Council, City Clerk, Chamber of Commerce

Potential Resources
General Fund, Chamber of Commerce, Bennington Community Foundation, Nebraska Public Power District

Objective

- Establish a local economic development committee to explore marketing and staffing opportunities, including participation in the Greater Omaha Economic Development Partnership

Action Steps

- Organize a local Economic Development Corporation or Chamber of Commerce.
- Define the economic development vision for the City of Bennington with the

Chamber of Commerce and other development groups with key interest and insight. Consider key industries for which the city desires to market to the community.
- Establish clear public policy as it relates to dedicating resources for economic development activities.
- Establish economic development goals, objectives, action steps and timelines for the creation of an entrepreneurial atmosphere to encourage the development of new business.
- Identify contact at the Partnership and become a partner in regional economic activities.

Responsible Group/Agency
City Council, appointed committee, Bennington Chamber of Commerce, Omaha Chamber of Commerce, Omaha Economic Development Partnership, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Metropolitan Area Planning Agency

Potential Resources
Appropriated Funds, Bennington Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, Bennington Community Foundation, LB 840 funds, Local Option Sales Tax, Keno Funds

Goal

Implement functional improvements at community entrance corridors to encourage investment and viability

Objective

- Develop and implement a vision for a design corridor along 156th street

Action Steps

- Acquire rights to utilize property along arterial streets for signage and landscaping improvements (acquisition/permitting).
- Contract or utilize local talent for site design; incorporate any community branding efforts and logo into the design and site plan.
- Develop cost opinions for the signage sites.
- Secure necessary resources (funds, materials, in-kind, etc.) to implement designs.
- Install signs and landscaping improvements.
- Dedicate sufficient resources for ongoing operation and maintenance of grounds.

Responsible Group/Agency
City Council, Planning Commission, property owners, Chamber of Commerce, Bennington Community Foundation, City Engineer

Potential Resources
General Funds, Capital Improvements Funding, Bennington Community Foundation, Transportation Enhancement Funds, Community Development Assistance Act, private fundraising

Chapter 7

Energy Element

7 Energy Element
BENNINGTON

[section 7.1]

PROFILE

Energy plays a crucial role in nearly every aspect of our lives. It is used to grow food, to move people from place to place, to light and heat our homes, and to make the products we buy. The vast majority of the region's energy is currently supplied by fossil fuels, which is a finite resource. Federal regulations are tightening emission rules for power plants, thus increasing the cost of using fossil fuels. By planning for energy, Bennington can save money, have a more resilient economy, conserve natural resources, and be better prepared for the future.

Nebraska Energy Policy Overview

Nebraska Legislation LB997

In 2010, Nebraska Legislators passed LB997 requiring comprehensive plans to include an energy element. Energy elements are required to have three components:

1. Energy infrastructure and energy use by sector
2. Utilization of renewable energy sources
3. Energy conservation measures that benefit the community

The following energy element is included within Bennington's Comprehensive Plan in order to fulfill the requirement of LB997.

Nebraska Energy Plan

The 2011 Nebraska Energy Plan outlines 14 strategies for the state to consider in meeting the following objectives:

1. Ensure access to affordable and reliable energy for Nebraskans to use responsibly
2. Advance implementation and innovation of renewable energy in the state
3. Reduce petroleum consumption in Nebraska's transportation sector

The strategies for Nebraska to consider include the following:

- Continue support of Nebraska's unique public power system
- Increase opportunities for demand-side energy management and energy efficiencies
- Maximize the investment in Nebraska's coal plants
- Expand Nebraska's nuclear power generation capacity
- Increase opportunities for industrial and municipal waste-to-energy projects
- Optimize the use of Nebraska's water resources for hydroelectric power generation
- Improve municipal water and wastewater management strategies and water quality
- Continue building Nebraska's wind energy through public-private partnerships
- Increase opportunities for methane recovery from agricultural and community biomass resources
- Increase opportunities for woody biomass in Nebraska
- Support distributed generation of renewable technologies
- Increase ethanol production, blended and delivered across Nebraska and to markets outside the state
- Increase development and use of other alternative fuels
- Diversify and expand opportunities for renewable diesel in Nebraska

Energy Codes

Under §§81-1608 to 81-1616, the State of Nebraska has adopted the International Energy Conservation Code as the Nebraska Energy Code. Any community or county may adopt and enforce the Nebraska Energy Code or an equivalent energy code. If a community or county does not adopt an energy code, the Nebraska Energy Office will enforce the Nebraska Energy Code in the jurisdiction.

The purpose of the Code, under §81-1608, is to insure that newly built houses or buildings meet uniform energy efficiency standards. The statute finds that:

> *there is a need to adopt the International Energy Conservation Code in order (1) to ensure that a minimum energy efficiency standard is maintained throughout the state, (2) to harmonize and clarify energy building code statutory references, (3) to ensure compliance with the National Energy Policy Act of 1992, (4) to increase energy savings for all Nebraska consumers, especially low-income Nebraskans, (5) to reduce the cost of state programs that provide assistance to low-income Nebraskans, (6) to reduce the amount of money expended to import energy, (7) to reduce the growth of energy consumption, (8) to lessen the need for new power plants, and (9) to provide training for local code officials and residential and commercial builders who implement the International Energy Conservation Code.*

The Code applies to all new buildings, as well as renovations of or additions to any existing buildings. Only those renovations that will cost more than 50 percent of the replacement cost of the building must comply with the Code. There are exceptions to the Nebraska Energy Code including: buildings that are neither heated nor cooled,

buildings registered as a historic place, or buildings with very low average energy use. Visit the Nebraska Energy Office website to see all the rules, regulations, and exceptions regarding the Energy Code.

Nebraska Legislation LB436 - Net Metering

The Nebraska Legislature passed LB436 which allows for net metering. Citizens have the opportunity to generate their own energy and it is found to be in the public interest because it encourages customer-owned renewable energy resources. It also can stimulate the economic growth, encourage diversification of the energy resources used, and maintain the low-cost, reliable electric service for the State of Nebraska. By supplementing an electric bill through "credits" for energy purchased back from the utility company, the citizens of Bennington can save money and alleviate pressure on the utility grid.

According to their website, Bennington's electricity provider, Omaha Public Power District (OPPD), has offered net metering since 2009. OPPD allows net metering for any consumer that has a qualified generator using methane, wind, solar, biomass, hydropower or geothermal energy with a total capacity of 25 kilowatts or less. As of December 31, 2013, OPPD had 44 qualified facilities with total generating capacity of 280 kilowatts. In 2013, the total estimated amount of energy produced by these customer generators was 368,883 kilowatt-hours, and the net received from them was 4,436 kilowatt-hours.

Solar and Wind Easements and Local Option Rights Laws

Nebraska's easement provisions allow property owners to create binding solar and wind easements in order to protect and maintain proper access to sunlight and wind. Counties and municipalities are allowed to develop zoning regulations, ordinances, or development plans that protect access to solar and wind energy resources. Local governing bodies may also grant zoning variances to solar and wind energy systems that would be restricted under existing regulations, so long as the variance is not substantially detrimental to the public good.

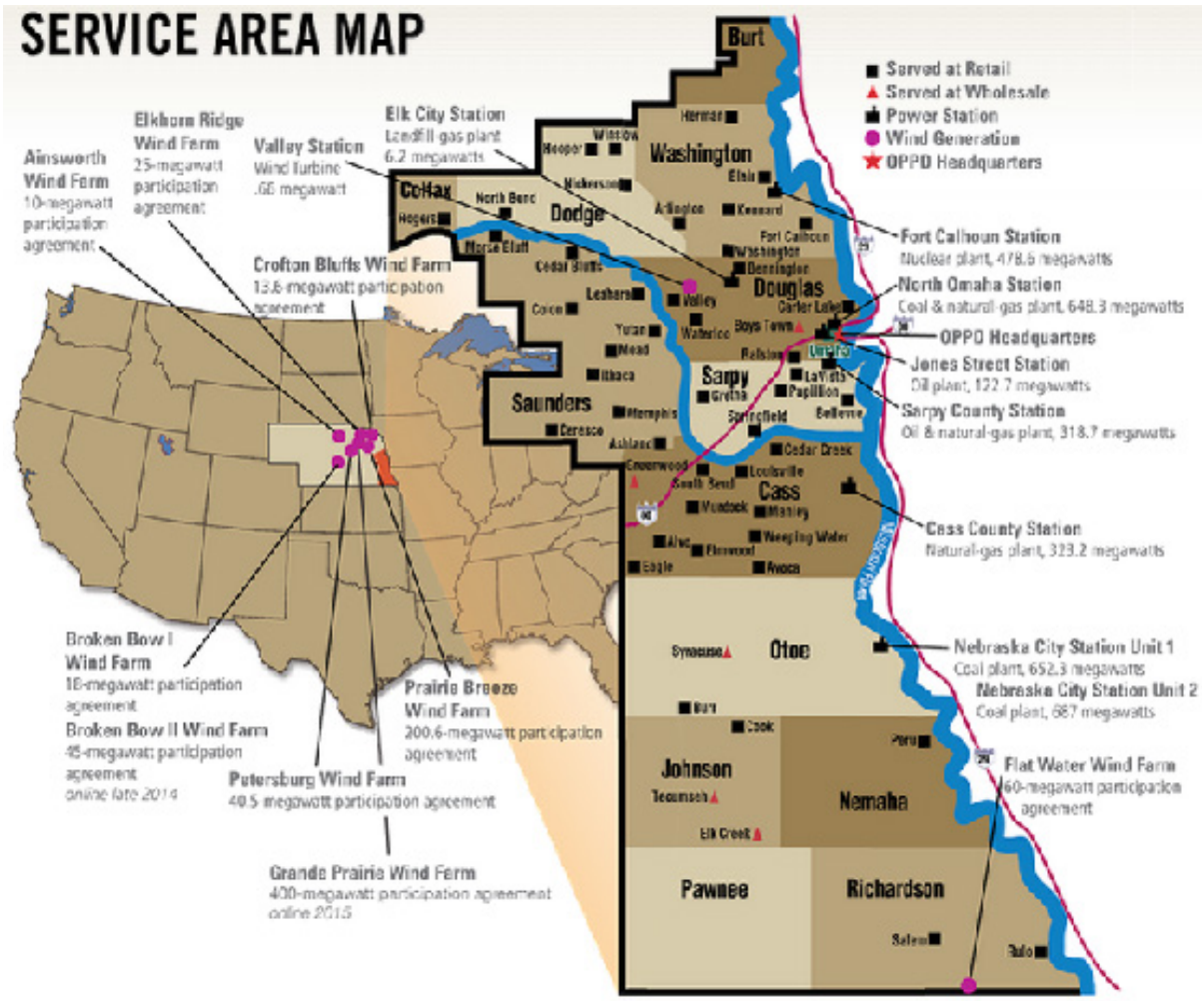
For summaries of additional programs, incentives and policies in Nebraska visit the Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency (DSIRE) website: *http://www.dsireusa.org/incentives/index.cfm?re=0&ee=0&spv=0&st=0&srp=1&state=NE*

Energy Infrastructure

Local Utility Providers

As seen in Figure 16, Bennington's electricity provider is OPPD. OPPD's generating capacity is 3,237 megawatts (MW). OPPD has 15,567 miles of electric line. The closest power plant to Bennington is the Elk City Station which is a 6.2 MW landfill-gas plant. The Metropolitan Utilities District (MUD) provides natural gas for the city and the greater Omaha area. As of 2013, MUD serves over 221,023 customers with 2,771 miles of gas mains.

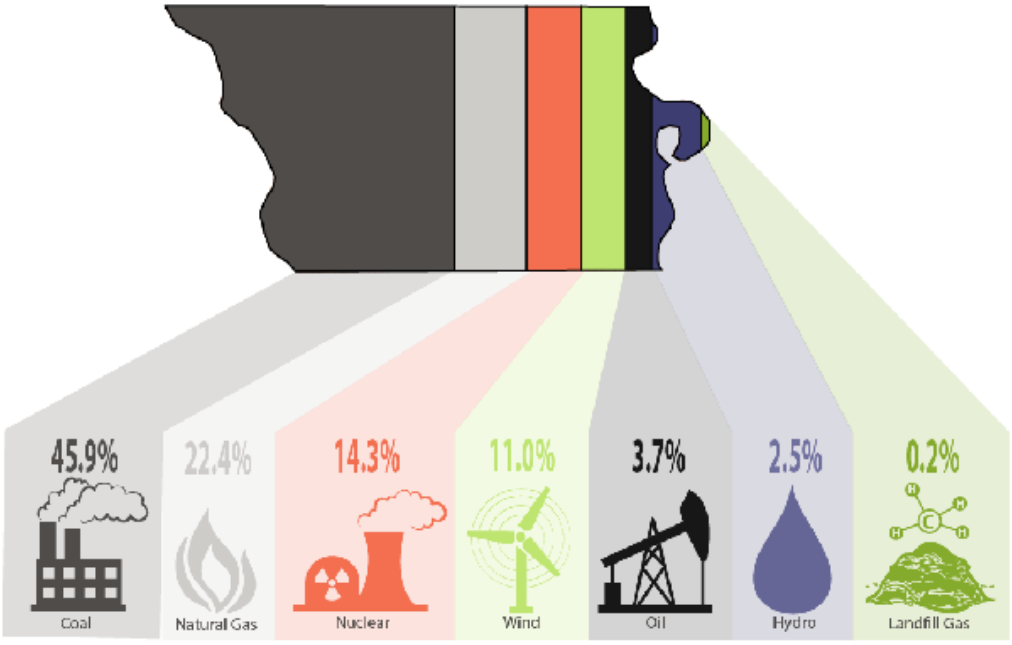
Figure 16: Communities Served by OPPD



Energy Sources

Figure 17 shows the mix of energy resources that OPPD uses to generate electricity. Fossil fuels (coal, natural gas, and oil) are the energy source for 72% of OPPD's electricity generation. Using fossil fuels for electricity generation results in emissions. Twenty-eight percent of OPPD's energy sources produce little to no carbon dioxide emissions (nuclear, wind, hydro, landfill gas). As concerns for air quality increase, there will likely be a push to rely on low carbon dioxide emitting technologies for energy. Currently, 13.7% of OPPD's electricity is generated from renewable energy sources, most of which comes from wind. OPPD will likely purchase additional wind power in the future.

Figure 17: Energy Sources in OPPD's Electricity Mix



In 2014, OPPD created a plan to lower its carbon emissions in reaction to new proposed EPA regulations on power plants.

The OPPD board adopted a plan to:

- Retire units 1-3 of the North Omaha coal plant by 2016
- Retrofit units 4-5 of North Omaha in 2016
- Convert units 4-5 of North Omaha to natural gas by 2023
- Retrofit Nebraska City One by 2016
- Maintain at least 33% of their portfolio in renewable energy beginning in 2018
- Reduce demand by 300 MW through energy efficiency and demand side management program

This plan would reduce:

- Carbon dioxide emissions by 49%
- Mercury emissions by 85%
- NOx (nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide) emissions by 74%
- SOx (sulfur oxide) emissions by 68%

If OPPD plans on maintaining at least 33% of their portfolio in renewable energy beginning in 2018, they will have to increase renewable energy generation considerably. Given the latest data, renewable energy was responsible for 13.7% of their electricity generation mix. In order to meet the goal of 33% by 2018, OPPD will need to aggressively invest in renewable energy and purchase renewable energy elsewhere.

Bennington Energy Use

Table 2 shows Bennington's electricity consumption in 2012 and 2013. Data prior to 2012 was not available from OPPD. Generally, energy consumption for the residential and commercial sectors is for lighting, heating and cooling buildings, appliances, and electronic devices. Overall electricity consumption was nearly identical in Bennington between 2012 and 2013 as there was only a 0.07% decrease in consumption. Residential expenditures increased 8.4% from 2012 to 2013. Despite using less energy in 2013, the commercial sector spent 2.4% more on electricity than they did in 2012.

Table 2: Bennington's Electric Consumption in Kilo-watt Hours and Expenditures

Bennington	2012		2013	
	Expenditures	kWh	Expenditures	kWh
Residential	$780,793.43	8,001,144	$846,362.36	8,194,383
Commercial	$592,031.23	7,071,195	$606,188.55	6,865,358
Street Lighting	$50,467.23	177,588	$50,780.61	179,256
Total	**$1,423,291.89**	**15,249,927**	**$1,503,331.52**	**15,238,997**

Source: Data for this table was provided by OPPD

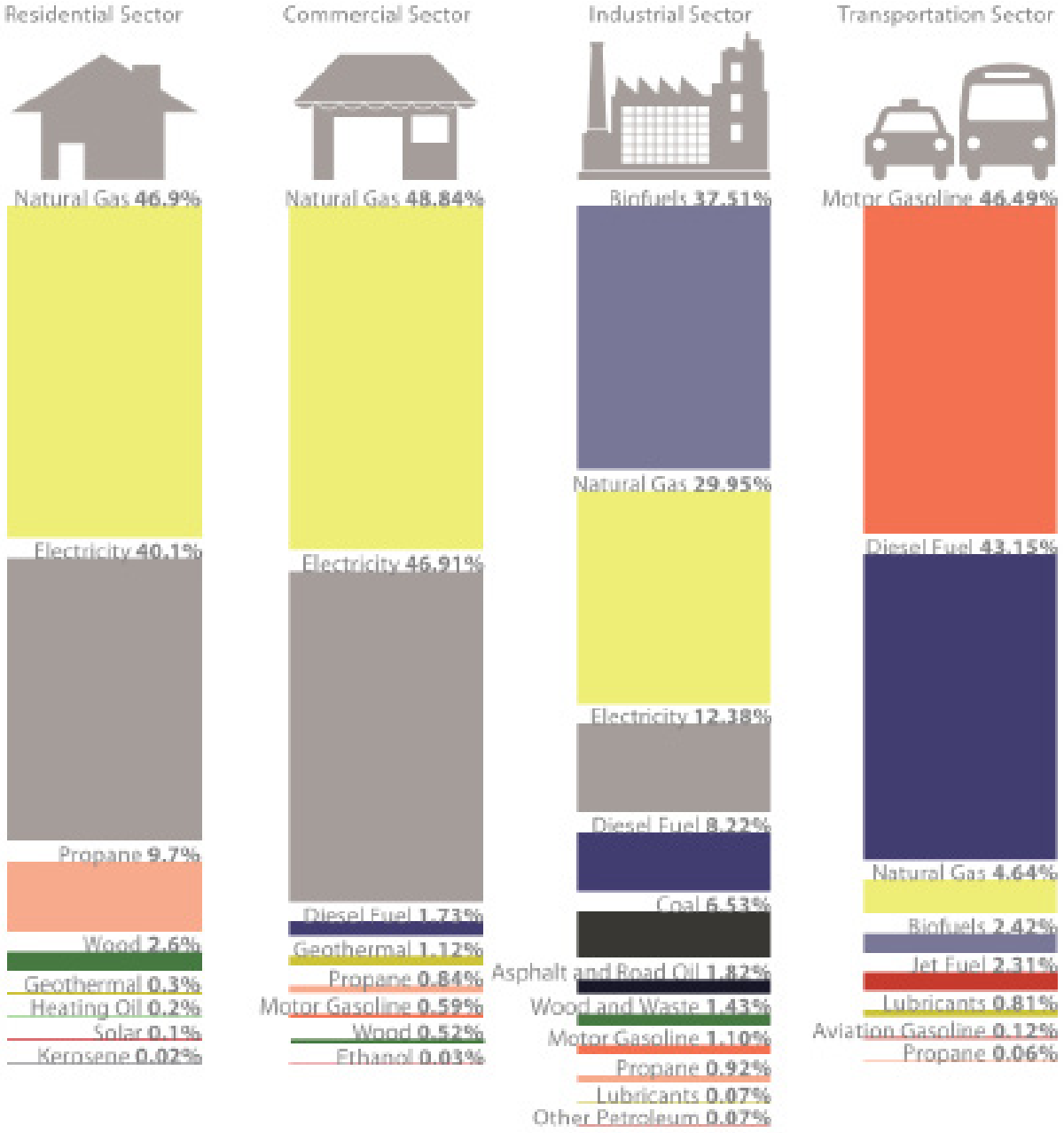
Consumption data for municipal operations was not available for Bennington. However, the City of Bennington should strive to set an example for its citizens by reducing its energy consumption. Bennington can reduce its energy consumption by following the goals and strategies described later in this energy element.

Nebraska Energy Consumption

The following Nebraska energy consumption data is used as consumption data by fuel type was not available for Bennington.

Figure 18 shows the net energy consumption by fuel type in the residential, commercial, industrial, and transportation sectors in Nebraska. A majority of the energy spent in the residential and commercial sectors in the form of natural gas and electricity is for heating, cooling, and lighting buildings. The industrial sector relies on biofuels for 37.51% of its energy consumption.

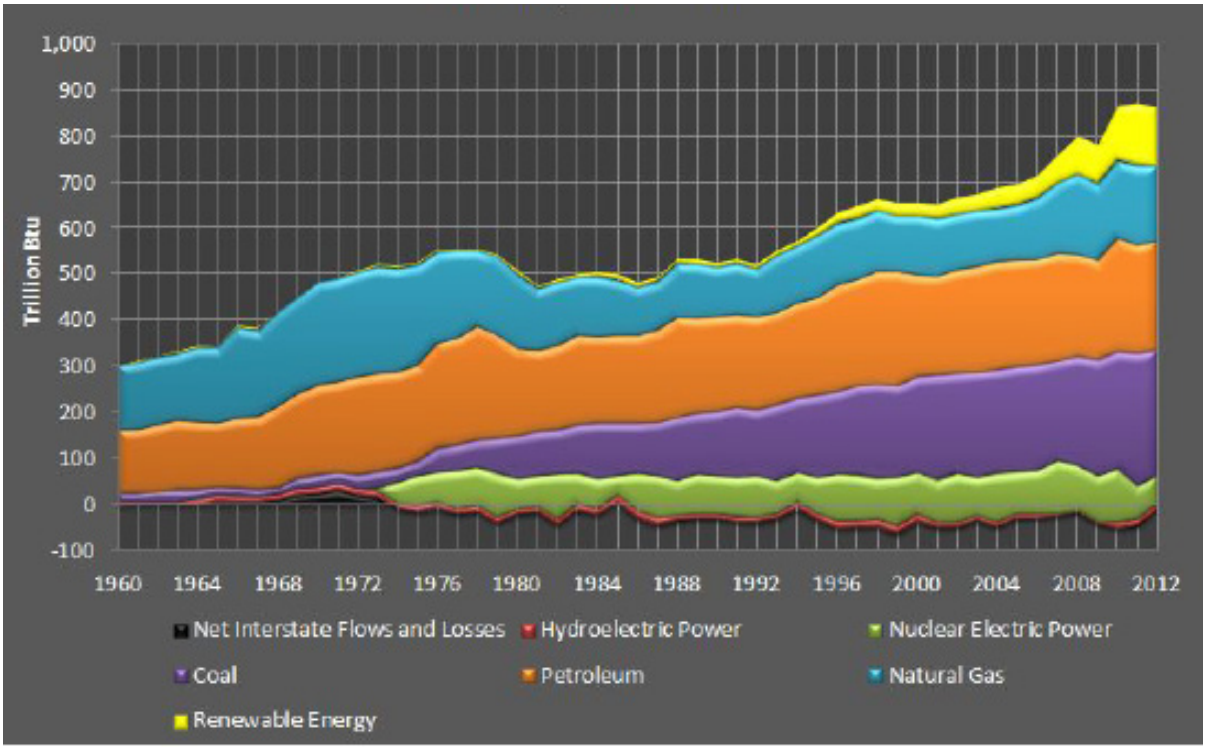
Figure 18: 2011 Net Energy Consumption by Fuel Type in Nebraska



Nebraska Energy Consumption by Fuel Type

As shown in Figure 19 below, Nebraskans rely on fossil fuels for an overwhelming majority of their energy needs. Energy consumption continues to increase from year to year with Nebraska consuming 871 trillion British Thermal Units (BTUs) in 2011. Natural gas and renewable energy consumption are expected to increase in the future as technology advances and as these sources become more economical.

Figure 19: Total Energy Consumption by Fuel Type, Nebraska, 1960-2012



Tables 3 and 4 show how much energy Nebraska consumed in 2012 and how much money Nebraska spent on energy in 2012. Total energy consumption decreased by 10 trillion BTUs from 2011 to 2012, or 1%. Even though transportation consumption was just under 23% of the consumption total in 2012, Nebraska spent more money on transportation than residential, commercial and industrial energy uses combined.

Table 3: Nebraska Consumption in Trillion BTU 2012 (EIA)

Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Transportation	Total
147.0	131.9	384.8	196.9	860.6
17.1%	15.3%	44.7%	22.9%	100%

Table 4: Nebraska Energy Expenditures in Million Dollars 2012 (EIA)

Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Transportation	Total
1,390.3	990.5	2,289.5	5,423.0	10,093.3
13.8%	9.8%	22.7%	53.7%	100%

Opportunities for Energy Conservation

Efficiency Improvements

Energy efficiency is the easiest and cheapest method to prepare for the energy future. There are many efficiency improvements that can be made in homes and businesses in order to conserve energy. According to the 2012 American Community Survey, over 63% of the houses in Bennington were built before 1970. These homes are an opportunity for Bennington to significantly reduce its energy use. In older homes, improvements in areas such as insulation, windows, lighting and appliances can cause them to be significantly more energy efficient. Efficiency improvements to homes and businesses not only save the owner in energy costs, but also reduce the need for utility companies to add costly infrastructure improvements.

There are tools such as the ENERGY STAR Energy Tracking Tool that a home or business owner/facility manager can use to track a building's energy use and progress towards energy goals.

Links to resources that describe the many possible efficiency improvements are provided in the education section below.

Transportation

According to the American Community Survey and Social Explorer, the average commute time for the Bennington area is 24 minutes. Bennington residents are spending money and energy commuting almost an hour each work day to and from work. The Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards will nearly double vehicle fuel economy by 2025 to 54.5 miles per gallon. Without any action this will lower fuel consumption per capita in Bennington. Finding strategies to reduce fuel consumption will result in further energy conservation and more disposable income for Bennington residents. Possible strategies for reducing transportation energy use may include: encouraging carpooling, encourage multi-modal transportation, and investing in trails and other pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure.

Landscaping

A well-designed landscape not only improves the aesthetics of a home or business, it can reduce water use and lower energy bills. According to the Nebraska Energy Office, a well-designed landscape saves enough energy to pay for itself in less than eight years. For example, when planted in the right spot, trees can provide shade from the sun in the summer and block the cold wind in the winter.

Recycling and Composting

Recycling and composting preserves energy by reducing the energy needed to extract raw materials. These practices also reduce the amount of solid waste that is dumped in a landfill.

Local Food

Food takes energy to grow, harvest, process and transport. Conditions such as the distance from where the food is grown to the table affect how much energy is used to produce food. Supporting locally grown food reduces the energy needed for food production.

Opportunities for Renewable Energy

Nebraska is the only state in the U.S. that is 100% public power. Since they are not seeking profits, public power districts have been able to maintain some of the lowest electricity prices in the nation. The low cost of energy is one of the reasons that Nebraska has not fully taken advantage of its renewable energy potential. Unlike places such as California, where electricity prices are higher, renewable energy systems have historically not been economical for Nebraskans and the state.

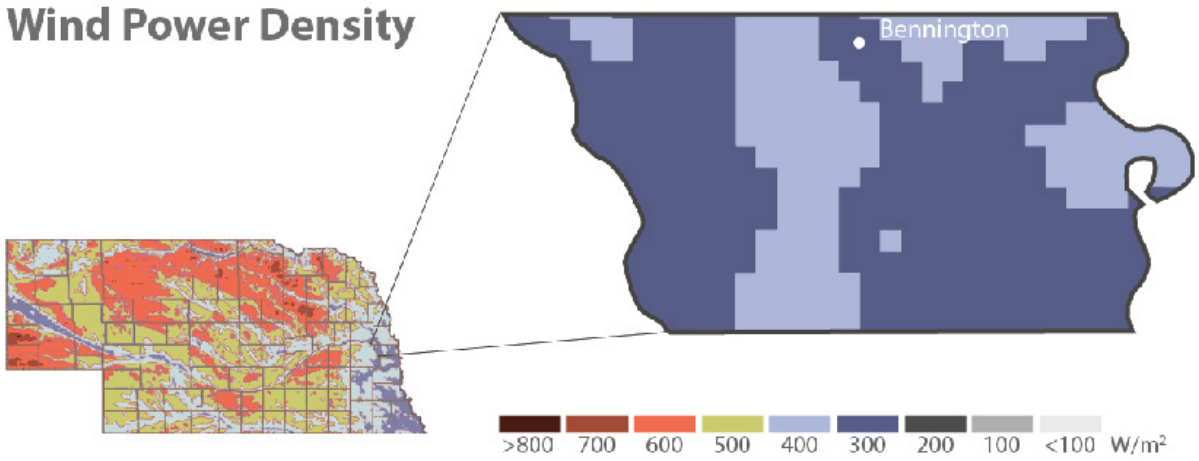
With new proposed federal regulations, power plants will have to lower their carbon emissions by 30% by 2030. This means that heavy carbon emitters such as coal power plants will require retrofits or improvements in order to meet that goal. Since a large amount of the electrical energy consumed in Bennington comes from coal, this will most likely affect the price of electricity coming from these power plants. Therefore, it would be in Bennington's best economic interest to decrease per capita energy consumption and begin to increase the amount of renewable energy produced in Bennington. Below is a summary of potential renewable energy options for Bennington.

Wind

According to the American Wind Energy Association, Nebraska has one of the best wind resources in the United States, 92% of Nebraska has the adequate wind speeds for a utility scale wind farm. Nebraska ranks 3rd in the U.S. in gigawatt hour (GWh) wind generation potential, but has been slow in utilizing this resource compared to other states. Nebraska currently ranks 23rd in total megawatts (MW) installed with 534 MW. According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Nebraska's wind potential at 80 meters hub height is 917,999 MW. It is estimated that wind power is capable of meeting more than 118 times the state's current electricity needs.

Nebraska has continued to add wind capacity in the following years:
2013: 74.8 MW
2012: 122 MW
2011: 124.5 MW

Figure 20: Wind Power Density



As Figure 20 indicates, Bennington and the rest of Douglas County has some of the lowest wind energy resources in the state at 300-400 watts per square meter. Despite this, areas around Bennington may be suitable for a wind energy operation. Electricity produced through wind power will be most cost effective on the utility/commercial scale. Small scale wind systems for homes and businesses may not be as cost effective, but they should not be discouraged.

Biomass

Biomass (biodiesel, ethanol, landfill gas, methane, wood and wood waste) accounted for 81.7% of all renewable energy generated in Nebraska in 2011.

Direct-fired System

Most biomass plants that generate electricity use direct-fired systems. Simply, these plants burn biomass feedstock directly to produce steam. This steam turns a turbine, which turns a generator that converts the power into electricity. The feedstock for direct systems can be a number of things: wood and wood waste, agricultural residues, municipal solid waste, or industrial waste. Wood fueled systems currently provide energy for a number of manufacturing facilities, two colleges, and other buildings across Nebraska. Wood fueled energy systems have the potential to create significant energy savings versus traditional fossil fuels. The Nebraska Forest Service currently has a grant program to help with the up-front costs of converting to a wood energy system.

Biodiesel

The two current Nebraska commercial scale plants have the estimated production capacity of 5.4 million gallons per year, but both closed in the late 2000s due to the price of soybeans used for feedstock. A joint venture between Flint Hills Resources and Benefuel, Inc. is currently retrofitting a biodiesel plant in Beatrice with plans to start operation of the 50 million gallon per year plant in the summer of 2015.

Ethanol
Ethanol produced from corn and grain sorghum is a growing energy resource in Nebraska. According to the Renewable Fuels Association, Nebraska has the second largest ethanol production capacity in the nation and the second largest current operating production in the nation. Approximately 14% of the nation's ethanol capacity is in Nebraska's 27 ethanol plants. The Nebraska ethanol plant operating closest to Bennington is located in Blair.

91% of Nebraska's ethanol production goes to U.S. domestic markets, 5% is exported to other countries, and 4% is used by Nebraskans. The state's Ethanol Board estimates that 40% of Nebraska's corn crop and 75% of the state's grain sorghum crop are used in the production of ethanol.

Ethanol consumption is mainly in the form of blended gasoline. Ethanol production and consumption is expected to continue to increase as national legislation continues to affect state policies. The Renewable Fuel Standard, established in 2005 as a part of the Energy Policy Act, requires a minimum of 36 billion gallons of renewable fuel to be used in the nation's gasoline supply by 2022. In 2013, 87 octane fuel without ethanol began to be phased out and replaced with an ethanol-blended 87 octane gas. Nearly all fuel stations in Nebraska and Iowa have phased out 87 octane fuel without ethanol as of 2014.

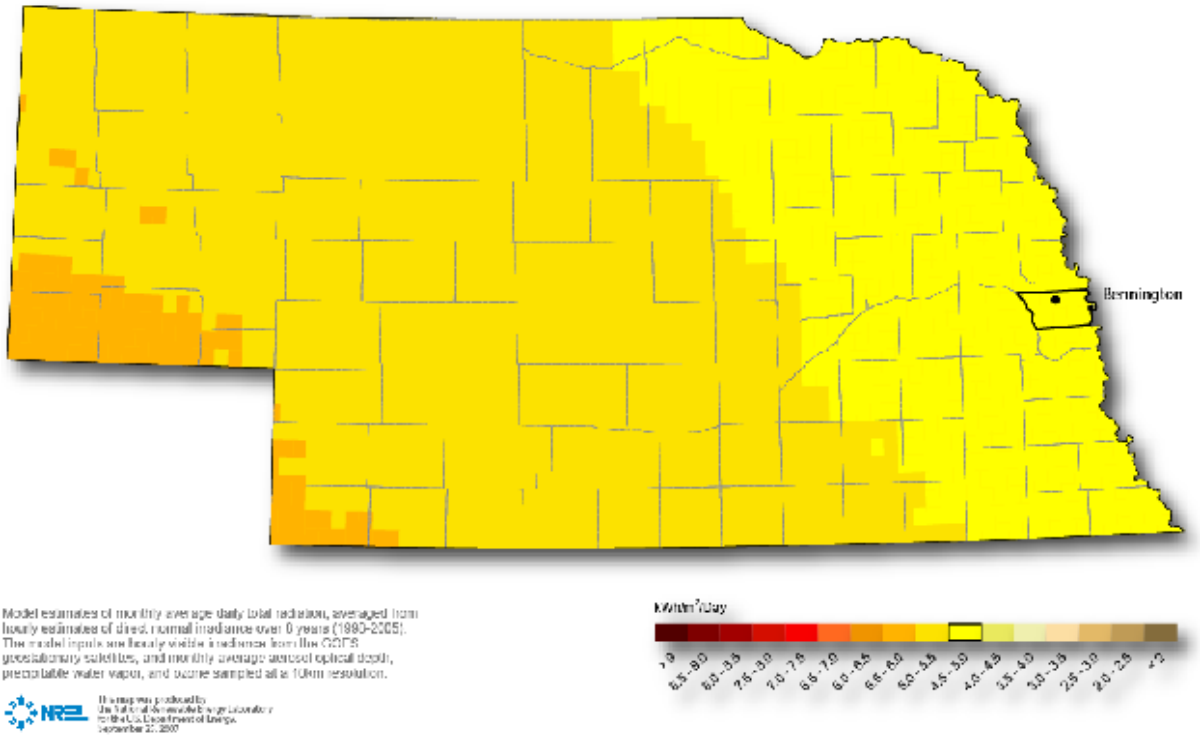
Biogas
Biogas is a product of the decomposition of manure, via anaerobic digestion, and is typically made of about 60% methane, and 40% carbon dioxide. Biogas can be used to generate electricity, as a boiler fuel for space or water heating, upgraded to natural gas pipeline quality, or other uses. After the production of biogas, the remaining effluent is low in odor and rich in nutrients. The byproducts of biogas production can be used as fertilizer, livestock bedding, soil amendments or biodegradable planting pots.

Methane gas can also be extracted from a landfill or wastewater treatment plant using a similar process. The Elk City Station 6.2 MW facility, located southwest of Bennington, is a landfill gas power plant. The facility will be able to produce electricity from landfill gas for at least 20 years. Waste Management currently operates the plant and sells the power to OPPD.

Solar Power
According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Nebraska is ranked 13th in solar energy potential. Currently, solar technologies are marginally used in Nebraska because it has historically been difficult for solar technologies to compete with the state's low electric rates. As seen in Figure 21, Bennington has an average solar radiation of 4.5-5 kWh per square meter per day.

According to the Department of Energy, the average cost of a solar energy system dropped by more than 50% from 2010 to 2013. As the cost of solar systems continue to decrease, solar can be utilized at an individual home or business scale to help supplement electrical needs. Many utilities have incentives to help with the cost of solar, but additional steps should be taken to increase the amount of solar energy generated in Bennington.

Figure 21: Global Solar Radiation at Latitude Tilt - Annual



Passive Solar

Passive solar design takes advantage of a building's site, climate, and materials to minimize energy use. A well-designed passive solar home first reduces energy use for heating and cooling through energy-efficiency strategies and then meets the reduced need in whole or part with solar energy. In simple terms, a passive solar home collects heat as the sun shines through south-facing windows and retains it in materials that store heat, known as thermal mass.

Geothermal

The geothermal application that is most practical and economical for the residents of Bennington is the use of geothermal heat pumps. Geothermal heat pumps are slowly becoming a popular method of heating and cooling buildings. Heat pumps use much less energy than traditional heating and cooling systems. This translates into energy and money savings while also reducing air pollution. There are many state and utility level incentives to help with the initial cost of geothermal energy.

There are two different types of geothermal heat pumps: closed loop systems and open loop systems also known as "pump and dump". Closed loop systems move fluids through continuous pipeline loops that are buried underground at depths where the temperature does not fluctuate much. Heat picked up by the circulating fluid is delivered to a building through a traditional duct system. Geothermal heat pumps discharge waste heat into the ground in the summer months and extract heat from the ground in the winter months.

Open loop systems require an ample source of ground water. An open loop system pumps water directly from a ground water source into a building where it is used for heating and cooling. The used water is either deposited on the surface in a pond or river, or back into the water source. Open loop systems may have environmental impacts due to introducing higher temperatures and minerals into the water sources. Open loop systems may also have some effect on the local aquifer or a neighbor's well source if there is not enough groundwater.

Education

Bennington will not be able to achieve its energy goals without the help of its citizens. Bennington should educate the public on the benefits of energy efficiency and the most feasible renewable energy systems. In the following subsections there are resources provided that Bennington can use to raise awareness regarding energy efficiency and renewable energy systems.

Energy Saving Tips

Bennington and its residents and businesses are encouraged to take advantage of the following energy saving information:

The Nebraska Energy Office has listed ways to save money on energy bills for the home, farm, business, or vehicle. Options for energy savings are listed on the Nebraska Energy Office's website at http://www.neo.ne.gov/tips/tips.htm.

The U.S. Department of Energy created the Energy Saver Guide that explains tips on saving money and energy at home: http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/05/f16/Energy_Saver_Guide_PhaseI_Final.pdf

On their website, OPPD has links to many energy saving tips and tools. Visit www.oppd.com for more information.

Jobs and Economic Development Impact Models (JEDI)

Developed for the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the JEDI models were created to demonstrate the economic benefits associated with renewable energy systems in the United States. This model can be used by anyone: government officials, decision makers, citizens, etc. The model is simple, the user enters in information about the project and it will generate economic impact data such as jobs, local sales tax revenue, etc.

Funding

Financial Incentives

Nebraska has a number of financial incentives for renewable energy production and energy efficiency. These include:

- Renewable Energy Tax Credit (Corporate)
- Renewable Energy Tax Credit (Personal)
- Property Tax Exemption for Wind Energy Generation Facilities
- Sales and Use Tax Exemption for Community Wind Projects
- Sales and Use Tax Exemption for Renewable Energy Property
- Dollar and Energy Savings Loans (State Loan Program)

Many utility companies have rebate programs for energy efficiency or renewable energy systems. For summaries of additional programs, incentives and policies in Nebraska visit the Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency (DSIRE) website: http://www.dsireusa.org/incentives/index.cfm?re=0&ee=0&spv=0&st=0&srp=1&state=NE

Energy Assistance Programs

Residents wanting help paying their utility bills can visit this website with links to many programs in Nebraska: http://nebraskaenergyassistance.com/assistance/

The Weatherization Assistance Program helps lower income families save on their utility bills by making their homes more energy efficient. The Nebraska Energy Office administers the federally-funded program. This website describes the program and how to apply: http://www.neo.ne.gov/wx/wxindex.htm

Grants

There are a number of grant opportunities from federal, state, and non-profit agencies that distribute funding for energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy. The City of Bennington should explore grant opportunities to help fund energy conservation or renewable energy projects.

Green Funds

The City of Bennington could create a program to help fund municipal energy projects. One such program could be a revolving green fund. First, the City would establish a baseline year for municipal energy use. Then after making energy improvements, the City would track the energy savings. The money which was saved through the energy improvements would then be used to create funding for continued energy improvements. A program such as this can help fund energy saving projects at the same cost as if the City did nothing. Many universities have created a green revolving fund such as this.

Definitions

LEED: Voluntary LEED certification provides independent, third-party verification that a building, home or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at achieving high performance in key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality. Building to LEED standards does not require LEED certification (http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=1988).

ENERGY STAR: A U.S. Environmental Protection Agency voluntary program that helps businesses and individuals save money and protect the climate through energy efficiency. The ENERGY STAR program has influenced the adoption of energy efficient products, practices, and services through partnerships, objective measurement tools, and consumer education (http://www.energystar.gov/).

Goals and Strategies

The following are goals and strategies suggested for Bennington.

1. Reduce energy use per capita in Bennington
    a. Encourage Multi-Modal Transportation
        i. Increase use of trails, walking, and bicycling as alternative modes of transportation
        ii. Plan trails and sidewalks to connect neighborhoods and provide access to commercial areas and community facilities
    b. Encourage the development of electric car charging stations and other alternative fuels infrastructure
    c. Ensure efficient use of land resources
        i. Encourage new development adjacent to existing development
        ii. Encourage infill development
        iii. Encourage mixed use development
    d. Increase local jobs to decrease average commute time and energy use
    e. Increase the energy efficiency of buildings within Bennington
        i. Educate homeowners regarding practical energy efficiency measures
        ii. Encourage meeting current LEED standards for new buildings and renovations in Bennington
        iii. Partner with utility companies to enhance Bennington's efforts to understand: energy use patterns, rates, programs, and incentives
        iv. Encourage residential and commercial energy upgrades
        v. Encourage energy conservation through the siting of development and landscaping
        vi. Encourage the use of green roofing systems
    f. Educate citizens regarding energy element
        i. Implement education, outreach and citizen engagement strategies
            A. Establish a webpage where the city can inform citizens of its energy related efforts, as well as provide energy saving tips

B. Develop a demonstration garden at a highly visible public facility

ii. Raise Bennington's residents' awareness of the wise use of energy

iii. Recognize local projects that support the goals and strategies of the energy element

iv. Encourage recycling in Bennington

2. Increase the amount of renewable energy generated in Bennington
    a. Inform citizens about practical renewable energy options
    b. Examine and remove unintended barriers for appropriate renewable energy generation
    c. Evaluate the feasibility of producing energy from a city owned facility
    d. Encourage renewable energy use in buildings

3. Increase the amount of local food that is consumed in Bennington
    a. Review existing codes regarding composting
    b. Support local food production
        i. Support markets for local food such as farmers' markets
        ii. Encourage community education regarding locally produced food

4. Reduce energy consumption within the City of Bennington's operations
    a. Conduct building energy audits on priority city buildings to identify energy retrofit and improvement opportunities
    b. Educate city staff regarding energy consumption
    c. Educate city staff on latest trends, energy codes, and systems
    d. Explore feasible on-site renewable energy applications in appropriate city facilities and projects
    e. Research funding opportunities to finance energy efficiency improvements
    f. As city vehicles are decommissioned, consider replacing them with alternative fuel or fuel efficient vehicles

Acknowledgments

This energy element was created using data from the following sources:

The Nebraska Energy Office
National Renewable Energy Laboratories (NREL)
U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)
Omaha Public Power District (OPPD)
AWS Truepower
U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA)
American Wind Energy Association
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Eastern Interconnection States' Planning Council (EISPC)
Social Explorer

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Mel Valasek
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Rob Loptin
Ron Johnson
Kevin Kuker
Tom Pearson

Chapter 8

Land Use & Growth Management

8

Land Use & Growth Management
BENNINGTON

[section 8.1]

PROFILE

Evaluating the land uses that presently exist in and around Bennington is critical to the formulation of the Comprehensive Plan. In order to realistically plan for future growth and development in Bennington, the profile of the amount and condition of land within its jurisdiction must be established. The analysis of developable areas in Bennington's jurisdiction is essential to the preparation of the Future Land Use Plan for the community.

Existing Land Use

The purpose of examining the current land use of a community is to establish an understanding of the previous growth and development of the community while analyzing the compatibility with adjacent land uses. Existing land uses are defined by how a specific parcel is being utilized, and does not take into account future land use or current land ownership.

The number and type of land uses found in a community is constantly evolving to meet the demands of local residents and the regional economy. The success and sustainability of a community is directly influenced by the manner in which available land is utilized and incorporated into the city.

Typically Midwestern communities are characterized by a fixed pattern of land use influenced by the consistency of their rural settings and abundant availability of relative economical land. However, Bennington anticipates increasing levels of growth and development pressures from the Omaha area and has seen the region transform from a rural setting to an urbanized extension of the larger city.

The opportunities that result from the external forces can create impacts upon the community and its residents and will significantly impact how and where Bennington grows in the future.

Existing Land Use Categories

Agricultural

A parcel of land that is not intended for development and is currently utilized as low intensity agricultural uses.

Commercial

A parcel of land containing a commercial business use which may sell a good or service.

Industrial

A parcel of land containing a commercial use involved in manufacturing, packing, storage, or assembly of products.

Public/Quasi-Public

A parcel of land owned, maintained, or controlled by a federal, state, or local governmental entity, which may be available for public use. The parcel may contain a use that is generally under the control of a private, religious, or non-profit entity that provides a social benefit to the community as a whole.

Parks and Recreation

A parcel of land containing public or private land available for recreational, educational, cultural, or aesthetic use.

Single-Family Residential

A parcel of land with a residential structure occupied by one family, such as a traditional home on its own lot, surrounded by yards on all sides.

Multi-Family Residential

A parcel of land containing a structure being utilized by two or more families within the same structure.

Vacant

A parcel of land that is undeveloped, whether by intention or environmentally restricted by hydrology, terrain, or access.

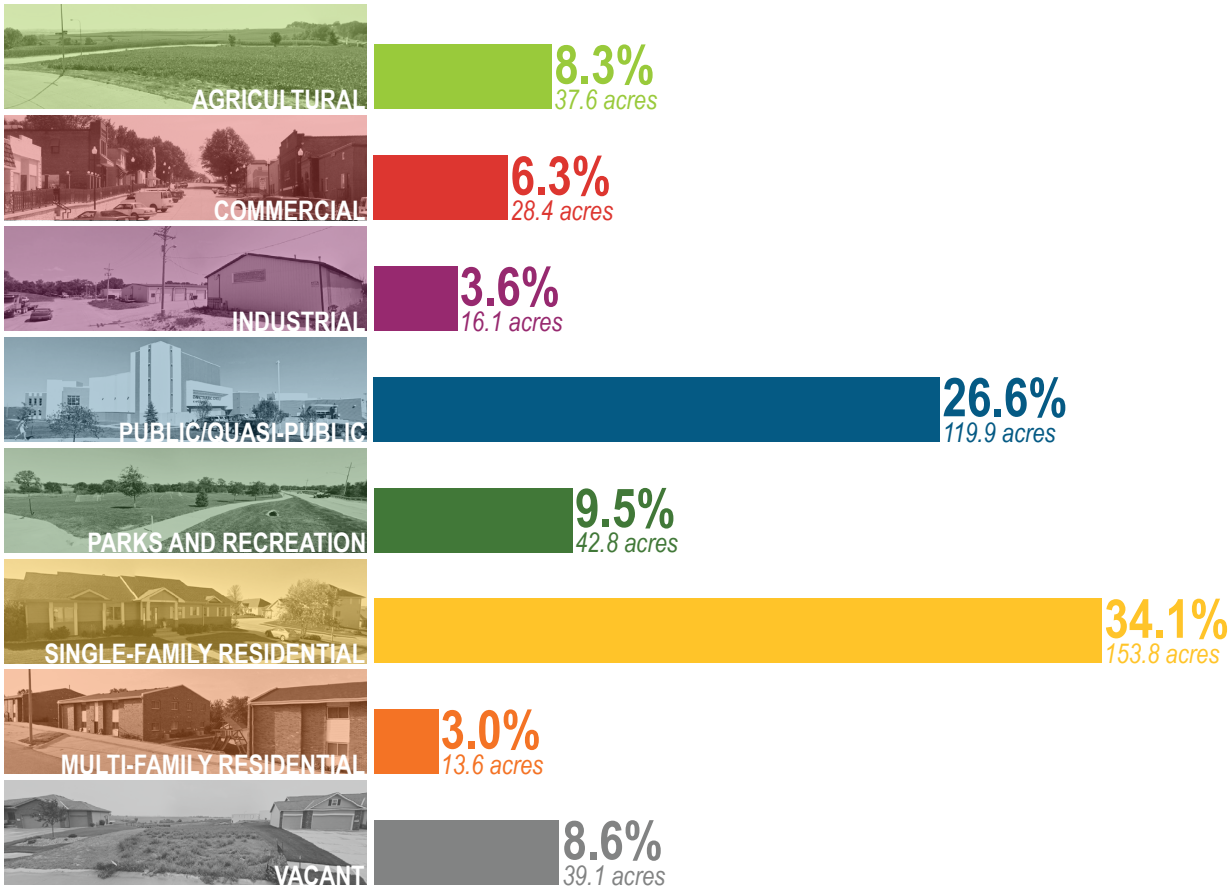
Existing Land Use Analysis

The majority of Bennington's land use is dedicated towards single-family residential parcels. The lack of vacant, developable land was continually brought up as a barrier for residential and commercial growth. There are just three vacant parcels zoned commercial or industrial in Bennington's corporate limits. Those lots present their own challenges for development including accessibility and neighboring residential uses. Any remaining vacant lots are contained within residentially zoned subdivisions.

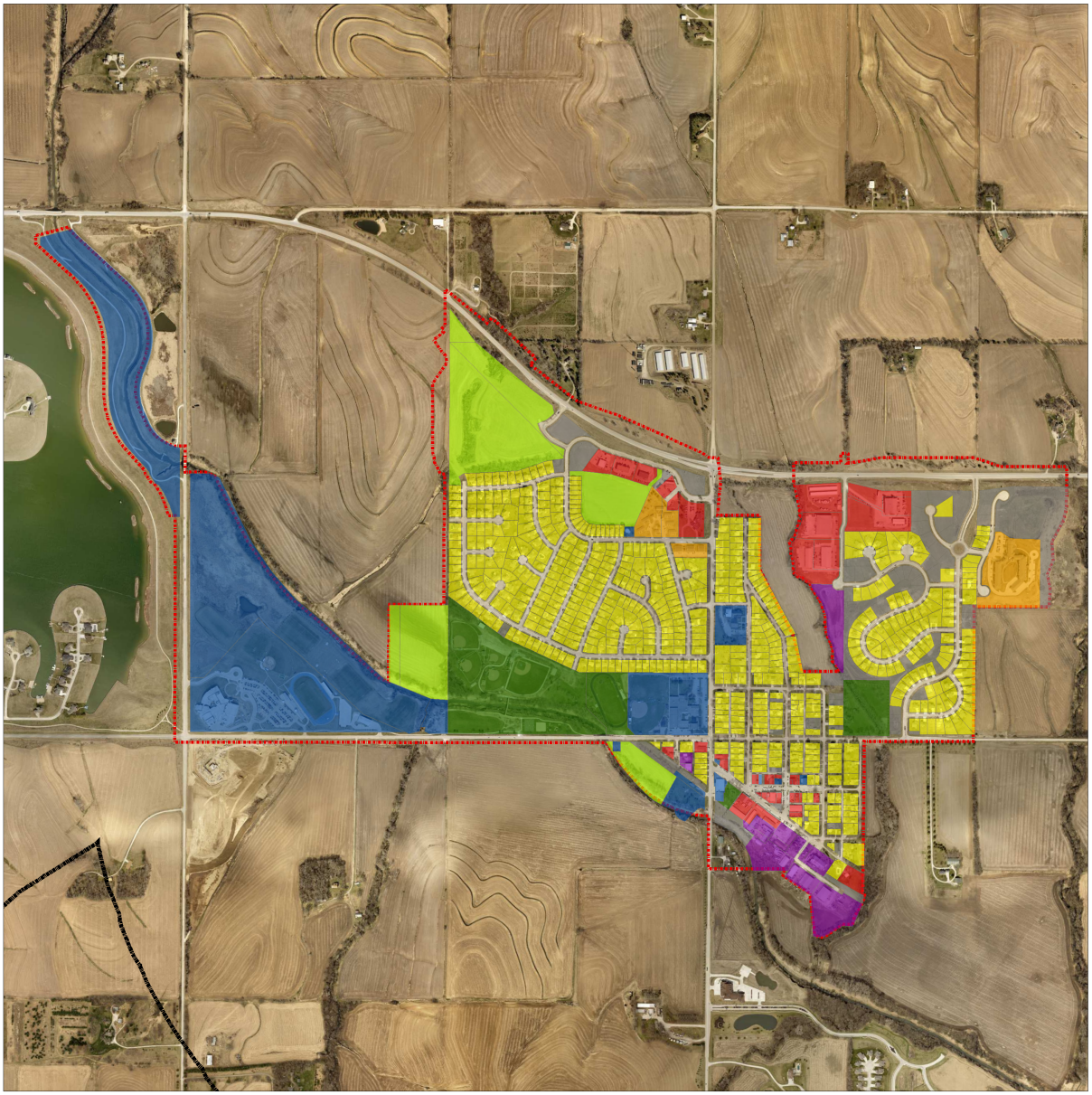
Bennington contains a small portion of its land dedicated to industrial uses. There is a lack of consensus on the desirability of industrial uses in Bennington's jurisdiction. The high ratio of residential land uses provide many potential conflicts with a heavier impact use such as industry.

Over the past twenty years, Bennington's land use dedicated to single-family residential has growth with the Bennington Park and Ridgewood subdivisions. Despite this growth, land dedicated to Parks and Recreation has not grown correspondingly. With community growth, Bennington should implement policies that subdivision contain lands made available for programmed park space.

Figure 22: Existing Land Use Analysis



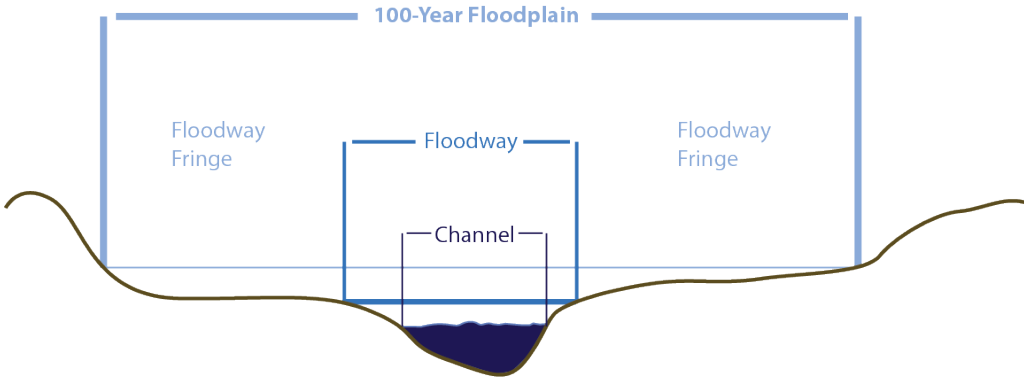
Map 8: Existing Land Use



Floodplain

The city of Bennington's floodplain derives from the Big Papillion Creek to the south of the community. A floodplain includes the floodway, one percent annual chance of flooding event, and 0.2 percent annual chance of flooding event. Through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Hazard Mapping Program (FHMP), and the Risk Mapping Assessment and Planning (MAP), FEMA identifies flood hazards, assesses flood risks, and partners with states and communities to provide accurate flood hazard and risk data to guide them to mitigation actions.

Figure 23: Floodplain Section Diagram



Floodway

As FEMA defines, a floodway is not only the existing water channel but also "other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevations more than a designated height. Communities must regulate development in these floodways to ensure that there are no increases in upstream or downstream flood elevations."

1.0% Annual Chance of Flooding

The one percent chance of annual flooding is commonly known as the "100-year floodplain." This describes an area where a one percent chance of flooding may occur annually within the boundary. This area is mapped by categories 1%-A and 1%-AE. Both are considered within the 100-year floodplain. 1%-AE areas are considered to be more precise, including Base Flood Elevations (BFE's), whereas 1%-A areas are determined using approximate methodologies.

0.2% Annual Chance of Flooding

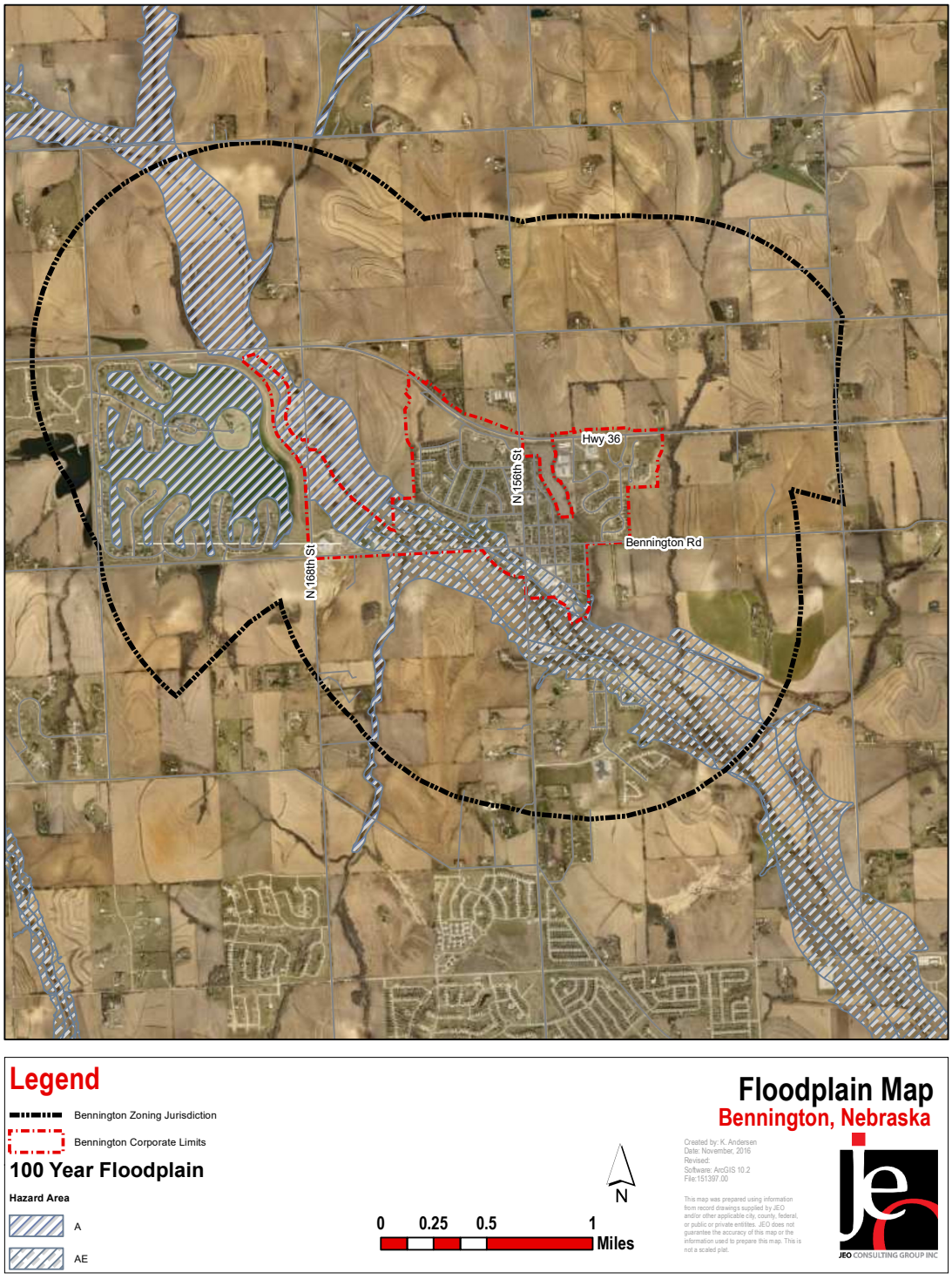
Two-tenths of one-percent chance of annual flooding is commonly known as the "500-year floodplain." In these areas there lies a two-tenths of one-percent change of flooding in any given year.

Floodplain Map

A floodplain map is a fluid document. The areas indicated are often updated as FEMA updates their studies. Amendments to hazard areas may not be represented on this map. Property owners within or near floodplain boundaries have options. Owners may submit a Letter of Map Change if they believe their property has been inadvertently

mapped in Special Flood Hazard Areas. Property owners near the boundaries may want to verify that their property is not within a special flood hazard area when developing or selling the property to avoid infringing upon the hazardous zones or affecting nearby properties.

Map 9: Bennington Floodplain



Wellhead Protection Area

The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) regulates groundwater quality and quantity. NDEQ helps assist local municipalities with progecting their drinking water supply with the development of the Nebraska Wellhead Protection (WHP) Program. In 1998, Nebraska Legislature passed LB 1161 (Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-01501 to 16-1509) authorizing the Wellhead Protection Area Act.

Wellhead Protection Areas were delineated with community safety in mind. Both subdivision and municipal wells served its populations and pose a larger threat to public safety if contaminated. The ultimate goal of the WHP Program is to protect land and groundwater surrounding public drinking water supply wells from contamination.

The WHP Program provides the following in accordance with federal laws:

1. Duties of the governmental entities and utility districts
2. Determines protection areas
3. Identifies contamination sources
4. Develops a contaminant source management program
5. Develops an alternative drinking water plan
6. Reviews contaminated sources in future wellhead areas
7. Involves the public

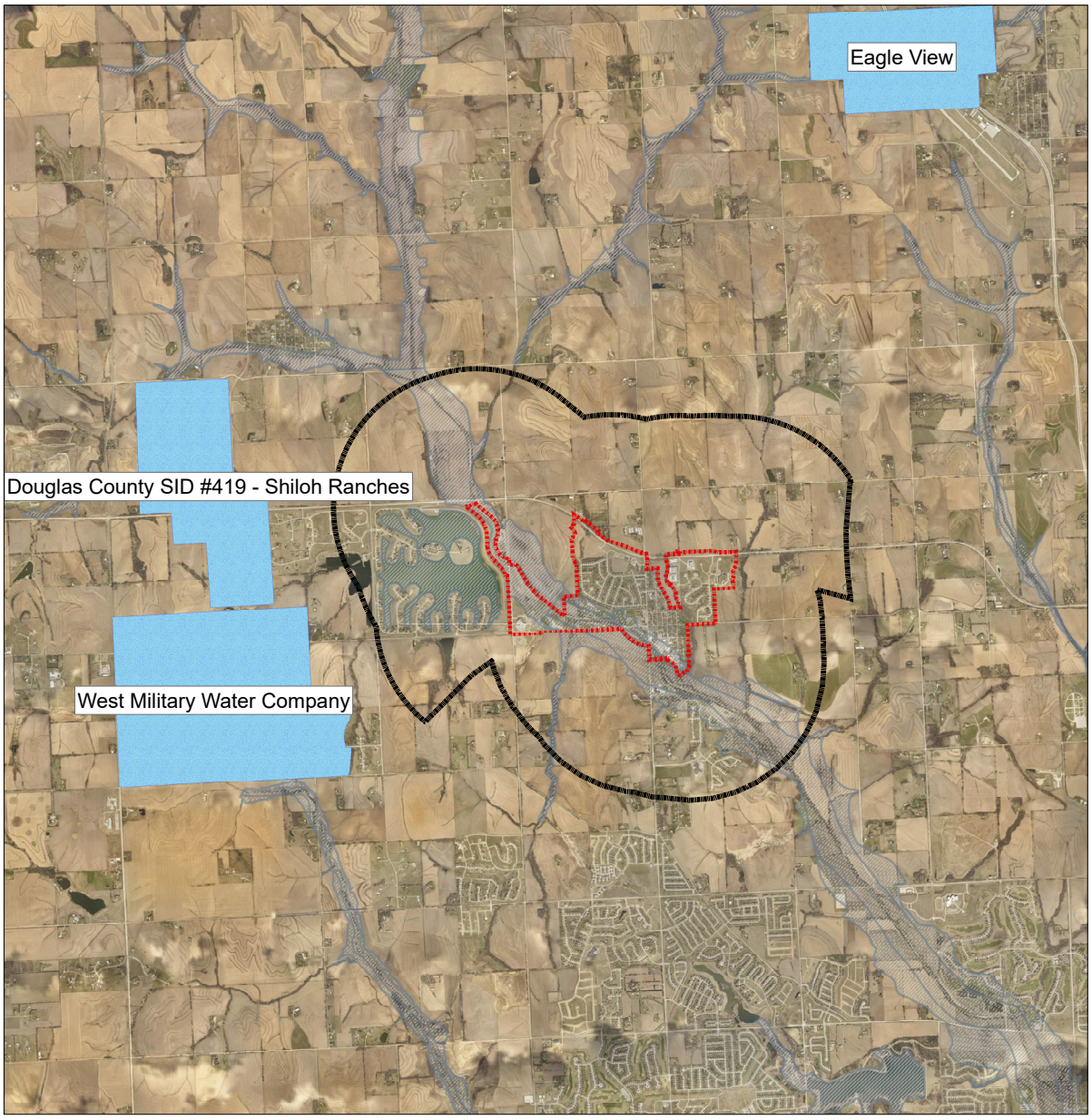
The approaches of Nebraska's WHP Program are to:

1. Prevent the location of new contamination sources in Wellhead Protection Areas through planning.
2. Minimize the hazard of existing contamination sources through management.
3. Provide early warning of existing contamination through groundwater monitoring.

The Wellhead Protection Area is a defined region with restrictive land use regulations to prevent potential contaminants from locating in the sensitive area. The boundaries are delineated by a time travel cylindrical displacement calculation. The boundary is mapped by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) so communities can apply zoning regulations to the district.

While Bennington's water distribution is sourced by Metropolitan Utilities District (MUD), the community's jurisdiction is adjacent to two private wellhead protection areas, Douglas County SID, #419 and West Military Water Company. The city of Bennington will continue to recognize area wellhead districts with the specific wellhead protection zones and appropriate zoning methods.

Map 10: Wellhead Protection Areas



Legend

Zoning Jurisdiction
Corporate Limits
Wellhead Protection Areas

100-Year Floodplain

Hazard Area

A
AE

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

N

Wellhead Protection Areas
Bennington, Nebraska

Created by: K. Andersen
Date: June, 2017
Revised:
Software: ArcGIS 10.2
File:151397.00

This map was prepared using information from record drawings supplied by JEO and/or other applicable city, county, federal, or public or private entities. JEO does not guarantee the accuracy of this map or the information used to prepare this map. This is not a scaled plat.

JEO CONSULTING GROUP INC

[section 8.2]

ENVISION

The Envision section of the planning process reflects the formal means of public participation in the Bennington Comprehensive Plan. It is within this chapter that community input is collected to address new growth, including where, what type, and how it affects adjacent properties.

Focus Group Meeting

Students

The overriding priority of the student-group was to balance growth in a manner that protects the small-town quality of life Bennington residents enjoy. The accessibility of both urban and rural opportunities were singled-out as a core value for young-people in the school district.

Business and Economic Development

The primary concern of the Business and Economic Development Focus Group lied in the lack of commercial properties in the community and lack of developable land for economic development on the community's periphery. Some of the strategies for development discussed included revitalization of the downtown district for commercial and retail sites, Additionally, the group discussed strategies for making developable farmland on the community's periphery more marketable for private-sector development. These strategies included acquisition and the speculative extension of infrastructure to lower development investment.

In order to promote more economic development and local job creation, the group discussed the lack of affordable housing options for the workforce. One challenge identified is the community's largest employer, the school district, cannot house many of its teachers because local housing costs exceed affordability for these positions. Multi-family apartments were one solution discussed for affordable housing options.

The development process was another barrier identified for business and economic development in Bennington. A business owner shared their experience in constructing a new facility and having to answer to a number of different jurisdictions in the development process. Between the City of Bennington, Douglas County, the City Engineer, among others, having a one-stop shop to report to or ask questions would have assisted in the development process. The group also discussed what were deemed to be excessive and/or antiquated sign regulations and the difficulty of marketing their business.

Town Hall Meeting

On January 24, 2017 a community-wide town hall meeting was held to discuss a variety of issues. After a presentation and input from the audience in its entirety, the remainder of the evening was broken into a topic-specific open house. Various stations relating to land use, housing, economic development, and parks and recreation were established for attendees to visit, ask questions, and provide input.

Land Use Station

The land use station focused on areas of growth in the residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Participants were also asked to identify ideal locations for parks, trails, and other amenities. The results focused commercial and multi-family residential growth to key transportation corridors and intersections. Specifically, the following areas:

- 156th Street corridor south of Bennington
- 156th Street and Highway 36
- 168th and Bennington Road
- 168th Street and Highway 36

The 156th Street corridor north of Highway 36 was identified as a key opportunity for an employment center, capitalizing on its transportation access and relative availability for utility extensions.

A key area for parks and recreation included the floodplain area along 156th Streets and Bennington Road. This was identified as an opportunity to connect Johns Bohn Park, the Heritage Subdivision, and four Bennington Public School facilities.

[section 8.3]

ACHIEVE

Bennington's land use policies are determined by balancing growth of services and opportunities with maintaining a sense of small-town community and independence. A phased and systematic approach to support future population growth is necessary to protect Bennington's jurisdiction from ad hoc development. The land use policies in this section provides the framework for orderly development. This vision is achieved through land use designations and thoughtful decisions for the future fiscal responsibility of the community.

Future Land Use Plan

Utilization of the Bennington Future Land Use Plan will result in the prioritized balance of land development throughout the community's jurisdiction. Adherence to the land use policies outlined in this chapter will assist the City and its growth to avoid conflicts between incompatible land uses, orderly phasing of infrastructure, and the proper connectivity of land uses via key transportation corridors.

The proposed land uses and their locations were carefully dictated by public input and through direct input of community leadership. The result is a plan that maximizes the utilization of land within Bennington's jurisdiction, while minimizing any conflicts of the anticipated build-out of development areas outside of the community's jurisdiction.

The Future Land Use Plan represents a static projection of the anticipated growth of the community. However, the implementation of the Future Land Use Plan is not designed to be a static policy, rather a living guideline that may be amended and adjusted as development opportunities occur, or as community priorities change.

Relationship to Zoning

The relationship of the Future Land Use Plan and subsequent zoning regulations is an important distinction in implementing the build-out of land uses as envisioned. The identified land use designations of the Bennington Land Use Plan contain a listing of zoning districts deemed compatible with each land use area. Through these regulations, Bennington's Planning Commission and City Council can effectively implement the land use plan. Zoning districts identified in each designation are designed to be amended as the level of intensity of development increases based on the availability of appropriate infrastructure.

The following land use designations have general development guidelines to be applied in the future. The Future Land Use Map follows the explanations of these designations.

Low Density Residential

The Low Density Residential land use area is intended for typical suburban scale residential development densities. This category represents the most common residential land use types and is located in areas that are experiencing growth or are anticipated to experience growth with the availability of utility and transportation infrastructure. Characteristics of the Low Density Residential designation include:

- Locations adjacent of contiguous development to provide convenient access to transportation routes, commercial areas, jobs, schools, parks and recreation areas, and public services;
- Accessory structures should be limited in size to reinforce the pedestrian scale of neighborhoods;
- Pedestrian connectivity should be reinforced; the public sidewalk and trail system should provide ample opportunities for residents to walk to destinations or for enjoyment;
- The area will include densities ranging from one to eight dwelling units per acre;
- Uses within this area include single-family residential dwellings, public and quasi-public use, parks/recreation/open space, and home occupations.

Compatible zoning districts of the Low Density Residential designation include:

- TA - Transitional Agriculture
- R-1 - Lake Side Residential
- R-2 - Low Density Residential
- R-3 - Medium Density Residential

Medium Density Residential

The Medium Density Residential land use area is intended for typical suburban scale residential development densities with opportunities for higher densities provided throughout. With smaller lots than the Low Density Residential land use, the Medium Density Land Use is intended to accommodate diverse housing options ranging from detached single family housing to multi-family housing while providing ample opportunity for attached single-family housing styles. Characteristics of the Low Density Residential designation include:

- Locations adjacent of contiguous development to provide convenient access to transportation routes, commercial areas, jobs, schools, parks and recreation areas, and public services;
- Accessory structures should be limited in size to reinforce the pedestrian scale of neighborhoods;
- Pedestrian connectivity should be reinforced; the public sidewalk and trail system should provide ample opportunities for residents to walk to destinations or for enjoyment;
- The area will include densities ranging from four to ten dwelling units per acre;
- Uses within this area include single-family and multi-family residential dwellings, public and quasi-public use, parks/recreation/open space, and home occupations.

Compatible zoning districts of the Low Density Residential designation include:

- TA - Transitional Agriculture
- R-2 - Low Density Residential
- R-3 - Medium Density Residential
- CMD - Clustered/Mixed Use District
- PUB - Public and Semi-Public
- FW/FP - Flood Plain (overlay)

High Density Residential

The High Density Residential land use area is intended to provide higher residential densities. These land areas will provide smaller lots, single family and multi-family residential uses and are found in areas adjacent to commercial uses and transportation corridors. The location in theses areas should be well-served by transportation facilities and near abundant employment opportunities. High Density Residential areas will also have a significant role as a transitional use between commercial and lower density residential development. Characteristics of the High Density Residential designation include:

- Locations contiguous to existing developments where uses can serve as transitions that buffer and/or screen lower density residential uses from commercial or business parks and major streets/roads;
- Location in areas adequately served by transportation facilities and near employment opportunities;
- Neighborhood parks and open spaces should be included in all new developments
- Pedestrian connectivity within development and to adjacent communities and other land uses is required and should follow established trail plans;
- Uses within this area include small lot single-family and two-family residential dwellings, public and quasi-public uses, neighborhood commercial uses, and multi-family residential;
- Commercial uses are appropriate along frontages of arterial streets;
- The area will include residential densities exceeding eight dwelling units per acre.

Compatible zoning districts of the High Density Residential designation include:

- TA - Transitional Agriculture
- R-3 - Medium Density Residential
- R-4 - High Density Residential
- C-1 - Highway Commercial District
- C-2 - Highway Commercial Center District
- CMD - Clustered/Mixed Use District
- PUB - Public and Semi-Public
- FW/FP - Flood Plain (overlay)

Commercial

Commercial uses may vary widely in their intensity of use and impact, varying from low intensity offices, to more intensive uses such as gas stations, restaurants, retail, or automobile sales/repair. Parking lots are usually shared by adjacent uses. Areas designated as general commercial in the land use plan may not be appropriate for every commercial zoning district. The appropriateness of a commercial district for a particular piece of property will depend on a review of all the elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Characteristics of the Commercial land use category include:

- Located throughout town, the intensity of particular uses should be suited to the character of the surrounding area;
- Larger, more intense commercial developments should be located nearer to major roads/streets;
- Neighborhoods should be served by small-scale commercial developments, providing uses that serve the convenience and daily needs of nearby citizens;
- Commercial businesses of all types and sizes should design at the pedestrian scale. Commercial areas shall be connected to residential neighborhoods by sidewalks and/or community trails;
- The design and exterior surface treatments should reinforce existing development patterns in newly developing areas;
- Design themes should strengthen the overall image of the development consistent with the character of Bennington;
- Landscaping, berms, fences, and setbacks should be used to visually screen and buffer commercial uses from residential uses, however should provide opportunity for connectivity with adjacent residential areas;

Compatible zoning districts of the Commercial designation include:

- TA - Transitional Agriculture
- R-4 - High Density Residential
- C-1 - Highway Commercial
- C-2 - Highway Commercial Center
- C-3 - Downtown Commercial
- CMD - Clustered/Mixed Use District
- PUB - Public and Semi-Public
- FW/FP - Flood Plain (overlay)

Business Park

The Business Park designation includes such developments as business/office parks, corporate campuses, data centers, research and development parks, and other "flex" uses.

Business parks are planned concentrations of office, trades, and construction services having interconnected internal road networks and shared open spaces. The individual buildings are sited so that they relate well to one another, and are of compatible design and materials. Business parks can contain either office or light industrial uses, or both. Typical "flex" uses for the Business Park land use designation includes warehousing, mini-storage, building trade offices and facilities, light manufacturing and assembling, and data centers. Typical office uses for both types of centers include large- and mid-

size corporate offices, as well as office space for smaller firms, office condominiums, and so forth.

The Business Park designation may also contain commercial space in areas most accessible to the public, at intersections and along transportation corridors.

Characteristics of the Business Park land use category include:

- The focus area (if any) should incorporate some amount of formal space or use to be utilized by the public, such as a formal park, plaza, or community center;
- Different land uses or activities may be placed adjacent to one another, or on floors of the same building. Such mixing of land uses encourages a compact and pedestrian oriented business park;

Compatible zoning districts of the Business Park designation include:

- TA - Transitional Agriculture
- C-1 - Highway Commercial
- C-2 - Highway Commercial Center
- C-3 - Downtown Commercial
- I-1 - Light Industrial
- CMD - Clustered/Mixed Use District
- PUB - Public and Semi-Public
- FW/FP - Flood Plain (overlay)

Industrial

The Industrial land use area focuses on industrial land uses and business accommodation. Location is important, as proximity to major streets and highways can help ensure heavy traffic avoids residential areas and prominent pedestrian activity centers. Careful consideration shall be given before designation of any industrial uses so as not to encroach upon, or conflict with, less intensive uses or detract from important new corridors.

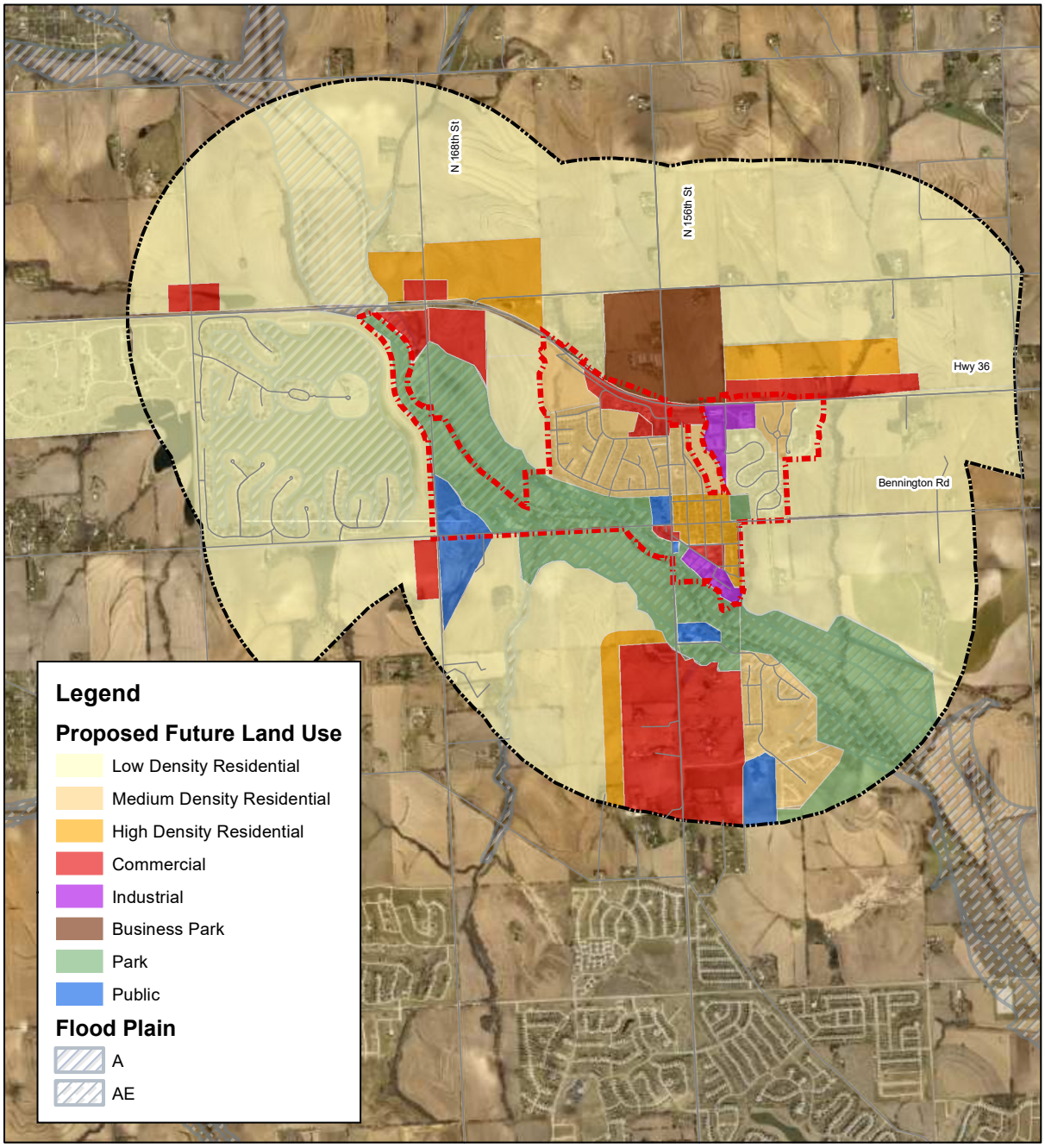
Compatible zoning districts of the Industrial designation include:

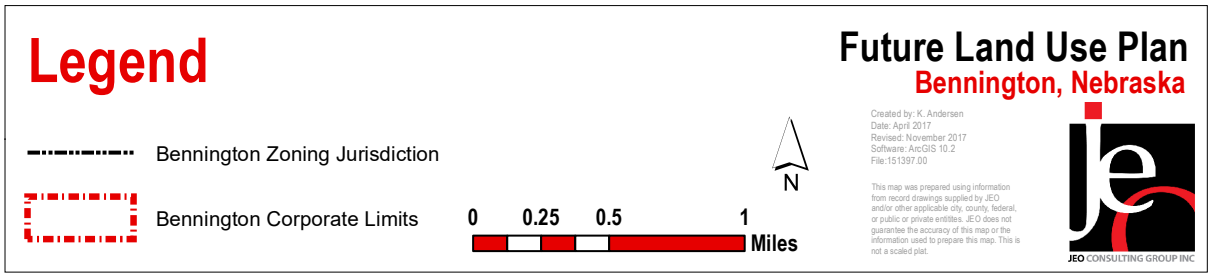
- TA - Transitional Agriculture
- I-1 - Industrial
- PUB - Public and Semi-Public
- FW/FP - Flood Plain (overlay)

Public

The Public land use area is intended to provide easy, convenient access for common activities of residents. however, the areas identified on the map tend to be existing developed uses specific to this category. The reason for this is that speculation with respect to future public uses can artificially inflate the underlying land value to the detriment of the city finances and community residents. In addition, not all existing or proposed public uses are identified by way of the Public land use designation since these uses are typically allowed outright or by conditional use in varying land use or zoning districts. Characteristics of the Public land use category include:

Map 11: Future Land Use





- Locations dispersed throughout he community, near activity centers and major streets;
- Locations that provide an opportunity to share facilities between uses, such as a school, library, park, community center, or post office;
- Uses within this area include public facilities, municipal properties, hospitals, and schools;
- Structures should model appropriate architectural design elements, high quality construction techniques, and appropriate materials and finishes;
- All zoning districts may apply.

Park

The Park land use area accommodates those undeveloped properties that are intended to benefit the public by remaining undeveloped as parks or open space. However, many of the areas identified tend to be existing areas considered under this land use category. The reason for this is that speculation with respect to future public uses can artificially inflate the underlying land value to the detriment of the city finances and community residents. Other identified areas are often found in floodplains, or other areas that pose challenges for private development.

In addition, not all existing or proposed parks, recreation, and open space land uses are identified by way of the Park land use area since these uses are typically allowed outright or by conditional use in varying zoning districts. Characteristics of the Park land use category include:

- Locations dispersed throughout the community, for easy access, or are important and appropriate to the function served;
- For appropriate utilization and maintenance, parks should be located adjacent and contiguous to residential, commercial, or public land uses to maximize accessibility and convenience;
- Uses within this are include parks, passive and active recreation areas, athletic fields, trails and natural areas, as well as drainage and flood control structures such as detention or retention facilities, drainage swales, and floodplain areas;
- All zoning districts may apply.

Land Use and Growth Management Goals and Policies

Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps, and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions.

Enforce sustainable growth patterns to promote financial stability and protect public investment of infrastructure and quality of life

The City should utilize the Comprehensive Plan to identify areas for implementation of appropriate zoning and subdivision regulations to facilitate responsible growth and development

Future land use designations and corresponding zoning classifications should be amended only when it can be demonstrated that such modifications are in the best

long-term interest of the city. Such amendments should not have an adverse effect on land use compatibility nor be inconsistent with the goals and policies of the Bennington Comprehensive Plan.

The City of Bennington should not approve a development or subdivision that is:

- Inconsistent with the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan, detailed area plans, infrastructure and utility plans, or long-range transportation corridor plans or studies;
- Inconsistent with the City's right-of-way standards, or standards established in long-range transportation plans or studies;
- Lacking necessary paved roads to serve the subdivision or development;
- Lacking adequate sanitary sewer and potable water capabilities;
- Lacking adequate storm water drainage, storm water treatment facilities, or storm water management either within the development site or downstream;
- Inconsistent with any other standards addressed in adopted zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, or design standards;
- Inconsistent with other adopted design criteria

Development should be designed in a manner that identifies the infrastructure of adjacent development and provides continuation and connectivity of those facilities throughout the immediate area

When possible, multi-family residential developments should be located along arterial street corridors and adjacent to commercial centers.

Growth Plan

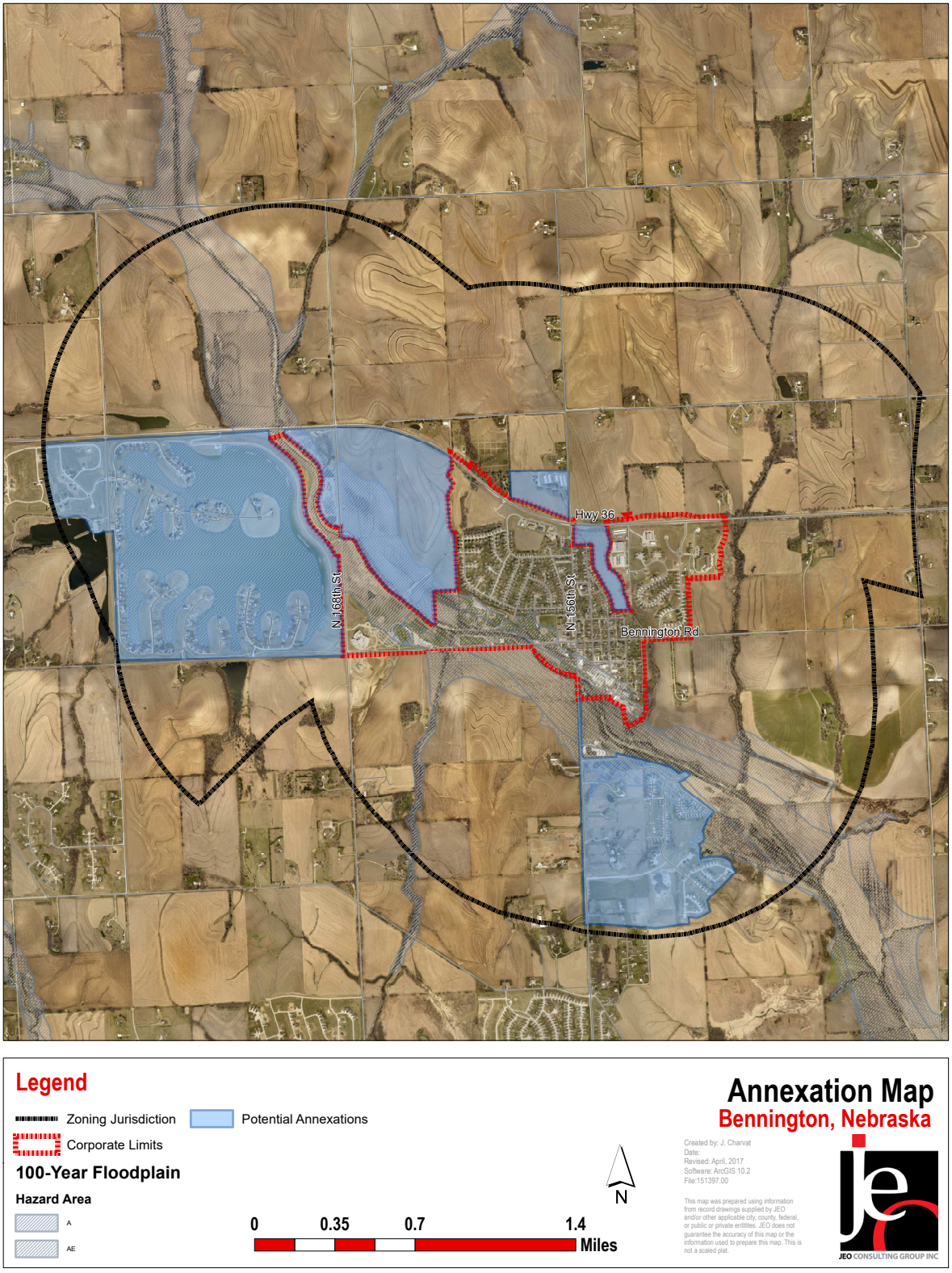
New development should, to the greatest extent possible, be contiguous to existing development or services. This would allow for the logical and cost effective extension of streets and utility services. The City may elect to authorize non-contiguous development if:

- The developer pays for the "gap" costs of extending services from existing connections to the proposed development.
- The extension would open up needed or desirable areas of the community for additional growth.
- Issues related to adjacent/transitional agriculture are properly addressed.

Sanitary and Improvement Districts

The use of a Sanitary and Improvement District (SID) as the method for financing the development of an area is common in the Metropolitan area. However, an SID and its debt load can be detrimental to a community's growth by effectively creating a roadblock to the extension of the corporate limits. Alternative methods for financing new developments are available and are equally effective, such as extension and improvement districts, private developer financing, and the annexation of areas with development potential, and which are urban or suburban in character, prior to development. These alternative methods are in common use throughout Nebraska and surrounding states and should be considered, encouraged, and utilized by Bennington when appropriate.

Map 12: Annexation Map



Annexation Plan

Typically, communities grow their size, area, and population by annexing areas that are urban in nature and adjacent and contiguous to the corporate limits of the City. A proactive approach to housing development pressures in the Bennington area will be contingent on a firm annexation policy and its implementation.

The State of Nebraska has established a process for communities to extend their corporate limits into urban or suburban areas situated contiguous to an existing community, provided the criteria for such action is justified. There are two distinct processes by which annexation actions can be taken:

- Land that has been requested to be annexed by the property owner(s), or
- Any contiguous and adjacent lands, lots, tracts, streets, or highways, which are urban or suburban in character for which the City wishes to bring into corporate limits.

Landowners that desire annexation of land must submit a plat by a licensed surveyor. This plat must be approved by the City Engineer and filed with the City Clerk along with a written request signed by all owner(s) of record within the proposed annexation area.

Once the Planning Commission provides a favorable recommendation of annexation, the City Council will hold three separate readings of the ordinance. A majority of affirmative votes by City Council in favor of an annexation is required at each reading to pass the annexation. The certified map is then filed with the County Register of Deeds, Clerk, and Assessor with a certified copy of the annexation ordinance. The City has one year to develop a plan that addresses the delivery of services to residents of the annexed area.

Within Bennington's extraterritorial jurisdiction and surrounding areas there are SIDs, subdivisions, industrial/commercial tracts, other discrete developed areas, and other undeveloped areas, lands, lots, tracts, streets and highways that are urban or suburban in character. In the future, these areas may be appropriate subjects for annexation. Such SIDs, subdivisions, tracts, and areas include, but are not limited to, those identified on the Annexation Map in Map 12 on the left. Pursuant to Nebraska Revised Statute §19-903(5)(a), however, the failure of the Annexation Map to identify subjects for annexation shall not serve as the basis for any challenge to the validity of an annexation ordinance.

Annexation is a legislative function and it is for the City's governing body to determine the facts which authorize the exercise of the power of annexation. In this regard, the general standards and qualifications to be considered when any area is being evaluated for inclusion in the City's corporate limits include, but are not limited to, the requirements of State statutes, the conditions of the infrastructure, the existing and available services, the method of finance for the extension of City services, population, taxes and revenue, the area's debts, obligations and assets, land uses and valuation, and the interests of the City.

The interests of the City in turn, include but are not limited to, planning and land-use control objectives, controlling and participating in future growth, adding to economic stability, protecting and enhancing the quality of life, and maintaining and preserving the City's future growth areas. The statutes, case law, and reason do not restrict annexations to lands or areas that have already been zoned and developed into non-agricultural uses, because such a restriction would seriously impair proper planning and coordination of the change-over in the use of land for urban and suburban purposes.

The City shall review these areas and all other areas, lands, lots and tracts within the surrounding area when appropriate to consider future growth and annexation.

With regard to annexation, the City should establish subdivision improvement agreements and non-contested annexation agreements with future Sanitary Improvement Districts (SID's), if utilized as a development mechanism. This agreement gives the SID a possible financing vehicle, the City gets an agreement that states that the SID can be annexed at the discretion of the City, and the SID will not contest the annexation action.

Annexation of Bennington

Bennington's proximity to Omaha warrants discussion on the possibility annexation of Bennington by the larger metropolitan-class city. By state statute, cities of the metropolitan class are allowed to annex adjacent communities with populations less than 10,000, without a vote of the smaller municipality.

While not immediate, Bennington's potential for annexation will grow as 1) the community's tax base grows, and 2) the more Omaha grows and needs to extend its jurisdiction to northwest Douglas County. In order to annex, Omaha would need to be adjoining Bennington. The size and extent of Omaha's corporate limits will likely eventually envelope Bennington's jurisdiction and pass this litmus test.

Secondly, annexation will be dependent on the long-term economic viability of annexation. Annexation would capture the income and property tax revenues generated by Bennington, but Omaha would also assume the debts of the annexed areas and become responsible for providing municipal services and the costs thereof.

The annexation of Bennington will thus be based on Omaha's cost-benefit analysis of assuming the area's tax base and debts and assuming the provision of municipal services and the costs thereof. Increasing commercial development in Bennington's jurisdiction will provide more tax benefits for annexation. Bennington must balance this established priority of increasing commercial development with the limitation of growth to desired contiguous areas.

Maintaining a rural buffer between the corporate limits of Bennington and Omaha will increase the overall costs of annexation for the City of Omaha, creating a disincentive for annexation. By encouraging contiguous growth along Bennington's corporate limits, the community can maintain a low-density buffer between the two cities and minimize the financial incentive for its annexation.

Chapter 9

Goals & Objectives

9 Implementation
BENNINGTON

[section 9.1]

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

In order to obtain, realize and sustain the goals in a comprehensive plan, there are several tools and mechanisms that can be used. The City of Bennington will need to continually develop its own set of implementation tools and strategies, recognizing that each has unique strengths and weaknesses. Implementation strategies can be separated into several distinct tool categories and programs, each with its distinct characteristics that make it suitable for specific goals and circumstances.

Support Programs

Aside from regular budgeting a municipality has a number of resources and options to help finance and implement projects and initiatives identified in a planning process. This section describes local, state, and federal resources available to communities to implement community betterment goals.

Business Improvement District

Over the past 15 to 20 years, communities across the country have turned increasingly to Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) as a source of funding for augmenting existing city services and enhancing infrastructure. BIDs provide additional funding where local government taxes are insufficient.

A BID is a geographically defined district in which commercial property owners choose to tax themselves to achieve a specific purpose or purposes. BID funds can be spent on a variety of projects. Nebraska Revised Statutes (Section 19-4015 through 19-4038) allows for these projects to include street and road construction and maintenance, sidewalks and streetlights, parking facilities, water and sewage systems, maintenance and landscaping, park facilities and recreational areas.

Businesses find BIDs an attractive funding mechanism because commercial property owners vote on the self-imposed tax and the cost is proportionately distributed across the district.

For more information, go to: http://law.justia.com/codes/nebraska/2016/chapter-19/

Capital Improvements Planning

One of the most vital functions of a local government is to construct and maintain the public works infrastructure. Without a network of roadways, sanitary sewer, water mains and other essential public facilities, a wide range of negative impacts are likely to be felt by residents and commercial enterprises which rely on local governments for their physical well-being and economic prosperity.

The 1990s saw the advent of two important and parallel trends. The first involved an increasing awareness on the part of local officials of the continuing deterioration of the nation's network of public facilities. The second involved a perhaps belated understanding on the part of these same public officials that an expanding economy requires an adequate infrastructure to sustain growth, especially within the fringe of expanding metropolitan areas.

Unfortunately, many local governments have failed to evaluate their capital facility repair and expansion needs, or to allocate sufficient resources to correct deficiencies. Recent experience has clearly demonstrated that this casual, short-sighted approach to capital project decision-making is likely to result in a funding crisis and an accelerated rate of deterioration of capital assets.

Public Education

In addition to the identified programs, broad public support and involvement is crucial to the successful development and implementation of any broad-based policy or program. If adequate public support is to be developed, a program including educating Bennington residents and stakeholders is paramount. Political leadership of Bennington should strive to implement an active public participation process by creating an educational process on land use and development issues. The City should make the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations available online. Ongoing education and promotion will be an important factor in sustaining interest and motivation from community members.

Some of the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan cannot be achieved unless the actions of public private partnerships can be leveraged. Frequently, constraints prevent organizations from collaborating effectively (i.e. financial resources, legal authority, excess regulation, etc.). Efforts should be made to identify and bridge these gaps with open communication, cooperation, and realization that issues at hand could benefit

Those local governments which have sought to address these problems have often turned to Capital Improvements Programming. The plan is a tool used to allocate scarce resources in an efficient manner. Rather than allow capital improvement decisions to be made on an ill-defined, haphazard basis, the Capital Improvements Program and annual capital budget identifies the needs, the prioritization of the various project, and provides for the funding and an implementation strategy on an annual basis.

Nebraska State Statutes recognize the intrinsic relationship between the comprehensive development plan and the capital improvement plan. The authorizing statutes (Section 19-929) read, the planning commission shall (a) make and adopt plans for the physical development of the municipality; including any areas outside its boundaries which the commission's judgment bear a relation to the planning of such municipality and including comprehensive development plan as defined in 19-903, (b) prepare and adopt such implementable means as a capital improvements program, subdivision regulations, building codes and zoning ordinances in cooperation with other interested municipal departments, and (c) consult with and advise public officials and agencies, public utilities, civic organizations, educational institutions, and citizens with relation to promulgation and implementation of the comprehensive development plans and its implementable programs.

A Capital Improvements Program can assist the community in achieving sound financial management practices by planning for the financing of construction, major rehabilitation and other capital projects, which are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Development Plan. By applying a planned schedule of expenditures for capital improvements, the community can assure taxpayers that long-term expenditures can be averaged out so that major debt is not incurred all at once, and that maintenance, renewal and replacement requirements of public infrastructure are adequately addressed to protect the community's investment and maximize the useful life of facilities

For more information, go to:
http://law.justia.com/codes/nebraska/2016/chapter-19/statute-19-929/

Civic and Community Center Financing Fund

The Civic and Community Center Financing Fund helps finance the construction of new civic centers and recreation centers or renovate or expand existing civic centers or recreation centers, to assist in the conversation, rehabilitation or reuse of historic buildings, to upgrade community centers, and for assistance for engineering and technical studies directly related to the above projects.

The fund may be used for site and infrastructure improvements directly related to the construction, renovation, or expansion of a center. It also may be used for the purchase and installation of fixed seating, lighting, carpeting, and other fixtures at a center, but not for temporary and/or portable furniture or equipment.

Evaluations of grant applications are based on a project's potential for long-term positive impacts on the local and regional economies, attraction impact, readiness, and financial support. The municipality must own and operate the center for which grant assistance is sought.

All municipalities in the state of Nebraska are eligible to apply for assistance, except Omaha. Any municipality receiving a grant will not be awarded more than one grant in any five-year period.

Application due date: Pre-applications due in January. Application in March.

Grant Maximum Schedule A *Until the balance of the Fund reaches $2,500,000*	
Population of Municipality	**Maximum Grant Amount**
100,000 to 299,999 persons	$1,500,000
40,000 to 99,999	$750,000
20,000 to 39,999	$500,000
10,000 to 19,999	$400,000
less than 10,000	$250,000

Grant Maximum Schedule B *After the balance of the Fund reaches $2,500,000 and until it falls below $1,000,000*	
Population of Municipality	**Maximum Grant Amount**
100,000 to 299,999 persons	$2,500,000
40,000 to 99,999	$1,125,000
20,000 to 39,999	$750,000
10,000 to 19,999	$600,000
less than 10,000	$375,000

Minimum grant amount: $2,000 - $10,000 for studies
Local match required: 50%, 50% of which must be cash match.

For more information, go to:
http://www.neded.org/community/grants/applications/cccff?highlight=WyJjaXZpYyIsImNvbnZlbnRpb24iXQ=

Community Development Block Grant Program

The Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, administered through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, helps smaller local governments fund community projects that might not otherwise be financially feasible. Through funding from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the program allows each community to determine which projects are most needed, with a focus on Housing, Neighborhood Revitalization, Commercial Revitalization and Economic Development

The national objectives of this category is to benefit low- and moderate-income persons and eliminate slum or blight.

- *Community Development Block Grant – Downtown Revitalization Program* Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Downtown Revitalization (DTR) Program projects are available to communities that have achieved the Economic Development Certified or Leadership Community designation by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

The objective of the CDBG DTR Category is to provide for investments in Nebraska communities that will contribute to the revitalization or redevelopment of downtown infrastructure, address health and safety concerns, and develop a capacity for greater growth. Activities will assist communities in carrying out a comprehensive downtown revitalization plan to stabilize and enhance clearly defined downtown areas that will provide a benefit to low/moderate income residents of the community, or aid in the elimination of substandard or blighted structures or areas in the downtown.

Each CDBG DTR project will be completed first through a pre-development planning process for which CDBG Planning Category resources may be used. Project implementation follows. Applicants interested in applying for the pre-development phase would do so by applying within the CDBG Planning cycles.

DTR resources are for implementation of the project; such funds become available to the applicant upon successful completion of the requirements of a downtown revitalization pre-development study. The study must be made available to the Department of Economic Development prior to, or along with the application for DTR resources.

The following activities are eligible so long as they relate and directly contribute to the revitalization and development of the established downtown district.

- Pre-development studies (must apply within the CDBG Planning Category).
- All public facility and infrastructure activities that are also eligible under the Public Works Program Category of the Nebraska CDBG Program that are located in the downtown business district or downtown redevelopment district. Activities may include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Street improvements including curb, gutter, and sidewalk, which may include energy efficiency improvements for lighting, storm sewer improvements; flood control drainage improvements;
  - Removal of architectural barriers; and single or multi-use facility improvements that are designed to provide public recreational and social activities;
  - Removal of architectural barriers that restrict accessibility for elderly and handicapped person in support of public facilities/infrastructure, which includes building, used predominantly for the general conduct of government.
  - Loans to businesses located in the designated downtown business district for façade improvements, which may include energy efficiency improvements

- Loans to businesses located in the designated downtown business district to improve deficiencies in meeting community codes, which may include energy efficiency improvements.
- Acquisition, clearance, and code enforcement activities which support other revitalization activities.
- Historic restoration, rehabilitation, and preservation for physical structures and infrastructure in a defined downtown business district.

Pre-Development Study Applications		Implementation Applications	
Application due date:	August 30*	Application due date:	Sept 30th
Maximum grant award:	$40,000	Maximum grant award:	$350,000
Matching requirement:	25%	Matching requirement:	25%

* After the CDBG Planning Grants are awarded from this cycle, DED will then have an open cycle until all CDBG Planning funds are obligated.

For more information, go to:
https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Chapter3-DowntownRevitalization.pdf

General Obligation Bonds

General Obligation (GO) bonds are backed by property taxes, and are issued by the city for a wide array of community betterment projects.

First Class Cities: See Section 16-6, 108 of the Nebraska Revised Statues.

For more information, go to:
http://law.justia.com/codes/nebraska/2016/chapter-16/statute-16-6-108/

Local Option Sales Tax

Any Nebraska county or incorporated municipality may impose a local sales and use tax upon approval by a majority of their voters in a regular election. The local tax applies to the identical transactions subject to the state sales and use tax, with the exception of direct-to-home satellite programming. Local option taxes of 0.5¢, 1¢, and 1.5¢ may be approved by city or county voters. The tax is collected and remitted to the state and is then allocated back to the municipalities after deducting the amount of refunds made and a three percent administrative fee.

Effective July 19, 2012 and pursuant to LB357, municipalities may, with voter approval enact a sales and use tax equal to 1.75¢ to 2.0¢. The proceeds from the rate in excess of 1.5¢ shall be used for public infrastructure projects or voter-approved infrastructure related to an economic development program as defined in section 18-2705. Public infrastructure project means and includes, but is not limited to, any of the following projects, or any combination thereof: Public highways and bridges and municipal roads, streets, bridges, and sidewalks; solid waste management facilities; wastewater, storm water, and water treatment works and systems, water distribution facilities, and

water resources projects, including, but not limited to, pumping stations, transmission lines, and mains and their appurtenances; hazardous waste disposal systems; resource recovery systems; airports; port facilities; buildings and capital equipment used in the operation of municipal government; convention and tourism facilities; redevelopment projects as defined in section 18-2103; mass transit and other transportation systems, including parking facilities; and equipment necessary for the provision of municipal services.

No municipal sales and use tax shall be imposed at a rate greater than one and one-half percent or increased to a rate greater than one and one-half percent unless the municipality is a party to an interlocal agreement pursuant to the Interlocal Cooperation Act or a joint public agency agreement pursuant to the Joint Public Agency Act with a political subdivision within the municipality or the county in which the municipality is located creating a separate legal or administrative entity relating to a public infrastructure project.

For more information, go to: http://law.justia.com/codes/nebraska/2016/chapter-77/statute-77-27-142/

Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality – State Revolving Fund

With the passage of the Amendments to the Clean Water Act (CWA) in 1987, Congress provided for the replacement of the federal Construction Grants program with the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) program and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) program. The program provides capitalization grants to the states to be used as the basis (along with a required twenty percent state match), to create revolving loan funds which provide low-interest loans to publicly owned water and wastewater systems to finance infrastructure projects, and to fund water quality projects such as nonpoint source and estuary management.

The states set the loan terms, which may be interest-free to market rates, with repayment periods up to twenty years. Terms may be customized to meet the needs of small and disadvantaged communities. Loan repayments are recycled to perpetuate the funding of additional water protection projects.

Public involvement is an important element of the SRF Programs. Before applying for a capitalization grant, a state is required to provide information about the respective programs and the projects to be funded in an Intended Use Plan which is available for public review and comment. The Intended Use Plan is a requirement in both the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund programs.

For more information, go to:
DWSRF Program: http://www.deq.state.ne.us/Wastewat.nsf/pages/DWSRLF
CWSRF Program: http://www.deq.state.ne.us/Wastewat.nsf/pages/CWSRLF

Nebraska Historic Tax Credit Program

The Nebraska Job Creation and Mainstreet Revitalization Act (Act) (Laws 2014, LB191 and Neb. Rev. Stat. §77 2901 to 77 2912) is jointly administered by the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) and the Nebraska Department of Revenue (Department). The Act provides $15 million in Nebraska Historic Tax Credits (NHTCs) to be allocated annually, beginning January 1, 2015 and ending December 31, 2022. This credit is equal to 20% of eligible expenditures incurred for improvements to qualifying historically significant real property and is limited to a $1 million tax credit per project. The NHTC may be used against income tax, the premium tax imposed on insurance companies, or the franchise tax imposed on financial institutions. This credit is transferrable and subject to certain limitations.

The applicant must apply with the NSHS for certification of the historical status of the property, approval of the proposed improvements, and allocation of the NHTC. After completing the improvements and placing the property in service, the applicant must then apply with the NSHS for completed rehabilitation certification.

After the NSHS has certified the completed rehabilitation project, the applicant must submit information on the eligible expenditures to the Department for review and approval. The Department will notify the applicant of the approved eligible expenditures, the certified credit amount, and the amount of the required fee to be paid to the Department before any tax credit certificates are issued.

For more information, go to: http://law.justia.com/codes/nebraska/2016/chapter-77/statute-77-2901/

Revenue Bonds

All municipal bonds fall into one of two categories—general obligation or revenue bonds—based on how the interest and principal repayment will be funded. Within each category, municipal bonds can be structured several different ways, each with different benefits and tax treatment.

Principal and interest payments for revenue bonds are secured by revenues generated by the project being financed. In some cases revenue bonds can be backed by sales taxes, fuel taxes, or hotel occupancy taxes. Some financiers refer to revenue bonds as "self-liquidated debt". Revenue bonds do not count against the general obligation of the community.

For more information, go to:
http://law.justia.com/codes/nebraska/2016/chapter-19/statute-19-1305/

Special Assessment Districts

Certain improvements, such as parking lots and sidewalk improvements can be financed by special assessments. This method of financing is a tax upon a property owner for a portion of the costs incurred by the city for a particular improvement.

For more information, go to:
http://law.justia.com/codes/nebraska/2016/chapter-16/statute-16-708.01/

Tax Increment Financing

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a tool that encourages private development in areas experiencing blight and disinvestments, typically areas in or near downtown. A TIF program provides a method for financing public costs associated with a private development project by using the projected increase in property tax revenue resulting from the private development. TIF bonds allow the developer to retire the "public costs" over a period of 15 years. During the time the bonds are outstanding, each taxing jurisdiction receives its original share of tax revenue or "pre-TIF project tax revenues." The advantage of TIF is that it enables a local government to borrow against future tax revenues generated by a redevelopment project. See Section 18-2101 through 18-2154 of the Nebraska Revised Statutes.

For more information, go to:
http://law.justia.com/codes/nebraska/2016/chapter-18/statute-18-2101/