

BEATRICE SDAT





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Introduction

In November 2008, Beatrice, Nebraska submitted a proposal to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) for a Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) to assist the city and its citizens in addressing key issues facing the community. The issues included planning and land use, economic development, water and natural resources, connectivity, waterfront development and historic preservation. The AIA accepted the proposal and, after a preliminary visit by a small group in April 2009, recruited a multi-disciplinary group of volunteers to serve on the SDAT Team. From July 28-30, 2009, the SDAT Team members worked closely with local officials, community leaders, technical experts, and citizens to study the community and its concerns. The team used its expertise to frame a wide range of recommendations, which were presented to the community in a public meeting on July 30, 2009. This report represents a more detailed version of the findings and recommendations that were presented to the community.

The Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT)

The Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) program focuses on the importance of developing sustainable communities through design. The mission of the SDAT program is to provide technical assistance and process expertise to help communities develop a vision and framework for a sustainable future. The SDAT program brings together multidisciplinary teams of professionals to work with community stakeholders and decision-makers in an intensive planning process. Teams are composed of volunteer professionals representing a range of disciplines, including architects, urban design professionals, economic development experts, land use attorneys, and others.

Today, communities face a host of challenges to long-term planning for sustainability, including limited resources and technical capacity, ineffective public processes and poor participation. The SDAT approach is designed to address many of the common challenges communities face by producing long-term sustainability plans that are realistic and reflect each community's unique context. Key features of the SDAT approach include the following:

- Customized Design Assistance. The SDAT is designed as a customized approach to community assistance which incorporates local realities and the unique challenges and assets of each community.
- A Systems Approach to Sustainability. The SDAT applies a systems-based approach to community sustainability, examining cross-cutting issues and relationships between issues. In order to accomplish this task, the SDAT forms multi-disciplinary teams that combine a range of disciplines and professions in an integrated assessment and design process.

- **Inclusive and Participatory Processes.** Public participation is the foundation of good community design. The SDAT involves a wide range of stakeholder viewpoints and utilizes short feedback loops, resulting in sustainable decision-making that has broad public support and ownership.
- **Objective Technical Expertise.** The SDAT Team is assembled to include a range of technical experts (planners, architects, economists and others) from across the country. Team Members do not accept payment for services in an SDAT. They serve in a volunteer capacity on behalf of the AIA and the partner community. As a result, the SDAT Team has enhanced credibility with local stakeholders and can provide unencumbered technical advice.
- **Cost Effectiveness.** By employing the SDAT approach, communities are able to take advantage of leveraged resources for their planning efforts. The AIA contributes up to \$15,000 in financial assistance for each project. In 2008, each SDAT project is estimated to cost between \$20,000-\$30,000 total. The SDAT team members volunteer their labor and expertise, allowing communities to gain immediate access to the combined technical knowledge of top-notch professionals from varied fields. Finally, the SDAT process employs a compressed schedule and the application of innovative public participation techniques to leverage resources effectively and produce timely results.
- **Results.** Many communities want to become more sustainable but are immobilized by conflicting agendas, politics, personalities, or even the overabundance of opportunity. Further, many communities have not yet taken stock of their current practices and policies within a sustainability framework; others have identified issues of concern but desire assistance in laying out a plan of action to increase sustainability. The intense SDAT process and compressed schedule allows a community to capitalize on SDAT information quickly and build momentum for implementation of its plan. The SDAT includes the delivery of a formal report and recommendations as well as a follow up assessment.



we define our
waterfront?



What Is the SDAT Program?

Communities that have participated in the SDAT program include the following:

Alexandria Township, NJ	Syracuse, NY	Windsor, CA
Oklahoma City, OK	Northeast Michigan	Tampa, FL
Northampton, MA	Lawrence, KS	Detroit, MI
Pittsfield, MA	Hagerstown, MD	Fort Worth, TX
Forest City, NC	Tucson, AZ	Leon Valley, TX
Cache Valley, UT	Englishtown, NJ	Morristown, NJ
Reno-Tahoe-Carson Region, NV	Dubuque, IA	Parma, OH
New Orleans, LA	Culver City, CA	Kauai, Hawaii
Longview, WA	Central City, LA	Fellsmere, FL
Guemes Island, WA	Albany, NY	Southeast Tennessee Valley

The SDAT program is modeled on the Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) program, one of AIA's longest-running success stories. While the R/UDAT program was developed to provide communities with specific design solutions, the SDAT program provides broad assessments to help frame future policies or design solutions in the context of sustainability and help communities plan the first steps of implementation. Through the Design Assistance Team (DAT) program, over 500 professionals from 30 disciplines have provided millions of dollars in professional pro bono services to more than 150 communities across the country. The SDAT program leverages the pivotal role of the architectural community in the creation and support of sustainable livable communities.

The following report includes a narrative account of the Beatrice SDAT project recommendations, with detailed suggestions concerning several principle areas of investigation. The recommendations are made within the broad framework of sustainability, and are designed to form an integrated approach to future sustainability efforts in the city.



BEATRICE

SDAT



The 3 Interrelated Legs of Sustainability: Environment, Economy, and Society

While the term “sustainability” is associated primarily with the natural environment, the SDAT approaches the concept of sustainability more holistically. Environmental, economic, and social aspects of the community are considered equally. This is often referred to as the “three Es” or the “triple-bottom line” of sustainability.

The concept of “environment” has expanded to include every element that people perceive as part of their environment, from chemicals in their food and air quality in their homes to international development and global climate change. Likewise, equity, or social needs, is a broad, all-encompassing concept that can be interpreted in a multitude of ways, from public health to affordability of housing to historic preservation. The primary definition of economic sustainability is the avoidance of transfer of costs, a result of bad present decisions, to future generations. Decisions that are taken with future goals and life-cycle costs in mind will result in much larger returns over the long term and sustained prosperity.

Addressing environmental sustainability in a community must be a broad, far-reaching effort because so many systems and issues are part of the environment. At the same time, individuals cannot focus efforts solely on the environment without impacting economic and social realms. Similarly, decisions based on economic concerns will affect the environment and society, and actions driven by social concerns will have economic and environmental repercussions. A truly sustainable community, where all concerns are addressed, emerges when a balance is struck between all three aspects. It must be recognized that a division between the three Es or the preference of one aspect over others in the decision-making process—i.e., privileging economic concerns at the expense of social needs—is a false choice. The good news is that a balanced, sustainable approach to community planning can result in a win-win situation for all.

ASSESSMENT

The SDAT team found Beatrice to be a community with tremendous potential if it takes control of its future.

Beatrice Today

In general terms, the things internal to Beatrice (i.e. the things that can be controlled from within) reflect more existing strengths than weaknesses. Beatrice already enjoys some very strong environmental, architectural, and community assets. More significantly, there are many positive quality of life attributes including the “small town” feel, the sense that it is a “safe community”, and “a good place to raise a family”. Many of the weaknesses identified relate to things that are lacking or missing, rather than things to overcome. The connection and proximity to the nearby city of Lincoln creates both strengths and weaknesses.

From an external perspective (i.e. things that are likely to influence life in Beatrice from the outside) the general economy and US employment picture provide many opportunities as well as potential threats. In addition, people’s perceptions of Beatrice, both within and outside of the community are an opportunity to build a solid, positive self image and reputation in order to overcome any threat of negative perceptions.



Master Planning and the Regional Context

Sustainable development: Making Connections

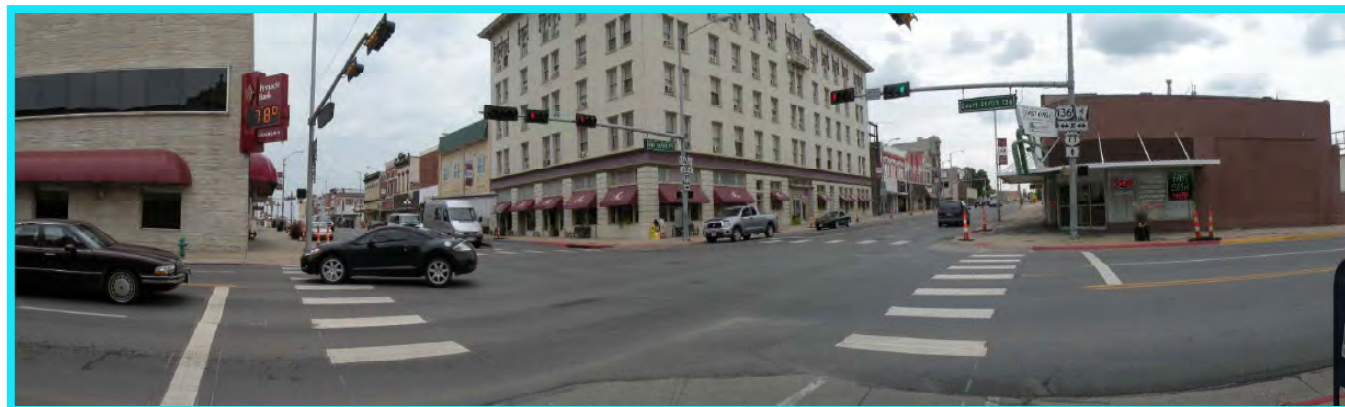
The sustainable design of our communities has become a significant priority because of our increased understanding of the impacts our cities have on natural ecosystems; the climate; air and water quality; social equality and physical health. Stephen Wheeler, in his 1998 article "Planning Sustainable and Livable Cities", defines sustainable community development to be a "development that improves the long-term social and ecological health of cities and towns." So, what does a sustainable community look like? According to Wheeler, it uses land efficiently; it provides an environment that you can get around without a car; it is judicious about natural resources; it restores or regenerates natural systems; it pollutes and wastes less; it provides good housing and quality living environments; it fosters sustainable economies; it encourages community participation; it preserves local culture and heritage; and it considers everything over the course of multiple generations. (Image of sustainable community)

In contemplating Beatrice's role as a sustainable community, we must understand its place as part of a much larger system. As the naturalist John Muir put it: "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything in the universe." And so it is with Beatrice, which is part of a continuum of land use, a principal component of a valued watershed, a piece of both a natural and man-made ecosystem, and a force in the global environment.

Queen City of the Blue: Its place in the larger context

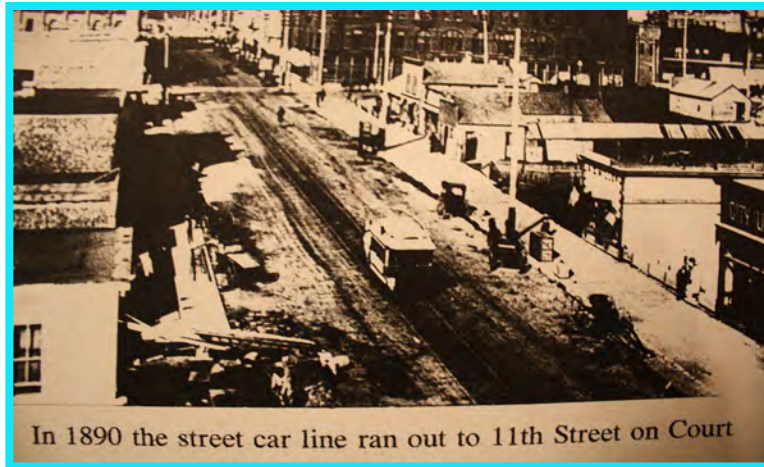
The history of Beatrice is about the land and the people who have lived on it. A community of approximately 12,000 people, Beatrice is located in southeast Nebraska in an area called the Dissected Till Plains, a region sculpted by retreating prehistoric glaciers into the rolling hills so characteristic of this place. Through this area runs the Big Blue River, the largest tributary of the Kansas River and part of the massive Mississippi River drainage. According to Zoa Ann Worden in her history Queen City of the Blue, the land now occupied by Beatrice was once the hunting grounds of the Otoe and Pawnee Indians, who thrived in the fertile prairies that supported their pasture lands, orchards and small gardens they cultivated along the banks of the Blue River.

The city of Beatrice proper was founded in 1859 and grew as a typical western expansion settlement comprised of a relatively dense aggregation of retail, commercial, cultural and religious edifices at its town center, rung by residential neighborhoods that eventually opened out to the expansive farms that stretched from one town to the next in each direction. These rural towns were initially connected by horse paths and wagon-scaled roads. The establishment of the transcontinental railway from Omaha to Sacramento in the 1860's was soon followed by various branch lines to Beatrice, further magnifying Beatrice's role as an economic and transportation node.





The effects of the Homestead Act of 1862 increased Beatrice's population dramatically over the next five decades: the population of the town at the turn of the century was nearly 8,000, a relatively significant midwest "urban area" during the first part of the 20th century (Lincoln's population during the same period hovered around 40,000). This growth helps explain the relative size, quality and sophistication of Beatrice's historic downtown, an area graced by such fairly monumental buildings as the Richardsonian Romanesque Gage County Courthouse, the Beaux Art Carnegie Library, numerous Victorian-era commercial blocks, and the community's many impressive churches. By the 1880's, the burgeoning population expanded into outlying residential additions like Belvedere and Glendover, accessed by streetcar systems that also serviced the Chautauqua Assemblies south of downtown in what was then known as Riverside Park.



Over the next century, Beatrice's population grew more slowly adding only 4,000 people over the last 110 years. This stable population helps explain the relative age of the town's housing stock: nearly half of all houses are over 50 years old with nearly 30% of all housing constructed before 1939. (In comparison, the median age of houses nationally is about 25 years.) Fortunately, this slow growth has likely protected important historic residential and commercial properties as well as significant open space that would have otherwise fallen victim under more aggressive growth and economic redevelopment pressures. One of the current concerns of the community as reflected in the both the Comprehensive Plan of 2001, the Angelou Economic Analysis Report and the SWOT analysis undertaken for the SDAT is the ability to attract and retain people, particularly young adults who seem to be leaving the community because of limited job opportunity or lack of community attractions.





The Downtown Fabric of Beatrice remains intact



US 77 has become a big box corridor and link to Lincoln

The Beatrice we see today remains in many respects a model of an historic rural town: a compact urban oasis centered on a relatively dense commercial core. The typical land uses one would have found a hundred years ago (shops, offices, churches, a library, the courthouse) are still present and organized in their typical urban context (shops and offices tightly aligned to the major corridors, churches between the downtown and neighborhoods, the library and courthouse centered in their respective village green). The industrial areas, as was typical in historic town development patterns of this type, were and are in proximity to the rail lines to facilitate transportation of goods to and from the community and near the river to better access water and dispose of industrial waste.

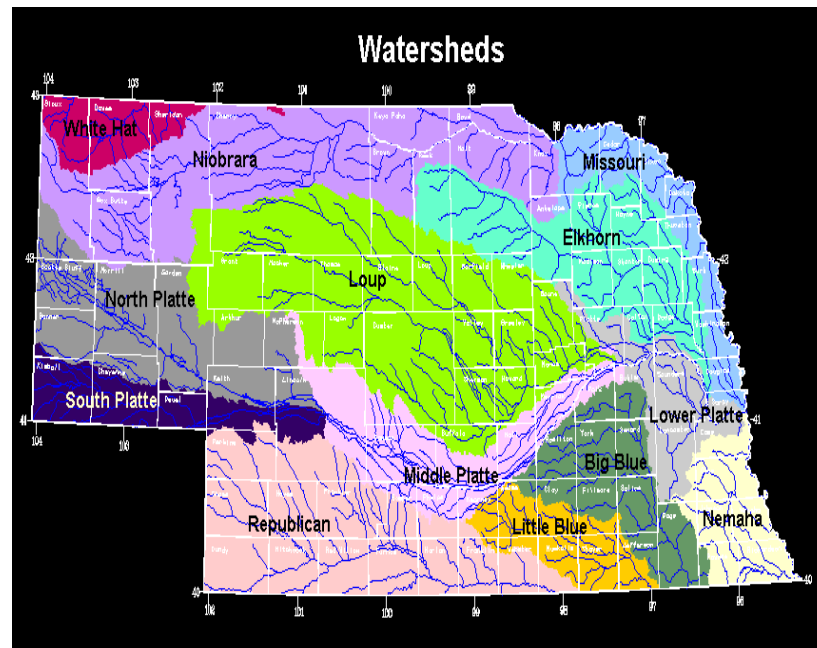
Certainly an important development that has reshaped Beatrice over the last half century was the formation of the Interstate Highway System in 1956. In conjunction with the relatively cheap housing made available through the FHA after World War II and the increasing availability of cars to the average American, what were once relatively compact walkable and/or streetcar based towns gave way to auto-centric suburban sprawl. As part of the Interstate Highway system, Beatrice became connected to areas north and south by US 77 and east and west by US136. It is along these routes that one can see the move away from nodal-based development patterns (walking-scaled or transit-oriented) to linear development patterns made possible by vehicle-scaled corridors as well as more consistently single-use commercial and residential developments of relatively low density. Pedestrian-scaled streetscapes, typical of the downtown, have given way in these areas to large box development fronted by parking lots.

Residential neighborhoods have also changed to reflect suburban subdivision planning, reflecting decreased connectivity and density and greater emphasis on infrastructure and auto-dependency. One of the important impacts to Beatrice of the highway system has been the greater ease with which the citizens of Beatrice can go to Lincoln for routine shopping, dining and entertainment. Although a recent market analysis prepared as part of Beatrice's Comprehensive Development Plan of 2001 indicated that Beatrice has "thrived" during the 1990's with the construction of a Walmart on the north edge of the community, the downtown is largely perceived to be struggling because of changes in the retail market, further exacerbated by the completion of US77 as an expressway to Lincoln and likely undermined by the big box retail at the edges of the community. Regional tourism is now recognized as having important economic potential for Beatrice with the creation in 1995 of the Gage County Museum and the continued enhancement of the Homestead National Monument west of the city. The National Monument has recently opened a new LEED-gold certified visitor center with high quality interpretative exhibits, tours, hands-on activities and land and building restoration projects.



Beatrice: the watershed capital of Nebraska

As the largest community along the lower basin of the Big Blue River watershed, Beatrice occupies a special role in the stewardship of the river. An assessment of the current condition of the river is detailed in a report “Total maximum Daily Loads for the Big Blue River Basin” prepared by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality and has been summarized in the Water Resource Assessment portion of this SDAT report. Besides the environmental concerns related to water quality and quantity of the Big Blue in all portions of the basin, there are wide ranging attitudes concerning its value as a local asset to the quality of life in present day Beatrice. There seem to be a number of people who view it as a questionable recreational resource and an image problem for the community. There seem to be another faction of people who view it in a restored state as a critical “blueway” that provides a catalyzing framework for open space, recreation, and economic development. In either case, the Big Blue River represents a critical environmental issue that requires strategies for dealing with both the urban agricultural runoff that is changing the flow and water quality throughout the watershed.



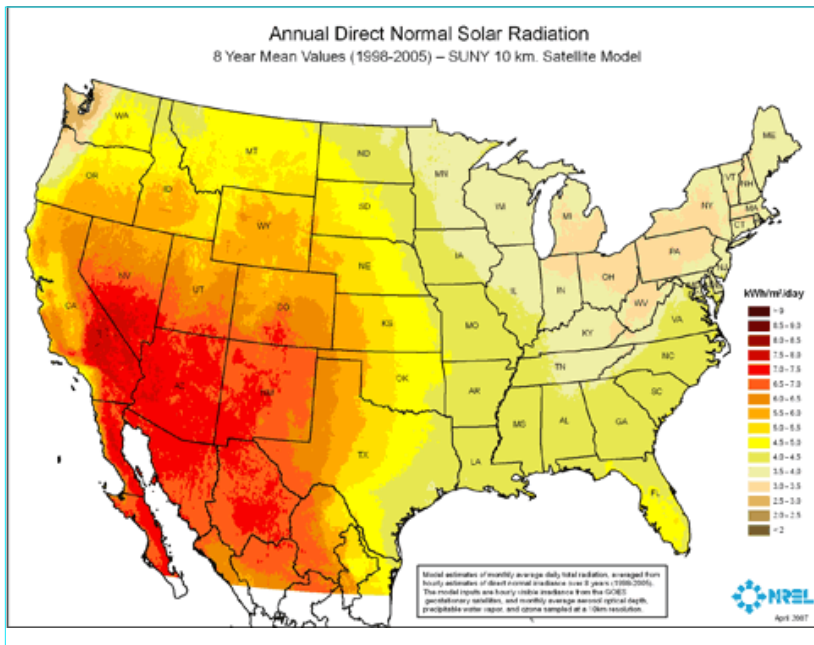
Political Context

Currently there appears to be no significant regional planning on any issue taking place either on a county basis, market area basis or environmental resource basis (watershed). This has been viewed by the participants of the SWOT analysis as a both a weakness in leveraging efforts on a larger scale and a threat because of various organizations and jurisdictions potentially working at cross purposes. The SDAT suggests creating a Regional Planning Council, a quasi-governmental organization that provides planning oversight over a broader area than discrete municipal or county governments can by themselves. In this case, a regional planning council may provide jurisdictional oversight on a county basis (Gage County) to better balance land uses, establish region-wide multimodal transportation policies and plans, address air quality and watershed issues, provide unique opportunities for open space preservation and management, develop efficient regional waste management strategies, provide tourist and conference marketing, provide direction in housing types and distribution, develop educational and business partnerships for green technologies and businesses, and address regional cultural and recreation public facility programming and planning.

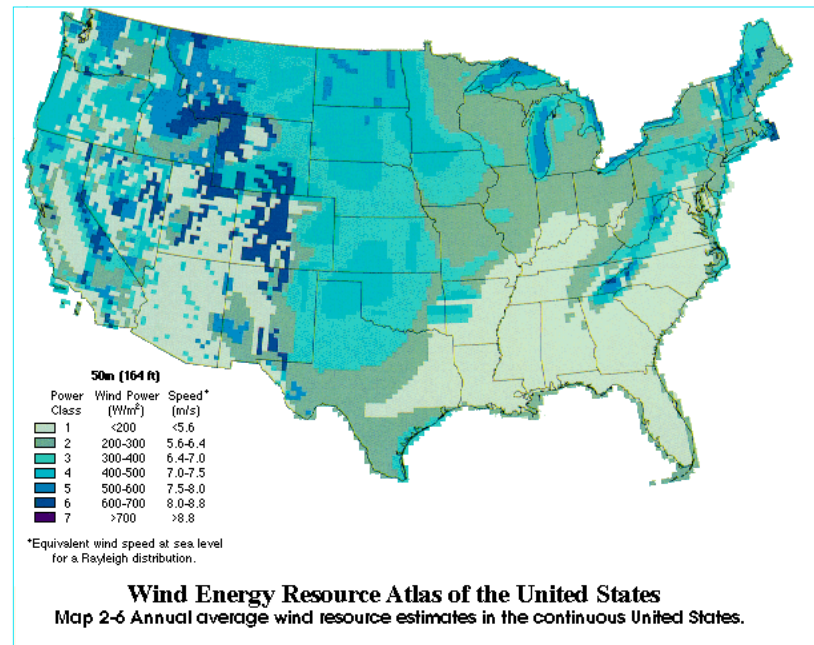


Beatrice's Climate Opportunities

Beatrice is within the humid continental climate zone, a region marked by significant seasonal temperature swings and highly variable weather. The July high is around 90 degrees. The January low approaches 13 degrees. Beatrice's comfort index, which is based on humidity during the hot months, is a 33 out of 100, where higher is more comfortable. The US average on the comfort index is 44. Beatrice receives an average of 31 inches of rain per year and about 28 inches of snow. (The average US city gets an average rainfall of 37 and snowfall of 25 inches). The number of days with any measurable precipitation is 85. Water is an valuable and limited commodity in this area of Nebraska. On average, there are 218 sunny days per year in Beatrice. Based on national mapping of solar resources, Beatrice is considered an area of high potential for solar energy generation.



Solar Resources Map



Wind Resources Map

The Department of Energy's Wind Program and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) published a new wind resource map for the state of Nebraska. This resource map shows wind speed estimates measured at 50 meters above the ground and depicts the resource potential that could be used for utility-scale wind development. As a renewable resource, wind is classified according to wind power classes, which are based on typical wind speeds. These classes range from Class 1 (the lowest) to Class 7 (the highest). In general, at 50 meters, wind power Class 4 or higher can be used for generating wind power with sizeable wind turbines. Class 4 and above are considered good resources. Particular locations in the Class 3 areas could have higher wind power class values at 80 meters than shown on the 50 meter map because of possible high wind shear. Given the advances in technology, a number of locations in the Class 3 areas may also be suitable for utility-scale wind development. The accompanying map indicates that the greater Beatrice area has wind resources consistent with utility-scale production with significant Class 3 and Class 4 areas in and around the community.



The SWOT Analysis

The SWOT Analysis revealed several interesting perceptions about Beatrice by the community members who participated in this analysis: Among Beatrice's strengths was the feeling that the community is a nice place to raise a family because of its good schools, athletic and recreational opportunities, and sense of security and safety. Beatrice was also felt to provide a strong work force that benefited from an unusually strong job base, given the current weak national economic condition. Beatrice's high level of open space and trails network was also perceived as being a real community asset as was the quality and quantity of historic buildings in both the downtown and neighborhoods.

Among the weaknesses was the concern that Beatrice was stagnating because of its small size, lack of major financial resources and its proximity to Lincoln. Indicators of this include its "dying downtown" and its perceived failure to retain its young adults or attract new ones.



Beatrice exhibits clear strengths.....



.....and visible weaknesses

Because of Beatrice's strengths, the SWOT participants saw numerous opportunities including reinventing itself as a community that is highly attractive to young people because of its outstanding built and natural environment. These assets could be leveraged to create unique attractions, as well as cultural and outdoor recreational activities. As the Gateway to the Heritage National Monument, the participants saw a real opportunity to capture tourist dollars by promoting existing assets like the history museum and downtown as well as enhancing other assets related to the Big Blue River and other environmental resources. (microbrewery, canoeing on river farmers market amphitheater

"Among the threats seen by the participants is a perception that local leadership lacks a unified vision for Beatrice and the region and resorts to working on individual political agenda. The participants also reiterated that the general negativity about the community could undermine efforts to try new things or invest when they don't have buy-in to an idea or a project. They also felt that the general economic downturn could hamper efforts or projects.



Water Resources Assessment

In the City of Beatrice, as in most cities in the United States that developed during the late Nineteenth and throughout the Twentieth Century, water has been overlooked as a precious commodity and, in the case of stormwater, dealt with as more of a nuisance than an asset. Consequently, at a time when non-point source water pollution is being targeted for cleanup by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency to satisfy the requirements of the Clean Water Act, historical stormwater management practices that are totally infrastructure dependent are proving to be detrimental.



Impervious surfaces in the downtown area such as roofs and pavement account for 90 percent or more of the landcover . Coupled with an efficient catch basin and drain pipe disposal system, runoff is immediate, carrying accumulated pollutants such as hydrocarbons, heavy metals and animal waste into Indian Creek or directly into the Big Blue River. This situation can be contrasted with pre-development conditions where the majority of precipitation would infiltrate into the soil to sustain biological processes and to recharge groundwater and, subsequently, contribute to the base flow of the river. Other neighborhoods throughout the city include lawns and other isolated green spaces in schoolyards and parks that permit some infiltration to reduce surface runoff. However, there remains approximately 65 to 70 percent impervious cover in these areas with the introduction of nutrients from lawn fertilizer plus herbicides and pesticides as well as bacteria from failing septic systems in some locations that contribute to further rapid runoff and contamination of the receiving waters.

Compounding the pollution problem is the lack of adequate sediment and erosion control on numerous industrial and derelict properties that abut the floodplain and contribute a significant amount of contaminated sediment to both the Big Blue and Indian Creek. Currently, all of the stormwater conduits that drain to Indian Creek and the Big Blue are causing excessive erosion at the outfalls due to inadequate energy dissipation and high erosion potential. The situation is extreme at the Storekraft channel outfall where erosion has created a serious headcut incised more than 10 feet into the local clay soils (photo of headcut) and contributing tons of sediment to Indian Creek.



There is also a general lack of adequate buffer strips adjacent to the watercourses that can intercept polluted runoff from surrounding land areas and provide continuity of habitat and additional shade to reduce increases in water temperature due to solar radiation. And finally, there is a general lack of awareness of the role that every individual must play to reduce the potential threats to water quality by their actions such as dumping crankcase oil into catch basins or over fertilizing lawns or not picking up dog waste.



Waterfront Development Assessment

Like many communities attempting to revitalize themselves, Beatrice is identifying and assessing specific attributes that they feel define their community. One of the most obvious attributes is that the community was established and located at the confluence of the Big Blue River and Indian Creek. It is easy to understand the founder's choice of location and the fundamental role the river and creek played in sustaining life and supporting the early development of the city and its surrounding region. With a focus on westward expansion and an increase in population the early residents took full advantage of this life sustaining resource. With the evolution of agriculture, related manufacturing, transportation systems and urban development the earlier intimacy and daily contact with the riverfront eventually changed. As development took place further and further from the river's banks the occupants of the watershed became less aware of the changing character of the river and the impacts of their daily and seasonal actions.

Today's leadership, on a broad community level, is recognizing the significant value that the Big Blue and Indian Creek provide. ***There is a realization in Beatrice that the waterfront remains a key element critical to the successful revitalization and sustainability of the community.*** To help the community redefine Beatrice's Waterfront the SDAT members engaged the community in a dialogue describing the waterfronts strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The team captured the top two points for each section of the SWOT analysis, as identified by public stakeholders.

Waterfront Development Strengths

- The River/Creek is being rediscovered as a resource,
- The historic planning and development of existing riverfront parks, especially Chautauqua Park, and
- The incremental development of multi-purpose recreational trail segments along the river/creek corridors



Waterfront Development Weaknesses

- The lack of a Vision/Master Plan
- The real and perceived limitations of the river's flood plain



Waterfront Development Opportunities

- The continued trail development with the ultimate goal of connecting all segments,
- Leveraging the waterfront as an asset for achieving Downtown Revitalization



Waterfront Development Threats

- The challenge of successfully involving the community at all levels with the hope of achieving unilateral support and key leadership,
- The lack of easy access (multi-modal)

In addition to these key points there were lengthy discussions related to water quality, seasonal characteristics, the role and presence of the dams, storm water management, river ecology, recreational use, fishing, land use, regulatory requirements, funding challenges, environmental education, private investment and regional opportunities.



Downtown Assessment

Downtown Beatrice generally is between 2nd and 10th Streets and between Bell and High Streets. This downtown core is bisected by Highway 77 and Highway 4. Downtown has a mix of uses: retail and service businesses, dining and entertainment, professional offices, financial institutions, and housing. Downtown also has a mix of public, private, and non-profit uses, including City and County facilities, churches, schools, and non-profit organizations.

Strengths

Main Street Organization/Board

Main Street Beatrice, a non-profit organization, is part of the Nebraska Lied Main Street Program designed to spark downtown revitalization and historic preservation through a four point approach: Design, Promotion, Economic Restructuring, and Organization. The Main Street Board of Directors is actively involved in the downtown community and with other partners.

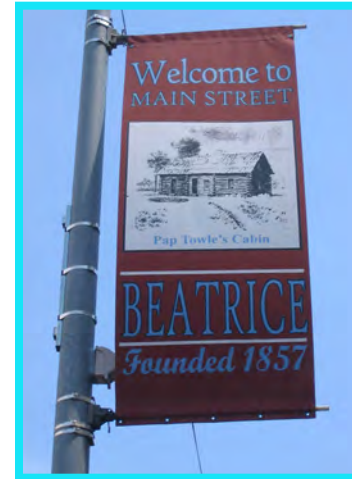
Historic Resources: Sites, Buildings, Organizations, and Institutions

The historic resources of Beatrice are more than just its older buildings; they include sites important to the community's settlement, organizations involved in historic preservation, and institutions that contribute to the cultural vitality of the City Center.

Downtown Beatrice has a largely intact streetscape, maintaining its historic sense of place. While many street level storefronts have been altered and "modernized", there are many upper story facades that maintain their general historic appearance. There are a number of architecturally significant landmarks and collections of historic buildings that create a potential historic district.

Proximity to River

The proximity of Downtown Beatrice to the Big Blue River and Indian Creek can foster connections via programs, events, attractions, green space, and a "home town feel" to this important environmental and heritage resource.



Weaknesses

Absentee Landlords Not Keeping Up Properties

While there are downtown landlords actively engaged in the Main Street program, Beatrice also experiences a lack of property maintenance and upkeep from some absentee landlords. Delayed maintenance and upkeep lead to blighting conditions that affect buildings along a block, and can lead to demolition by neglect for individual structures. The loss of buildings from a streetscape creates gaps in the historic rhythm of building scale and mass, like the missing teeth in a hockey player's smile.

Vacant Upper Stories

Historically, people lived and worked about the store in downtowns. Over time, these upper floors were vacated. The loss of activity on these upper stories reduces the number of residents and businesses in downtown, in turn reducing its vibrancy.



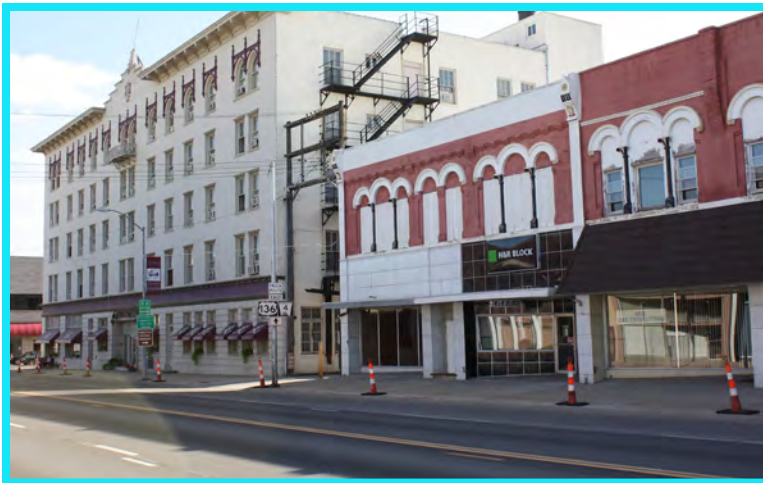
Opportunities

Business Plan and Financial Incentives

Main Street Beatrice has created a Business Plan Competition Grant Program to foster entrepreneurship. If selected, the prospective small business is awarded a \$20,000 grant and eligibility to apply for other financial assistance from Main Street. Availability of financial incentives to fill the gap in project financing is critical to successful business recruitment, retention, and expansion.

Vacant and underutilized buildings with available parking

Vacant and underutilized buildings with available parking in downtown Beatrice offer opportunities to attract a wider range of retail and other niche businesses as well as upper story spaces for offices, housing, and lodging.



Opportunity to Attract Wide Variety of Businesses

Increasing the economic base and improving the economic stability of downtown through diversification of the downtown business mix encourages reinvestment, revitalizes the district, and generates property and sales taxes. The Beatrice Chamber of Commerce commissioned a 2008 downtown retail study that identifies potential for 6 categories of retail stores.

Threats

Big Box/Discount Stores

Like historic downtowns across the country, the business mix in downtown Beatrice can suffer from the competition presented by big box discount stores, pulling jobs from downtown to a suburban or edge-of-city location.

State Highway restrictions on Façade renovations and signs

The State Department of Roads (DOR) has a permitting process along state highway rights-of-way that may place restrictions on façade renovations and signs. This process may impede improvements to the streetscape and individual buildings.

Lack of Consensus on Truck Traffic

There is a lack of consensus among Downtown business owners, residents, and other stakeholders about truck traffic that goes through downtown. For some, the issues are the truck traffic volume and noise make the downtown pedestrian-unfriendly. There is also a concern about vibration damage to historic buildings. Some downtown business owners, however, would like to keep the truck traffic moving through downtown. Others would like to divert just the trucks on an alternate truck route off the main streets.



Economic Development Assessment

General economic development refers to maintenance and growth of the community's economic base outside the downtown area, which is treated separately in this report due to its distinct economic development needs. General economic development includes the office, business and industrial sectors, utilities, educational institutions, health care providers, and the community's state and congressional delegations.



Strengths

Local, Regional, State and Federal partnerships and Incentives

Beatrice competes successfully for business retention and growth through strong local, regional, state and federal partnerships, which are a must for successful economic development. Beatrice also has access to a variety of local, state and federal economic development incentives, which enable the community to compete for business and industrial retention and expansion.

Strong Industrial base and available sites

Beatrice has a strong industrial base and available sites. Local industries contribute substantially the property tax base and serve as a regional employment base. Having development-ready sites available gives Beatrice a leg up when competing for recruitment efforts for new and expanding industries.



Weaknesses

Lack of white collar jobs / diversity in industrial base

An economic base focused on agricultural, manufacturing and retail sectors can be sensitive to economic swings. Diversifying the employment base that includes white collar, creative class, and other emerging employment sectors positions a community to weather downturns as well as attract the next generation of employers and employees.

Seasonal Layoffs

Cyclical employment in Beatrice's seasonal employers can have negative ripple effects in the service and retail sectors during layoffs.

People in Beatrice shop in Lincoln

The proximity to a major metro area like Lincoln draws people away from business and employment options in Beatrice, resulting in negative cash flow as dollars leave Beatrice.

Opportunities

Collaboration: Opportunity for every sector to work together on common economic development goals/plans

No one entity can be successful in economic development. Expanding on the strong existing partnerships to collaborate in new ways and with new partners will only strengthen the community's general economic development efforts.

Make Beatrice a destination for employment, dining, retail, arts, heritage tourism, sports, etc.

As a destination for a variety of economic sectors, Beatrice can increase the influx of outside money into the community – which contributes to the community's long-term stability and sustainability.



Threats

Outside perception of community

Perception often is reality. A negative outside perception of Beatrice affects retail sales, retention and recruitment of business and industry, and attraction of new residents.

Historic Resources/Neighborhood Reinvestment Assessment

A community's historic resources tell the story of a community's start and its growth through development patterns, architectural styles, and association with persons and events significant to the history of the community, region, state and/or nation. The collections of historic resources in Beatrice generally are concentrated in several key older neighborhoods: the downtown core, east of downtown, Chautauqua Park, and southwest.

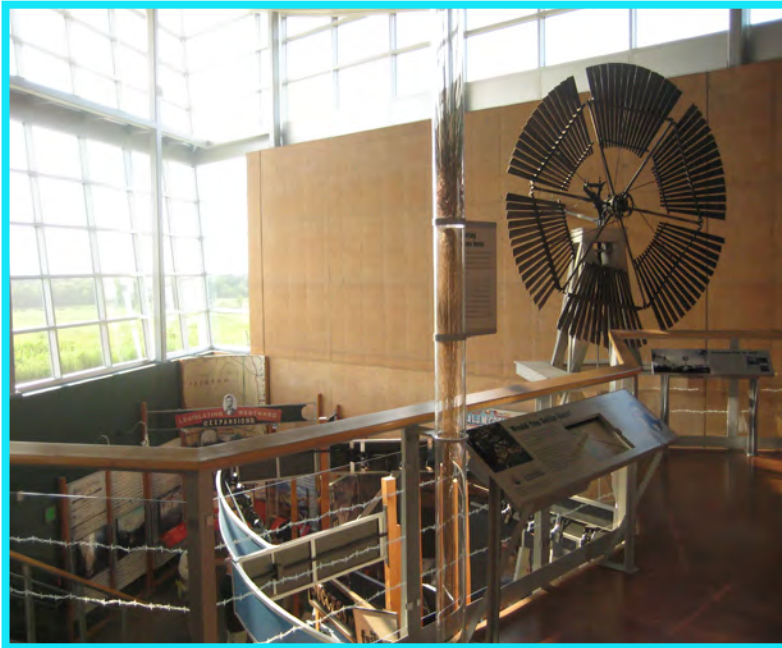
Beatrice has a number of well-established, walkable residential neighborhoods with a variety of housing types and compatible uses, such as schools, churches, and parks. The grid development pattern pre-dominates these residentially-zoned areas. The City's recreational trail system provides connections to these features. Several of these neighborhoods are experiencing some degree of disinvestment, however. The Comprehensive Development Plan for Beatrice includes goals, analyses, policies and actions for neighborhoods in general (Chapter 7: A City of Strong Neighborhoods), various neighborhood components (housing, recreation), and the special neighborhood of downtown (Chapter 8: A Revitalized City Center). The Comprehensive Plan is an important tool for protecting, conserving, and revitalizing the neighborhoods.



Strengths

Historic Resources: Sites, Buildings, Organizations, Institutions, Homestead National Monument, Parks

The historic resources of Beatrice are more than just its older buildings; they include sites important to the community's settlement, organizations involved in historic preservation, and institutions that contribute to the cultural vitality of the City Center. They also include the regional tourism attractions of the Gage County Historical Museum and the Homestead National Monument. The community has individually significant and contributing structures in the community's older neighborhoods and downtown. Beatrice has several potential historic districts in the downtown and several older neighborhoods that may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).



Mixed residential in neighborhoods with “True Urbanism” of front porches and alley access

The neo-traditional and New Urbanism movements seek to create on green field sites the “True Urbanism” of Beatrice’s historic neighborhood development patterns. Beatrice has several older neighborhoods with a mix of residential types and institutional uses, such as schools and churches, proximity to parks, downtown and neighborhood commercial centers. These are walkable neighborhoods, with the alignment of front porches that facilitates social interaction and alley access that minimizes vehicles crossing the sidewalks at driveway curb cuts.

Weaknesses

Housing in disrepair negatively impacts economic development and neighborhood reinvestment

Dilapidated, deteriorated housing in neighborhoods can create a blighting influence along a block. This disrepair stifles economic development efforts to attract new employers to town and new employees to live in Beatrice. Poor housing conditions stifle reinvestment by nearby property owners in the upkeep and maintenance of their properties, further reducing property values. Often times the deteriorated housing are historic structures that reach the point of demolition by neglect. The loss of buildings from a neighborhood block creates gaps in the historic rhythm of a walkable streetscape.

Opportunities

Provide option to prevent deterioration

To counteract the blighting influence of housing deterioration in established neighborhoods, the community needs to provide incentives to encourage property maintenance. These options can include a “carrot and stick” approach of financial incentives, assistance from technical experts and volunteers, and regulatory measures.



Provide incentives for housing choices for new employees

Availability of a range of affordable housing and a variety of housing types is an important economic development tool for recruitment of new employers and their employees to locate in Beatrice and increasing the tax base.

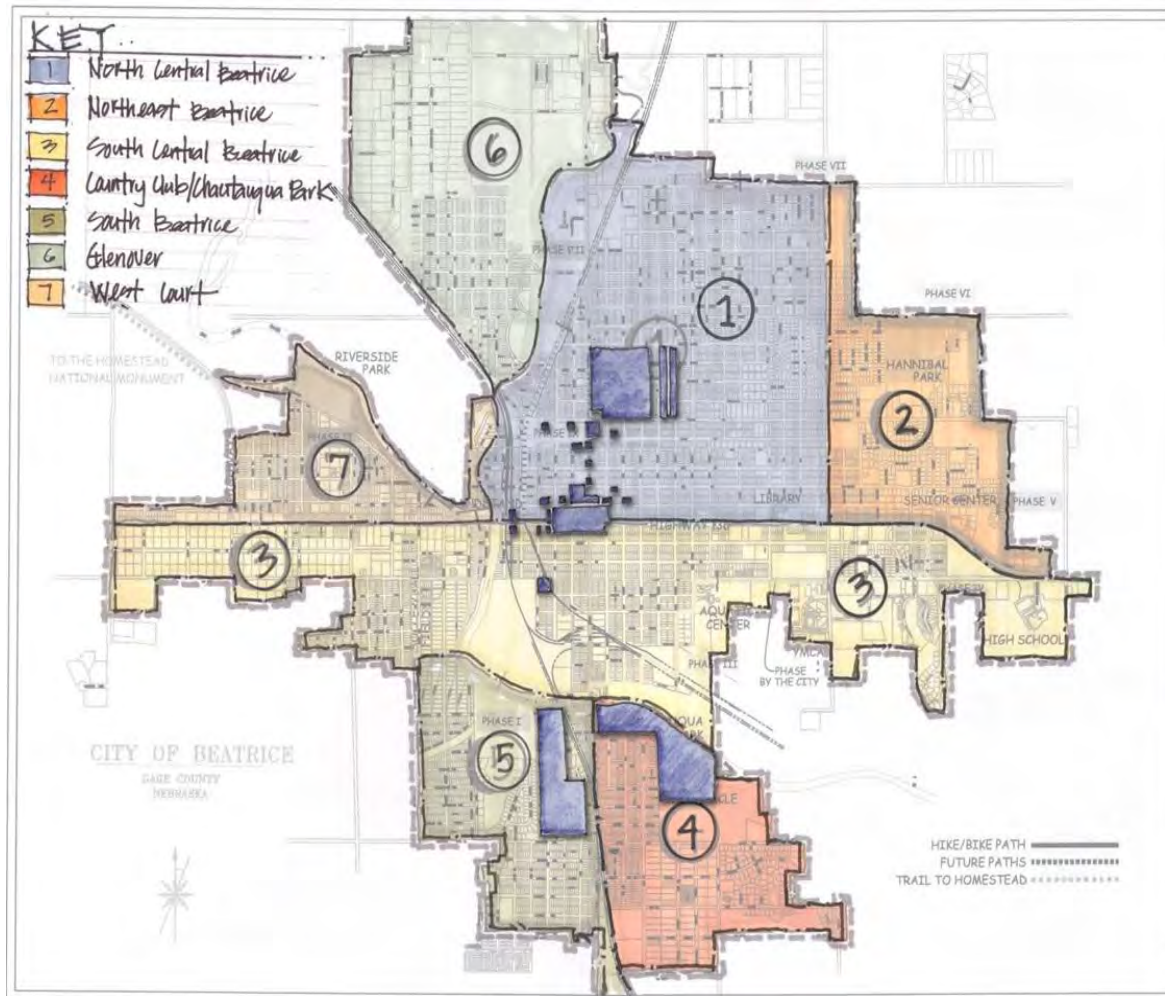
"Homestead Act of 2010" on vacant City-owned lots

When structures reach a point of deterioration that can't be rectified by rehabilitation, the City has demolished homes. The Homestead Act of 1862 offered 160 acres of free land to any qualified individual willing to live on, farm, and improve it for five years. The City could re-create this program for in-fill of vacant City-owned lots in neighborhoods as a national model.

Threats

Loss of historic/older homes due to deterioration

The continued loss of historic and older homes due to deterioration threatens the sustainability and sense of place of Beatrice's established neighborhoods.



Open Space & Connectivity Assessment

The City of Beatrice has existing parks, trails, and open space that provide residents and visitors alike opportunities for active and passive recreation, connection to the environment, and wildlife viewing. The Big Blue River provides open space and connectivity in the form of a blueway, which runs west to east on the northwest and south side of the City. Indian Creek is a north-south tributary of the Big Blue River which connects north of the Court Street bridge. The trail system, greenways and blueways create a web across the town and provide several forms of visual, physical and environmental connection.

Civic spaces and schools within the City provide additional opportunities for formal and informal open space activities as well as recreation on the trail system. At present, some facilities are accessible on the trail system and others are isolated from alternate means of transportation. The trail along the west bank of the Big Blue River is in the floodplain, and its location allows for low-impact recreation in an area prone to flooding.

Trail networks and recreation sites allow for active recreation in formal and informal forms. Active recreation is important because the U.S. Surgeon General estimates that 60% of American adults are not regularly active and another 25% are not active at all. (Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996). Diverse recreation opportunities allow for residents and visitors to select the form of recreation that suits their individual needs.

According to the National Trails Training Partnership, trails and greenways help improve air and water quality. Studies have shown that communities with trails provide enjoyable and safe options for transportation, which reduces air pollution. Additionally, protection of land along rivers and streams by greenways prevents soil erosion and filters pollution caused by agricultural and road stormwater runoff. Greenways also serve as natural floodplains. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, flooding causes over \$1 billion in property damages every year. Restoring developed floodplains to their natural state allows many riverside communities to prevent potential flood damage. (The Impacts of Rail-Trails, A Study of Users and Nearby Property Owners from Three Trails, National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, 1992.)

The Vision of the Recreation Element of the Beatrice Plan (Comprehensive Plan of October 2001, amended March 2006) is:

"Beatrice should provide a quality park system to support the needs of its current and future residents and serve as a symbol of the unique character of the community."

Residents, city officials and stakeholders identified that the trail and park system of the City is very important. They also identified the importance of the quality of the trails and existing amenities of the parks, and noted the new facilities such as the water park as important in the City's quality of life.



The Beatrice Plan has identified several goals that support the Vision of the Recreation Element.

Beatrice Plan Goals

- Create a linked park network of greenways and civic streets that connect open spaces, neighborhoods, and activity centers.
- Provide recreational facilities to meet the needs of newly developing areas.
- Distribute active recreation uses across the geographical area of the City, guarding against over-concentration of park resources in any quadrant of the City.
- Provide an equitable mechanism establishing service standards in growth areas and financing park acquisition and development.
- Balance and active and passive recreation opportunities for all people of Beatrice.
- Use parks and open space to encourage neighborhood reinvestment and to help to reinforce Beatrice's urban form.



At present, the City has approximately 2.5 miles of paved trails and 35 miles of unpaved trails that are suitable for walking/running and biking. The paved trails are suitable for rollerblading. Six “mini-parks,” parks that are generally less than one acre and address limited, isolated, or unique recreation needs, total 7.6 acres. Four community parks exist in the City. The 192 acres of community parks are 10 to 50 acres and meet community-wide recreation needs with a larger service radius than a mini-park. The Beatrice Aquatic Center is classified as a special use park and provides water-based recreation during the summer months. The Prairie Park is 30-acres of tall grass preserve that is classified as a natural resource area.

The town has a variety of active and passive parks, multi-use trails, greenways, open space, blueways and civic areas suitable for some type of open space programming. The Beatrice Plan indicated that the City meets the Level of Service standards for swimming pools, baseball and softball fields, tennis courts, golf courses and soccer fields for the present population (The Beatrice Plan, 2001 and the National Park, Recreation and Open Space Standards, National Recreation and Park Association, 1996). However, the Beatrice Plan does not inventory and assess the existing trail network, nor does it determine if the trails meet the minimum Level of Service for the existing population.



The Strength/Weakness/Opportunities/Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted with residents and stakeholders during the SDAT team visit. Groups with an interest in connectivity and open space contributed feedback and comment related to the SWOT analysis and provided the team with a first-blush assessment of the resource from a public and stakeholder point of view.

Strengths

Family-Oriented and Neighborly Community.

The City is identified as a place suitable for families to reside and raise their children, and has many assets that make it attractive to families, including parks, trails, and open space.

Lots of Open Space with Trails

Participants felt that there was a high quantity of open space and trails within the City.

Weaknesses

Proximity to Lincoln

Participants identified the proximity of the City to Lincoln and the potential draw away from City.

Negative Perception as a Rivertown

Flooding events, resulting impact to residential and commercial areas adjacent to the river, and blight/neglect of these areas created a stigma that Beatrice was a “rivertown” even though the last major flooding event with significant damage was in the early 1970’s.



Opportunities

Beatrice as Gateway Community to Homestead National Monument

The City’s presence as the nearest developed community to the national park is seen as an asset, as the commercial, retail and recreational amenities have the potential to retain visitors before or after their visit.

Open Space Opportunities with the Blueway and Greenways

The Big Blue River is seen as a blueway with unfulfilled opportunity for recreation, conservation and linear open space. A relatively small number of people take advantage of the river for recreation compared to other recreation facilities in the city. The adjacent greenway provides a linear area in which trails can be located and floodwater can be stored during high precipitation events.

Threats

Divergent Political Agendas

Participants identified historical problems with the City Council and the Board of Public Works in embracing proposals and actions regarding actions that would expand open space/connectivity and take advantage of the Big Blue River as a community focus and recreation opportunity.

Lack of Vision for Beatrice/Region

The absence of an overall Vision for Beatrice and the region outside the City has created a rudderless effect. The City lacks clear and concise focus that otherwise would provide direction for planning and actions that would affect the immediate future as well as near-term and long-term future of the City.

Current Economic Condition

The present state of the economy has had a ripple effect across the country, affecting communities of all sizes to varying degrees. While Beatrice has been spared some of the significant effects of the financial and housing markets, layoffs have occurred within the City and some stores have closed in the downtown. The recession has affected the saving/spending habits of residents and this has affected the City's commercial, retail and service establishments.



Feedback was collected during a town hall-style meeting where participants contributed comments and discussed the desired characteristics and qualities of the City. Several common themes regarding the Big Blue River existed throughout the conversation with residents and stakeholders. The primary concern regarding the Big Blue River was access to the river. Access is difficult because of the steep and erodible slopes. There is a lack of infrastructure in the form of docks, steps and ramps to support canoe and kayak launching. Access to the river from motor vehicles is difficult for residents with mobility issues, as trails have replaced roadways adjacent to the riverbank. Residents communicated the desire to have the Big Blue River listed on the national website for canoe trails.

Residents wanted to know what kind of development could occur in the floodplain. At present there is open space and trails along the west bank of the Big Blue River where housing formerly existed. The residents communicated about using this open space for additional programming and infrastructure that could support community building activities, such as an amphitheater. Residents wanted to know what kind of effort would it take to make the area developable, including raising the flood elevation, permitting, and operational costs.

Residents like the existing multi-use trail system and inquired if there was a way to complete trail segments other than loops. At present, there are trail segments that have been completed. The Beatrice plan has a Park and Open Space Concept Plan that illustrates proposed trails with connections to parks, schools and civic spaces.

Several residents were concerned with the maintenance of existing open spaces and inquired if there were alternatives to periodic mowing. Several options were discussed and included dedicating areas for community gardens, development of a drag strip, an outdoor amphitheater adjacent to the river, a new golf course, a new miniature golf course, an area for an outdoor market, and enhancing an area with trees and vegetation suitable for bird watching.

A concurrent theme exists between downtown development and connectivity and open space. Residents were concerned that young families are looking for more recreation opportunities and entertainment. This includes water-based recreation activities (both programmed and informal), family movie night, and activities that engage both parents and children alike. At present, there is no city recreation department to support the planning and execution of these programs.

There was a concern among several residents concerning the lack of connection between the Big Blue River and downtown as a destination, source of commercial/retail, and a cultural attraction. Several challenges exist between the river and downtown which include visual and physical separation due to the presence of BNSF railcars, lack of adequate infrastructure to support pedestrian and bicyclists, access to the river from the riverbank, and visual separation due to the copious amount of vegetation along the riverbanks. The City's existing land use designation does not lend itself to redevelopment along the river without significant rezoning or and use changes.



The City's open space, parks and trails are excellent when considered as individual elements. However, they are fragmented from each other due to the lack of connectivity. A partial trail network exists and connects a few of the parks and open spaces. However, a direct physical and visual connection to the downtown is absent and pedestrian bridges allowing for crossing the river are needed. The development of a lake/wetland complex on the east side of the river provides an opportunity for a trail within easy walking distance of downtown, allowing for access to the river, connection to the environment and a linkage to the existing trail network.

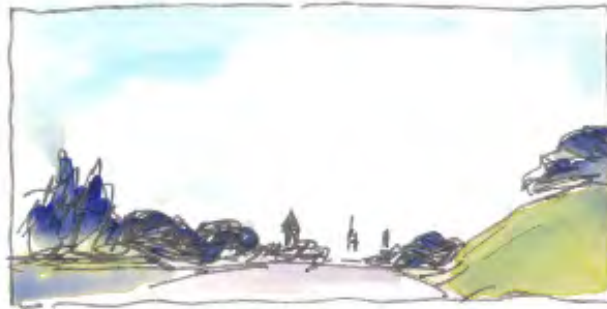
The Beatrice Plan was last updated in 2006. However, in order to maintain an adequate Level of Service for parks, trails, and open space, the Beatrice Plan should be reviewed every five (5) years and fully updated every ten (10) years to address changes in the community. Revisions to the plan can determine phasing and prioritization of open space acquisition and trail infrastructure, as well as address connections to the downtown from open space and the river. The Plan could be revised to incorporate a degree of flexibility to reflect proposed connections to the downtown core area and the development of the proposed lake and wetland complex.

The City is the host community to the Homestead National Monument. While the City and the National Park have developed cooperative plans together, there needs to be strong ties utilizing wayfinding and corridor connection via trails. The City should implement both programmatic and physical elements in order to take advantage of local and out-of-area day visitors to the park.

The architecture of the City is varied and retains much of its authenticity. Turn-of-the-century architecture and period styles were not removed during the urban renewal area of the 1960's. At present, there are walking tours of three historical areas of the downtown and a unique horse-drawn tour. The City could take advantage of combining the trail system and the rich cultural heritage and historic architecture by developing a self-guided bike tour as well as a group bike tour that could tour the city and join the trail network.

The City can use the existing parks, open space, and trails to develop programming suitable for all residents, especially young families. The connection to the Big Blue River allows for the possibility of new activities such as canoeing, kayaking, tubing, and fishing. Ramps/steps, docks and slips can allow for easy access to the river with minimal impact of vegetation and erosion of soils from the riverbanks.

The implementation of sustainable principles in the planning and design of new facilities as well as the maintenance of existing facilities could provide an example to the City's residents and reduce capital and maintenance costs over time. An example of sustainable principles that could be easily implemented includes Xeriscaping, water conservation, management of mowing practices, energy efficient lighting, recycling, and use of fuel efficient vehicles and equipment. A detailed list of sustainable practices that the City could consider is included in the Appendix.



• TOWN SILHETTE



VISION

Imagine a Beatrice that....

How do you finish this sentence? There are many answers. Some were articulated during the SDAT, some over the course of many past efforts and reports, some by generations long since past. Here's the current proposed overall vision:

“Beatrice is a truly sustainable community that is proud of its many healthy environmental assets, a diversified strong local economy, and a family friendly cultural heritage and quality of life available to all.”

This statement addresses all 3 aspects of sustainability:

Environmental assets include clean water, clean air, land that is well cared for and appropriately used, and sustains growth of natural habitats.

Economic strength means that it is diversified to be strong year round, is able to survive outside negative influences, and allows for opportunities for wealth to grow within the community.

Social characteristics allows for everyone of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy a high quality of life that appeals to families, provides educational and cultural opportunities, and celebrates the heritage, history, and future of the area.

The SDAT produced individual issue vision statements that support this overall vision.



Master Planning/Regional Vision

Regional Vision 1: *Beatrice will be a regional destination by virtue of its dynamic downtown and connection to Big Blue River and the Homestead National Monument HNM by establishing a cultural and environmental education center in town in proximity to a relocated visitor center, the history museum and a proposed conference/hotel facility.*

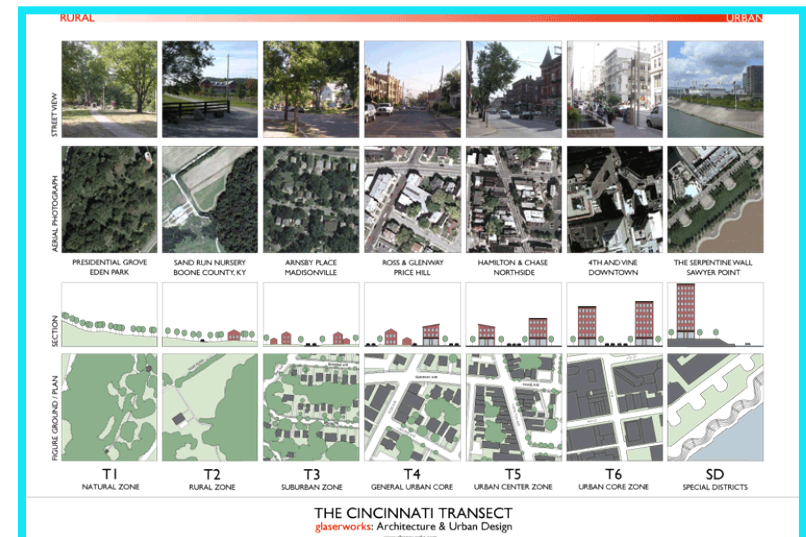
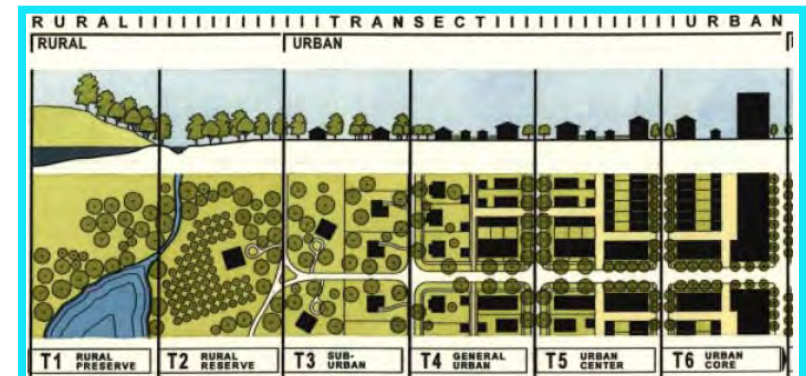
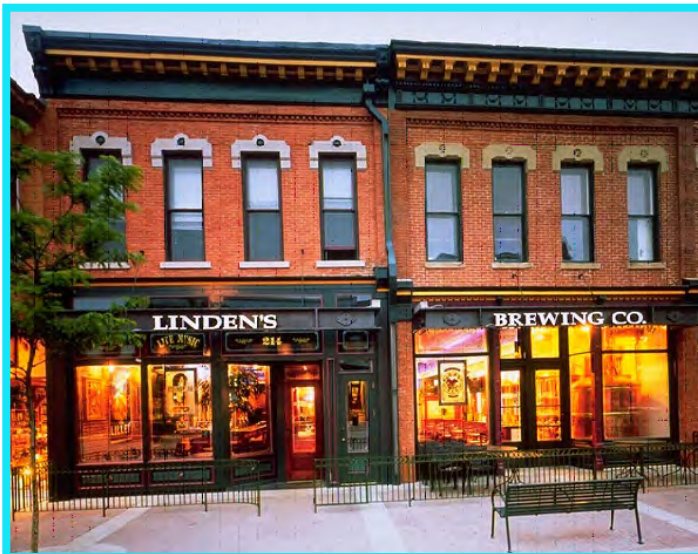
Discussion: Complementing the Homestead National Monument, this center is designed for both residents and visitors and focuses on the unique identity of Beatrice as well as expands the discussion to embrace concepts of both sustainable development and regenerative and transformational strategies that emerged as part of this SDAT process. The Center should be a model of sustainable development, demonstrating principals of green building design; of alternative agricultural practices like slow foods, community supported agricultural, organic gardening, agricultural planting for wildlife; of urban design based on the pedestrian, efficient/sustainable compact development, innovative water conservation and waste water management strategies (sod roofs, low water fixtures, living machine, constructed wetlands, bioswales), demonstrative uses of locally produced sustainable products (agrifiber products), the application of site appropriate renewable energy (hydro-electric from the Big Blue), wind power, solar power, bio fuel (manure to methane gas digester), corn-based cellulosic ethanol production and use (demonstration bioreactor).



Regional Vision 2: Beatrice will be a model of sustainability and sustainable growth. It will be attractive to young families and young singles be providing quality services, culture, recreation and entertainment through a revitalized downtown, rehabilitated historic neighborhoods, innovative land use planning and design in other areas of the community and the careful enhancement and stewardship of the natural environment.

Discussion: Discussion: The SDAT team recognizes that a key group in the revitalization of the downtown are members of what is often called the “creative class”, including artists, designers, musicians, writers, and scientists who are often the first wave in urban revitalization. Beatrice should focus is recruitment efforts towards these people and its planning and programming efforts at providing the cultural, recreational, technological and physical infrastructure that supports them and their lifestyle goals. Sustainability and sustainable growth through area rehabilitation and infill is seen as a core value of this group (particularly younger members. In line with this, Beatrice should consider urban growth limits to redirect development and redevelopment activity to existing underutilized commercial areas and infill sites, incentivizing rehabilitation of historic properties and new, context appropriate infill in historic neighborhoods and the downtown, and creating annexation policies and innovative land use strategies to encourage or mandate conservation subdivisions in green field areas of the city. The city should update its zoning ordinance to reflect more innovative approaches to urban planning and design. The Envision Utah toolbox is an excellent illustration of sustainable planning and design. The Smartcode is another kind of model code that also provides an innovative template to create, recreate or reinforce traditional urban form consistent with the historic fabric of Beatrice.

Additionally, Beatrice should promote sustainable building design by creating its own model sustainable projects (such as the proposed new fire station and conference center) to a recognizable green standard (e.g., LEED) and should also consider raising development requirements for private construction to include sustainable site development strategies (xeriscaping, stormwater management), water conservation (xeriscaping, water reducing fixtures), dark sky ordinances; enhanced energy performance, design standards to emphasize locally sourced materials. Finally, it should promote sustainable lifestyle activities: athletic recreation, healthy living, organic food products, as well as unique offerings such as microbrewers, loft living, live work units, state of the art infrastructure, entertainment, etc.

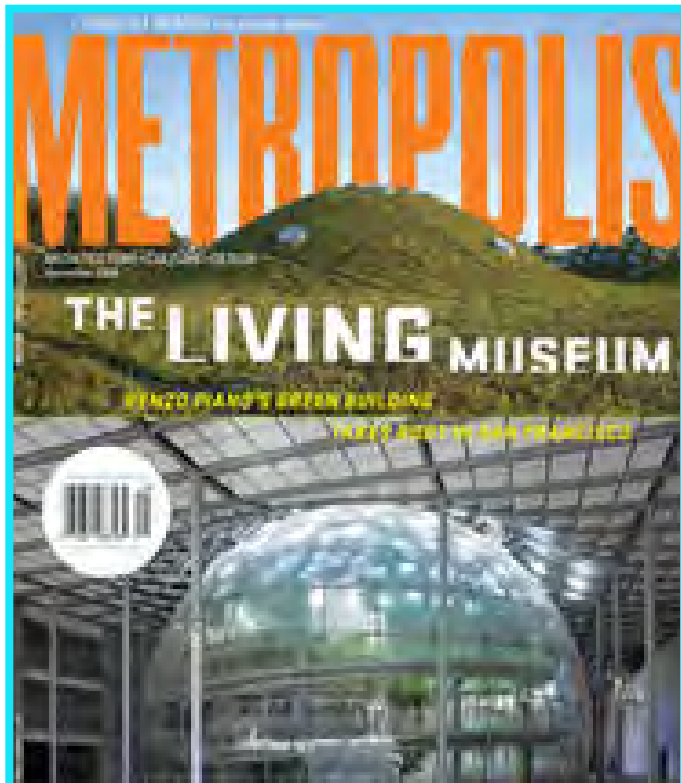


Regional Vision 3: Beatrice will become both the symbolic and effective watershed capital of Nebraska.

Discussion: Discussion: One of the priorities related to restoring Big Blue River as quality environmental and recreational resource is to enhance its water quality through effective runoff management practices along the its entire watershed tributaries. There are two fundamentals means for addressing this: firstly, cleansing urban runoff through regenerative strategies that will be explained in the water resource section of this report; and, secondly, through cleansing agricultural runoff through the creation of planted buffers along the rivers edge that filter soil and manure before it enters the river and by reducing the pollution source (manure slurry) through a combination of alternative manure disposal technologies like anaerobic digesters used to create methane for bio fuel ingestor, river buffer zone, wetland creation, etc.

Regional Vision 4: Beatrice citizens will be proud of its many assets (natural, cultural, architectural, social) and will be recognized regionally as a city with premier quality of life

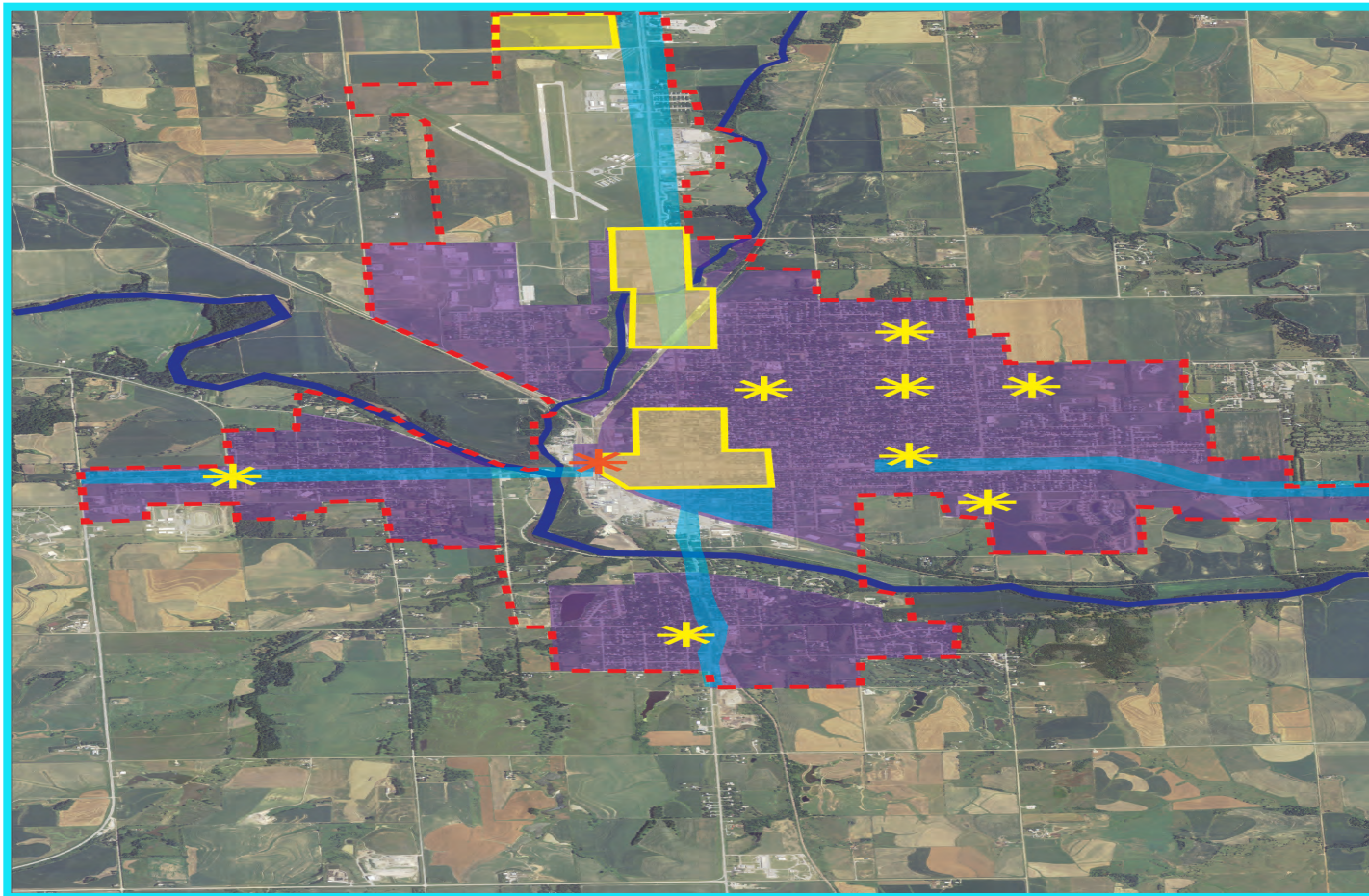
Discussion: Discussion: All the members of the SDAT team have been impressed at the outstanding assets this community enjoys. Beatrice is experiencing some of the same challenges that other historic communities have felt because of changing market demands and development directions. Because historic Beatrice is a paradigm of what one SDAT member calls true urbanism---a model of compact, walkable, resource efficient and powerfully imageable place---it has all the right pieces in place to become the leading community it once was. Several SDAT members have commented on the modesty of the people here (a positive attribute), but the team feels that it is appropriate for community---through efforts of a new public relations staff person working closely with the Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, the city and a new regional visitor and conference center bureau---to "blow its own horn" through a comprehensive community branding program and "super host" initiative. These efforts can include quality local river celebrations, heritage festivals, community recognition programs, etc. These efforts should also focus on garnering outside recognition through awards programs, magazine features, etc. Additionally, the city should communicate to the broader community through public television, newsletters, facebook, twitter, etc.



Water Resources Vision

Following a fruitful discussion that identified strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities, the water resources group focused on defining their vision for water resources management, and specifically, stormwater management within the urban boundaries of the city that produce the largest concentrations of nonpoint source pollution. In the context of identifying future conditions, the group discussed a conceptual sketch illustrating a natural systems approach to managing water within the city limits that would substantially reduce pollution in the Big Blue and provide a multifunctional greenspace that would improve habitat as well as recreation and education opportunities. This discussion led to the formulation of a concise statement by the group of the desired future condition for water and related natural and cultural resources in Beatrice:

“Beatrice has become a national model for water quality improvement through a comprehensive program that involves all members of the community and provides water resources management that is ecologically based and sustainable while improving habitat and expanding recreational economic and educational opportunities.”



Waterfront Development Vision

As a result of a comprehensive discussion and the recognition of the river as a primary community asset the process yielded the following vision statement to guide both the planning, programming and future use of the community's valuable water corridors:

"The Beatrice Waterfront is an accessible multi-use green space within the community that celebrates the environmental and cultural context of the region as it relates to the river and the nations westward expansion as embodied by the Homestead Monument."

The vision statement was intended to be inclusive and inspire all at local, regional and state levels. Successful implementations of future actions inspired by the vision statement have the opportunity for national recognition due to the associated programs as well as the relationship to the proximity and relationship of the of Homestead - National Park Monument .



The waterfront can redefine the community's relationship with the river at three levels.

- National /Regional

- oThe Trail connections to the surrounding counties, Blue River Corridor to Kansas and the Homestead Monument.
- oEnvironmental Corridors

- Neighborhoods of the City

- oTrail and Park System
- oStreets and Sidewalks

- Downtown

- oRiverwalks
- oInterpretive Facilities
- oStreets
- oDowntown Parks

Downtown Development Vision

"Downtown is a vital and varied economic base for Beatrice. It preserves and Protects unique historic qualities of the district while providing connectivity to the river front and community. Downtown is the primary destination for dining, shopping and cultural activities in a pedestrian friendly environment."

There is significant consensus that Downtown Beatrice, possessing a number of civic, social and other amenities, is the premier commercial and cultural district in Gage County. The Main Street Program, serving in essence as the lead downtown management entity, while working in concert with the City of Beatrice and other organizations, has a comprehensive and far-reaching four- point plan for downtown revitalization in the city's historic core. Jointly they have cemented a long-term renewal strategy that encompasses retail development, building rehabilitation historic preservation, promotional/ cultural events and entrepreneurship development. The Beatrice Comprehensive Development Plan outlines goals, policies and actions for creating "A Revitalized City Center". The many entities engaged in downtown revitalization have drawn upon consultant studies as well as the Comprehensive Plan to craft a program designed to create a sustainable commercial district.



General Economic Development Vision

“Economic development creates an environment for sustainability and growth of the Beatrice area. Our environment promotes the revitalization and “home town” competitiveness and demonstrates our commitment to business, industry, and the entrepreneurial spirit.”

The Gage County Economic Development organization, working closely with the City of Beatrice, The Chamber of Commerce, The Main Street Program as well as state and national partners manages a creative and sophisticated economic enhancement effort that actively seeks to attract new business while retaining existing businesses. They have nurtured a sensitivity to the over-arching need for sustainable businesses which provide jobs for employees of all income levels.



Historic Resources/Neighborhood Vision

“Neighborhoods provide positive living environments for residents. Residents respect and nourish the city’s heritage and foster a sense of pride, responsibility and cooperation. Property owners and residents are actively involved and engaged in neighborhood care and maintenance. The neighborhoods utilize unifying factors, such as the trail system, to create a sense of total community.”

Beatrice is blessed with several historic neighborhoods offering a wide variety of housing options. The Beatrice Comprehensive Development Plan outlines goals, policies and actions for creating a “City of Strong Neighborhoods”. The community is encouraged to review The Comprehensive Development Plan in conjunction with this Vision Statement to create sustainable neighborhoods.



Open Space/Connectivity Vision

The Sustainable Communities Network has identified that the visioning process is important for a community to address sustainability. The visioning process can often provide guidance for residents who are unclear about a future course. Residents and stakeholders reviewed the SWOT Analysis and discussed existing conditions, and asked to provide feedback that characterized the desirable characteristics of the Connectivity and Open Space in their city. The following Visioning Statements are a refinement of feedback and provide focus for development of an Action Plan for implementation:

Beatrice will be a regional destination by virtue of its dynamic downtown and connection to Big Blue River and Gateway National Monument of America.

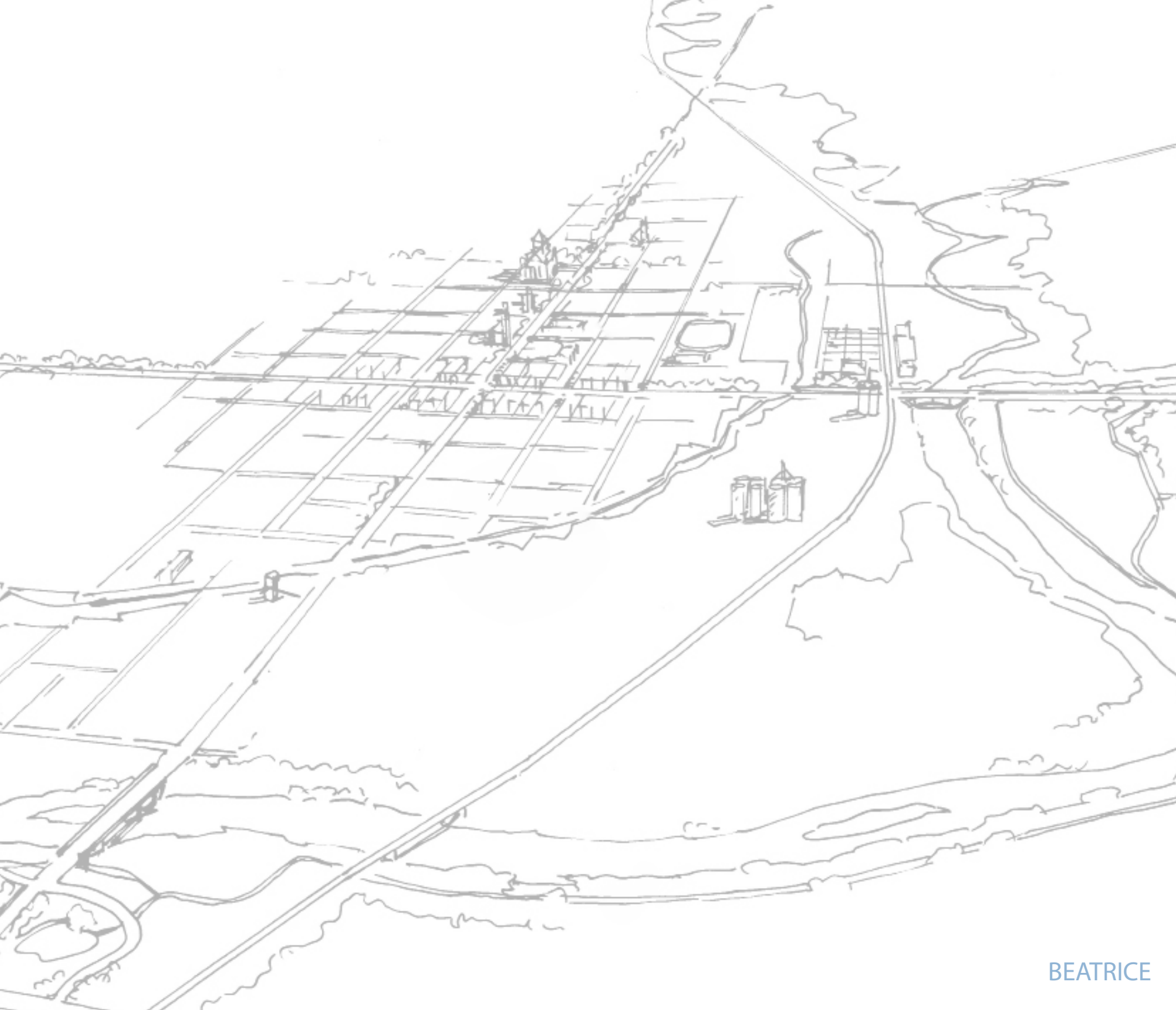
Make Beatrice the watershed capital of Nebraska including upstream influences.

Utilizing Beatrice's open space and trails to inspire and unify the community and connect to the environment.

Beatrice citizens will be proud of its natural built environment and heritage.

Create additional connectivity between the neighborhoods via trails, the downtown and the river by utilizing physical and visual connections, and linking parks, open space, and natural elements using multi-use trails. Lateral connections between the City and the Homestead National Monument of America and other cities such as Lincoln to promote Beatrice through alternate modes of transportation.







ACTIONS

Turning the Vision into Reality

The road to the future vision is a journey of single steps over time. In terms of the community, there are many people that will need to participate and journey together in a synchronized way. The key factor to a successful outcome will be the ability of different groups and individuals to come together and form functional partnerships to work achieving the common vision. Some of the specific action items are summarized in Appendix B.

Master Planning/Regional Actions

Develop Comprehensive Marketing Plan

Develop a comprehensive marketing and public relations plan that includes a broad cross section of the community in its creation to ensure that all Beatrice groups (including the underserved) are addressed as well as targeted for communications.

Promote Model Stormwater Management

Use Beatrice's new stormwater management system as a model to mobilize other communities along the Big Blue watershed to implement similar innovative approaches to their own urban stormwater management requirements.

Partner with Natural Resources District

Partner with Natural Resource District/NRCS to create a public outreach initiative targeted toward rural landowners along the Big Blue watershed. This initiative will provide education (and incentives, when possible) to encourage best practices methods for providing natural drainage buffers between farm lands and the watershed. Also, investigate other methods for both manure disposal or crop fertilizing to reduce use of manure slurry (a major component of the watershed pollutants) through better dry manure management (see Midwest Plan Service information services on more sustainable farm practices as well as "Manure into Gold: a strategic framework for manure management in Ontario" by Ernest Lowe and Ivan Weber).

Develop Cooperative Approach to Professional Job Development

Develop a cooperative approach to increasing professional level jobs focussing on Beatrice's unique economic development opportunities including creating a center of excellence at the Southwest Community College that may encompass one or several of the following: biotech research, eco-industrial economics, environmental education, wildlife management, water resource managment, recreation, renewable energy (wind, solar, methane generation), historic preservation, hospitality, etc. Consider expanding the community college to offer 4-year degrees and/or working closely with UNL on possible satellite baccalaureate program offerings.

Bring State-of-the-Art Infrastructure to Beatrice

Bring state-of-the-art infrastructure to Beatrice to make the community more attractive to high tech businesses and members of the creative class. Create an incubator to help new businesses succeed. Consider targetting business for incubation that help build Beatrice "brand" as a supportive place for innovative and eco-friendly industries and businesses. (Because of its unique location in the Wasatch Mountains and on two rivers has had considerable success marketing to outdoor recreation companies, e.g., snow/snowboard, water sports, fishing, etc., in addition to its eco-tourism/cultural-tourism efforts)

Attract the Creative Class

Make Beatrice more attracitve to both younger community members and members of the creative class through enhanced entertainment and recreational activities and services, including: outdoor concerts and music festivals (Blues on the Blue and/or Bluegrass on the Blue), alfresco dining, organic food store, organic farmers market, micro breweries (and signature beers), wine bars (featuring Nebraska wines), fine and folk art galleries, outdoor sports stores/bike shop as well as outdoor recreation, including biking, hiking, cross country skiing/snow shoeing, canoeing, kayaking, etc. Target school alumni.

Pursue LEED Standards

Require LEED-certification of all city buildings with a focus on renewable energy and water resources. Incentivize LEED-certiciation and/or Energy Star-certification of private commercial and residential buildings, through grants, and expedited approval process.

Expand Recycling

Expand city's recycling program to increase participation by everyone. Establish contests or community-wide goals recycling.

Provide for Mixed-Use in Downtown

Provide mixed commercial/residential use in the downtown. Change zoning to allow loft apartments above storefronts, live/work units, and artist studios in the CBD. Investigate incentive programs targeted at young professionals, artists, design professionals, and educators to relocate to downtown.

Increase Downtown Residential

Increase residential areas around the downtown by encouraging higher density housing in the current manufacturing areas south of the downtown. Develop a masterplan of this area showing future roads, pedestrianways, residential type and mix, local services and open space, river connections, etc. Consider rezoning as part of a comprehensive plan update and phased development strategy.

Enhance Communications

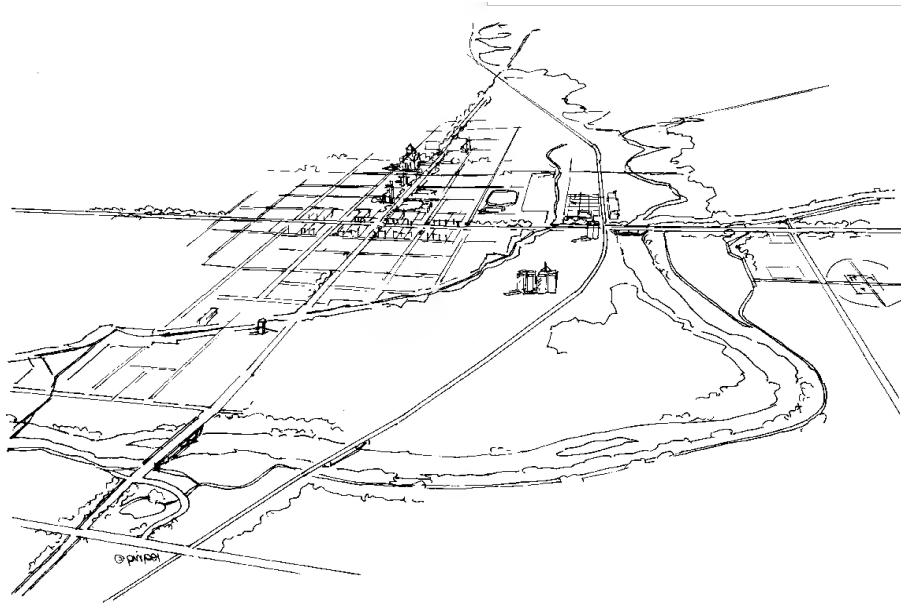
Enhance overall communications to the citizens through website, public service “Channel 9” television, water bills, community newsletter, community booster club. Review accomplishments at community celebrations, etc.

Seek Recognition

Persue external recognition of Beatrice. Submit SDAT to local, regional, and national recognition programs of the AIA, the American Planning Association, the American Society of Landscape Architects, etc. Submit innovative stormwater management system for national public/awards. Submit historic downtown and residential neighborhood plan to honor awards program at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Pursue joint communications with the National Park Service for collaborative marketing of the Beatrice and HNM. Explore opportunities to promote Beatrice’s assets and lifestyle to national magazines like Outdoor, Dwell, Preservation, Via, National Geographic, etc.

Update the Comprehensive Plan

Update the city’s comprehensive plan to encourage the sustainable growth of the community through restoration and infill of existing developed areas and discourage sprawl. Consider creating an urban growth boundary around the existing developed areas to focus redevelopment and infill new development to core. Consider modifying single use zones to allow mixed-use overlays in specific locations to enhance walkability and decrease automobile reliance. Modify development standards along current “strip” corridors to reduce parking areas, increase pedestrian-friendliness, enhance visual appeal, encourage sustainable land-use and land development design for stormwater management, water-wise landscaping, energy efficiency, etc.



Pursue Innovative Land Use Strategies

Consider innovative land-use approaches for currently undeveloped parcels in the city and in future annexation areas to promote open space preservation, walkability, and sustainable infrastructure. Consider conservation subdivisions for undeveloped areas if growth requires moving the urban growth boundary in the future.

Create a Redevelopment District

Create a masterplan for a redevelopment district between the confluence of the Big Blue and Indian Creek and downtown, fronting Main Street and connecting to the History Museum. This area should be attractive to both residence and visitors. Complementing the Homestead National Monument, it should focus on celebrating the local and regional traditions, culture, nature and art of the area. Among the programming elements that should be considered are: a comprehensive visitor center that provides information as well as interpretation of both cultural and natural systems of the region as well as Beatrice's new stormwater management system; an art center with working studios, classrooms and gallery; and regional conference center (consider the adaptive re-use of the Municipal Auditorium as the plenary space similar to the historic Egyptian Theatre's role in Ogden, Utah's Eccles Conference Center--a National Trust for Historic Preservation National Honor Award winner); a "slow foods" cafe featuring organic food grown on site; demonstration gardens showing xeriscaping approaches, natural buffers between farms and watersheds utilizing phytoremediative plants (poplars) as part of Community College's water resource research program, organic gardens; a community garden; a community supported agricultural installation, etc. The center should also be a model of sustainable design through: LEED-certification; employment of renewable energy systems (wind, solar, methane produced by manure digesters, cellulosic ethanol from local producers) innovative storm and waste water management strategies; local materials, etc.) Create effective pedestrian connections to water front and CBD.

Create Gateway Plans

Enhance the entry ways to Beatrice. Create gateway plans for major corridors into the community. Consider unified streetscape design (lighting, signs, sidewalks); public art installations, appropriate land-uses; building and landscaping design standards (see Envision Utah toolbox); sustainable road design with landscaped bioswales along edges incorporating phyto-remediative plants and other stormwater quality management practices; multi-modal road design for bikes, surreys, cars, pedestrians, etc. At the points where the corridors cross the Big Blue, consider preserving or expanding viewsheds to river and redesign bridges when possible to create a more engaging experience. Provide distinctive district sign monumentation and streetscape in the CBD.

Continue Chamber's Customer Service Initiative

Continue the Customer Service Program of the Chamber of Commerce to ensure positive visitor and resident experience in both CBD and other local activities.

Renovate Carnegie Library

Rehabilitate the historic Carnegie Library to an appropriate civic use. Develop the park/civic green adjacent to it to include public art. Create a region-wide celebration when it is complete.

Create a Regional Planning Council

Create a Regional Planning Council, a quasi-governmental organization that provides planning oversight over a broader area than discrete municipal or county governments can by themselves. In this case, a regional planning council should provide jurisdictional oversight on a county basis (Gage County) to better balance land uses, establish region-wide multimodal transportation policies and plans, address air quality and watershed issues, provide unique opportunities for open space preservation and management, develop efficient regional waste management strategies, provide tourist and conference marketing, provide direction in housing types and distribution, develop educational and business partnerships for green technologies and businesses, and address regional cultural and recreation public facility programming and planning.



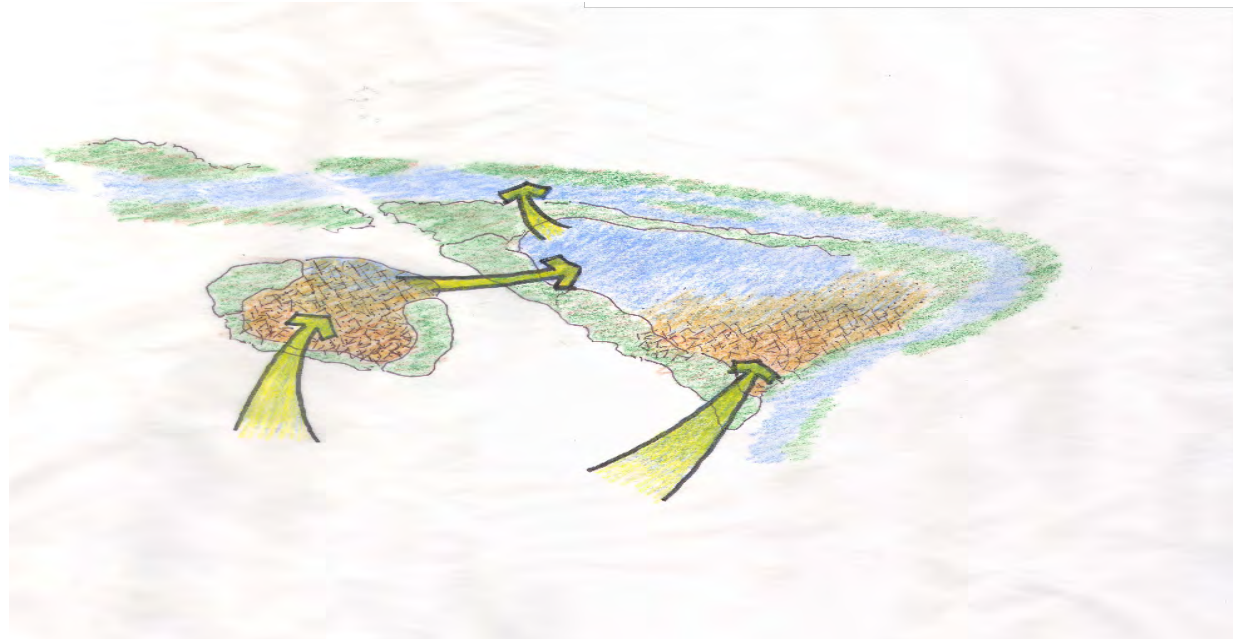
Water Resources Actions

Listed below is an abbreviated outline of the steps to be taken to implement a multi-functional, ecologically-based and sustainable water resources management program that emphasizes water quality. This innovative and precedent setting program is very much dependent on federal and state funding for feasibility analysis, detailed design that includes the preparation of plans and specifications, and construction.

The concept for achieving a sustainable water resources management program involves a major change in stormwater management for Beatrice in the long term. Currently, stormwater is collected in a traditional catch basin and drain pipe system that deposits untreated water through outfalls directly into either Indian Creek on the west side of town or the Big Blue River from the center and east sides. This outdated system contributes negatively to peak runoff and, therefore, exacerbated flooding downstream as well as significant additional contamination of the Big Blue River.

Beatrice is blessed with an expansive floodplain area between the city streets in the downtown and the river. A lake had been located in this space at one time to provide recreation opportunities but failed because of rapidly infiltrating soils and inadequate surface water input to sustain a recreation pool. A second look at this location reveals a significant opportunity to provide a water oriented recreation opportunity for residents and visitors while providing a natural systems-based stormwater treatment system that provides flood attenuation, improved habitat, and substantially improved water quality.

A preliminary evaluation of the existing stormwater system reveals that about sixty percent of the runoff from city streets can be directed into treatment wetlands located at the east and west ends of the proposed lake location. These wetlands can be designed to remove up to ninety percent of the pollutants in the stormwater through a series of physical, chemical, and biological processes. The treated water can then be directed into the lake for polishing, that is, additional treatment before it flows into the Big Blue. Nearly uniform year-round precipitation can supply the water needed to maintain a sufficient pool of water coupled with a clay liner to minimize water loss through infiltration. A second similar system is possible on the east side of the city to capture an additional twenty percent of the runoff and process it in a treatment wetland and a pond adjacent to the Big Blue.





As a significant visual feature in the community, the lake will provide an opportunity to expand outdoor recreation and education opportunities associated with the trail system near the river and be suitable for non-contact recreation such as boating and catch and release fishing. Although the initial costs of implementing a sustainable stormwater management plan from feasibility through design and construction will be significant the long term benefits to the community and the region that include flood attenuation, clean water, and a multifunctional green space that is ecologically appropriate can be well amortized over time.

In the short term, completion of Chapter 5 of the Standard Operating Procedures for Stormwater Management in Beatrice will contribute greatly to an improved stormwater management program. This document will describe the policy for application of Low Impact Development (LID) Best Management Practices (BMPs) in post construction situations, that is, throughout the developed portion of the city where obvious problems exist that affect the quality of the runoff that now enters Indian Creek and/or Big Blue. It will also include a section on involving the public as stewards of the environment with individual responsibility for protecting and ensuring water quality.

An immediate and serious problem exists at the Storekraft channel outfall as mentioned in the assessment where inadequate energy dissipation is causing a head cut with extensive erosion and sediment deposition into Indian Creek. This is an excellent opportunity to employ a natural systems approach by creating a wetland complex below the outfall to intercept the runoff and remove pollutants while permanently eliminating the erosion and sedimentation problem at that location. Furthermore this immediate action can be used as a demonstration project to document the positive benefits that can be realized through the application of an ecologically based stormwater management system.

Another short term project involves a survey of the existing forested buffers along Indian Creek and the Big Blue to identify those that are less than 50 feet wide and develop a plan to restore the buffer where conditions and circumstances are appropriate.

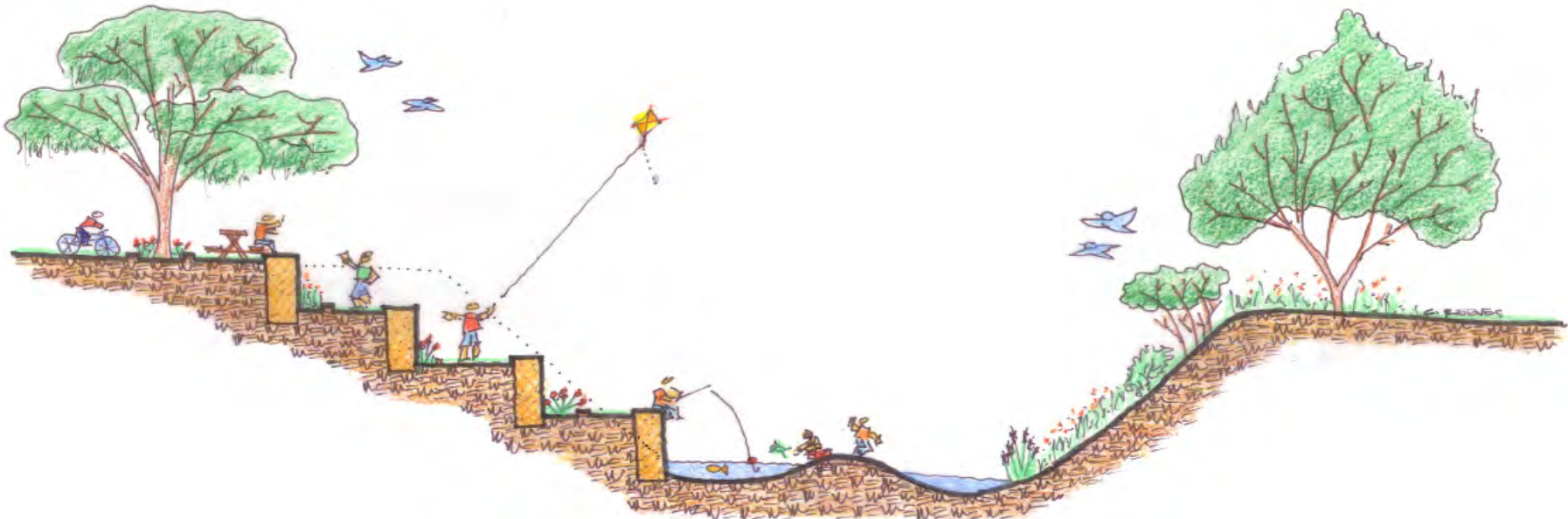
Waterfront Development Actions

There was tremendous input identifying specific actions and programmatic elements that would reconnect the community with the Big Blue River. The opportunities identified can be grouped into organizational/planning and specific project categories. Upon further assessment it also becomes clear that, like many waterfront communities, the issues are similar and the programmatic elements can be further categorized into elements that contribute to successful waterfronts. In many cases these elements are critical ingredients for bringing cities and neighborhoods back to the water. The Concept Plan developed incorporates many of the ideas shared and returns the river to the community in the form of civic, recreational, educational, environmental enhancement and investment opportunities. The SDAT Team has organized the list of desirable improvements and necessary actions as specific elements that contribute to successful waterfronts.

Elements of a Successful Waterfront

Create and Strengthen Access to Water

- Enhance river visibility
- Develop on site environmental educational programs
- Develop property acquisition strategy
- Develop Riverwalk Plan and implement
- Plan and implement infrastructure plan
- Develop pedestrian bridges connecting east and west bank
- Renovate existing vehicular bridges as celebratory Civic Gateways

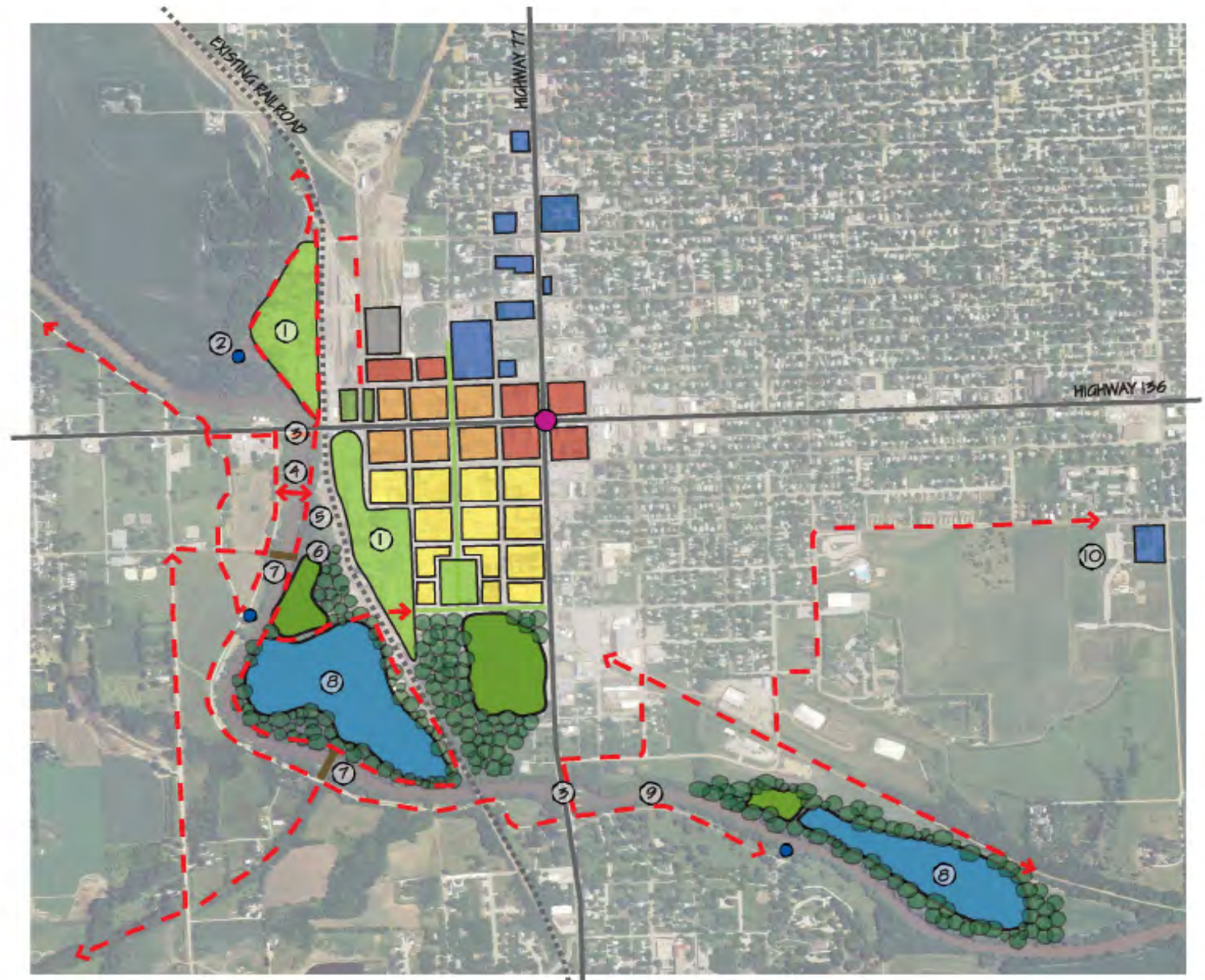


BIG BLUE
RIVER

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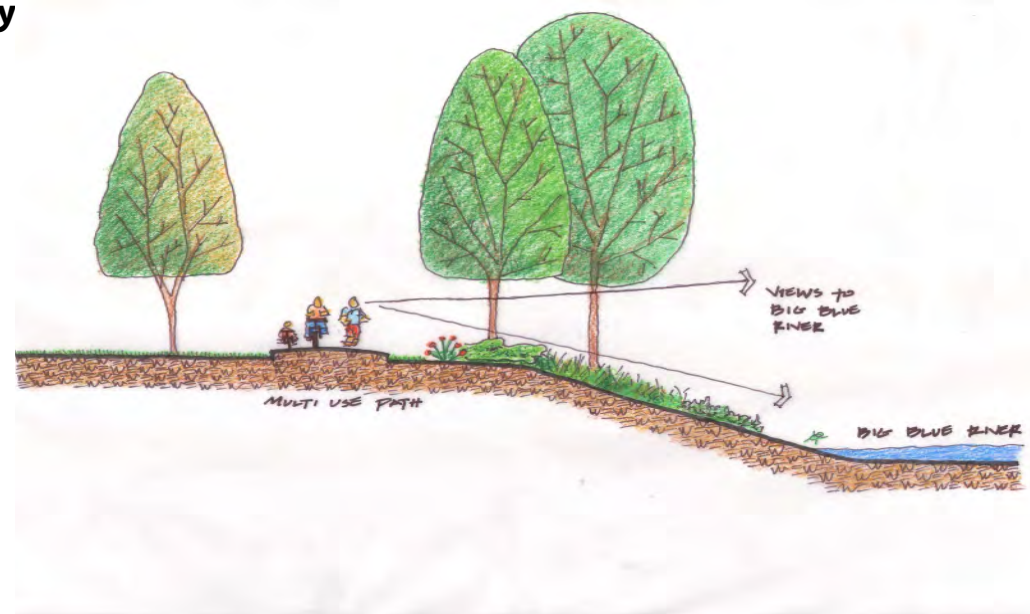
Waterfront Plan

1. Homestead, Gardens, Amphitheater
2. Boat Launch
3. Civic Gateways
4. Deroin Crossing
5. Future Parking
6. Environmental Center
7. Pedestrian Bridges
8. Lake + Nature Trails
9. Riverwalk



Preserve Environmental Quality and Sustainability

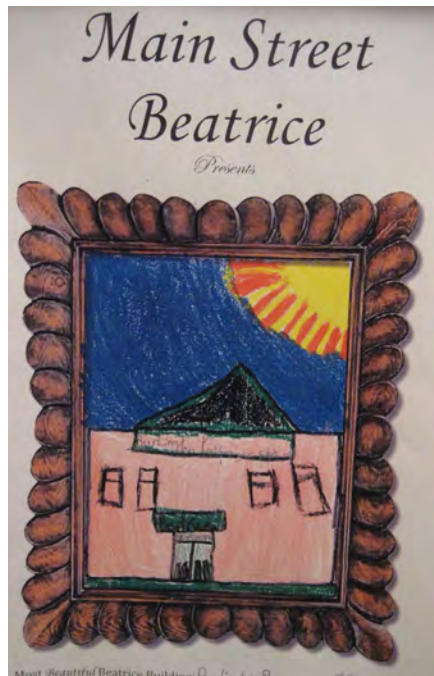
- Commission Phase I studies
- River clean up events
- Commission study to assess dams and navigability
- Enhance fishing habitat
- Design and develop storm water management lake and wetland basin system
- Develop nature walks around new lake
- Develop Riverfront Environmental Center



Understand the Context of Place...Authenticity

- Historic/interpretive signage
- Re-programming Chautauqua program
- Develop "made in Beatrice Story"
- Create Deroin Crossing interpretive feature
- Incorporate elements interpretive and public art celebrating Dempster + Venetian Nights





Focus on Economic Development and Sustainability

- Develop and recruit vendors for riverfront
- Develop B + B strategy and recruitment
- Revamp promotional material celebrating Big Blue
- Develop riverfront shuttle
- Renovate Stevenson Building
- Develop Riverfront lodging and Conferencing facility

Ensure Quality of Amenities, Activities and Design

- Develop boat launches
- Develop fishing piers
- Develop overlooks
- "Blues on the Blue" program seasonal events
- Create downtown Homestead Visitor Center
- Develop riverfront natural amphitheater
- Develop strategy for Trail Museum



Create an Effective Public Process....Transparency + Inclusivity

- Create Master Plan
- Create a Big Blue Corridor Project Coordinator position and fill position
- Develop branding program
- Develop funding strategy
- Promote the river in all community marketing efforts
- Lobby /educate /promote trails

To insure the realization of the elements of the vision plan and the initial framework of the waterfront development plan an implementation matrix has been developed. The above elements are organized from the perspective of time and grouped by immediate (12-18 months), short term (1-5 years), midterm (5-10 yrs.) and long term (10 -20 yrs.) This information can be found in the Appendix.



Downtown Development Actions

Short Term Actions - 1 Year

Complete Business Plan Competition Grant

The Main Street Program has started a business plan contest designed to award the winner of a judged business plan contest \$20,000. The details of the contest should be finalized and the program implemented while additional money is sought for similar grant contest in the future.

Champion: *Main Street Beatrice*

Finalize Downtown Economic Development Incentive Fund and Other Incentives

In an effort to proactively provide low-interest loans to the downtown community for façade and interior building improvements, the Main Street Program developed a low-interest loan program. That program has not been used to date and should be marketed to the downtown community with the newly-revised financial terms.

Champion: *Main Street Beatrice*

Begin to Seek Common Ground on the Issue of Downtown Truck Traffic

Given that state highways, under the jurisdiction of the Nebraska Department of Roads, form the “main streets” in Downtown Beatrice, trucks travel through downtown. This issue has caused some to ask whether a primary truck route should be created which would reduce truck traffic through the center of Downtown Beatrice. There are proponents on both sides of the issue and there should be an immediate and ongoing effort to seek common ground on this issue.

Champions: *Main Street Beatrice, The City of Beatrice, The Department of Roads, Downtown Businesses and Property Owners*



Adopt Building Codes for Upper Floors in Downtown Buildings

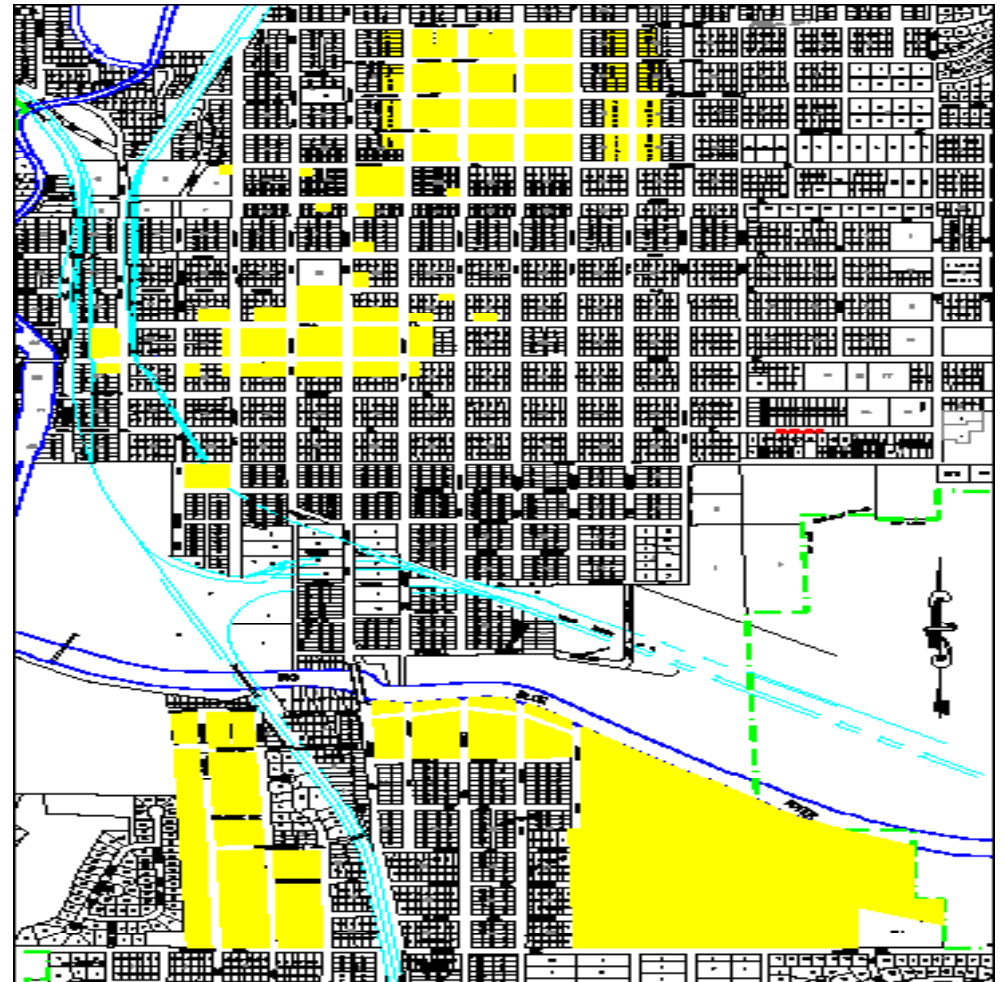
Downtown Beatrice has a significant stock of historic and architecturally significant buildings which have vacant or under-utilized upper floors. The City of Beatrice should formulate and adopt building codes that facilitate development of these floors for a variety of uses, thus diversifying further the downtown economy.

Champion: *City of Beatrice*

Market the Availability of Competitively Priced Retail and Commercial Space in Order to Attract a Wider Variety of Businesses in Downtown.

Organizations with an immediate stake in the long-term viability of Downtown Beatrice should begin to aggressively market the available retail and commercial spaces in the Central Business District. The competitive advantage of these buildings, in addition to their location in a vital commercial center, is their relatively inexpensive acquisition or rental costs as compared to shopping centers within the region.

Champion: *Main Street Beatrice*



Map of Historic Properties

Complete Certification of Community Economic Development Application for Downtown Beatrice

The Gage County Economic Development entity is fully and actively engaged in seeking certification from the State of Nebraska to become a Certified Economic Development Community. This certification provides the opportunity to access a wide-array of economic development services and incentives—including downtown. The application should be completed as soon as possible in provide Main Street Beatrice additional incentive and economic development opportunities.

Champion: *Gage County Economic Development*

Mid-Term Actions (12-24 months)

Utilize Alleys as Business Entrances and Improve the Aesthetics of Some Alleys

There are several under utilized alleys in Downtown Beatrice. Many businesses and some vacant buildings have rear entrances that lead to the alley-ways. Some alleys can be revitalized through paving and planting and serve as a second or primary entrance to a business.

Champion: *The City of Beatrice, Building Owners, Business Owners, Main Street*



Expand SCC Incubator to Downtown as a Retail Incubator

Southeast Community College has an active business incubator in Lincoln serving a wide variety of business types. It is proposed that the College expand the Incubator concept to Downtown Beatrice and in conjunction with local organizations start a retail incubator to create a consistent stream of quality businesses for the downtown.

Champion: Main Street, Chamber of Commerce, Main Street

Forge a Partnership with The State of Nebraska Department of Roads Relative to Downtown Revitalization Issues

Given the attendant reality that Downtown Beatrice is located on state highways, there is a need for compliance with certain state regulations. One such example is the need for a "RIGHT OF WAY" from the State when repairing a building façade, adding building signage or architectural ornamentation. In order to lessen confusion relative to these issues, it is suggested that an educational outreach program to downtown business and building owners be developed in conjunction with the State Department of Roads.

Champion: City of Beatrice, Main Street, Business and Property Owners



Strengthen the linkage between the Gage County Historical Museum and the Homestead National Historic Monument

One of Beatrice's many assets is its rich cultural heritage. The Gage County Museum in a revitalized railroad depot sits at a gateway to downtown. The museum coupled with a downtown visitor's center for the Homestead National Historic Monument should create a band of cultural connectivity that will serve the downtown, the museum and the National Monument well. Therefore, the many organizations actively engaged in cultural heritage in Beatrice should actively seek to establish a downtown visitor's center that is thematically aligned with the National Historic Monument.

Champion: *The Gage County Historical Museum, The National Park Service, The Convention and Visitors Bureau*

Community Education and Evaluation of National Register of Historic Places Listing for Downtown Historic Buildings

Designation of a building as historically significant and contributing provides numerous opportunities for building owners to access a number of tax incentives. There are a number of buildings in Downtown Beatrice eligible for National Register designation. The process of seeking designation for these buildings should commence as soon as possible.

Champion: *Main Street Beatrice, Gage County Historic Preservation, Gage County Historical Society*



Develop Design Guidelines Linked to Downtown Financing

In order to cement Downtown Beatrice's position as an historic commercial corridor, design guidelines for downtown buildings should be formulated. These guidelines, which can be employed by building owners and tenants should be tied to financing through Downtown Economic Development Incentive Fund.

Champion: *City of Beatrice, Main Street Beatrice*

Restore and Repurpose Carnegie Building

The former library in Downtown Beatrice is an historically significant Carnegie building. Several organizations in Beatrice are committed to saving this structure. It is essential that the building be restored and that an appropriate use be found. There have been several studies that have explored various options for the building. That process of exploring an appropriate use should be explored while the building is being restored and stabilized.

Champions: *The City of Beatrice*



Complete Current Streetscape Plan & Develop a New and Ongoing Plan

Main Street Beatrice received a grant for streetscape design for a portion of Downtown Beatrice. Planning for implementation has commenced. Obviously, streetscape redesign employing the initial grant will begin shortly. However, there is a need for ongoing streetscape improvements. Main Street Beatrice should continue to seek funds for additional streetscape improvements and in essence embrace this as an ongoing effort

Champion: Main Street Beatrice



Evaluate Opportunities For Upper Story Lodging/Hospitality/Housing

The upper floors in Downtown Beatrice are underutilized. A significant effort to repurpose the upper floors should include examination of a Bed and Breakfast (or boutique hotel) as well as market rate housing. With increased activity on the upper floors there will be additional pedestrian traffic, as well as potential patrons for downtown businesses.

Champion: The City of Beatrice, Main Street Beatrice, Downtown Building Owners



General Economic Development Actions

Short Term Actions - Immediate - 24 Months

Continue Targeting Year-Round Business Through Existing Marketing Programs

Gage County Economic has developed an extensive network of partnerships as it has effectively recruited and retained businesses. Currently a significant portion of the industrial base lays off some workers seasonally. In order to mitigate that seasonal downturn, year-round sustainable businesses should be included in the marketing effort, if not already in place. In addition, a continued effort should be made to integrate sustainable business attraction in the marketing and recruitment effort.

Champion: *Gage County Economic Development*



Develop a Marketing Program to Attract the “Creative Class”

In order to diversify the local economy and underscore the desire of the City of Beatrice to nurture and grow entrepreneurial businesses, Gage County Economic Development should attempt to recruit members of the “Creative Class.” The Creative Class, comprised of individuals engaged in variety of emerging technologies and the arts, tend to be entrepreneurial and active consumers of the arts. These individual often seek downtown locations in which to reside and many others seek out affordable residential locations in close proximity to the downtown. There is a significant Creative Class in Lincoln as well as Omaha that could be easily targeted in a concerted marketing effort. This effort dovetails with the desire of Main Street Beatrice to convert upper floor units in downtown into market rate housing. Moreover, Creative Class individuals tend to seek out downtown locations for shopping and dining.

Champion: *Gage County Economic Development*

Update the Beatrice Logo and the Overall Branding Effort to Reflect the Visions

As Beatrice moves toward a diversified economy with a thriving downtown and a renewed waterfront, the current logo should be updated to reflect that vision. That same vision should be carried throughout the city branding effort.

Champion: *The City of Beatrice*

Develop a “Home Town” Welcoming Network of Resources

While the population of Beatrice has remained relatively steady over the past several decades, there is significant data to indicate that many people move into the city and leave after a relatively short period of time. In order to stem that out-migration it is recommended that Beatrice, through the Chamber of Commerce develop a far-reaching “Home Town” welcoming network of resources in order to inform new and existing residents of the many amenities and services available within the community. This sustainable approach can stabilize neighborhoods and serve as a regional/statewide model.

Champion: *Chamber of Commerce*

Streamline and Organize Beatrice’s Web Presence

In order to provide a gateway to Beatrice’s many amenities, the City should update its current website in order to better integrate not only public services, but the wide array of economic development, cultural and business services available. In addition available industrial/commercial sites could be featured. This one-stop approach is a vital economic development tool if Beatrice is to attract and retain businesses and residents.

Champion: *The City of Beatrice*



Mid-term Actions

Expand the SCC Incubator to Beatrice to Foster Emerging Technologies

Southeastern Community College has developed a highly-visible industrial incubator in Lincoln. Beatrice should actively seek an extension of that incubator to Beatrice near the Community College. The incubator will not only provide a haven for budding entrepreneurs but can also specialize in sustainable technologies. This will allow Beatrice residents and non-residents alike to become an active part of the Beatrice business community.

Champions: *Southeastern Community College, Gage County Economic Development, The Chamber of Commerce*



Historic Resources/Neighborhood Actions

Short Term Actions

Develop a Community Angels Corps to assist disadvantaged households with property upkeep and maintenance

The community needs options to counteract the neighborhood threat of loss of housing due to deterioration. City services can be augmented with volunteers. A Community Angels Corps can assist disadvantaged households with home maintenance and repair, building a sense of pride and community and fostering positive social interaction while stabilizing neighborhood property values: an approach that addresses all three aspects of sustainability.

Champions: Churches, Area Service Clubs, Youth and Senior Citizen Organizations

Complete recreational trail system to all neighborhoods

Connecting all Beatrice neighborhoods with the extension of the planned and proposed extensions of the recreational trail system improves walkability of the community, strengthens the trail system as a community amenity, and offers an alternative mode of transportation.

Champions: City



Mid Term Actions

Reestablish Neighborhood Watch Program

Neighborhood pride, responsibility and cooperation will increase with the reestablishment of the Neighborhood Watch program. This program increases the perception of safety and security in neighborhoods, and promotes social interaction among neighborhood residents.

Champion: *City Police*

Establish Beatrice Homestead Act of 2010 as a national model (pilot project has 5 lots)

When structures reach a point of deterioration that can't be rectified by rehabilitation – demolition by neglect-- the City has little recourse but to demolish homes. The City could put a spin on the Homestead Act of 1862 with a program for in-fill of vacant City-owned lots in neighborhoods. The City should pursue recognition of this effort as a national model for neighborhood reinvestment. The City can launch the program with a pilot project of 5 lots, combining these free lots with other local, state, federal, and private & non-profits assistance programs.

Champion: *City*



LongTerm Actions

Complete inventory and mapping of NRHP listed and eligible properties

NBeatrice lacks a comprehensive inventory and mapping of its historic resources, making it difficult to plan for their preservation and protection. Historic/architectural assessments can be funded with state and federal grants matched by in-kind donations in many states through the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program, a federal pass-thru grant from the National Park Service to states. Local preservation champions should consult with the Nebraska SHPO about this opportunity.

Champions: *GCHP, GCHS, SHPO*

Complete a community outreach and pursue listing of NRHP eligible sites and neighborhoods

Local champions of historic preservation, with a strengthened partnership with the SHPO, should continue their community outreach efforts to inform property owners and community leaders about the benefits of listing on the NRHP. This effort should be followed by listing as many eligible structures and districts as is politically feasible.

Champions: *SHPO, GCHP, GCHS*



Identify the criteria for quality livable neighborhoods in Beatrice, Including the downtown

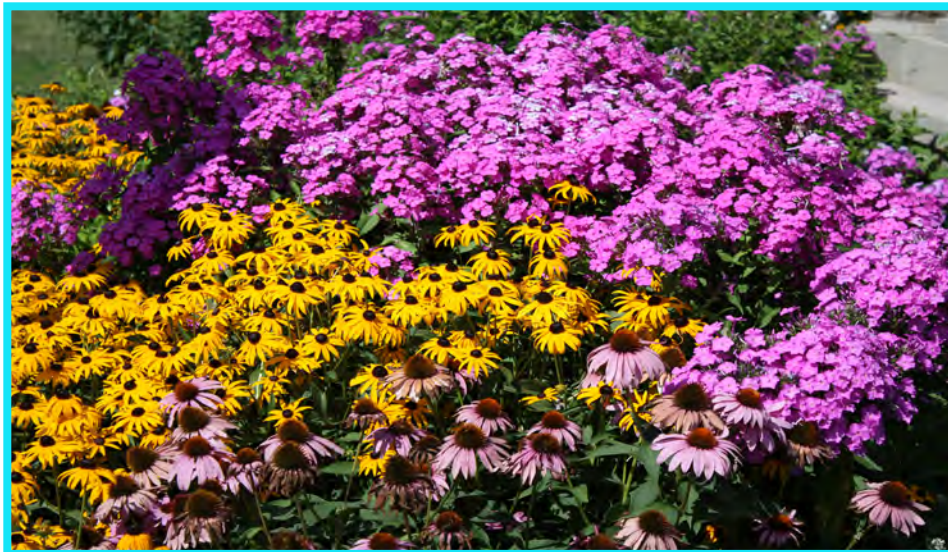
What makes a quality, livable neighborhood in Beatrice? The community can look to established and evolving measures of livability from the APA and AIA, and utilize planning students from the University of Nebraska's Community & Regional Planning program to conduct neighborhood and community input sessions as part of a studio.

Champions: *Main Street Beatrice, Chamber, City*

Community outreach and property assistance for historically appropriate restoration and maintenance

Increasing public awareness of the positive, sustainable impacts of historic preservation, and the stewardship of historic resources for future generations, should be coupled with financial incentives for a range of income levels and housing configurations to fill the gap often experienced with historically appropriate rehabilitation of historic structures.

Champions: *Main Street Beatrice, City, GCHP, GCHS*



Open Space and Connectivity Actions

Actions were developed for each Visioning Statement and provide a basis for implementation. Each action has been classified according to timing: immediate indicates that it can be planned and executed within six months to one year; short-term actions can be planned and executed within three years; and long term actions can be planned and executed from three to five years, occasionally more.

Beatrice will be a regional destination by virtue of its dynamic downtown and connection to Big Blue River and Gateway National Monument of America.

Immediate Actions

Tie in with Heritage Parkway

Big Blue River Coastal Cleanup

Steps and dock for access to the Big Blue River

Short-Term Actions

Pedestrian bridge across the Big Blue River

Homestead National Monument Trail

Multi-use trail paralleling the river

Bike lane along the road

Connect trails to Heritage Areas

Multi-use crossing at covered bridge

Corridors into town

Wayfinding

Trees (short - long term)

Trails (short- long term)

Land use/ Limited Industrial (Short - Long term)

Bioswales along corridors (Short-Long term)

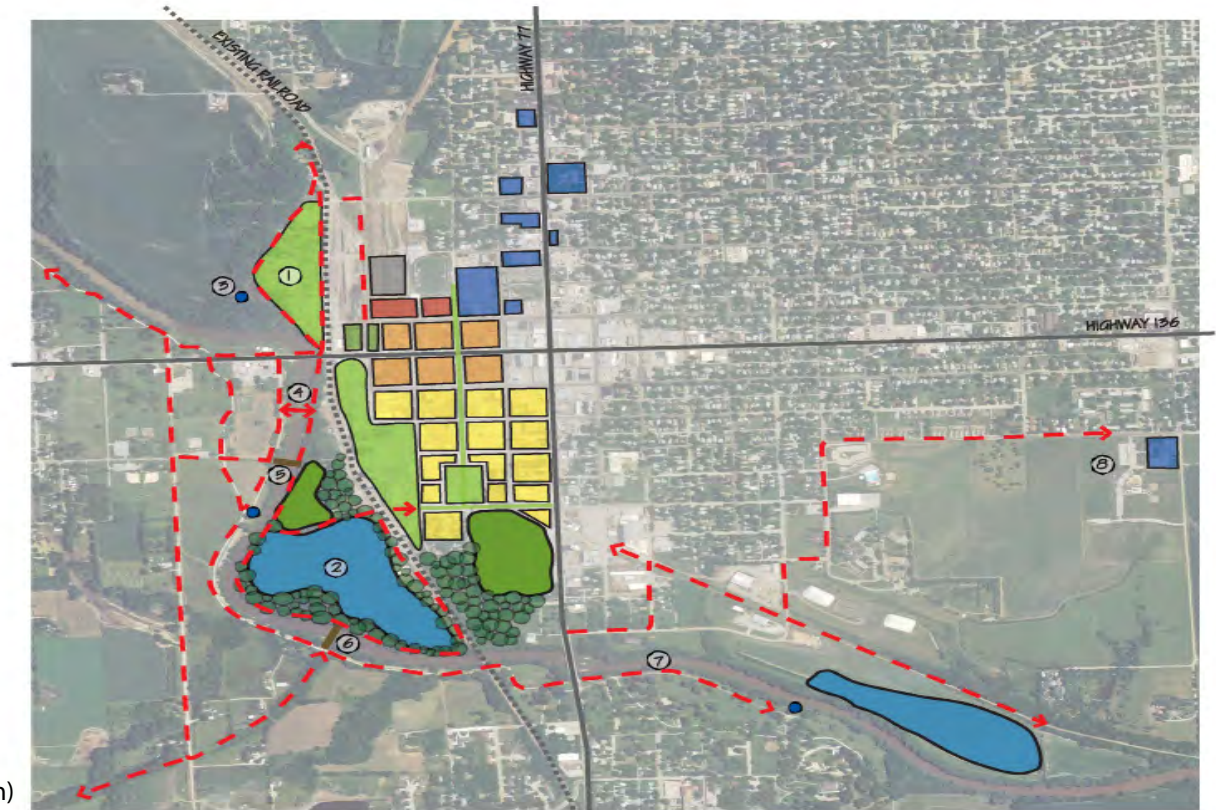
Bike Shop/Rentals

Concession rentals

Surrey at new lake and tours of downtown

Implement naturalize system to treat water-with cities

Free Bikes + Rentable Surries



Long Term Actions

Disposal of Animal Manures - Pilot Project with Anaerobic Digester

Make Beatrice the watershed capital of Nebraska including upstream influences.

Immediate Actions

Irrigation

(implement LEED Credit Req.) Water Conservation

Other programmed activities in Greenways

Open space and trails - Green thumb army

Landscape - less monoculture

Target areas/landscape

Adopt a Trail/Lakeshore

Trails to Inspire, Unify, and Connect to the environment

Residential Stormwater Stewardship

-On site treatment

-Green Roof

-Smaller Lawn Areas

-Use of Cisterns

-Rain Gardens



Implement Education program regarding environmental stewardship of the Big Blue River

Schools

Parents

Farmer meetings

Schools Upstream =AmeriCorps

Develop Curriculum

Ongoing Education

Short Term Actions

Sustainable Landscapes - Small Scale

Xeriscape Guidelines

Residential Stewardship Program

Utilizing Beatrice's open space and trails to inspire and unify the community and connect to the environment.

Immediate Actions

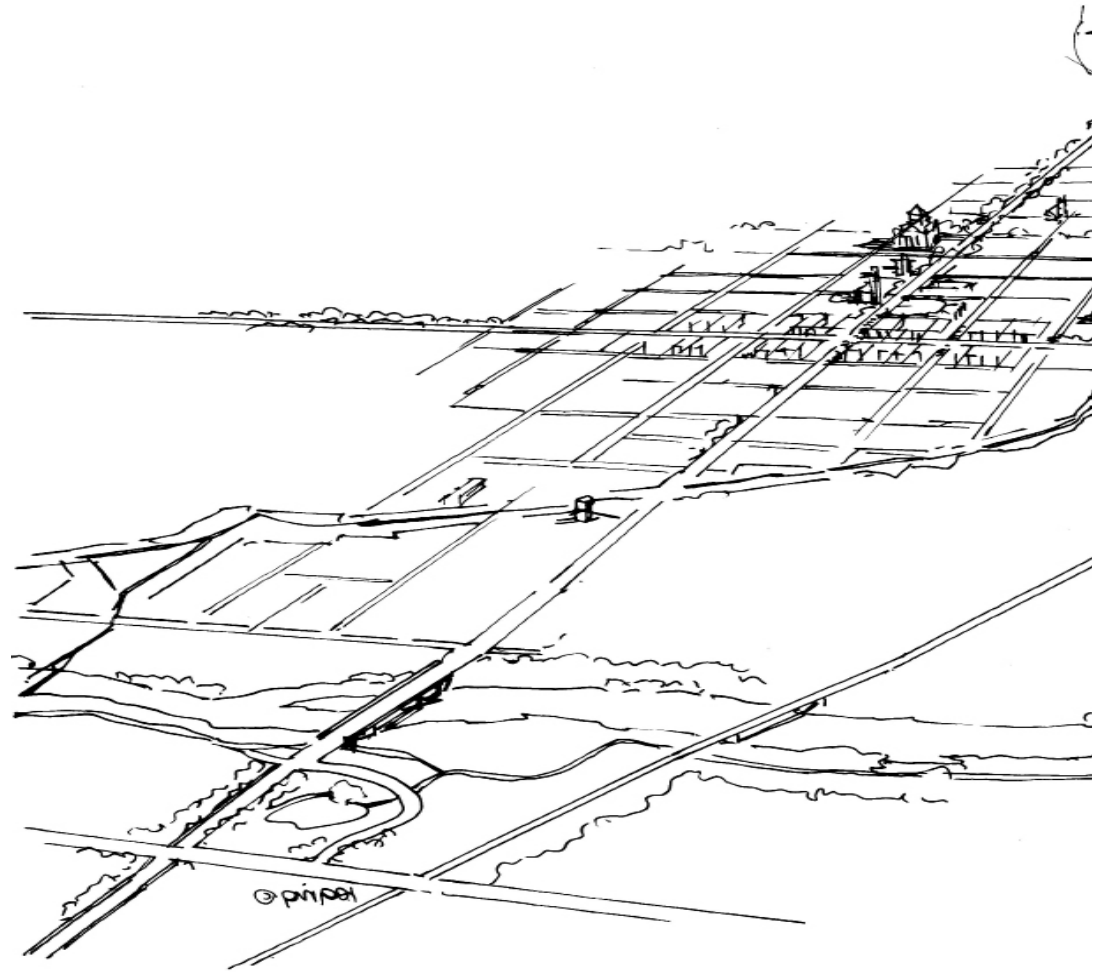
Connections

-Update Trail Master Plan

-Inventory and assessment

-Frequently Update (5-yr., 10-yr.)

Group Bike Tours



CONCLUSION

Will your great grandchildren choose to live here?

This report contains a number of general and specific recommendations based on the assessment of the National SDAT team and the input of many local residents and stakeholders. The next step is to use this information to the benefit of the people of Beatrice to craft a truly sustainable future through the planning and implementation of the vision and action items presented. There are a few overriding thoughts to keep in mind as this process goes forward:

Organize around the Action Plan It will take many people and many organizations to realize the vision and specific action items listed in this report. Organize people, schedules, and other resources around this plan to see that the vision becomes action and the actions become results.

Stay Involved If you have read through or contributed to this report, you are already involved. Continue to participate but also to seek out other voices for their participation in the processes of decision making. Many people from many different backgrounds participated in the SDAT process, but it was noted that others couldn't be there. Find ways to reach out and engage more of the community for input and acceptance of the sustainability principles ultimately made part of the implementation plan.

Follow Through The AIA staff and team leader of the SDAT are available for follow up support in the form of phone calls, additional information if available, and a follow up visit in Summer of 2010. Take advantage of these resources to help leverage and move forward the good work that has been started here.

Focus on Community: Will your great grandchildren choose to live here?

Think beyond today to see the Beatrice of future generations, not just the immediate needs of today.



ENTRY BRIDGE FROM WEST

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS



Peter Arsenault, SDAT Team Leader

Peter J. Arsenault, AIA, NCARB, LEED® AP, is a registered architect and sustainability consultant located near Syracuse, New York. A 1977 graduate of Syracuse University, he earned degrees in both architecture and sociology with an emphasis on urban design and environmental planning. Since 1980, even before the term “green” architecture was popularized, he has focused his work on the principles of energy consciousness, environmental sensibility and sustainable design.

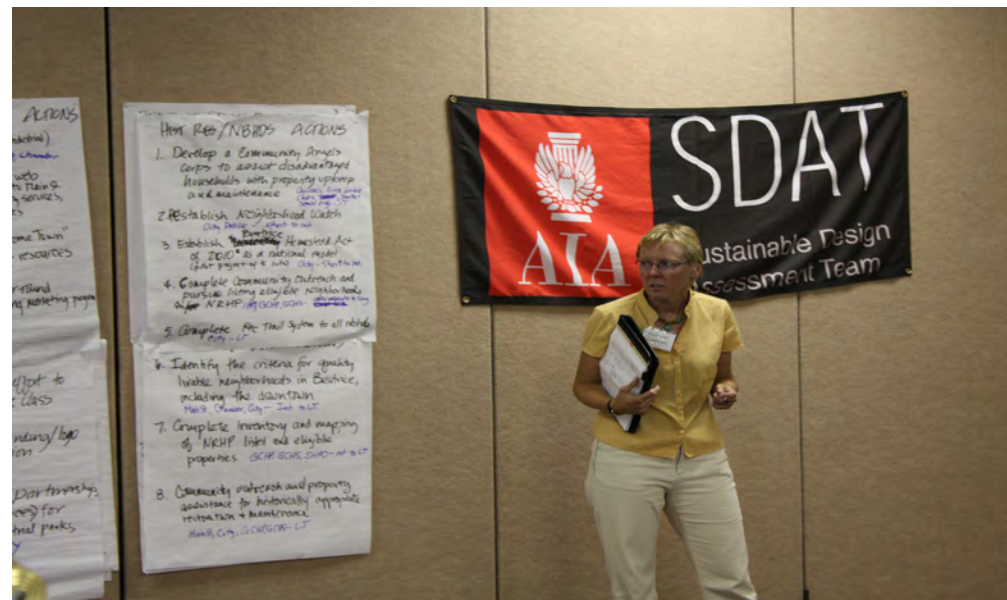
Peter has managed design teams and brought green and sustainable principles to notable projects throughout the United States for commercial corporations, government agencies, not-for-profit associations, and private clients as well as for educational, health care, and religious institutions. He is a licensed architect, a LEED Accredited Professional and a National Council of Architectural Registration Boards certificate holder with over 30 years of diversified experience in sustainable building design, consulting, and planning. In addition, he has been a sought after speaker and presenter at numerous state, regional and national seminars and conferences, primarily on the topic of sustainable design and green building practices.



Peter has been active in the American Institute of Architects (AIA) since becoming a member in the 1980's, currently serving as National Vice President and chair of the National Board Advocacy Committee. He has been an active member of the AIA Community by Design programs having served on related committees and as Team Leader for multiple Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) programs around the country. He is also a past president of the New York State and Central New York Components of the AIA, a member of the US Green Building Council and charter president of a green community advocacy organization known as Greening USA.

Laura Carstens, Historic Resources

Planning Services Manager Laura Carstens joined the City of Dubuque in September, 1989. The Planning Services Department is responsible for: administration and enforcement of the City's zoning, subdivision, floodplain, and historic preservation regulations, as well as long and short range planning efforts for the community, riverfront, downtown, bike/hike trail system, annexation, and other special areas. Carstens holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Studies from Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois, and a Master of Arts degree in Environmental Planning from the University of Illinois - Springfield. Previously, Carstens served as a Planner, and then Community Renewal Coordinator, for the City of Decatur, Illinois, and as Economic Development Director for the City of Maquoketa, Iowa. Carstens is a member of the American Planning Association (APA).



Bob Herman, AIA, LEED AP Master Planning/Regional Overview

Robert Herman is an architect with EDA, Inc., an architectural, planning and interior design firm based in Salt Lake City, Utah. He directs EDA's facility master planning, and urban design projects as well as its civic, cultural and educational facility design studios. He is chairman of EDA's sustainability group.

Bob is a past president of AIA Utah and the current president of The Utah Foundation for Architecture and the Built Environment. Most recently, he served as Utah's champion for AIA150 (the American Institute for Architect's sesquicentennial anniversary), helping to coordinate two of AIA's Blueprint for America initiatives: "Downtown Rising", a comprehensive planning project for Salt Lake City's central business and cultural district; and the Mountain Green DAT, a five day visioning charrette for a new town center for a rapidly growing northern Utah community. Additionally, he has served on the steering committee for the 1988 RUDAT in Ogden, Utah and as a local team member for the 2005 Cache Valley AIA Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT).



Bob is a member of University of Utah's College of Architecture + Planning Advisory Board. An active advocate for the arts, he has also served on the Utah Symphony Board of Directors, the Ballet West Board of Trustees, the Utah Arts Council Community Arts Advisory Committee, Weber State University's Department of Visual Arts Advisory Committee, the Egyptian Theatre Foundation Board of Trustees, and the Utah Governor's Awards for the Arts Advisory Board, among others. He also is a planning commissioner for Ogden, Utah and chaired the recent update of the city's Comprehensive Plan.

He has lectured locally and nationally on issues related to historic preservation, sustainable design and planning, urban planning, and public art master planning. He is a frequent lecturer and studio critic at the University of Utah's College of Architecture and Planning and has been an adjunct faculty member of Weber State University's Department of Visual Arts. Bob lives in Ogden, Utah with his wife and two sons.

Eduard Freer, Waterfront Development

Over the course of his 30-year professional career, Ed Freer has built a significant and award-winning portfolio in urban design, waterfront and downtown redevelopment, and community-based planning. Currently a Senior Urban Designer for JJR, he has also worked for HNTB, Seracuse Lawler + Partners, and The Architect Collaborative (TAC). Ed is highly accomplished at facilitating a consensus vision and broad community support for urban design and redevelopment initiatives. He has worked throughout the United States, with project work including:

Echo Bay Redevelopment, New Rochelle, NY

Central Wharf Redevelopment, Boston, MA

Weehawken – Hudson River Pedestrian Master Plan, Weehawken, NJ

Riverfront Redevelopment Plan, Paducah, KY

Marine District Redevelopment Plan, Seabrook, TX

Riverfront and Downtown Urban Design Plan, Sanford, FL

Waterfront District Plan, Cleveland, OH

Detroit RiverWalk, Detroit, MI

Lakeshore State Park and Milwaukee Art Museum Lakefront, Milwaukee, WI

Old Town, Fort Collins, CO

Mississippi Upper Harbor Master Plan, Red Wing, MN

Ed has served as a resource member to many civic task forces and professional panels and as a member of national design juries. He has been an urban design resource for the Mayors Institute on City Design and an Urban Waterfront Planner for the ULI – Advisory Panel for San Pedro, CA. He currently serves as an Advisory Board Member for the Waterfront Center.



Dr. Robert Neville

Dr. Neville is a Senior Hydrologist for the Bioengineering Group. For over three decades, Dr. Neville has identified innovative solutions for maintaining the health of watersheds and the quality of water in the context of urban and suburban development. He has an intimate understanding of the relationship between healthy human societies and functioning, dynamic ecosystems. As Project Manager, Dr. Neville integrates his experience in civil engineering, planning, and landscape architecture with his watershed stewardship skills to lead design teams to ecologically substantive results that achieve community sustainability. Dr. Neville is skilled in hydrology, soil science, watershed and community planning, stormwater management, and civil engineering.

Dr. Neville has guided interdisciplinary teams through hydrologic analysis of watersheds and the development of innovative solutions for the management of stormwater from new developments and urban retrofit projects. He authored a paper for the EPA on creation of an interactive website for developing stormwater management plans that conform to the NPDES Phase II regulations. He has broad practical experience in erosion and sediment control, and he is an expert in the application of bioengineered treatments for stormwater management and treatment.

Throughout his career, Dr. Neville has developed and refined an elegant and practical vision for watershed stewardship. His activities have included master planning, environmental impact statements, resource assessment, and ecosystem-based approaches to community planning and zoning. He has considerable experience working with developers in planning and design for housing and commercial developments. He has developed a process to compare projected growth patterns against bio-hydrologic processes and community values in order to show how uninformed decision-making will impact the health of ecosystems and social systems in the future. Additionally, he was instrumental in establishing the first National Science Foundation urban long-term ecological research (LTER) site on the Gwynns Falls Watershed in Baltimore, MD.



Chuck D'Aprix, Downtown Development/Economic Development

Chuck D'Aprix has over twenty-five years of extensive economic and community development experience. Mr. D'Aprix has served as the first President/Executive Director of three public/private economic development agencies and served as one of the first Main Street Managers in a diverse urban environment. In addition, he was Director of Marketing for a major Boston area developer where he worked to unite several economic development entities in a common progressive mission.

Mr. D'Aprix has consulted in large cities and small towns across the country and abroad and is often called upon to speak on issues related to community revitalization. He has taught in the Main Street Certification Institute, a downtown management certification program offered by The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Center. In addition, Mr. D'Aprix has been retained several times by the Main Street Center and State Main Street Programs to consult on Main Street programs across the country.

Mr. D'Aprix has conducted extensive research on economic development and downtown revitalization and is currently writing a book on downtown entrepreneurs who have persevered against nearly insurmountable odds. He has been quoted frequently in national and regional publications as well as in a number of professional journals. He has Masters Degrees in Public Communications from Syracuse University and Management from Lesley University. He also holds certificates in Charrette Planning and Public Meeting Facilitation from the National Charrette Institute, and a certificate in Urban Design from the Edward J. Bloustein School of Public Planning and Policy at Rutgers University.





Erin Degutis, ASLA, AICP, LEED AP Open space and Connectivity

Erin Degutis serves as a NEPA project manager and registered landscape architect for the URS Corporation, an international multi-disciplinary consulting firm, and is based out of the Denver, Colorado office. She has over ten years of experience in the public and private sectors, working for federal and local government agencies and consulting firms. Ms. Degutis previously called Tampa, Florida home and earned her Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture from Rutgers University and her Master's in landscape architecture from The University of Georgia. She previously participated on the Morristown, NJ SDAT as the team landscape architect and developed an open space/pedestrian plan and developed design recommendations to implement Green Streets in the town.

Ms. Degutis has worked on several components of the Everglades Restoration in Palm Beach, Broward, Hendry, and Miami-Dade County, Florida. She has an interest in sustainability and green building, and has assisted clients to incorporate sustainable principles in planning and design of their projects. She participated in writing and editing the award-winning handbook, "Visions of Smart Growth and Sustainability" which identifies planning and design strategies for implementing Smart Growth and sustainable principles specific to Florida.

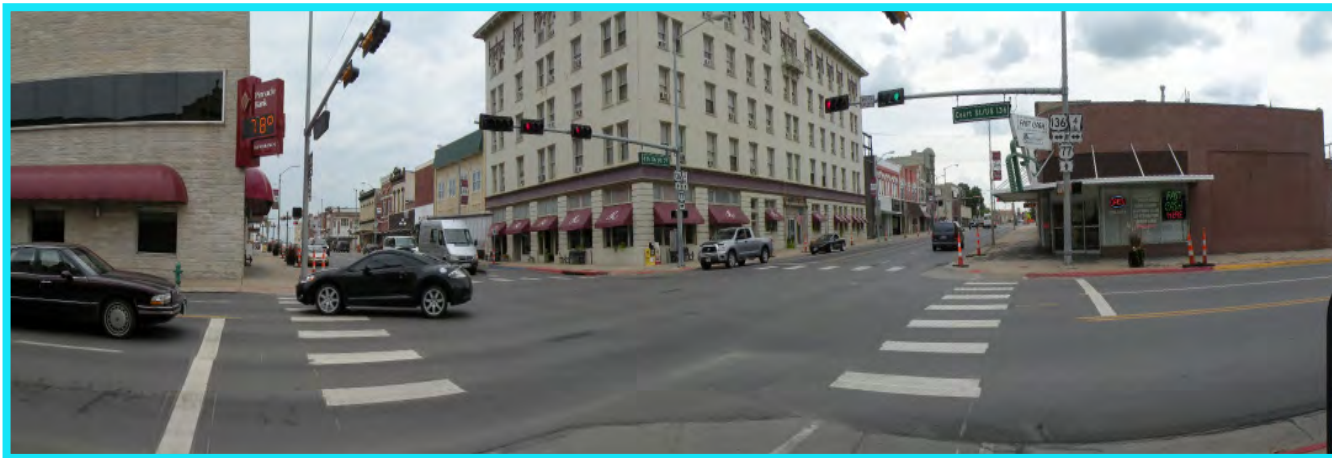
At present, Ms. Degutis is working on strategic planning and permitting for renewable energy and power projects in the Rocky Mountain region. Underway is an environmental analysis for a 150-megawatt windfarm in New Mexico, a strategic planning analysis for a 300-megawatt solar array in Colorado, and a visual resource protection plan for a drilling site in Wyoming.

AIA Center for Communities By Design Staff

Joel Mills, Director, Center for Communities by Design

Joel Mills provides process expertise, facilitation and support for the Center's Sustainable Design Assistance Team (SDAT) and Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) programs. In this capacity, he works with AIA components, members and partner organizations to provide technical assistance to communities across the country on sustainability and urban design.

His experience includes community-based technical assistance, process design, facilitation and training across a number of fields including juvenile justice reform, local government, education, family strengthening, civic media and emergency management. During the 1990s, Mr. Mills spent several years supporting international democratization initiatives by providing technical assistance to parliaments, political parties, local governments, civic and international organizations. His scope of work included constitutional design and governing systems, voter and civic education, election monitoring and administration, political party training and campaign strategy, collaborative governance, human rights and civil society capacity building. He maintains active memberships in the International Association of Facilitators (IAF), the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), and the Mid-Atlantic Facilitators Network. He also serves on several public and private boards.



Local Steering Committee and Working Groups

Susan and Phil Cook – Co-Chairs

Gary Lytle, City Council

Calvin Carey, City Council

Don Vetrovsky, Board of Public Works

Matt Bauman, County Board

Angela Fortier, Main Streets

Lori Warner, Chamber of Commerce

Terri Dageford, Gage Co. Economic Development

Stan Wirth, City Planning & Zoning

Dave Clabaugh – Natural Resource District

Wally Valasek, National Resource Conservation Service

Linda Grell – Keep Beatrice Beautiful

Allen Grell, Bill Armstrong, Jerry Ratigan, Kate Ratigan

Linda Clabaugh – Main Street Beatrice

Bob & Kelly Morgan

Terry Doyle

Laureen Riedesel – Historian

Dr. Weldon – Fitness Group

Gary Willard – Technical

Rex Behrands

Gissel Gonzales – Rowden

Mary Hanson – U.S. National Park Service

Kevin Pollard

Dennis Byars

Mark Engler

Joan Christen – Beatrice High School



Local AIA Volunteers

The team wishes to thank the following volunteers from AIA's Lincoln component that provided invaluable assistance to the project by sketching visual illustrations and graphics as well as providing technical expertise:

AIA Lincoln:

Tom Laging, FAIA,
Kevin Clark, AIA,
Nate Krug, AIA,
Cleve Reeves, AIA,
John Williams, ASLA

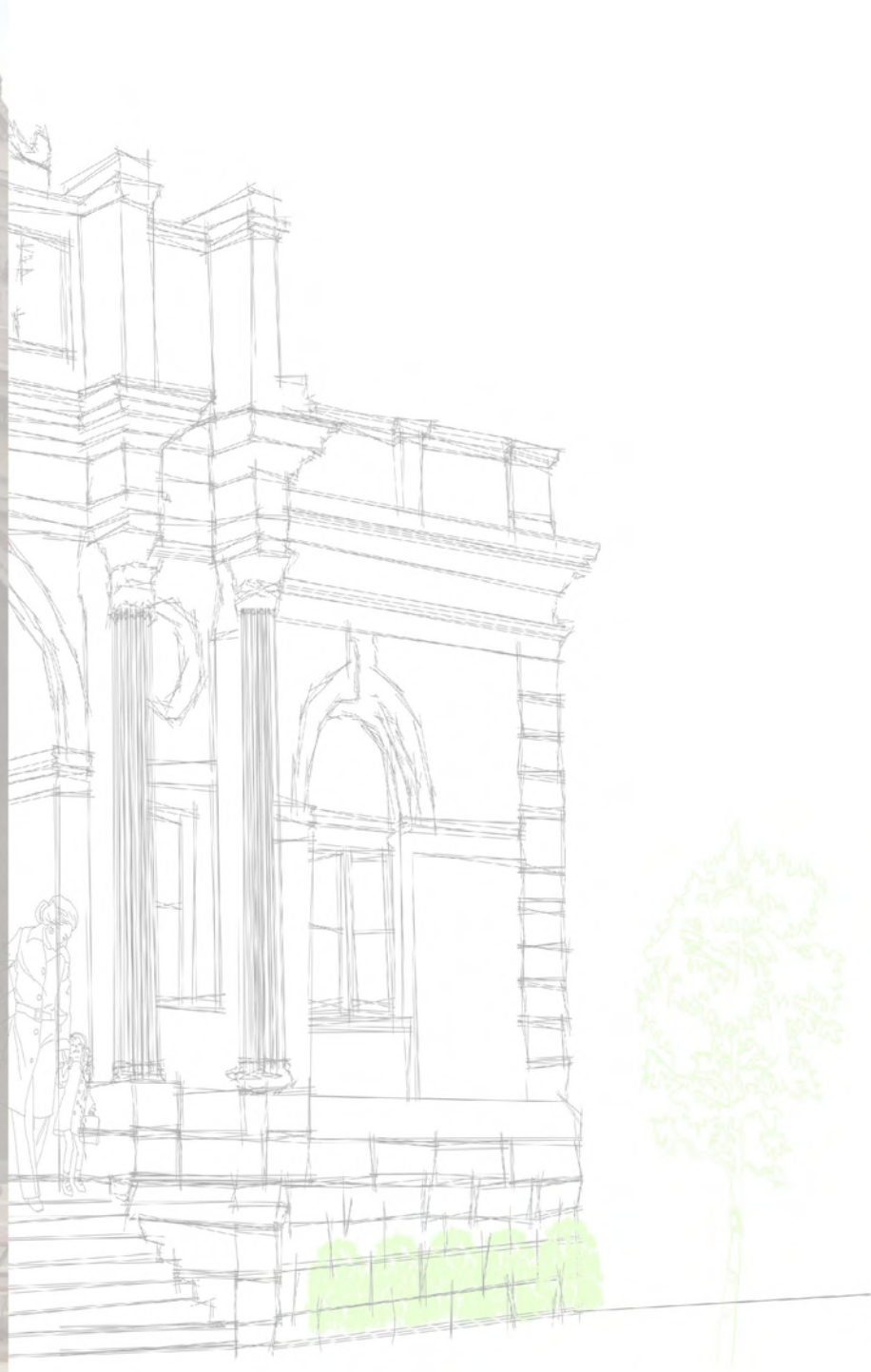
AIA Omaha:

Matthew Smith, AIA,
Jesse McConnell, Brad Elsbury

AIA Nebraska:

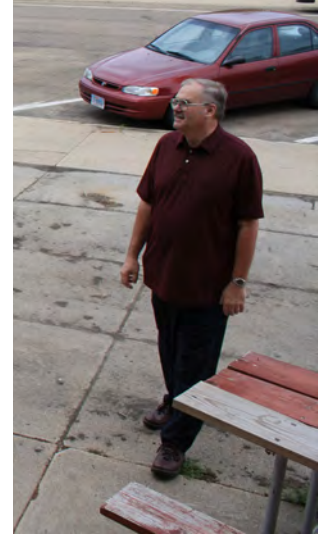
Sara A. Kay, Executive Director
Emily Jenkins





A SPECIAL THANK YOU.....

The SDAT Team wishes to extend a special thank you to Gary Willard, the stormwater coordinator for the City of Beatrice. Gary authored the application to the AIA for the project, served as a chair of the local steering committee, and spearheaded much of the organization and preparations for the team's visit. During the project, Gary suffered a tragic accident while photographing stormwater channels, falling into a deep ravine. The team wishes him a speedy recovery and hopes that his passion and commitment to the city will be matched by others as the community moves forward with implementation. The SDAT project would not have been possible, much less successful, if not for the efforts of Gary and other civic leaders in the community.



Gary Willard, City of Beatrice

APPENDIX C: ANATOMY OF A PROCESS

The Making of the Beatrice SDAT

