

T H E S E W A R D P L A N

THE COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR
SEWARD, NEBRASKA

PREPARED WITH THE
CITY OF SEWARD
BY
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IN ASSOCIATION WITH
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JULY, 2001

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INTRODUCTION

Seward is a community rich in assets, including an attractive physical environment, an academic community, a strong local economy and a good location. These advantages provide special opportunities for growth as a quality of life center for an entire region. The community's challenge is to define its future as it takes advantage of opportunities for growth. This future should allow development while maintaining the features of the community that make Seward distinctive.

This comprehensive development plan for Seward has two fundamental purposes. The first provides an essential legal basis for land use regulation such as zoning and subdivision control. Secondly, a modern comprehensive plan presents a unified and compelling vision for a community, derived from the aspirations of its citizens; and establishes the specific actions necessary to fulfill that vision.

The Legal Role

Communities prepare and adopt comprehensive plans for legal purposes. Nebraska State Statutes enable cities to adopt zoning and subdivision ordinances to promote the "health, safety, morals, or general welfare of the community". Land use regulations such as zoning ordinances recognize that people in a community live cooperatively and have certain responsibilities to one another. These regulations establish rules that govern how land is developed within a municipality and its extra-territorial jurisdiction.

However, under Nebraska law, a city may not adopt land use ordinances without first adopting a comprehensive development plan. This requirement derives from the premise that land use decisions should not be arbitrary, but should follow an accepted and reasonable concept of how the city should grow. Under state statutes, a comprehensive development plan must address, at a minimum, the following issues:

- Land use, or the planned distribution of activities and uses of land in the community.
- Transportation facilities.
- Community facilities, including recreation facilities, schools, public buildings, and infrastructure.
- Annexation, identifying those areas that may be appropriate for annexation in the future.

The Seward Plan provides the ongoing legal basis for the city's authority to regulate land use and development.

The Community Building Role

A comprehensive development plan has an even more significant role in the growth of a community. The plan establishes a picture of Seward's future, based on the participation of residents in the planning of their community. Beyond defining a vision, the plan presents a unified action program that will implement the city's goals. The plan is designed as a working document - a document that both defines the future and provides a working program for realizing the city's great potential.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: APPROACH AND FORMAT

The comprehensive plan presents a strategy-oriented approach to the future development of Seward. The plan includes nine chapters, corresponding to the city's most important physical development issues. Many of the traditional sections of a comprehensive plan, such as land use, housing, infrastructure, and transportation, are organized as recurring components to these thematic chapters. This enables the plan to tell the story of the city's future development and present integrated program for the city's growth.

Themes Within the Seward Plan

The overriding theme of the Seward Plan involves managing new growth and investment within a planned city development concept that improves traffic mobility, housing opportunity, potential for business growth, and recreational activities while reinforcing Seward's traditional features and distinctive images and character.

1. **A Profile of Seward** presents an analytical view of Seward's people, economy, and position within its region.
2. **Development in Character with the Place**, examines the patterns and relationships that make Seward special and considers challenges to its distinctive sense of place. The chapter creates a "Development Constitution" for Seward. The Constitution establishes the general principles and ideas that guide the more detailed elements of the plan.
3. **Growth and Land Use** examines development demands and projects the amount of residential, commercial and industrial land needed for the next twenty years. It presents an inventory of existing land use patterns, along with detailed strategies to guide future growth in new development areas.
4. **A Quality Urban Environment** considers one of Seward's most critical issues - its need to assure that growth occurs in beneficial ways, supporting the building of community. By uniting its subdivisions, Seward can create a community whose whole is greater than the mere sum of its parts. Important issues discussed here include measures to manage new development and planning principles that can guide the construction to result in a high-quality, small city environment. It presents a Community Design Concept and describes the projects and design principles necessary to realize the concept. It also contains detailed traffic analysis and a Transportation Plan concept that allows Seward to improve residents' mobility as the city continues to develop.
5. **Recreation Lifestyles** describes Seward's parks and sports facilities, and outdoor recreation as a way of life for its residents. It presents improvement plans for new and existing parks and trails, to be integrated into the City's growth, housing, and regional tourism efforts.
6. **Downtown Seward** proposes an innovative development program for the city's vital town center, a distinctive place that remains an active mixed use center. This theme analyzes downtown, and presents a multi-faceted downtown development program that includes the public environment, redevelopment opportunities, and management strategies designed to improve the district's already attractive environment. It is designed to create opportunities for additional business, and to improve the functioning and financial success of the district.
7. **Quality Public Services** examines the quality of public facilities and infrastructure within Seward. Facilities discussed in this chapter include City Hall, the library, city maintenance shops, and public safety buildings serving fire protection and law enforcement. These facilities are vital to the city's ability to support growth and serve present and future residents. It includes a detailed assessment of each public facility and provides a specific program for streets, sidewalks, infrastructure, and facility development.
8. **Housing and Neighborhoods** examines housing demand characteristics and presents strategies to assure that each area maintains a state of health. Important issues include the preservation of the city's older and historic housing stock, and provisions of additional rental and affordable housing opportunities.
9. **Implementing the Plan** draws together the analysis and policies of the plan into a program for implementation. It summarizes the recommendations and development policies of the plan, and presents an Implementation Schedule, listing proposed projects and the time-frame for their completion.

CHAPTER ONE

This chapter examines important demographic and regional trends that will affect Seward as it plans for its future. This analysis will examine the community's population and demographic dynamics, including an examination of the city's future population composition. In addition, it will analyze important regional issues that will affect the quality of the city's environment.

POPULATION HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

Population and population characteristics help to explain the condition of a community. This discussion will present important changes in the characteristics and dynamics of Seward's population. Table 1-1 exhibits historic population growth in Seward, compared to other regional cities.

Seward's early settlement coincided with the agricultural settlement of the Nebraska region during the mid to late 1800s. Its location along the Big Blue River provides excellent farm land and a natural transportation route. Seward experienced steady growth during the early 1900s. With the completion of the Classical revival-style courthouse in 1907 the community presented an atmosphere of success and prosperity that steadily helped attract increasing numbers of new residents. Seward continued to experience steady growth throughout the century and did not see a decline until the farm crisis years of the 1980s.

-Seward's population grew at a faster rate through the mid 1900s, than comparable cities.

Seward gained population during the Great Depression and in the post-war period but lagged significantly behind other communities in the state including Blair and Lexington. This trend changed dramatically during from 1950 to 1970 as Seward grow at a faster rate than any of the comparable cities. Communities across Nebraska experienced accelerated growth rates during this period but only Blair comes close to Seward 68% increase in population. Since 1970 Seward's growth rate has significantly slowed, including a decrease in population during the 1980s.

Table 1-1: Population Change for Seward and other Regional Cities, 1930-1990

	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1998	% Change 1930-50	% Change 1950-70	% Change 1970-90
Seward	2,737	2,826	3,154	4,208	5,294	5,713	5,634	6,113	15.24	67.85	6.42
Seward County	15,938	14,167	13,155	13,581	14,460	15,789	15,450	16,299	-17.46	9.92	6.85
Chadron	4,606	4,262	4,687	5,079	5,853	5,933	5,588	5,760	1.76	24.88	-4.53
Dawes County	11,493	10,128	9,708	9,536	9,693	9,609	9,021	8,979	-15.53	-0.15	-6.9
York	5,712	5,383	6,178	6,173	6,778	7,723	7,884	7,974	8.12	9.71	16.32
York County	17,239	14,874	14,346	13,724	13,685	14,798	14,428	14,512	-16.78	-4.61	5.43
Hastings	15,490	15,145	20,211	21,412	23,580	23,045	22,837	21,356	30.48	16.67	-3.15
Grand Island	18,041	19,130	22,682	25,743	32,358	33,180	39,386	41,392	25.72	42.66	21.72
South Sioux City	3,927	4,556	5,557	7,200	7,920	9,339	9,677	11,415	41.51	42.52	22.18
Blair	2,791	3,289	3,815	4,931	6,106	6,418	6,860	7,566	36.69	60.05	12.35
Lexington	2,962	3,688	5,068	5,572	5,654	7,040	6,601	8,976	71.11	11.56	16.7

- Seward has accounted for a steadily increasing share of Seward County's population.

From 1930 to 1950, Seward County lost approximately 24% of its population, while the City of Seward increased by 15%. The City of Seward would continue to increase its share of the county's population throughout the 20th Century. However, Seward County has successfully retained population, compared to similar counties.

TABLE 1-2: Population Distribution in Comparable Counties, 1930-1990

Year	Proportion of County Population Beyond City Limits		
	Seward Outside of Seward	Dawes Outside of Chadron	York Outside of York
1930	82.83	59.92	66.87
1940	80.05	57.89	63.81
1950	76.02	51.72	56.94
1960	69.02	46.74	55.02
1970	63.39	39.62	50.47
1980	63.82	38.26	47.81
1990	63.53	38.06	45.36

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, 200

Population Dynamics and Migration

Population change in a town is explained by three basic factors:

- *A comparison of births and deaths.* If more people are born in a community than die, the population of the town will increase. Therefore, a city with more population in younger age groups (particularly with people in childbearing or family formation years) will tend to grow.
- *Migration patterns.* During any period in a city's life, people move in and out. If more people come to the city than leave, its population will tend to increase. A community that is building new housing may experience significant in-migration, some of which are residents new to the city, while others are relocating from surrounding rural communities.
- *Annexation.* Annexation of large residential populations increase a community's population.

In order to assess the dynamics of Seward's population during the 1980s, the city's expected population based solely on natural population change is calculated and compared with the actual outcome of the 1990 census.

These calculations are based on the following assumptions:

- Use of a cohort-survival method to develop predictions. This method "ages" a five-year age range of people by computing how many of them will survive into the next five year period. The cohort survival rates that were used were developed by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- Generally, birth rates in Nebraska tend to approximate 15 per 1,000 residents. However, overall birth rates are related to the numbers of people in various age groups of the population.

Table 1-3 summarizes the results of this analysis. It indicates that natural population change would have predicted a 1990 population of 6,225, an increase of 512 people or 8.96%. The city's actual 1990 population of 5,634 indicates that the population decreased by 79 persons during the 1980s, signifying a substantial out-migration rate.

TABLE 1-3: Seward's Population: Predicted vs. Actual Population Change, 1980-1990

	1980	1990	Change	%
Predicted Population				
(based on survival and birth rates)	5,713	6,225	512	8.96
Actual Population	5,713	5,634	-79	-1.38

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, 200

Table 1-4 compares predicted and actual population change for each age group in the city. The predicted population projects how many people would be in each age group in 1990 if the city had experienced neither migration nor population increases caused by annexation. The variance percentage shows how well this prediction agrees with reality — whether people in a given age group tended to move into or out of Seward.

- *Seward experienced an in-migration among the college age cohort during the 1980s.* The actual 1990 population indicated an in-migration of 459 residents between the ages of 15 and 24 years old. Concordia College and Seward's proximity to colleges in Lincoln and Milford likely accounted for the significant increase.
- *Young families (people ranging from 25 to 35 years in 1990) displayed the greatest likelihood of out-migration during the 1980s.* This high statistical rate is an artifact of college students moving out of the city following the completion of their education.
- *Seniors, most notably people over age 70 in 1980, were attracted to Seward in significant numbers.* As a result, this population showed a substantial increase over predicted 1990 population.

Table 1-4 : Predicted and Actual Age Cohort Changes: All Residents, 1980-1990

Age Group	1990		1990 Actual	(Actual) - (Predicted)	% Variance: actual/predicted
	1980 Actual	Predicted			
Under 5	400	616	359	-257	-4.17
4 to 9	334	563	441	-122	-21.67
10 to 14	324	398	389	-9	-2.26
15-19	654	332	516	184	55.42
20-24	1011	321	596	275	85.67
25-29	448	646	338	-308	-47.68
30-34	329	998	396	-602	-60.32
35-39	217	441	400	-41	-9.3
40-44	263	322	306	-16	-4.97
45-49	220	210	202	-8	-3.81
50-54	209	251	245	-6	-2.39
55-59	232	204	214	10	4.9
60-64	224	186	203	17	9.14
65-69	236	196	240	44	22.45
70-74	206	173	235	62	35.84
75-79	142	160	205	45	28.13
Over 80	263	205	349	144	70.24
Total	5,713	6,225	5,634	-591	-9.49

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Total Fertility Rates, 1988; National Center for Health Statistics, Historical Survival Rates; RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, Inc., 1999

Table 1-5 illustrates changes in age distribution for Seward.

- *The median age of Seward's population increased during the 1980's, from 26.5 in 1980 to 32.2 in 1990.*

This rise is attributable to declines among young adults and an increase among those over the age of 30. Youth and adults ages 15-29 made up the greatest proportional decline within the total population, accounting for 26% of all residents in 1990, compared to 37% in 1980. At the same time Seward's population over the age of 65 increased by 21% during the 1980s.

TABLE 1-5: Age Composition as Percent of Total Census Population, 1980-1990

Age Group	1980 Pop	1990 Pop	Change 1980-1990	% of Total 1980	% of Total 1990
Under 5	400	359	-41	7	6.37
5 to 9	334	441	107	5.85	7.83
10 to 14	324	389	65	5.67	6.9
15-19	654	516	-138	11.45	9.16
20-24	1011	596	-415	17.7	10.58
25-29	448	338	-110	7.84	6
30-34	329	396	67	5.76	7.03
35-39	217	400	183	3.8	7.1
40-44	263	306	43	4.6	5.43
45-49	220	202	-18	3.85	3.59
50-54	209	245	36	3.66	4.35
55-59	232	214	-18	4.06	3.8
60-64	224	203	-21	3.92	3.6
65-69	236	240	4	4.13	4.26
70-74	206	235	29	3.61	4.17
75-79	142	205	63	2.49	3.64
Over 80	263	349	86	4.6	6.19
Median Age	26.5	32.2			

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, 2000

•The city's proportion of adults aged 30-44 increased from 14% in 1980 to 18% in 1990.

An increase of young adults in family formation age cohorts has influenced the city's proportion of young children. The constitutes an "echo" effect of the growing number of young adults age 30-40.

Seward has always attracted young Nebraskans as a place to attend college, but as seen in the comparison between natural and actual population growth during the 1980s Seward has not retained these cohorts after finishing college. In a related trend, more young adults across the country are enrolling in college focusing on trade programs such as those offered at Southeast Community College in Milford. Retaining these students after college offers great promise to strengthen Seward's economic, educational and civic life.

In summary, Seward's age distribution indicates that:

- Seward continues to be a relatively young community, and an attractive living environment for families with young children. Seward does need to ensure that future out-migration among those 25-44 does not continue by providing additional economic opportunities.
- Despite out-migration during the 1980s young adults 30-45 and therefore young children make up an increasing proportion of the city's population.
- The number of mature adults (age 50-65) has remained steady during the 1980s. A decline in this cohort of peak-earning level persons has important implications on the local economy.

Population Projections

Projecting the future size and makeup of Seward’s population helps predict the future demographic character of the town. This is critically important for the city’s planning and policy decisions regarding future investments and growth.

Future population for Seward is forecast by:

- Computing probable changes in Seward’s existing population. The calculation of the “base” population of the city assumes no net migration.
- Basing population forecasts on 1990 Census statistics for age distribution. As before, the cohort survival method is used to project population, utilizing birth and death rates developed by the Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics.
- Six migration models have been utilized, designed to be relevant to the city’s likely potential for growth. These correspond to migration rates of +0%, +2.0%, +4.0%, +6.0%, +8.0% and +12.0%.

Table 1-6 displays the population projections for these various population scenarios in Seward.

TABLE 1-6: Seward Population Projections, 1990-2020, Low Birth Scenario

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change 1990-2020
No net migration	5,634	5,666	5,788	5,893	5,972	6,065	6,160	9.34
+2.0% migration	5,634	5,723	5,904	6,071	6,215	6,374	6,539	16.06
+4.0% migration	5,634	5,780	6,022	6,254	6,465	6,696	6,937	23.13
+6.0% migration	5,634	5,836	6,140	6,439	6,722	7,031	7,355	30.55
+8.0% migration	5,634	5,893	6,260	6,629	6,987	7,391	7,796	38.37
+12.0% migration	5,634	6,006	6,503	7,019	7,540	8,116	8,738	55.09

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census;

RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, 200

When determining the migration patterns for the city of Seward three sources were used, the State of Nebraska, Claritas, Inc. and an estimate based on construction activity since 1990. The State’s estimated 1998 population is 6,123, Claritas estimates a 1999 population of 6,204 and based on construction activity in the city an approximate population of 6,416. Using these estimates the projection scenario that most closely approximates Seward’s likely future population growth is a +8.0% migration rate, with a low series birth rate. This would result in a local population of nearly 7,796 persons by the year 2020, representing a twenty year growth rate of 38.37%, or an annual rate of about 1.01%.

The experience of the 1980s indicates that Seward has been capable of attracting new young adults and elderly residents to the city. If the city provides opportunities for new growth, desirable residential sites, and high quality education and medical support services, it should be able to sustain these young adults as they enter their thirties and forties.

Potential growth in Seward could exceed present trends. Seward may grow well beyond these projections because of its environment, the amenity of its “small town” qualities, the reputation of the community as a center for learning and culture, and the successes of its employers and the local economy. The continued growth of commercial and industrial development to the south of the city may produce additional employment opportunities. Under such an alternate future development scenario, the city future population growth could accelerate. The Seward Plan’s land use concept accommodates this potential by designating four growth centers in the Northwest, Eastern and Southern parts of the city, that can be developed following traditional town-building principles to meet future housing demand.

Summary

Seward has grown significantly since 1930, initially in response to the expansion of the interstate system and agriculture, and later the result of natural increases that accompanied that population. The projections in this plan become very important in establishing development policies for the city. Seward, as a growing community, must assure that growth occurs in places that will provide the greatest benefits to the city and its residents. A key premise of this plan is creating a framework for planned growth. This means that development areas are designated that relate to the amount of growth that the city can realistically expect. This approach assures that transportation and utility systems are designed and built in an orderly and cost-effective way, and that the city ultimately takes full economic advantage of its expansion.

The opposite approach, in which development is undirected and diffuse, can result in expensive initial development costs and overextended public services. As a result, the public cost of supporting new growth is increased, also increasing the burdens placed on the city's taxpayers.

Population projection is an inexact science to be sure. However, projections can help a city set out its priorities. A clear future challenge for Seward is its ability to sustain growth and accommodate it in a cost-effective, economical and high quality community development structure.

EMPLOYMENT

Seward's economy is based on local employment opportunities within the retail, education and manufacturing fields. In 1990 most residents worked within the city, or at sites just outside the city. This section examines various economic characteristics and dynamics of Seward's population, in order to establish a basis for economic planning.

- *Seward residents are more likely to have jobs in retail trade, education, manufacturing and health services, but less likely to be employed in wholesale trade, construction or communications/ utilities.*

Table 1-7 compares the employment makeup of Seward's residents with those of Seward County for 1990. This information indicates that Seward County residents experienced a similar pattern of employment as most residents were employed in retail trade, education or manufacturing within the county. The similarity is probably the result of the proximity of Interstate 80 and Lincoln. The influence of Seward's civic institutions is evident by the large number of residents employed in health services, public administration and education.

TABLE 1-7: Employment by Industry; Seward and Seward County, 1990

Industry	City of Seward		Seward County	
	Employed	%	Employed	%
Total Employed	2,832	100	7,841	100
Agriculture, mining	82	2.9	825	10.52
Construction	53	1.87	334	4.26
Manufacturing	408	14.41	1,088	13.88
Transportation	134	4.73	462	5.89
Communications and Utilities	53	1.87	192	2.45
Wholesale Trade	44	1.55	207	2.64
Retail Trade	590	20.83	1,456	18.57
FIRE	135	4.77	300	3.83
Nonprofessional Services	218	7.7	626	7.98
Health Services	228	8.05	581	7.41
Education	564	19.92	1,100	14.16
Professional	150	5.3	350	4.46
Public Administration	173	6.11	310	3.95

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, 2000

Table 1-8 compares the types of jobs held by Seward's residents in 1990 to Seward County. In general, the occupational profile of the City and County are similar.

- *Seward residents in 1990 were more likely to be employed in service, managerial and sales occupations, while the county saw a large number of residents employed in precision production and repair.*

Service employment comprises about 34% of all jobs held by Seward residents and another 24% by managerial and professional occupations. Seward County also has a large number of residents employed in these areas and a strong number employed in precision production, craft and repair occupations. Seward County employs more people in farming, forestry, and fishing occupations than the City of Seward, 9.46% and 2.58% respectively.

TABLE 1-8: Employment by Occupation: Seward and Seward County, 1990

Industry	City of Seward		Seward County	
	Employed	%	Employed	%
Employment	2,832	100	7,841	100
Managerial and professional occupations	684	24.15	1,472	18.77
Technical and sales	475	16.77	192	2.45
Service occupations	972	34.32	3,177	40.52
Farming, forestry and fishing occupations	73	2.58	742	9.46
Precision production, craft and repair	270	9.53	898	11.45
Transportation, movers	111	3.92	481	6.13
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	247	8.72	331	11.21

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census;

RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, 200

TABLE 1-9: 1999 Income Distribution for Households by Percentage

	Under \$10,000	\$10,000- 14,999	\$15,000- 24,999	\$25,000- 34,999	\$35,000- 49,999	\$50,000- 74,999	Over \$75,000	1998 Median HH Income (\$)
Seward	8.3	7.4	16.9	17.5	21.2	19	9.6	34,956
Nebraska	9.2	7.4	15.5	14.3	17.7	19.8	16.2	37,374
USA*	10.3	7.8	14	13.2	16	18.6	20.1	38,885

* Based on 1998 estimates

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; Claritas, Inc

Table 1-9 displays 1998 income distributions for Seward, Nebraska and the United States.

• *In comparison to other areas, Seward contains a larger number of middle-income households.*

In 1999, Seward's median income was estimated at \$34,956, which is comparable to that of the state as a whole. Seward has a balance of both lower and higher income residents with the largest number of residents employed in service and professional occupations. Seward demonstrates a trend that is opposite of most rural Nebraska communities with a majority of residents earning between \$25,000 and \$74,999 a year.

Seward has fewer residents in both the lowest and highest income brackets as compared to the state and nation as a whole.

About 15.7% of Seward's households earn under \$15,000 as compared to 16.6% of the state and 18.1% of the nation. Seward also had fewer residents in the highest income brackets as compared to the state and the nation. Within Seward 28.6% of the population earned over \$50,000 while 36% of the States residents fell within this income bracket. Generally, Seward still shows a greater percentage of residents in the higher income brackets than other rural areas.

Seward's income distribution and employment characteristics suggest that future residential and economic development efforts should be concentrated on continuing to attract professional and managerial sectors of the economy but also accommodating those within the manufacturing and service sectors. Seward's location and demographic characteristics help it attract industries that can work with the educational and technical training opportunities available in Seward and in near by Lincoln.

Taxable Retail Sales

Table 1-10 compares retail changes between 1991 and 1997 with competitive markets. It is clear that Seward has often experienced the pull of Lincoln's retail power. This is illustrated by Seward's slow retail growth rate compared to other Nebraska cities. Seward's retail growth is affected by the number of large retailers who located outside the city limits along Highway 15 during the 1990's. As development continues to occur around Lincoln and specifically

along Highway 34, the trend toward retail leakage is likely to accelerate. Seward County's retail growth has also been slower than many other areas across Nebraska but the slight edge the county has over the City of Seward could indicate the influence of those retail businesses located just outside Seward City limits.

TABLE 1-10: Taxable Retail Sales (000's)

Community	1991	1993	1995	% Change	
				1997	1991-97
Seward	54,191	56,478	55,079	59,109	9.08
Seward County	67,269	72,033	70,554	76,486	13.7
York	84,712	88,167	98,535	111,449	31.56
Columbus	199,702	210,371	226,430	240,953	13.38
Grand Island	418,393	475,795	544,779	581,617	39.01
Lincoln	1,500,220	1,709,938	1,947,729	2,259,594	29.83
Omaha	3,869,008	4,375,389	4,827,811	5,369,677	38.79

Source: Nebraska Department of Revenue,
RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, Inc. 200

Commuting Patterns

Seward residents generally walk to work or work at home. The 21.1% of residents in this category is a higher than any other Nebraska community in Table 1-11. Even when compared with the other Interstate 80 communities of York (11.5%) and Waverly (7.9%) there is a significant difference. Table 1-12 does indicate a fairly average travel time as compared with other Nebraska communities. The almost thirteen minute travel time could indicate a number of people working outside the city limits and those that live within often choosing to walk to work.

TABLE 1-11: Commuting Patterns for Seward and Other Regional Cities, 1990

Community	Average Travel Time to Work	% Who Walk or Work at Home	% Use Public Transportation
Seward	12.8	21.1	--
Columbus	10.7	7.6	--
Fremont	16.1	6.2	--
Kearney	11.2	8.2	0.1
Hastings	12.1	8	--
Grand Island	13.1	6.1	0.1
Lincoln	15.6	7.8	2.2
York	10.3	11.5	0.3
Waverly	17.7	7.9	--
Omaha	18	5.8	2
Papillion	18.8	4.1	0.7

Source: 1990 Census;
RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, 200

Conclusions

- Seward residents are more likely to be employed in service, professional, managerial and technical jobs. This also influences the large number of residents within the middle and upper income brackets

- Seward's retail sector often competes with the Lincoln's regional market power. Many of its larger retail businesses have been located outside city limits which has also influenced its overall retail growth during the 1990's. Seward must continue to attract commercial development to both its downtown and to service growth areas to the north.
- Seward residents benefit from its "small town" mobility and amenities with 21% of the population either walking to work or working from home.

CHAPTER TWO

Seward is a leading community in its region. Part of this leadership grows from its standing as the county seat but also from excellent educational opportunities and lifestyle amenities. In Seward's early history its strategic location along the Blue River just south of the Platte Valley corridor helped it to flourish. Today location still plays a significant role in Seward's continued success. Its proximity to Interstate 80 and the large open spaces created by the Blue River and Plum Creek valleys continue to make Seward an attractive location. The combination of academic tradition and an outdoor environment complemented by a heritage of good community design have created a special setting — one that can be parlayed into greater economic growth and attraction for investment.

Seward is challenged to use these key resources as a lever for major community growth. Seward has grown steadily over the years and its small community environment has been an attraction for recent growth. This small community environment is generated from a sense of vitality and significant economic opportunity in an intimate context. It is important to note though that Seward does face forces in and around the community that will challenge these traditional qualities. Seward has the opportunity to experience tremendous growth in the coming years as more and more people look for the amenities that Seward offers along with Lincoln's diverse job market. It will be Seward's challenge to guide growth in a way that sustains the small community atmosphere and facilitates continued growth.

Future growth strategies should grow from a triad of features, including:

- 1. Natural and built environment.* Seward's location along the Blue River and Plum Creek Valleys is an asset to the community, creating opportunities for outdoor recreation. Its distinctive built environment, including a historic and architecturally distinguished town center, complement this natural quality.
- 2. Location.* Seward's adjacency to Interstate 80 and Lincoln provide opportunities that other comparable communities do not have. Interstate 80, an east/west national corridor, provides opportunities for both commercial and industrial development. At the same time, Seward's close proximity to Lincoln provides the opportunity for attracting residents who are looking for the wide range of employment options that Lincoln offers but the small town atmosphere that Seward provides.
- 3. Intellectual Resources.* Concordia University, established in 1894, provides resources and activities unusual in a community of Seward's size. Seward's proximity to both Southeast Community College in Milford and the University of Nebraska in Lincoln provide additional educational and cultural opportunities.

PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT

This section, then, considers the following physical features and patterns that give Seward a distinctive environment:

- **TOPOGRAPHY**
- **CROSSROADS**
- **COLLEGE-TOWN ANCHOR**
- **COMMUNITY STREET**
- **THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**
- **DOWNTOWN SEWARD**
- **PARKS**

It then presents a general philosophy for future community growth management, forming a Development Constitution that defines the general perspectives of the comprehensive plan.

TOPOGRAPHY

Seward lies within the valley of one of Nebraska's more important waterways, the Blue River. The original city plat lies perfectly between the flood plains of the Blue River and Plum Creek. This flat topography and prime farm land attracted the first settlers to the region and create an environment that continues to welcome residents.

Topographic influences have shaped the form of the city. Seward's downtown and job centers lie just to the north of the intersection of the Blue River and Plum Creek floodplains. These floodplains have directed growth through time. With large floodplains lying to the west and south, and a smaller one to the east, growth has generally occurred in a northerly direction. Only recently has development skipped over the converging floodplains to the south. The floodplains have also created an enormous opportunity for recreation and green space development that can link the edges of the community together.

CROSSROADS

Seward has developed as a crossroads in the transportation linkages of Nebraska. Train service first arrived in 1873 and was an important catalyst in the continued development of the community. Originally two rail lines converged near the junction of the Blue River and Plum Creek, providing Seward with transportation in all directions. Today the BNSF still cuts through the western and southern sections of the city.

As rail transportation gave way to the nation's highway system Seward again become a crossroads in the state's transportation system. The intersection of Highways 15 and 34 provides Seward with links to Lincoln, York and communities throughout northeast Nebraska. Highway 15 provides the most important link to the south. Seward's location just six miles north of the Interstate 80 and Highway 15 intersection provides the city access to one of the most important east/west corridors in the nation. As communities in the region continue to grow the importance of the intersection will continue to generate additional traffic and visibility.

COLLEGE-TOWN ANCHOR

Anchoring the eastern edge of the city is Concordia University. The stately buildings that encompass the 106 year old campus provide both an academic and environmental amenity to the City of Seward. Concordia University also provides cultural amenities through its arts and entertainment programs. The University has grown from a small one building facility to include 16 buildings and room for expansion to the east. Weller Hall's stately tower welcomes those to the campus and to the City of Seward. Concordia University provides the northern anchor to one of the city's civic street, Columbia Avenue. The street was Seward's original eastern boundary and is today the location of churches, Memorial Hospital and Concordia University.

COMMUNITY STREET

The Court House square became the heart of the city's early commercial district. The streets lining the square, Seward, Main, Fifth and Sixth connect the commercial heart of the city with the residential and industrial

developments of the community. All of these streets extend the commercial development around the square in an even manner.

Highway 34 and 15 follow Main and 6th Street respectively and extend Seward's commercial development to the edges of the city. These streets evolved into "community streets", important public spaces that link major community institutions and unites rather than divides neighborhoods. In American towns, community streets have a processional quality, becoming civic corridors that define the town and are magnets for people who are outside to exercise, experience the town, or see other people. Main and 6th Street have become more car dominated but the tree lined streets and brick connecting streets give a slower pace feel to the square area.

While the heart of these four "community streets" is made up of the Downtown and the Courthouse Square, their sequences begin on the edges of the city. Seward Street connects Moffit, Centennial and 4-H Park and the industrial development on the western edges of the city with the residential and civic institutions on the eastern edge. From the Courthouse Square Fifth Street proceeds north and south connecting the newest residential development to the north with the civic and commercial developments to the south. Main Street and Sixth Street extend to secondary commercial corridors on the western and southern edges of the city. The community street atmosphere of these two Highway corridors dissipates on its edges as the automobile becomes the dominate characteristic.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The architectural characteristics of Seward's buildings lend a third dimension to the interaction of land and layout in defining the character of the city. Seward's most visible architectural landmarks include the Seward County Court House and Weller Hall on Concordia Campus. However, the variety of high styles in the city's older residential, institutional, and commercial architecture gives the community distinctive buildings that showcases early twentieth century design.

The quality of the historic built environment is defined by:

- Traditional residential neighborhoods, generally radiating out from the Courthouse Square and are bounded by Ash Street, 8th Street, Hillcrest Drive and Columbia Avenue. While examples of construction of many periods are evident in these districts, most construction occurred between 1890 and the 1940s.
- Civic architecture, including the Seward County Courthouse, Seward City Hall, Seward Civic Center and the churches and educational buildings across the city provide a wide range of architectural styles that lend to the charm of the city.

DOWNTOWN SEWARD

Seward's city center, located around the Courthouse Square, has maintained its vitality as the community's primary civic center. The continued vitality is caused by several factors, including:

- The connection between the traditional center and surrounding residential neighborhoods. Many segments of the city's traditional street grid flow directly from neighborhoods into Downtown Seward.
- The scale and character of the district itself, including its historic buildings. The Downtown Seward commercial district contains many one and two-story brick structures that are excellent examples of early twentieth century commercial architecture. The numerous awnings provide a welcoming feel during any season.
- The connections between the traditional center and surrounding residential neighborhoods.

PARKS

Seward's location, adjacent to the Blue River and Plum Creek floodplains, has allowed it to take advantage of ideal recreation lands. These two floodplains form a natural greenway corridor that the city has utilized on its western

edge through the development of Moffit, Centennial, and 4-H Parks. The recent acquisition of Wilderness Park, an area along Plum Creek, has significantly increased Seward's park area and created a greenway corridor along its eastern edge. The corridor will provide a recreational linkage between residential development in the north and Downtown Seward. The development of an extensive park system will help to establish diversified recreational opportunities and define new roles for the city.

CHALLENGES

The previous discussion has described features and relationships that over time have made Seward distinctive. Yet, the forces that have changed town building and community development patterns in contemporary times also challenge Seward's traditional character. These challenges include:

- **COMMERCIAL CHANGE AND THE ROLE OF DOWNTOWN**
- **TRANSPORTATION ROUTES AND LAND PATTERNS**
- **REGIONAL GROWTH**
- **LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS**

Each of these challenges requires a concerted response if Seward hopes to fulfill its future development potential.

COMMERCIAL CHANGE AND THE ROLE OF DOWNTOWN

Seward's role as a small regional trade center and highway crossroads creates a demand for auto-oriented commercial development, including "big-box" retailers. These uses have gravitated toward Highway 15 south, connecting Seward to Interstate 80. The character of these new commercial developments, usually designed to accommodate automobiles, is different from traditional patterns and Seward's automobile-oriented mass retail development may be viewed as a threat to the strength of the traditional business district. On the other hand, in Seward, such development may also be an invitation to visitors to patronize different kinds of retailing in the town center. The downtown district must confront the need to redefine itself in the face of the challenge of new, large-scale retail development.

TRANSPORTATION ROUTES AND LAND PATTERNS

Highway access is both an asset and a challenge. North-south Highway 15 (6th Street), connecting northern Nebraska and Interstate 80, carries increasing traffic loads, including growing truck traffic. Local land use patterns including the emergence of 6th Street as a major commercial corridor, add traffic to this corridor. The heavy regional and local traffic streams make 6th Street a growing barrier, dividing the city east and west.

Seward's other principal highway, US Highway 34, provides an important link to the growing Lincoln area. As more commuters rely on the highway the city could experience rural residential development pressures to the east. The expressway feel that the highway generates on the eastern and western edges of the city has created a divide between the older industrial and new commercial development to the south and the residential development to the north. The city's challenge in the coming years will be balancing the development opportunities that these two highways generate and the barriers that they also create.

REGIONAL GROWTH

Seward will experience development pressure caused by two forces: local employment and population growth, and land availability. Seward's population growth has been steady, while development has spread from traditional sites in the city to outlying rural developments.

In Seward, these two forces along with the topography of the area tend to pull new urban residential development to the north and away from the traditional commercial centers. Acreage developments are also growing in popularity in the Seward area, reflecting the rural traditions of the surrounding region and offering rural lifestyles in reach of Lincoln's urban employment or amenities. The less expensive land compared to the Lincoln area could create premature urban growth - built at low cost because it is farther out of town and lacks standard city water and sewer services. Such development, introducing well and septic system into areas that can be logically provided with urban services, can block Seward's long-term growth. In addition rural residential development can create conflicts with major agricultural use. Finally, urbanites moving to low-density areas often expect the services of a municipality, placing heavy demands on county government.

In addition, population growth forecasts given in Chapter One: “Seward and Its People” establish development demands for future housing. If Seward meets this growth projection, it will generate a 20-year population increase of 1,530 people. Converted to housing unit demand, this suggests a 20-year demand of almost 800 additional units.

LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Contemporary land development regulations, including zoning and subdivision controls, follow principles of single use zoning districts and numerical regulators such as minimum setbacks from property lines. Land development regulations for Seward should maintain the city’s unique community character, provide flexibility to accommodate state of the art development while providing protection for neighborhood environments, and address issues of community appearance.

A DEVELOPMENT CONSTITUTION FOR SEWARD

The previous discussion defined patterns of the built environment that make Seward distinctive, and described challenges that can affect that character. Growth can radically change the quality of the community's environment. This has produced considerable debate in Seward over such questions as:

- How should the community manage growth?
- How will the community meet the growing demand for diverse housing choices?
- What impact will various infrastructure and land use decisions have on the economic strength of the city and its ability to support necessary public services?

If the city does not carefully regulate its growth, it will face high infrastructure costs, transportation congestion and a loss of community character. This would endanger the quality of community life that residents value. If it must be governed under a scenario of unmanaged growth, Seward will spend a higher proportion of its limited financial resources to pay for new infrastructure, with less money for recreation and educational services, renewal of the older parts of the city, housing rehabilitation, and measures to improve the appearance and liveability of the community.

This section presents a Development Constitution, with basic principles that should guide measures to improve Seward. Principles of the Constitution include:

- **A REGIONAL CITY OF NEARLY 7,800**
- **OFFICIAL MAP**
- **A UNIFIED CITY**
- **TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD PATTERNS**
- **TRANSPORTATION TO MEET CITY AND REGIONAL NEEDS**
- **A RECREATION LIFESTYLE**
- **A CENTER FOR NEW ENTERPRISE**
- **PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC SEWARD**
- **THE SEWARD ANNEXATION PLAN**

Each of these principles is discussed in the following section.

A REGIONAL CITY OF NEARLY 7,800

SEWARD SHOULD CAPITALIZE ON ITS ABILITY TO ATTRACT GROWTH AND WILL ACHIEVE A TARGET POPULATION OF NEARLY 7,800 DURING THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS.

Seward's vitality and status as a civic and educational center make it attractive to existing and future residents of central Nebraska. This attractiveness, combined with the probability of continued regional employment and population increases, will attract new residents to Seward and provide future growth opportunities.

Seward must grow and should position itself both to attract and manage this future development. Growth is necessary to maintain its vitality and diversity, enhance incomes and opportunities, support a strong retail community, and expand the tax base. The community should work to achieve a target population of 7,800 at the end of this twenty-year planning period. This projects a twenty-year population increase of about 1,500 residents, or 25%, over the next twenty years. In development terms, this is equivalent to about 480 new single-family units, and 320 new townhouses and multi-family units. This generates an average annual construction rate of 40 units. The land use implications of this population target are discussed in the next section, "Growth and Land Use".

OFFICIAL MAP

SEWARD SHOULD ADOPT AN OFFICIAL MAP WHICH PRE-PLANS FUTURE STREETS AND OPEN SPACES.

Seward's original 1868 plat adopted an official map for the city and established the street network, the size and layout of lots and the fundamental rhythms of the town. The official map was a momentous planning decision, because it created a context for future construction. People who built houses in town fit into this community pattern and assured the consistency of character that makes Seward distinctive. The concept of the "official map" was used throughout the nation as towns were built.

Contemporary land use planning is often less detailed, providing maps that outline future residential areas in fields of color. These plans do not define the basic elements that provide structure to a town, including street layouts, lot size, and open space reservations. As a result, these decisions are left to chance and to the decisions of individual developers. In the absence of an official map, the design of street systems and other features too often responds to internal, rather than community requirements.

For Seward to accommodate growth successfully, it must determine the character of that growth and assure that it enhances rather than alters the sense of the town. This can be accomplished by reviving the tradition of the Official Map — a preplanned framework of important streets and open spaces that establishes a community context that orders individual development decisions.

A UNIFIED CITY

PLANNING IN SEWARD SHOULD UNIFY EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS, BRIDGING PHYSICAL DIVISIONS BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH, AND SHOULD CONNECT NEW AND ESTABLISHED PARTS OF THE COMMUNITY.

Seward should emerge from the planning period as a unified city, linking previously separated parts. Components of this policy include:

- Defining and developing transportation links that link all parts of the city with one another and with major activity centers.
- Developing an open space system that produces a connected network of greenways, parks, and recreational attractions that make all major facilities the territory of all members of the community.
- Developing more diverse land uses on the northern and southern ends of the city away from the single use zones that divide a city.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD PATTERNS

NEW NEIGHBORHOODS IN SEWARD SHOULD FOLLOW THE PATTERNS OF TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS.

Modern development in Seward has tended to following the existing street grid but more recently suburban development has helped Seward meet its growing housing needs. Nonetheless, residential growth that occurs in Seward should incorporate some of the development patterns of the traditional community. Defining and enforcing these patterns allows the city's growth to strengthen, not dilute, its character. In addition, it offers new residents a built environment that is distinctive and consistent with the best image of Seward.

These traditional patterns include:

- Providing continuous street networks that link neighborhoods together and prevent the development of enclaves that are separated from the life of other parts of the city.
- Integrating parks and trails into neighborhood design.
- Using the street and open space systems of the city to create a unifying structure for urban development.

- Mixing uses and housing types.
- Defining street, sidewalk and setback dimensions that create the most desirable visual quality.
- Designing street sections and distances between building faces that produce desirable environments.
- Viewing streets as public spaces in addition to being conduits for automobiles.
- Using alleys for service access where appropriate.
- Encouraging development patterns that are important to Seward, including public spaces along the streets and parkway.

These patterns are defined in detail in Chapter Four: “Mobility for Urban Quality”, defining characteristics derived from Seward traditions and unique qualities that should guide new development in the city.

TRANSPORTATION TO MEET CITY AND REGIONAL NEEDS

THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM SHOULD SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES OF SEWARD AS A COUNTY CENTER AND SMALL CITY.

Transportation systems are often designed to meet one goal only — the efficient circulation of automobiles. In spite of that, and perhaps because of that, they often fail to meet our expectations.

Beyond efficient circulation, Seward’s transportation system is an important defining element of the future character of the community. Transportation is inseparable from land use and a powerful formative element in the life of the community. Thus, while some intersections stand out, congestion caused by transportation and land use patterns can be found city wide.

Transportation planning in Seward should:

- Use alternate circulator patterns to distribute land uses and traffic to the maximum advantage of the city, its business markets and its residents.
- Manage new and future regional traffic to mitigate effects of congestion and improve peripheral travel around the city.
- Use new circulation routes as a framework to encourage the emergence of desirable development patterns.
- Provide strong connections between established and developing parts of the community, uniting all parts of the city.
- Provide safe access to major activity centers for pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as for motorists.
- Reinforce the patterns, scale, and land use characteristics of the traditional city.

A RECREATION LIFESTYLE

SEWARD SHOULD CONTINUE TO PROVIDE ITS CITIZENS WITH GOOD ACCESS TO RECREATION.

Recreation is important in the lives of many residents of Seward and the surrounding area. The parks and open spaces are vitally important to Seward, providing active and passive recreational resources that keep and bring people to the community. Local parks are complemented by regional recreation pursuits such as hunting, fishing, water sports and golf. Therefore, Seward’s parks are very important.

Each of Seward’s parks fill a distinctive role. Moffit/Centennial/4-H Park and Plum Creek Park are all important recreational facilities, meeting many of the recreational needs of the community. The Moffit/Centennial/4-H Park complex provides opportunities for active uses, including tennis courts, ballfields and the city’s swimming pool. These three parks also provide the most passive recreational opportunities with larger open spaces. Plum Creek Park also provide a wide range of active recreation opportunities, but little passive open space. The mini-parks and

other open spaces, including Seward's Public Schools, Concordia University campus, cemeteries, and the Seward Country Club, all contribute to the "green" quality of the community. Together, these features create an urbane small city life.

The integration and extension of these public spaces is key to Seward's future. The city should connect its open spaces into a system of boulevards and trails, to further integrate public space into community design. In this way, parks and activity centers can help maintain the vitality of older and newer neighborhoods while providing for recreational needs of future residents. The proposed continuous greenway system of trails and environmental corridors supports Seward's quality of life by viewing public space as the social centers of new neighborhoods.

A CENTER FOR NEW ENTERPRISE

SEWARD SHOULD USE ITS STRATEGIC LOCATION AND ACADEMIC RESOURCES TO CONVERT THE CITY INTO A CENTER FOR NEW BUSINESS GROWTH.

Seward's location and academic resources give it an excellent opportunity to attract a wide variety of new enterprises. While most communities of comparable size would be more challenged to attract new industries to their communities Seward adjacency to Interstate 80 and close proximity to Lincoln place it in a prime location. In addition Seward can also parlay its superb local resources and opportunities into a support system for home-grown business and entrepreneurial activity. In an era where many entrepreneurs can live anywhere and communicate electronically, Seward's environmental and academic resources have much to offer.

Private and public sector leadership should push for the vision of Seward as a center for new business that communicates the city's academic, transportation and lifestyle advantages. Focuses for this policy should include:

- Collaboration among agencies to identify support operations that could be developed locally to exploit this potential.
- Incentives for the creation of new businesses.
- Recruitment of people with high skill levels and business concepts.

PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC SEWARD

SEWARD'S HISTORIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT MUST BE MAINTAINED AND PRESERVED.

The preservation of these resources from the past is an indispensable part of the city's future. Policies which promote preservation, then, are a key corollary to the Development Constitution. The policies should:

- Discourage land uses which threaten the value or maintenance of historic neighborhoods or buildings.
- Enhance the real value of historic buildings.
- Increase the profitability of Downtown buildings by securing a financial return from use of second floor spaces.
- Encourage architecturally sympathetic rehabilitation and restoration of historic structures.
- Assure that new construction is consistent with design in historic districts.
- Increase awareness and appreciation of the architectural and historic importance of buildings in the city.

THE SEWARD ANNEXATION PLAN

SEWARD SHOULD ESTABLISH A PHASED ANNEXATION PLAN IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT THE GOALS OF THE LAND USE PLAN

As Seward continues to grow the city will need to create opportunities for new development and reserve land necessary to carry out the goals of the future land use plan. To do this the city will need to annex adjacent territory and expand its extra-territorial jurisdiction. The City's annexation program should:

- *Control Future Fringe Development.* In order to allow the city to guide its growth and development more effectively fringe development will need to be managed. Through annexation, a city can extend its zoning

ordinance to adjacent areas and thus guide development in a direction that will provide safe and healthy environments.

- *Protect and Enhance the City's Tax Base.* Those living in fringe developments benefit from the city's parks and recreational facilities, streets, utilities, and other facilities and programs without contributing to the tax base.
- *Avoid Jurisdictional Confusion.* Squaring off the city and county boundaries can aid in providing services by establishing an orderly and logical boundary.
- *Increase In Size and Population.* An increase in the city's physical size and population can mean an increase in its level of political influence and attractiveness for commercial and industrial development. Annexation may force new development to occur in the city, and therefore increase jobs and the tax base. It may also increase the city's ability to attract grant assistance.

Annexation Process

Within a City of the First Class, annexation can be initiated by the mayor or city council. The city may annex any land that is: within the corporate limits; contiguous or adjacent; and is urban or suburban in nature. The city must first adopt a resolution that establishes a plan for extending city services to the territory to be annexed. Including an estimated cost impact for providing services to the territory and description of how the city will finance the extension and maintain existing services.

CHAPTER THREE

The previous chapter of the Seward Plan considered the factors that have helped make the city a prosperous and quality urban environment. It also discussed factors which present challenges to the management of growth and the preservation of this character. Finally, it presented a Development Constitution, to establish basic principles which can help the city encourage growth that remains true to the best features and potentials for Seward.

GOALS

This chapter considers existing land use characteristics in Seward and projects the amount of additional land that will be needed to achieve the target population of 7,800 within twenty years. It also discusses the condition of existing neighborhoods and concludes by identifying the growth areas which will experience significant development during the next twenty years. In considering land use needs, Seward should:

PROVIDE ADEQUATE LAND FOR PROJECTED AND POTENTIAL GROWTH

Land use projections should anticipate future growth needs and permit a reasonable amount of flexibility to accommodate possible changes in trends and provide adequate choice to developers. Land use planning should neither designate too little land for development, thereby inflating land costs, nor too much land, resulting in a loss of control over utility and infrastructure extension costs and the development process.

ASSURE THAT NEW DEVELOPMENT CREATES THE GREATEST ADVANTAGES FOR BUILDING THE COMMUNITY

The city should continue to benefit from the vitality and energy created by development and investment. New growth areas should be designated which will provide maximum advantages to all parts of the city. Growth should be guided to create excellent new residential environments, and also help improve the city's existing residential and business neighborhoods. Development directions should enhance positive features of the city, rather than create new patterns which turn away from the existing fabric of the city.

ENCOURAGE THE CONSERVATION OF THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

Residential growth includes measures to rehabilitate and conserve Seward's supply of older, often historically significant homes. Numerous single-family homes in the community need some type of rehabilitation. These homes represent a substantial housing resource that cannot be replaced at present costs. Moreover, the conservation of these units is vital to the health of traditional neighborhoods. In some cases, new housing development can support these rehabilitation efforts by making available to lower income persons the opportunity to secure "move-up" housing in better quality units. The community must expand housing opportunities for all by preserving its housing supply of affordable units.

ENCOURAGE ECONOMICAL EXTENSIONS OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Efficient growth patterns conserve limited public funds. A compact urban form helps accomplish this goal by using existing public facilities, gravity flow sewers, and incremental extensions of existing public utilities. Incremental utility extensions: reduce development costs, long-term maintenance and capital expenses, and tax burdens; make housing more affordable to buyers; and enable the city to annex new developments in a timely manner. If infrastructure is financed by the city, or an SID, incremental extensions also mean that new development creates a larger return on public investment.

ANALYSIS

EXISTING LAND USE

This section describes land use characteristics and trends that will help determine the amount of land needed to accommodate future development in Seward. In addition, it will project the community's probable housing demand and residential land requirements for the next twenty years.

The Existing Land Use Map and Table 3-1 summarize current land uses in Seward and its extra-territorial jurisdiction based on a detailed 1999 field survey. In addition to providing acreage and percentage breakdowns by general land use categories, the survey provides detailed information on specific uses.

Residential Uses

Residential uses make up Seward's second largest land use, accounting for approximately 28% of the city's developed land area. Over eighty-one percent of this land is taken up by urban density single-family residential development in the city and surrounding subdivisions. Most of the balance is used for rural residential, mobile homes, and multi-family residential development. Much of the city's multi-family development, specifically 2 to 4 plexes, are located to the north of Jackson Street, in the city's newest neighborhoods.

While about 35% of Seward's housing is renter-occupied, according to the 1990 Census, as-built multi-family or mobile home units account for only 7% of the total residential area. This indicates that most rental housing is found in structures built for single families.

Commercial Uses

About 3.66% of Seward's developed land area is in commercial and office uses. Of land in these uses, 38% is general commercial development located outside city limits along the highway corridors. Highway commercial development is characterized by free-standing buildings and on-site, self-contained parking. Downtown commercial uses are focused in Downtown Seward, located around Seward County Courthouse Square. The compact city center accounts for about 4% of the town's commercial land.

Industrial Uses

Over 4% of Seward's developed land is in industrial use. Most of this industry is located west of Highway 15. Eighty-four percent of the industry in Seward is located inside city limits and is dominated by Hughes Brothers.

Civic Uses

Civic uses account for over 50% of land use in the city of Seward, an extremely unusual situation. This is caused by the large amount of land dedicated to parks and recreation, education and the airport. Purchase of the Wilderness Park and the Seward Sports Complex area and land within the floodplain pushed park land to the largest single land use in the city. The airport dominates all other civic uses in the city. Other major civic uses include the public schools, Concordia University, St. Gregory the Great Seminary, and the cemeteries.

Table 3-1: Land Use Distribution in Seward and the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction, 1999

1999 Land Use Distribution	City		Jurisdiction	
	Acres	% of	Acres	% of
		Developed		Developed
	Land	Land	Land	Land
Residential	425.79	27.11	53.42	13.07
Rural Residential	7.99	0.51	45.62	11.16
Single Family Urban Residential	388.97	24.76	2	0.49
2-4 Plex/Townhouses	21.09	1.34	0	0
Multi-Family Residential	7.39	0.47	0	0
Mobile Home Residential	0.35	0.02	5.8	1.42
Office	7.1	0.45	0	0
Commercial	32.12	2.04	32.04	7.84
Downtown	2.78	0.18	0	0
Retail and General Commercial	21.68	1.38	27.21	6.66
Auto Services	7.66	0.49	4.83	1.18
Industrial	86.9	5.53	9.91	2.42
General Industrial	82.03	5.22	0	0
Warehousing/Light Industry	4.87	0.31	9.91	2.42
Civic	693.16	44.13	313.48	76.67
Schools	112.42	7.16	48.46	11.85
Public Facilities and Utilities	14.48	0.92	241.54	59.08
Other Civic Uses	56.9	3.62	22.59	5.53
Parks and Rec	509.36	32.43	0.89	0.22
Transportation	325.27	20.74	-	-
Total Urban and Developed	1,530.84	100	408.85	100
Agriculture and Open Space	434.64			
Vacant Urban Land	31.83			
Total Undeveloped Land	499.43			
Total Land	2,037.31			

Source: RDG Crose Gardner Shukert

Comparisons Among Quadrants of the City

For convenience in evaluating land use patterns, quadrants are defined using 6th and Main Streets or Highway 15 and 34. Each of these quadrants displays a significantly different pattern and distribution of land uses. Tables 3-2 and 3-2b compare land use within each of the quadrants.

- *Northwest Seward.* Northwest Seward contains almost 74 acres of developed residential land - the second largest of the quadrants. Civic uses comprise 146 acres within this quadrant, most of which is dedicated to the Moffit/Centennial/4-H Park complex and the Seward Country Club. The Northwest quadrant also contains the largest portion of overall industrial land in the city, 55%. The large amount of land dedicated to industrial land use is due mostly to the Hughes Brothers manufacturing plant which is located within this quadrant.
- *Northeast Seward.* The Northeast quadrant is Seward largest quadrant with over a thousand acres. Because of its size it does lead the city in many of the land use categories. The two most noticeable land uses in the Northeast quadrant are residential and parks development. Residential development accounts for 33% of the developed area within the quadrant, while 30% of the land is dedicated to parks. Of the 341 acres in residential development the Northeast quadrant leads in all housing styles except mobile homes. The quadrant's almost 20 acres of duplex and multifamily development is strategically located to serve Concordia University.

Seward is in an unusual position of almost matching, acre for acre, park and residential land. A vast majority of this park land is still undeveloped and will provide an invaluable resource for future residential development in the area. The Northeast quadrant's dominance of civic land use is not limited to parks and recreation but also includes educational uses. The newest educational facilities are located within this quadrant and include the high school and elementary school. Also located within the quadrant is Concordia University. Future expansion of the University will only further extend the areas dominance in educational land uses.

- *Southwest Seward.* This quadrant of Seward has the smallest amount of developed land within city limits but has the largest concentration of commercial and retail developments outside the city limits. The area will likely be annexed in the near future and will double the city's current commercial development. The imminent annexation will increase the city's total land area by almost 400 acres. The annexation will be dominated by commercial development but also include the city's only mobile home park. The Southwest quadrant also contains St. Gregory the Great Seminary and the airport which accounts for 372 acres of civic development.
- *Southeast Seward.* The Southeast quadrant is the smallest quadrant with no single land use dominating the city and its jurisdiction. The quadrant is dominated by the Plum Creek floodplain and the large food plain created by the convergence of the Plum Creek and Blue River. Most of the land in the quadrant is split between residential and civic uses. Recent acquisition of land by the city has increased park land to over 38 acres or 28% of the quadrants development. Residential development focuses on single family housing but also has the second largest amount of both multi-family and rural residential developments.

TABLE 3-2: City of Seward Land Use Distribution: By Quadrants, 1999

Land Use Category	Acres	NW		NE		SW		SE	
		% of Developed Land	Acres	% of Developed Land	Acres	% of Developed Land	Acres	% of Developed Land	Acres
Residential	73.55	6.04	300.5	19.54	12.83	0.82	39.17	2.49	
Rural	0	0	5.91	0.38	0	0	2.08	0.13	
Single Family	68.83	5.65	275.03	17.88	12.48	0.79	32.89	2.09	
Duplex	2.99	0.25	15.95	1.04	0	0	2.14	0.14	
Multi-Family	1.73	0.14	3.61	0.23	0	0	2.06	0.13	
Mobile Home	0	0	0	0	0.35	0.02	0	0	
Office	1.23	0.1	1.44	0.09	2.63	0.17	1.81	0.12	
Commercial	6.64	0.55	13.73	0.89	9.95	0.63	1.79	0.11	
Downtown	2.08	0.17	0.69	0.04	0	0	0	0	
General commercial	2.45	0.2	10.96	0.71	6.9	0.44	1.37	0.09	
Auto Services	2.11	0.17	2.08	0.14	3.05	0.19	0.42	0.03	
Industrial	54	4.43	0.57	0.04	25.4	1.62	6.93	0.44	
General Industrial	53.79	4.42	0	0	22.95	1.46	5.29	0.34	
Warehouse/ Light Industry	0.21	0.02	0.57	0.04	2.45	0.16	1.64	0.1	
Civic	146.04	11.99	469.74	30.54	24.7	1.57	52.7	3.35	
Schools	0	0	106.78	6.94	0	0	5.65	0.36	
Public facilities/Utilities	1.45	0.12	3.99	0.26	1.39	0.09	7.65	0.49	
Other Civic Uses	8.5	0.7	47.46	3.09	0.17	0.01	0.77	0.05	
Parks & Rec	136.09	11.17	311.51	20.26	23.14	1.47	38.63	2.46	
Transportation	70.75	5.81	195.34	12.7	22.24	1.42	34.89	2.22	
Total Developed Area	352.21	28.91	981.32	63.81	97.75	6.22	137.29	8.74	
Ag/Open Space	65.46		143.76		175.56		50.36		
Vacant	10.45		17.39		2.01		1.88		
Total Area	428.21		1,142.47		275.32		189.53		

Source: RDG Crose Gardner Shukert

TABLE 3-2b: City of Seward and Extra-territorial Jurisdiction Land Use Distribution: By Quadrants, 1999

Land Use Category	Acres	NW		NE		SW		SE	
		% of Developed Land	Acres	% of Developed Land	Acres	% of Developed Land	Acres	% of Developed Land	
Residential	73.55	3.78	340.59	17.5	24.36	1.23	40.7	2.06	
Rural	0	0	46	2.36	4	0.2	3.61	0.18	
Single Family	68.83	3.54	275.03	14.13	14.21	0.72	32.89	1.66	
Duplex	2.99	0.15	15.95	0.82	0	0	2.14	0.11	
Multi-Family	1.73	0.09	3.61	0.19	0	0	2.06	0.1	
Mobile Home	0	0	0	0	6.15	0.31	0	0	
Office	1.23	0.06	1.44	0.07	2.63	0.13	1.81	0.09	
Commercial	6.64	0.34	13.73	0.71	41.99	2.12	1.79	0.09	
Downtown	2.08	0.11	0.69	0.04	0	0	0	0	
General commercial	2.45	0.13	10.96	0.56	34.11	1.72	1.37	0.07	
Auto Services	2.11	0.11	2.08	0.11	7.88	0.4	42	0.02	
Industrial	54	2.77	0.57	0.03	35.31	1.78	6.93	0.35	
General Industrial	53.79	2.76	0	0	22.95	1.16	5.29	0.27	
Warehousing/ Light Industry	0.21	0.01	0.57	0.03	12.36	0.62	1.64	0.08	
Civic	146.04	7.5	487.34	25.03	320.59	16.2	52.7	2.66	
Schools	0	0	106.78	5.49	48.46	2.45	5.65	0.29	
Public facilities/Utilities	1.45	0.07	3.9	0.2	242.93	12.27	7.65	0.39	
Other Civic Uses	8.5	0.44	65.06	3.34	5.17	0.26	0.77	0.04	
Parks & Rec	136.09	6.99	311.51	16	24.03	1.21	38.63	1.95	
Transportation	70.75	3.63	195.34	10.03	22.24	1.12	34.89	1.76	
Total Developed Area	352.21	18.09	1,039.01	53.37	447.12	22.59	138.82	7.01	
Ag/Open Space	65.46		143.76		175.56		50.36		
Vacant	10.54		17.39		2.01		1.88		
Total Area	428.21		1,200.16		624.69		191.06		

Source: RDG Crose Gardner Shuker

Comparison with Other Cities

A comparison of Seward's land use distribution with that of other communities offers additional insights into the city's growth patterns and its functional specializations. Tables 3-3 and 3-4 compare land use in Seward with that of other comparable communities in Nebraska. These comparisons include Chadron, Norfolk, and Beatrice.

Seward greatly exceeds comparable cities in land for parks and recreation development. The only city to approach to Seward's 32% of developed land in parks is Norfolk's 8%. Seward also has the largest portion of land in industrial development. Unlike many cities around Nebraska, Seward has a large amount of industrial development within city limits. It is also important to note that Seward has the smallest amount of land in commercial development compared to the sample cities. This is due to both a large amount of retail development outside city limits and the city's proximity to Lincoln. Beatrice, to the south of Lincoln, is in a similar situation whereas Norfolk and Chadron are regional commercial hubs and attract a larger commercial base.

TABLE 3-3: Comparative Land Use in City Limits by Proportion: Seward and Other Nebraska Cities

	% of Developed Area			
	Seward	Chadron (1996)	Norfolk (1999)	Beatrice (2000)
Residential	27.11	31.04	40.42	34.18
Commercial	2.49	9.39	9.66	5.11
Industrial	5.53	3.05	3.85	5.04
Civic/Semi-public	11.7	25.61	9.76	21.77
Parks/Rec	31.43	5.56	8.08	6.29
Transportation and ROWs	20.74	25.35	28.22	27.62
Total Developed Area	100	100	100	100

Sources: Seward Land Use Survey RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, 1999; The Chadron Plan, 1997; Norfolk and Beatrice Land Use Survey RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, 2000

TABLE 3-4: Comparative Land Use in City Limits by Population Ratio: Seward and Other Nebraska Cities

	Acres /100 People			
	Seward	Chadron (1996)	Norfolk (1999)	Beatrice (2000)
Residential	6.88	5.69	8.31	9.2
Commercial	0.63	1.72	1.95	1.37
Industrial	1.4	0.56	0.79	1.36
Civic/Semi-public	2.97	4.69	2.01	5.86
Parks/Rec	8.23	1.02	1.66	1.69
Transportation and ROWs	5.27	4.66	5.81	7.4
Total Developed Area	25.39	18.36	20.52	26.92

Sources: Seward Land Use Survey RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, 1999; The Chadron Plan, 1997; Norfolk and Beatrice Land Use Survey RDG Crose Gardner Shukert,

In Table 3-4 Seward's leadership in park development again stands out. Compared to the other sample communities Seward residents have almost five times as much land dedicated to parks and recreation per 100 people.

Overall density in Seward (measured by total developed acres per 100 residents) is relatively comparable to other communities, although its relatively low residential acreage per 100 people underlines its basically efficient growth pattern. Seward's overall density dramatically decreased during the late 1990's with the purchase of additional park land and annexation areas south of the city. The density of the city will again decline with the annexation of lower density development along Highway 15. Although, the majority of development within this area is commercial in nature and will significantly increase Seward's low percentage of commercial land.

Land Use Trends

Land use surveys for the city were completed during a previous comprehensive planning process, conducted in 1980 and 1990. While there were some differences in the way information was gathered and tabulated, it is possible to draw some general conclusions about changes in the city's land use patterns and distributions over the past two decade.

Tables 3-5 and 3-6 summarize the evolution of land use in Seward between 1980 and 1999. It is important to note that the 1999 inventory does include those areas outside city limits.

TABLE 3-5: Comparative Density of Land Uses in Seward 1980 to 1999

	City of Seward		
	1980	1990	1999
Residential	5.55	6.83	7.75
Commercial	0.52	0.98	1.15
Industrial	1.59	1.7	1.56
Civic	2.31	2.5	8.02
Parks/Rec.	0.2	0.74	8.25
Transportation	3.9	3.96	5.26
Total Developed Area	14.06	16.71	31.99

Plan Update, 1991-1992; Seward Land Survey RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, 199

The most significant changes during these periods include:

- A significant increase in parks and recreation between 1980 and 1999, most of which occurred during the 1990's. Between 1990 and 1999 Seward absorbed over 53 acres of parks and recreation land a year. This is due to the large park purchases which included Plum Creek Park, the Seward Sports Complex and the future Wilderness Park.
- A profound increase in civic related land uses between 1990 and 1999. This is most likely due to the inclusion of the airport in the land use inventory and specifically as a civic related land use. Expansion of Concordia University and St. Gregory The Great Seminary also influenced this category.
- A small decrease in industrial developed, likely due to differing reporting standards.
- Seward's total area has doubled since 1980 which dramatically decreased Seward's density, especially during the 1990's. Between 1990 and 1999 overall density decreased from 16.71 acres per 100 people to 31.99 acres per 100 people.

Land Use Absorption

Table 3-6 compares changes in residential, commercial, and industrial land use between 1980 and 1999. These findings are used to calculate annual average rates of land consumption. These rates, in turn, provide one basis for projecting future requirements for each type of land use.

TABLE 3-6: Urban Land Consumption for Principal Uses, City of Seward 1990-1999

Land Use Category	Area (Acres)		Change			Annual Land Consumption	
	1980	1990	1999	1980-99	1990-99	1980-1999	1990-1999
Residential	316.8	406.4	479.21	162.41	72.81	8.55	8.09
Commercial	29.5	58.4	71.26	41.76	1.86	2.8	1.43
Industrial	90.7	100.9	96.81	6.11	-4.09	0.32	-0.45
Civic	131.9	148.6	496.39	364.49	347.79	19.18	38.64
Parks/Rec.	11.3	26.85	510.25	498.95	483.4	26.26	53.71
Transportation	222.8	235.6	325.27	102.47	89.67	5.39	9.96
Total Developed Area	803	994	1,979.19	1,176.19	985.19	61.91	109.47

Source: City of Seward 1992 Land Use Plan Update;
Seward Land Use Survey, RDG Crose Gardner Shuker

Between 1980 and 1999, Seward converted a total of 1,176.19 acres, or 11.07 acres of land annually, for residential, commercial, and industrial development. Of all the land uses, park development has accounted for the largest share of converted land, though much of it remains to be developed. Civic development also accounts for a significant proportion of the city’s additional area, most likely due to the airport being included where it obviously was not in 1980.

Commercial development between 1990 and 1999 dropped as compared to 1980 and 1990. From 1980 to 1990 Seward was absorbing 2.89 acres of commercial land a year, but from 1990 to 1999 this rate decreased to 1.43 acres per year. Residential development over the last twenty years has remained fairly steady with only a slight decrease during the 1990’s.

LAND USE PROJECTIONS

Seward’s previous land use rates, combined with population and development projections, suggests forecasts of land consumption over the next twenty years. Since 1990, Seward has added about 34 residential units annually. That approximate level of development is expected to continue during the future planning period. Seward’s population forecasts appear in Chapter One under the theme, “A Profile of Seward”. Projections are summarized in Table 1-6 and predicts a population of 7,796 by 2020.

Tables 3-7, 3-8 and 3-9 present the projected twenty-year housing demands for this scenario. The analysis is based on the following methods and assumptions:

- The basic method used in projecting annual demands is to compare the number of units needed in a given year (number of households plus projected vacancy rate) with the number of units available during that year (housing supply during the year less the units that leave the housing supply and must be replaced). Twenty-year demands are based on multiples of the five year demand computed in this section.
- Household size in Seward is expected to decrease slightly during the twenty-year period from 2.46 in 1990 to about 2.35 people per household in 2020.
- The city’s non-household population (people in student dormitories, institutions, groups quarters, or nursing homes) does not produce a demand for conventional housing. These forecasts project that the non-household population will remain at its 1990 rate of 12.2% of the city’s population.
- Seward’s current vacancy of 5.7% will decrease slightly to 5.5% during the planning period.
- The projection model assumes that about 7 units annually will be lost to demolition, redevelopment, or conversion to other uses.

TABLE 3-7: Housing Demand For Seward, 1990-2020

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Population	5,634	5,686	5,738	5,789	5,841	5,893	5,966	6,040	6,113	6,187
Household Pop	4,948	4,993	5,039	5,084	5,130	5,175	5,240	5,304	5,369	5,433
People/household	2.46	2.45	2.44	2.43	2.42	2.41	2.4	2.39	2.38	2.37
Household demand	2,009	2,036	2,063	2,090	2,117	2,145	2,181	2,217	2,253	2,290
Vacancy rate	6.6	6.5	6.4	6.3	6.2	6.1	6	5.9	5.8	5.7
Total unit needs	2,151	2,177	2,204	2,230	2,257	2,284	2,320	2,356	2,392	2,428
Available from previous year		2,151	2,177	2,204	2,230	2,257	2,284	2,320	2,356	2,392
Lost Units	0	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Total Units Available	2,151	2,144	2,170	2,197	2,223	2,250	2,277	2,313	2,349	2,385
Annual Need		33	33	34	34	34	43	43	43	43
Cumulative Need	0	33	67	100	134	168	211	254	297	34

TABLE 3-8: Projected First Ten Year Housing Development,

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Population	6,260	6,334	6,408	6,418	6,555	6,629	6,700	6,772	6,843	6,915
Household Pop	5,498	5,563	5,627	5,692	5,757	5,822	5,885	5,947	6,010	6,073
People/household	2.37	2.37	2.37	2.37	2.37	2.37	2.37	2.37	2.36	2.36
Household demand	2,318	2,346	2,375	2,403	2,431	2,460	2,487	2,515	2,542	2,570
Vacancy rate	5.65	5.6	5.55	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
Total unit needs	2,457	2,485	2,514	2,543	2,573	2,603	2,632	2,661	2,690	2,720
Available from previous year	2,428	2,457	2,485	2,514	2,543	2,573	2,603	2,632	2,661	2,690
Lost Units	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Total Units Available	2,421	2,450	2,478	2,507	2,536	2,566	2,596	2,625	2,654	2,683
Annual Need	36	36	36	36	37	37	36	36	36	36
Cumulative Need	376	411	447	483	520	557	593	629	665	70

TABLE 3-9: Projected Ten Year Housing Development

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Population	6,986	7,067	7,148	7,229	7,310	7,391	7,472	7,553	7,634	7,715	7,796
Household Pop	6,135	6,207	6,278	6,349	6,420	6,491	6,562	6,633	6,704	6,776	6,847
People/household	2.36	2.36	2.36	2.36	2.36	2.36	2.36	2.36	2.35	2.35	2.35
Household demand	2,598	2,629	2,660	2,691	2,723	2,754	2,785	2,817	2,848	2,880	2,911
Vacancy rate	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
Total unit needs	2,749	2,782	2,815	2,848	2,881	2,914	2,948	2,981	3,014	3,047	3,081
Available from previous year	2,720	2,749	2,782	2,815	2,848	2,881	2,914	2,948	281	3,014	3,047
Lost Units	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Total Units Available	2,713	2,742	2,775	2,808	2,841	2,874	2,907	2,941	2,974	3,007	3,040
Annual Need	36	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
Cumulative Need	738	778	818	858	898	938	979	1,019	1,059	1,099	1,140

Source: RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, 2000

In 1990, about 94.2% of Seward's housing stock was single-family. This proportion dropped to 82% by 1999. While single-family detached units will remain dominant, future housing trends suggest that:

- Higher-density housing forms that maintain single-family characteristics (single-family attached and townhouse configurations) will grow in popularity, accommodating an aging "baby-boomer" and empty-nest population.
- Affordable housing development will generally take the form of townhouses and multi-family development.
- Mobile homes will be a relatively small component of Seward's housing supply. Manufactured housing on permanent foundations is categorized as single-family housing.

Based on these projections and trends there will be a cumulative demand of 798 residential units during the next twenty years. Using the previous proportions of owner and renter occupancy noted in the 1990 census, about 65% of these units should be developed for owners (predominantly in single-family) and 35% should accommodate renters (predominantly in multi-family, duplex, townhome and mobile home units).

Required Residential Area

Residential land projections estimate the amount of land that will be needed to accommodate growth during the next twenty years. Projections are based on the following assumptions:

-Typical gross densities will be 3.5 units per acres for single-family, 6 units per acres for attached housing and mobile homes, and 12 units per acres for multi-family.

-Land designated in the land use plan for residential development over a twenty year period should be about twice the area that new growth actually needs. This is necessary to preserve competitive land pricing.

Table 3-10 presents the amount of new area that will be required for additional development. Annual actual absorption of residential land will be in the range of 9 acres annually. Using the rule of designating land at a rate of two times the "hard demand", this suggests a total reservation of land for residential development of about 347 acres over the twenty year period.

TABLE 3-10: Required Residential Land for Seward, 1990-2020

Housing Type	%	2000-2010 Units	2010-2020 Units	Total	Gross Density (units/acre)	Hard Land Needs (acres)	Designated Land (acres)
Single-Family	60	239	240	479	3.5	137	274
Urban Family	10	40	40	80	6	13	27
Multi-Family	25	100	100	200	12	17	33
Mobile Homes	5	20	20	40	6	7	13
Total	100	398	400	798		173	347

Source: RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, 200

Commercial Development

Table 3-11 shows that commercial land conversion in Seward has occurred at a rate of about 1 acres per year since 1990. If development continued at this rate, the community would require an additional 26 acres of commercial land by 2020.

This plan does not include a comprehensive retail market analysis. However, probable development needs and the plan's overall policy of encouraging appropriate development suggests that Seward will require new commercial space during the next twenty years. Three methods can be used to help project commercial land needs:

- *A straight-line trend analysis*, assuming that the amount of land absorbed annually in the past will continue into the future. A weakness in this method is its assumption that the last twenty years' experience is a good predictor of future needs.

- *A population service relationship*. This method relates commercial growth to population projections. It assumes that the absolute amount of commercial land per 100 people will remain relatively constant and that new commercial development will grow in proportion to population growth.

- *Residential use proportion*. This assumes a constant relationship between the amount of land used for residential and commercial purposes, thereby relating commercial growth directly to residential development rates.

Table 3-11 compares the results of these three methods. The last two methods suggest a need for between 19 and 29 acres of commercial land during the next twenty years. In order to provide alternative sites, the land use plan should designate 1.5 times the hard demand for commercial land. This means that 28-43 acres of land should be designated for future commercial development.

TABLE 3-11: Required Commercial Land for Seward, 1999-2020

	2000	2000-2010	2010-2020	20 year Need	Designated
Absorption Trend Method					
Annual Absorption		1.43	1.43		
New Commercial Land (A)	70.46	84.76	99.06	28.6	42.9
Population Proportion					
Projected Population	6,260	6,986	7,796		
Comm Use/100 res.	1.15	1.15	1.15		
Projected commercial Land Need	71.99	80.34	89.65	18.5	27.76
Residential Use Proportion					
New Residential Land (A)	425.79	512.35	598.35		
Comm Land/Res Land Ratio	0.167359	0.167359	0.167359		
Projected Comm Use (A)	71.26	85.75	100.14	28.88	43.3

Industrial Development

The need for industrial land is not directly related to population growth, making it much more difficult to predict. A single major corporate decision can dramatically increase (or decrease) the projected industrial demand in a community. In addition, a decision by the city to pursue industrial development aggressively can affect industrial land needs.

The projection methods used to predict commercial demand may also be used to approximate industrial needs. A straight-line trend analysis is a poor measure of demand for industrial acres and is not used. The projection models are also applied to Seward's extra-territorial jurisdiction. New industry is often attracted to areas outside city limits as happened along south Highway 15. This corridor will likely continue to attract new industrial growth because of its access to Interstate 80.

Table 3-12 below calculates additional industrial land needs within the city or annexable areas. Based on population and residential use proportion methods described above, Seward should absorb about 25 acres of new industrial land in and adjacent to the city. In order to provide maximum flexibility, the land use plan should designate about three times the "hard demand" for industrial use. Therefore, the plan should provide about 75 acres of industrial and business park land in and adjacent to the city.

TABLE 3-12: Required Industrial Land for Seward, 2000-2020

	2000	2000- 2010	2010-2020	20 Year Need	Designated
Population Proportion					
Projected Population	6,260	6,986	7,796		
Ind Use/100 res.	1.56	1.56	1.56		
Projected Industrial Land Need	97.66	108.98	0.62	25.1	75
Residential Use Proportion					
New Residential Land (A)	479.21	565.12	651.5		
Ind Land/Res Land Ratio	0.20202	0.20202	0.20202		
Projected Ind Use (A)	96.81	103.5	120.88	24	72
Source: RDG Crose Gardner Shukert					

LAND USE POLICIES

This section presents land use strategies that will enable Seward to plan successfully for projected growth. Overall development patterns should reinforce the functional and aesthetic values of a compact city. In Seward, this implies that new development should be contiguous to existing city infrastructure, and designed to provide a high degree of pedestrian and vehicular mobility. In addition, Seward should continue to provide its residents with attractive and convenient living, shopping, and working environments. The city's growth program should:

- Designate growth areas for residential development, designed to provide the appropriate amount of land for urban conversion.
- Ensure that new development is consistent with the traditional land and street patterns of the City of Seward.
- Encourage adequate commercial growth to respond to market needs in Seward, supportable by the city's service systems.
- Provide adequate land to support an economic development program that capitalizes on Seward's resources.

The components of this program include:

- **ADEQUATE LAND SUPPLY**
- **COMPACT DEVELOPMENT PATTERN**
- **COMPLETE AND BALANCED NEIGHBORHOODS**
- **PRE-PLANNED MAJOR STREETS**
- **STREETS AS PUBLIC SPACES**
- **CONSERVATION RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**
- **COMMERCIAL NODES**
- **INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT**
- **HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM**
- **FRAMEWORK FOR DECISION-MAKING**
- **A PROGRAM OF PHASED ANNEXATION**

Each component of land use the policy is described below. The Land Use Plan maps the concepts presented in these policies and recommendations.

ADEQUATE LAND SUPPLY

SEWARD SHOULD DESIGNATE ENOUGH LAND FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT TO MEET A YEAR 2020 POPULATION TARGET OF 7,800 PEOPLE.

Tables 3-10, 3-11, and 3-12 display the amount of land needed for residential, commercial, and industrial uses to serve a probable target population of 7,800. These proposed land supplies approximate the demand closely enough to allow managed growth, while providing adequate choices of sites to developers. The Seward Land Use Plan proposes four major development zones, implementing the concept outlined by the Development Principles:

1. *The Urbanized Area.* This corresponds to the built-up part of the city. Appropriate policies in this area include neighborhood conservation, including housing rehabilitation, infill development on vacant lots and sites within the city; redevelopment of underused sites; and completion of supporting public projects.
2. *An Urban Development Zone.* This area corresponds to the projected land needs for the city between 2000 and 2020. The specific growth centers for urban development are presented later in this section. The Urban Development Zone provides over 1,900 acres of land for residential development currently or potentially served by interceptor sewer lines. The specific growth centers for urban development are presented later in this plan. "Rural" subdivisions, including very large lots lacking full urban services, should not occur on lands within the Urban Development zones.

3. *An Urban Reserve Zone.* This zone corresponds to areas that can be served by municipal utilities in the long term, but is unlikely to experience development until after the year 2020. This area should generally be preserved in current agricultural and open space use, with extension of urban services programmed in the long-term future. The Urban Reserve Zones includes areas in the Urban Development Zone that will not be required during the planning period. Any development that occurs in this area should be designed to avoid conflicts with future urban growth.

Some areas within the Urban Reserve Zones are generally contiguous to existing development and may be developed within the horizon of this plan if primary growth centers are unavailable for development. Urban Reserve Zones include future, residential development to the northeast of the city.

4. *Agricultural Zones.* These areas should be maintained in primary agricultural use.

New development in Seward should be focused in those areas designated by the Land Use Plan. Such disciplined approach will help to insure cost effective, efficient land use patterns that maximize the benefits of development to the community. Additionally, development should occur within the context of the transportation and open space framework presented in this plan.

It is important to note that the land use projections in the development plan are based on a future population of 7,800. Based on current trends, Seward will achieve this population by the year 2020. However, faster than expected population can create a need for additional land designation. Periodic reviews of population and development activity can help the city adjust the plan to its actual growth experience during the planning period.

COMPACT DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

SEWARD SHOULD ENCOURAGE COMPACT GROWTH THAT IS DISTRIBUTED EQUALLY AROUND THE TRADITIONAL CITY.

Within Seward's established areas and in some of its newest developments the city has been able to maintain a pattern of compact development. This pattern has produced an intimate, walkable community that is efficient to serve, minimizes travel distances, and supports a strong city center. As Seward anticipates increased residential growth, it should act to maintain its compact character.

Public policies which execute this strategy should:

- *Define and channel growth into development areas contiguous to existing infrastructure, existing developments, and with street patterns consistent with the city development concept.*
- *Encourage residential development that builds from existing community investments.* The city should encourage growth which uses existing or planned extensions of sanitary sewers and other key utilities. Additional growth adjacent to remote developments south of the city must be contiguous to existing subdivisions and should not exceed the carrying capacity of existing infrastructure.
- *Limit outlying development in areas at odds with the city's development policies.* Seward should discourage the expansion of urban residential, commercial, or industrial development to those properties that are located beyond watersheds served by existing or programmed sewer extensions.

COMPLETE AND BALANCED NEIGHBORHOODS

SEWARD WILL BALANCE AND GUIDE ITS NEW RESIDENTIAL GROWTH TO CREATE BETTER NEIGHBORHOODS AND IMPROVED MOBILITY.

The Development Constitution proposes principles that are designed to accommodate necessary growth while strengthening the overall community character. These principles can be realized by conceiving of the quadrants of the city as essential parts of the whole, each requiring community investments and features that create desirable living environments. Each of Seward's quadrants should reflect the community image that characterizes Seward.

These four areas will accommodate most of Seward's projected growth during the next two decades. Amenity features that must be provided in each growth center include:

- A mixture of housing types and lot sizes
- Organization of new neighborhoods around traditional street patterns, including a community parkway that links civic, educational and park facilities.
- Dedication of new neighborhood parks and trails, designed as central open spaces that are focuses of each quadrant of the city.
- Development of higher-density residential and limited commercial, service, and civic uses at nodes along boulevards and new neighborhood parks.
- Care in establishing setbacks, landscaping, and streetscape standards along boulevards to ensure the appearance of a traditional community promenade.

The elements of these systems are woven throughout the themes of this plan.

The four Growth Centers include:

1. North Seward Growth Center. In the last twenty years Seward's residential growth has been predominately to the north. This trend will likely continue but will only exacerbate the need for commercial development in the area. Residential development will continue to be the dominate force in the area providing over 170 acres of new development, small neighborhood commercial developments will account for an additional 13. Investments necessary to support development include:

- Northern extension of Karol Kay Boulevard
- Dedication and improvements of a grid of east-west collector streets that links Karol Kay Boulevard and 6th Street.
- A greenway that will link together Plum Creek Park, the Seward Country Club and future park development on the east and west side of the city. The greenway will include open spaces that will extend and link together the more active use parks and recreation destinations.
- Designating land for Urban Reserve on Seward's northern fringe. It will be important for the city's future growth to ensure that development within this area will comply with the city's goals and objectives.

The Northern Growth Center will accommodate about 430 single family lots and about 47 acres of mixed density residential development.

2. East Seward Growth Center. Current residential development in the area will likely create development pressures within northeast quadrant. The location will provide excellent access to the park system and vehicular links into the heart of the city. Neighborhood commercial development will be needed to meet the needs of residents who are fairly isolated from the rest of the city. Needed improvements include:

- Extension and upgrade of Seward Street and an additional street north of Seward street. Completion of the street grid would include construction of a street east of Evergreen Street that would intersect with Highway 34, Seward Street and a future collector street to the north.
- A neighborhood commercial center for existing and future development.
- Analysis and development of a possible Highway 15 bypass to the east of the city.

3. Southern Seward Growth Center. This area has developed as a major commercial strip south of Seward's Downtown. The concentration of commercial development can be capitalized on with the development of more mixed use residential development on the eastern side of Highway 15. The Southern Growth Center will also provide a prime location for future light industry with easy access to Interstate 80 and the airport. It will also be important for the city to provide open space south of the Blue River. When completed Seward's park system will be an excellent

example for other communities to emulate but the southern growth area is currently isolated from the system. Including open spaces and links to the park system will be important to the quality of life provided in this area. Development on the eastern side of Highway 15 will provide an additional 100 acres of commercial development, 64 acres of mixed density residential and 70 acres of single family residential. Light industrial development on the western side of Highway 15 will provide 200 acres. Needed improvements will include:

- Extension of Sixth Street to southeastern development and connecting links back to Highway 15.
- Diversion of Highway 15 to bypass the city on its eastern jurisdictional boundary.
- A trail system that provides additional access to the heart of the city and the park system. The trail will follow the Highway 15 Bypass to Road P29 where it will turn north before crossing the river north of Isaak Walton Road. The trail will then follow Plum Creek, and tie into the northern trail loop.
- Development of a street grid that will service light industrial development to the southwest. This will include upgraded connections to Highway 15 and a north/south collector street linking Walker Road and Fletcher Avenue north of the airport.

4. *Western Seward Growth Center.* Seward Western Growth Center is bounded by the Blue River floodplain and by existing development. The floodplain limits the amount of development but provides an excellent opportunity for parks and open space. The Western Growth Center provides an additional 140 acres of parks and open spaces. These green spaces will play a key role in creating an arc of parks and open spaces around the city. The Western Growth Center will also provide an additional 175 acres of single family residential development that will be focused around the Seward Country Club. An additional 27 acres will provide mix density and high density residential development. Links connecting Waverly Road and Hillcrest Avenue and upgrades of 14th and Park Avenue will be the necessary improvements in the area.

PRE-PLANNED MAJOR STREETS

THE COLLECTOR STREET AND PARKWAY SYSTEM IN DEVELOPING AREAS SHOULD BE DESIGNATED AHEAD OF DEVELOPMENT AND DEDICATED AS GROWTH TAKES PLACE.

Contemporary residential and commercial development tends to occur on an incremental, project-by-project basis. As a result, projects provide for their own internal circulation needs, but rarely anticipate the cross connections and linkages necessary to create an integrated transportation network. This creates a “pod” type of development pattern, by which most traffic exits a development onto arterial streets, where it comes into conflict with through and regional traffic.

The circulation network that connects different neighborhoods together cannot be left to develop by chance. Instead, these important links should be predesignated through this comprehensive plan. As projects are designed, they should reserve the required collector routes and dedicate their rights-of-way. While actual alignments of the collector network may differ somewhat from those proposed in this plan, the general structure should be preserved. In some cases, the city may pre-develop a street segment to create necessary linkages. Possible links in a collector system could include:

- *An Arterial connection*, along the northern edge of the city following Waverly Road.
- *A series of collector streets*, running east and west on the northern edge of the city; these streets would connect the existing and future north/south streets.
- *A Seward Street Parkway*, linking new growth in the east with Downtown Seward and the Moffit/Centennial/4-H Park complex.
- *A Bypass* would divert Highway 15 traffic to the eastern edge of the city.

STREETS AS PUBLIC SPACES

NEW COLLECTOR STREETS IN SEWARD SHOULD HAVE MULTIPLE USES, BECOMING GREEN CORRIDORS THAT LINK THE “ROOMS” OF THE GROWING CITY.

In addition to moving vehicular traffic, streets are also important public spaces, providing the front yards for homes and businesses. Yet, cities rarely consider this quality in street design. Those cities, such as Minneapolis, that historically considered the public quality of streets have produced environments of special distinction and value.

Key elements of Seward’s transportation system should also transcend their traffic moving function and become links of a parkway system, providing structure to the community and adding value to the properties and neighborhoods around them. The Seward Plan envisions major local circulator streets as parkways and boulevards, connecting neighborhoods with one another and with major activity centers. These parkways have the following characteristics:

- *They include features such as ornamental lighting, landscaped medians, and additional greenway width and landscaping.* Boulevard sections may or may not be divided roads. In areas where a single street channel is used, greenway setbacks should be expanded.
- *They include parallel facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.* This often includes wider than standard sidewalks on at least one side of the street to accommodate both pedestrians and recreational users. Paths may include gentle curves and street furniture to provide interest and accommodations for users.
- *They connect major activity centers.* Neighborhood parks in developing areas should be expanded green areas along the parkways. The parkways become linear parks, leading people between new and old parts of the community.
- *They are designed for local traffic moving at slow to moderate speeds, rather than becoming high speed routes.* Thus, parking is allowed along parkways and houses can front on them. They are designed as public spaces and thrive on residential features such as porches and front doors.
- *They emerge organically out of the fabric of traditional and new neighborhoods, linking them together.* Parkways in existing areas grow out of the groupings of major civic facilities. In new areas, they become the structuring elements for new features and neighborhood amenities. As a result, the parkway concept becomes a critical determinant of community land use patterns and design.

Boulevard and parkway segments include in the Seward Plan include:

- *Seward Street*, connecting new development and the Plum Creek Park area with Downtown Seward and the Moffit/Centennial/4-H Park Complex. Seward Street already functions as a major processional community street, connecting major open spaces through downtown.
- *A Northern Greenway*, linking new development along the northern edge of the city. It will provide a link in the city wide trail system and numerous open spaces that bring together parks on the western and eastern edges of the city.
- *A North/South Parkway*, meshing together residential development its eastern side with proposed parks to the west. The north/south parkway would also link together Hillcrest Drive and the northern Parkway

CONSERVATION RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

LARGE LOT DEVELOPMENT IN SEWARD SHOULD MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE AND SHOULD DIFFER IN DESIGN FROM URBAN SUBDIVISIONS.

The Seward jurisdiction has experienced development in the rural landscape beyond the urban boundaries of the city. Most of this development has occurred south and east of the city, with easy access to the Highways and

Lincoln's larger market. The beauty and geographic location of these areas has encouraged the development of substantial homes. The development to the south along Highway 15, is actually developed to urban densities, but does not receive city services. This type of development pattern could create significant service problems for the City of Seward.

In the future, rural residential subdivisions should be located in specific areas that are unlikely to demand or receive future urban services and, for reasons of topography or market, are beyond the future direction of conventional urban development. As these areas are subdivided, development techniques such as lot clustering should be utilized to maintain the character of the rural landscape. In such subdivisions, environmentally important or sensitive features, such as desiccated hills, are owned and maintained in common. Urban density subdivisions, using septic systems in place of sewers should not be permitted.

COMMERCIAL NODES

SEWARD'S NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE LOCATED WITHIN WELL-DEFINED NODES OR DISTRICTS, EACH WITH A UNIQUE AND COMPLEMENTARY ROLE.

Commercial uses are important both economically and as centers for community activity. In order to maximize its twin business and city-building roles, commercial growth should occur in specific nodes or districts, each with a specialized function. Together, these nodes will furnish the equivalent of 118 acres of new commercial sites for Seward over the next twenty years.

Unlike residential and industrial land uses commercial strategies are linked less to projected absorption rates than to the function that different commercial areas should fill in the community. This plan envisions a hierarchy of commercial areas, with distinct roles to play. Growth of each area will result from a combination of new construction, public improvements, changes to land and building use, conversions and redevelopment, and improved zoning and subdivision processes and regulations.

Major Commercial Districts

Seward's two major commercial centers, Downtown Seward and South Highway 15, are relatively distinct districts.

• *Downtown Seward.* Downtown Seward will continue to be the flagship mixed use district for the city, combining retail, office, and civic sectors in a vital city center. The Downtown development program presented in Chapter Six can expand by making better use of space, buildings, and facilities already in place. To benefit Downtown Seward, the city should:

- Develop the Seward Street Parkway that will connect the downtown to the park system. The corresponding trail is also an important link in the trail loop around the city.
- Adopt zoning policies that encourage the location of civic, financial, entertainment, local service and specialty retail, and personal services uses in the city center, combine with programs that enhance the rich historical texture of the County Courthouse Square.
- Encourage residential development on upper levels of the Courthouse Square buildings.
- Implement a program to enhance the public environment.
- Successfully market Seward as a specialty commercial district to residents of the Lincoln area and to Interstate 80 travelers and tourist.

• *South Highway 15 Service Corridor.* The traveler service role of this area has created an open linear corridor of commercial development extending between the railroad and St. Gregory the Great Seminary. To guide mixed use development of this area, the city should:

- Construction of new cross streets leading to the planned regional arterial system.

- Concentrate commercial and industrial sites into distinct, planned districts, located at intersections along circulator routes. The city should resist pressure to permit further “strip” or linear commercial development, which tends to dissipate market concentration and increase traffic friction and congestion.
- Improve public environment by including open spaces that will buffer future development from the Highway corridor and trail connections to the heart of the city.

Secondary Commercial Areas

While most commercial development in Seward will be concentrated in the south and downtown, other areas should accommodate limited commercial uses. These areas will accommodate neighborhood services and complement the city’s two major commercial centers.

• *Neighborhood Commercial Nodes.* Neighborhood commercial and office development should be directed to appropriate infill sites. These nodes will provide small-scale commercial services for each of the four growth areas. The neighborhood nodes should be limited to intersections of collector streets with arterial streets, designed to blend compatible limited retail service and office uses, day care services, and convenience commercial.

Potential locations for new neighborhood service nodes include:

- Waverly Road and Columbia Avenue.
- Waverly Road and Highway 15.
- Seward Avenue and the proposed link in the Eastern Growth Center.

INDUSTRIAL GROWTH AREAS

SEWARD SHOULD PROVIDE ATTRACTIVE SITES FOR FUTURE INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS PARK DEVELOPMENT.

Seward will need to continue to provide diverse economic opportunities to provide additional employment opportunities to those looking for small city residences. Economic development efforts in the city should take maximum advantage of the community’s primary assets — its quality of life and good regional and national transportation access. The land use plan proposes expansion of Seward’s existing patterns of industrial development.

The major industrial area will lie to the south of the city on the western side of Highway 15. Future industrial development in this area will have access to both the Interstate 80 corridor and the Seward Municipal Airport. Special attention should be given to the design and appearance of the development. Good landscaping and sign standards should be implemented to complement existing development. Improved connecting links to both Highway 15 and 34 will facilitate access to the development without adding undue stress to existing commercial development.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

SEWARD SHOULD IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY TO INCREASE AWARENESS AND MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF IMPORTANT RESOURCES IN ITS BUILT ENVIRONMENT.

Sound preservation policy and local preservation advocacy is an integral part of sound community planning. Historic preservation furthers major community development objectives, including maintaining a strong central business district, revitalizing and conserving neighborhoods, expanding housing opportunities, and enhancing the overall quality of community life. Also, viable and attractive older commercial and residential areas can help in recruitment of new residents, businesses, and industry.

Seward is a community of distinctive design quality, defined by architecturally important civic, residential, and commercial buildings. This is exemplified in the Seward County Courthouse Square Historic District and numerous

historic residences. The quality of the city's built environment is an important resource, which can be a central asset to community marketing efforts. As such, the city should implement a comprehensive strategy designed to increase awareness and appreciation of the city's special environmental features. In addition, city policy should work to preserve this heritage for future generations of Seward residents. Components of an historic preservation policy follow.

Educational Programs

Educational programs improve an understanding and appreciation of the history and architecture of the city, and encourage greater involvement of residents and neighborhood groups in preservation efforts. Educational programs may include:

- Training sessions for special interest groups in the community. Training techniques may include site tours, lectures, brochures, press releases of preservation activities, slide presentations highlighting architecture in Seward, and information booths at community events.
- An architectural guidebook to Seward, generally available at community retail outlets. Grant funds to support preparation may be available from local contributors or foundations; or through the Nebraska State Historical Society.
- Interpretive graphics in special districts. Interpretive graphics can tell the architectural story of the central business district.

Historic Preservation Ordinance

A number of communities have implemented Preservation Ordinances to provide various levels of protection for architectural and historic resources. In 1977, the Unicameral approved enabling legislation which permits cities to adopt protective preservation ordinances. To date, four Nebraska communities — Omaha, Lincoln, Tecumseh, and Ashland — have adopted local preservation ordinances. Preservation ordinances include the creation of an appointed Historic Preservation Commission, appointed by and responsive to the Mayor and City Council. Commissions generally include people with special expertise in preservation, history, architecture, or related fields. They also include members of other disciplines and neighborhood representatives.

Several options for Preservation Ordinances may be considered:

1. An advocacy model. This model creates an Historic Preservation Commission to designate sites and to serve as an advocate for preservation, but does not include protections or design reviews. Such a model is largely an educational and technical assistance service, without regulatory powers. Components of this ordinance include:

- Appointment of a Preservation Commission.
- Establishment of standards for designations.
- Designation of properties.
- Technical assistance to owners contemplating projects or modifications to historic properties or sites.

2. A demolition delay model. This model combines the advocacy model with the power to delay demolition of designated properties for a set period of time. During this period, the Commission would work with the property owner to seek alternatives to demolition. In addition to the components of the advocacy model, this alternative includes:

- Designation of an Historic District Overlay Zone, to define districts which are governed by the ordinance. These designations are then used to “flag” applications for demolition permits and referral to the Commission.
- A demolition delay, requiring a delay in demolition for designated properties for a specific period of time. During this time, the Commission will work with the owner to pursue alternatives to demolition.

3. *Design Review Model.* This model augments the previous two concepts by adding design review to the powers of an Historic Preservation Commission. Here, proposed improvements or changes to designated properties are reviewed by the Commission, according to specific design standards. The Commission must then issue a “certificate of appropriateness” before construction can proceed. The model permits appeals to the City Council if a permit is denied by the Commission. In addition to the features of the previous concepts, the Design review model includes:

- The formulation of design review standards and procedures by the Commission.
- Design review and issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness,
- Power to work with the applicant to make changes necessary to secure a certificate of appropriateness.
- An appeal route for denials, typically to the City Council.

4. *Demolition Denial Model.* This model provides the Historic Preservation Commission with the additional power to deny demolition of designated properties, except in cases of demonstrated hardship. An appeal process to the City Council should be provided.

Historic preservation ordinances can also include provisions for variances, special uses, or other tools that serve to encourage preservation of designated properties or districts. These tools can work in tandem with targeted neighborhood conservation and rehabilitation strategies, efforts to expand housing opportunities, or other policies and recommendations of the comprehensive plan.

Seward may consider the advocacy or demolition delay models as initial steps in a preservation program. However, the city should move toward the greater level of sophistication required by the design review model. This includes the development of design standards, generally based on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

Designations

Seward County Courthouse Square District, County Courthouse and numerous homes around Seward have already been placed on the National Registry. Other opportunities for both individual and district designation exist within Seward. District designations involve an ensemble of buildings in a generally contiguous area that have special importance or make a distinctive contribution to the cityscape. Columbia Street from Hillcrest Drive to Seward Avenue contains some of Seward historic homes and Concordia University.

Criteria for site or district designation include areas that:

- Exemplify or reflect the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or city.
- Are identified with historic people or important events in national, state, or local history.
- Exhibit architectural characteristics valuable for the study of periods, styles, methods of construction, or local materials or craftsmanship.
- Are representative of the notable works of master builders, designers, or architects of significant influence.
- Have yielded or may yield information important to the study of history or pre-history.

Historic district designations may include the preparation of a Preservation Plan specific to that district. The plan may include:

- Justification and boundaries of the district.
- A review of properties that contribute to the character of the district.
- Standards for new construction and modification of existing buildings within the district.
- Standards for changes and design in the public environment, including streets, alleys, sidewalks and trails, and landscaped areas.
- Provisions for variances and special uses.

Certified Local Government (CLG) Status

The CLG program, implemented through the Nebraska State Historical Society, provides access to funds for communities that have implemented a preservation plan and ordinance. Seward should move toward achieving

CLG status, which in turn makes the city eligible for funding under the program. Funds may be used for such projects as preservation studies, educational programs, development of financial incentive programs, and commission training. In addition, districts that are designated locally by a CLG may qualify for federal tax credits for historic rehabilitation. In order to qualify for CLG status, a city must:

- Adopt a preservation ordinance.
- Create a Preservation Commission.
- Provide opportunities for public participation and education.
- Maintain a survey and inventory of historic properties. Seward County should contract with the Nebraska State Historical Society to complete a countywide survey of historically and architecturally significant buildings and sites. NSHS has completed such a survey for a number of Nebraska counties.
- Maintain at least one professional staff member. The program could be carried out in cooperation with an existing staffed organization.

Conservation Code

Seward should adopt a special building code designed to meet the unique needs of adaptive reuse of existing structures. Model codes such as the Uniform Code for Building Conservation should be considered as a way to remove obstacles to the economic improvement or reuse of historic buildings. In its 1996 session, the Nebraska State Legislature adopted the Uniform Code for Building Conservation within the state building code. The intent of this action was to make the reuse of older and historic buildings viable, while requiring appropriate lifesafety compliance.

FRAMEWORK FOR DECISION-MAKING

SEWARD'S FUTURE LAND USE MAP AND POLICIES SHOULD PROVIDE BOTH GUIDANCE AND FLEXIBILITY TO DECISION MAKERS IN THE LAND USE PROCESS.

A Future Land Use Plan provides a development vision for the city that guides participants in the process of community building. However, it cannot anticipate the design or specific situation of every rezoning application. Therefore, the plan should not be taken as a literal, lot-by-lot prescription of how land is to be utilized. Rather, it provides a context that helps decision-makers, including city administrative officials, the Planning Commission, and the City Council, make logical decisions which implement the plan's overall principles.

The Land Use Plan establishes a number of categories of land uses, some of which provide for single primary uses while others encourage mixed uses. Two tables are included in this section to help approving agencies interpret the intentions of the land use plan. Table 3-13 presents and defines the various categories proposed in the plan and establishes criteria for their application. It also considers the appropriate zoning districts within Seward's Zoning Ordinance for each use category, or recommends new zoning policies where necessary. Table 3-14 presents a land use compatibility guide which assesses the relationships between adjacent land uses and provides a basis for review of land use proposals based on their surroundings. These tables together form a framework for findings by the Planning Commission and City Council which provide both needed flexibility and consistency with the plan's overall objectives.

TABLE 3-13: Framework for Decision Making		
Land Use Category	Use Characteristics	Features and Locational Criteria
Agriculture and Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally in agricultural or open space use. • Agriculture will remain the principal use during the planning period. • Extension of urban services is unlikely during the foreseeable future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These areas should remain in primary agriculture use. Urban encroachment, including large lot subdivisions, should be discouraged. • Primary uses through the planning period will remain agricultural. • Typical zoning would be A Agricultural.
Urban Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally in agricultural or open space use. • Areas may be in the path of future urban development after the planning horizon contained in this plan. • Very low density residential uses may be located in the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These areas should be reserved for long-term urban development. • Primary uses through the planning period will remain agricultural. • Any interim large lot residential development should avoid obstructions to future urban development. • Typical zoning would be A Agricultural to TUD for Transitional Use District.
Conservation Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictive land uses, emphasizing housing and open space. • Civic uses may be allowed with special use permission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies to wooded or hill environments with significant environmental features. Golf course subdivisions share characteristics of conservation development. • Development regulations should promote reservation of common open space and design of projects to take best advantage of open space resources. • Gross densities will generally be less than two units per acre, although lot clustering may produce smaller individual lots. • Typical zoning is A or TUD, although special regulations are needed to promote conservation developments.
Large Lot Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictive land uses, emphasizing housing and open space. • Civic uses may be allowed with special use permission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes area that have developed to low densities, but utilize conventional subdivision techniques. • Applies to areas where conventional large lot subdivisions have been established. • Most houses use individual wastewater systems and are unlikely to experience extensions of urban services. • Gross densities will generally be less than one unit per acre. • Typical zoning is A or TUD.

TABLE 3-13: Framework for Decision Making		
Land Use Category	Use Characteristics	Features and Locational Criteria
Single-Family Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictive land uses, emphasizing single-family detached development, although unconventional single-family forms may be permitted with special review. • Civic uses are generally allowed, with special permission for higher intensity uses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary uses within residential growth centers. • Should be insulated from adverse environmental effects, including noise, smell, air pollution, and light pollution. • Should provide a framework of streets and open spaces. • Typical densities range from 1 to 6 units per acre. • Typical zoning is R-1.
Moderate-Density Residential/Urban Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictive land uses, emphasizing housing. • May incorporate a mix of housing types, including single-family detached, single-family attached, and townhouse uses. • Limited multi-family development may be permitted with special review and criteria • Civic uses are generally allowed, with special permission for higher intensity uses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies to established neighborhoods of the city which have diverse housing types, and in developing areas that incorporate a mix of development. • Developments should generally have articulated scale and maintain identity of individual units. • Develop in projects with adequate size to provide full services. • Tend to locate in complexes, but should include linkages to other aspects of the community. • Typical maximum density is 6 to 10 units per acre. • Innovative design should be encouraged in new projects. • Typical zoning is R-2 or R-3.
Mobile Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodates mobile homes which are not classified under State law as “manufactured housing, • Single-family, small lot settings within planned mobile home parks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop in projects with adequate size to provide full services. • Tend to locate in complexes, but should include linkages to other aspects of the community. • Typical maximum density is 8 units per acre. • A new zoning district and updated regulations should be established to govern development of mobile home facilities. • Zoning is R-5. Development proposals always require Planned Development designations.
High Density Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows multi-family and compatible civic uses. • Allows integration of limited office and convenience commercial within primarily residential areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate at sites with access to major amenities or activity centers. • Should be integrated into the fabric of nearby residential areas, while avoiding adverse traffic and visual impacts on low-density uses. • Traffic should have direct access to collector or arterial streets to avoid overloading local streets. • Requires Planned Development designation when developed near lower intensity uses or in mixed use developments. • Developments should avoid creation of compounds. • Attractive landscape standards should be applied. • Typical density is in excess of 10 units per acre. • Typical zoning is R-4.

TABLE 3-13: Framework for Decision Making		
Land Use Category	Use Characteristics	Features and Locational Criteria
Mixed Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporates a mix of residential, office, and limited commercial uses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May apply to urban corridors, including Seward, 6th, and Main Streets. • Also applies to planned areas in new districts which incorporate an urban mix of residential, office, and commercial uses. • Developments should emphasize relationships among parts. • Pedestrian traffic should be encouraged and neighborhood scale retained when applicable. • Projects should avoid large expanses of parking visible from major streets. • Signage and site features should respect neighborhood scale. • Commercial and office development in mixed use areas should minimize impact on housing. • Current C-1 district partially accommodates mixed uses. A new district for mixed uses, including residential, office and limited commercial uses with good development and signage standards should be implemented.
Limited Commercial/Neighborhood Business District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes a range of low-impact commercial uses, providing a variety of neighborhood services. • Includes low to moderate building and impervious coverage. • May include office or office park development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be located at intersections of major or collector streets. • Should avoid a “four corners” configuration, except within neighborhood business districts. • Development should emphasize pedestrian scale and relationships among businesses. • Uses should be limited in terms of operational effects. • Good landscaping and restrictive signage standards should be maintained. • Good pedestrian/bicycle connections should be provided into surrounding areas. • The dominance of automobiles should be moderated by project design. • Typical zoning is C-2.
Community Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes a variety of commercial uses. • Establishes larger buildings and parking facilities than Limited Commercial uses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be located at intersections of arterials or other major streets. • Should avoid a “four corners” configuration. • Traffic systems should provide alternative routes and good internal traffic flow. • Negative effects on surrounding residential areas should be limited. • Good landscaping and restrictive signage standards should be maintained. • Good pedestrian/bicycle connections should be provided into surrounding residential service areas. • Buffering from surrounding uses may be required. • Typical zoning is C-3.

TABLE 3-13: Framework for Decision Making		
Land Use Category	Use Characteristics	Features and Locational Criteria
Main Street Mixed Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional downtown district of Seward. • Includes mix of uses, primarily commercial, office, upper level residential, and warehousing/industrial uses. • Primary focus of major civic uses, including government, cultural services, and other civic facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes mixed use pattern in the traditional city center. • Recognizes current development patterns without permitting undesirable land uses. • District may expand with development of appropriately designed adjacent projects. • New projects should respect pedestrian scale and design patterns and setbacks within the overall district. • Historic preservation is a significant value. • Typical zoning is C-1.
Limited Industrial/Business Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited industrial provides for uses which do not generate noticeable external effects. • Business parks may combine office and light industrial/research uses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited industrial uses may be located near office, commercial, and, with appropriate development standards, some residential areas. • Strict control over signage, landscaping, and design is necessary for locations nearer to low intensity uses. • Most proposed industrial locations in the Seward Plan are relatively isolated from residential uses. • Typical zoning is I-1. A new district for business parks, including office and office/distribution uses with good development and signage standards should be implemented.
General Industrial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General industrial provides for a range of industrial enterprises, including those with significant external effects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General industrial sites should be well-buffered from less intensive use. • Sites should have direct access to major regional transportation facilities, without passing through residential or commercial areas. • Developments with major external effects should be subject to Planned Development review. • Typical zoning is I-2.
Civic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes schools, churches, libraries, and other public facilities that act as centers of community activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be permitted in a number of different areas, including residential areas. • Individual review of proposals requires an assessment of operating characteristics, project design, and traffic management.
Public Facilities and Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes facilities with industrial operating characteristics, including public utilities, maintenance facilities, and public works yards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial operating characteristics should be controlled according to same standards as industrial uses. • When possible, should generally be located in industrial areas.

TABLE 3-14: Land Use Compatibility Guide

Proposed Land Use	Residential Units/Acre	Large Lot Residential	Existing Adjacent Land Use			
			Low-Density Residential	Moderate-Density Residential	Medium-Density Residential	High-Density Residential
Large Lot Residential	<1	5	5	4	4	2
Low-Density Residential	1 to 6	4	5	4	3	2
Moderate-Density Residential	6 to 8	3	4	5	4	3
Medium-Density Residential	8 to 16	3	3	4	5	5
High-Density Residential	>16	2	2	3	4	5
Office		2	2	3	3	4
Limited Commercial		1	2	3	3	4
General Commercial		1	2	2	3	3
Limited Industrial		1	1	1	2	2
General Industrial		1	1	1	1	1
Civic		3	3	3	3	4
Utilities		2	2	2	2	

Proposed Land Use	Office	Limited Commercial	Existing Adjacent Land Use				Civic	Utilities
			General Commercial	Limited Industrial	General Industrial			
Large Lot Residential	2	1	1	1	1	4	2	
Low-Density Residential	2	2	2	2	1	4	2	
Moderate-Density Residential	3	3	2	2	1	4	2	
Medium-Density Residential	4	4	3	2	1	4	2	
High-Density Residential	4	4	3	2	1	4	2	
Office	5	5	5	4	3	4	4	
Limited Commercial	5	5	5	4	3	3	4	
General Commercial	5	5	5	4	3	2	5	
Limited Industrial	4	3	5	5	5	2	4	
General Industrial	3	2	3	4	5	1	3	
Civic	4	3	3	2	1	5	2	
Utilities	2	2	3	4	5	2	5	

Source:RDG Crose Gardner Shuker

Compatibility Rating Key

- 5:** Identical to pre-existing land uses or totally compatible. Development should be designed consistent with good planning practice.
- 4:** The proposed use is basically compatible with the pre-existing adjacent use. Traffic from higher intensity uses should be directed away from lower intensity uses. Building elements and scale should be consistent with surrounding development.
- 3:** The proposed use may has potential conflicts with existing adjacent uses, which may be remedied or minimized through project design. Traffic and other external effects should be directed away from lower-intensity uses.

Landscaping, buffering, and screening should be employed to minimize negative effects. A Planned Unit Development may be advisable.

2: The proposed use has significant conflicts with the pre-existing adjacent use. Major effects must be strongly mitigated to prevent impact on adjacent uses. A Planned Unit Development is required in all cases to assess project impact and define development design.

1: The proposed use is incompatible with adjacent land uses. Any development proposal requires a Planned Unit Development and extensive documentation to prove that external effects are fully mitigated. In general, proposed uses with this level of conflict will not be permitted.

ANNEXATION PROGRAM

SEWARD SHOULD IMPLEMENT AN ANNEXATION PROGRAM THAT WILL CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT AND FACILITATE THE GOALS OF THE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN.

The Annexation Map illustrates those areas around the City of Seward that should be considered for annexation. The areas are categorized into four phases based on the estimated urgency for incorporation into the city. Phase 1 being the most urgent and Phase 4 being the least urgent.

The following is a description of the issues associated with each phase as illustrated on the Annexation Phasing Map. Within each phase, areas are delineate by their relevance regarding the need for annexation and the services the city will need provide to the area.

Phase One. *Location and associated issues warrant the immediate consideration of annexation.*

Section 1a. Section 1a covers two areas, both are islands within the current city limits. The southern section is bisected by Seward Street and has easy access to city services. Plum Creek encompasses most of the area within the northern section adjacent to Edgewood Lane. Both sections are bordered by Wilderness Park and are within the Plum Creek flood plain, therefore development will be unlikely. Annexation of these sections will address any boundary confusion issues and provide more efficient services to the area.

Section 1b. Section 1b is bounded by 6th Street, Columbia Avenue, Waverly Road and the existing city limits. Development along the northern boundary will create development pressures in the future. Easy access to the public schools, Plum Creek Park and the Seward Sports Complex will add additional development pressures to the area. Section 1b will require city water and sewer services, but its adjacency to these services will facilitate development. It will also be important for the city to designate future road right of way and trail linkage for the City's park system.

Section 1c. Section 1c covers a small area on the western edge of the city. Water and sewer service is adjacent to the area facilitating future development of the area. The floodplain and railroad line will limit development in the area but annexation should reduce boundary confusion in the future.

Phase Two. *Opportunities exist to warrant future consideration of annexation within the twenty year life of the Seward Plan.*

Section 2a. Section 2a lies to the east of the South Highway 15 corridor. The corridor has been the location of large scale commercial development in the past 15 years. Access to Interstate 80 along Highway 15 will continue to make this area a prime location for development. A future Highway 15 bypass would likely move through this section creating new intersections and opportunities for commercial development. Additionally, the imminent annexation of the western section of the Highway could create increased development pressures in the area. Development on the western side of Highway 15 currently receives city services facilitating development to the east.

Section 2b. Section 2b is located within the Eastern Growth Center, north of Highway 34. Residential development has been occurring to the east and south and access to Wilderness Park will likely create development pressure

within the section. Annexation will reduce boundary confusion for future development and ensure that residential development coincides with the city's future goals and objectives.

Section 2c. Section 2c lies to the north of Waverly Road and is bounded by Highway 15 and Columbia Avenue. Residential development has traditionally been moving to the north and the trend will likely continue through the planning period. Existing development to the south will facilitate the extension of city services. It will be important for the city to guide development within this section to ensure that it meets both the residential and commercial needs of the Northern Growth Center.

Section 2d. Section 2d borders the Seward Country Club creating a prime location for residential development. This section will also play an important part in the proposed trail and park system. A trail link along the northern edge of Section 2d will unite existing parks and recreation facilities on the eastern and western sides of the city. Annexation would facilitate the development of the trail system and ensure that future development is contiguous with Seward's Land Use Policies. Development along Hillcrest Avenue does use septic systems, therefore it will be important for the city to ensure city services to this area to prevent blockages to future growth. Designating road right-of-way will also ensure proper circulation through the area.

Phase Three. *These areas are situated beyond the expected growth areas of the city. Conditions exist that may bring about the need for annexation of these areas. However, annexation will not be necessary until well beyond the life of the Seward Plan.*

Section 3a. Section 3a, located in the Southern Growth Center, is located east of existing commercial and industrial development. The Highway 15 corridor is a prime location for future development with the imminent annexation of the western side of the Highway and access to the Interstate 80 corridor and city services. It will be important that the city ensures that future development meets the city's long-term development goals and objectives.

Section 3b. Section 3b is located just to the south of the city's current city limits along the western side of South Highway 15. A large floodplain and the railroad will limit development of the area but it will be important to ensure a contiguous boundary between the northern and southern sections of the city.

Section 3c. Section 3c is located within the Eastern Growth Center north of Highway 34. Rural residential development within the section and easy access to the park system and downtown will facilitate further residential development in the area. It will be important for the city to ensure a correct balance between residential and commercial development. The area does not currently receive city services but can easily access services to the south. The city will need to ensure upgrades of existing roads and reserve street right-of-way that will provide sufficient circulation between new development and the downtown.

Section 3d. Section 3d is bounded by Waverly Road, Hillcrest Avenue and the BNSF Railroad. The Blue River floodplain will limit development within the section but also provide a prime opportunity for expansion of the park system. The area does not receive city services and it will be important that development in the area meets the city's long term goals.

Section 3e. Section 3e is located within the Southern Growth Center with access to the Interstate 80 corridor. Existing city services adjacent to the section, access to the Interstate and existing development make this area a prime location for future light industrial development. The city will also need to ensure that industrial development within the area is compatible with the city's long-term development goals.

Phase Four. *These areas are situated beyond the expected growth areas of the city. Annexation will not be necessary until well beyond the life of the Seward Plan. Rural development will likely be an end use in many of these locations, as urban development will likely occur nearer the current urbanized area.*

Section 4a. High visibility from Highway 34 may create development pressures along Section 4a's northern edge. It will be important for the city to ensure that the area is reserved for future development that is compatible with the city's long term development goals.

Section 4b. Section 4b is located adjacent to the future Wilderness Park and includes existing rural residential development. The existing development and quality of life amenities that the park will offer could create

development pressures in the area. The area does not receive city services and would likely require an additional crossing of Plum Creek.

Section 4c. Section 4c lies outside the twenty year plan but should be reserved for future development. A bypass of Highway 15 would likely bisect this area and could create additional development pressures.

Section 4d. Section 4d is located in the northern edges of the city and development of the area is unlikely during the twenty year planning period but should be protected for future development, ensuring compatibility with long-term development goals will be a primary concern.

Section 4e. Section 4e is bisected by Highway 34 and the Blue River. Growth in this area will be limited by the large Blue River floodplain but the visibility of Highway 34 could create development pressures. As a gateway into Seward it will be important that development along Highway 34 is compatible with the city's long term development goals.

CHAPTER FOUR

Transportation and land use interact in a critical way to determine the quality of life in the Seward Plan. In any community, the transportation system fills many functions - as a lifeline for business and industry, a tool for economic self-sufficiency and human dignity, a form-giver to the city, and an amenity and vital service for residents.

GOALS

This chapter is designed to provide the city with a city design concept and transportation system that fills these varied roles for Seward. The overall assumption of this chapter is that land use policies and major transportation improvements in Seward must:

- Address transportation issues that result from Seward's position in the regional and national traffic system;
- Provide enhanced movement around the city; and
- Link neighborhoods and community features together.

As Seward's combined pattern of land use and transportation systems develops it must strive to:

PROVIDE FOR THE SAFE AND CONVENIENT MOVEMENT OF ALL RESIDENTS OF SEWARD.

Safety is a fundamental consideration for all elements of a transportation system. Transportation conflicts and a mixture of turning movements create traffic "friction" that slows travel and increases the probabilities of accidents. A traffic system that sorts out these varied demands and provides alternatives will become a safer and more expeditious system. In addition, system design should anticipate future problems and plan for them. Finally, the community should serve the needs of a growing number of pedestrians and bicyclists and help insure their safety as well. This chapter will address these concerns, provide solutions for identified problems and suggest direction for future needs that will emerge from community change.

ASSURE THAT THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IS ADEQUATE TO MEET THE DEMANDS PLACED UPON IT.

Although transportation has been a vital part of Seward's development history and economic growth, the city's system is not well developed in many ways. Specifically, its over reliance on a few arterial streets creates both congestion and safety problems on major highways such as 6th Street and Main Street; or regional through traffic which creates demands for the widening and upgrading of in-city streets. A major goal of the plan must be to create an overall system which reduces or eliminates these conflicts or pressures.

The transportation plan should also look at limited cost solutions that can also increase the system's ability to serve the city's needs. For example, system management strategies that spread out peak loads and eliminate local problems that slow traffic loads can economically increase the practical capacity of existing streets.

USE THE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK TO SUPPORT DESIRABLE PATTERNS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.

Transportation systems do more than move people from one place to another. They also form the structure of the community and are a very important implementation tool in the comprehensive planning process. In the case of Seward, transportation "balance" also means opening new areas to development. This, over the long term, will load the traffic system more equally and assure that streets are equal to the task of serving an increasing population and industrial base. Indeed, a growth pattern that produces residential development in one direction combined with industrial growth in the opposite direction, will eventually overload any street improvement project.

PROVIDE MOBILITY FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT USING AUTOMOBILES.

Seward's physical layout makes traveling around the city by means other than cars a possibility. The city's pedestrian system should provide good access for all to major features in the city. In addition, Seward could make increasing use of bicycle transportation for recreational, shopping, and even work trips. A balanced transportation system addresses these other needs which, although less visible than street construction, are nevertheless very important.

In addition, some of Seward's residents suffer from mobility impairments. For example, elderly residents are increasingly transportation-disadvantaged because the city provides few alternatives to the use of cars. Many senior citizens can no longer drive or feel uncomfortable about using automobiles. Students at Concordia University and St. Gregory the Great Seminary lack public transportation alternatives to bring them to shopping and entertainment in Downtown Seward or other retail centers. For its residents, and for the sake of reduced traffic congestion, Seward should work to increase transportation options and mobility for all its citizens.

ENCOURAGE A BALANCED GROWTH PATTERN THAT DISTRIBUTES TRAFFIC IN WAYS THAT SAFEGUARDS THE CITY'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM.

In order to realize the full benefits of the planned transportation system, growth in Seward must be evenly distributed. The proposed network is designed to promote development in each of the city's quadrants, which will reduce the city's current dependence on two major traffic corridors.

Seward's land use policies and decision making must reinforce the long-term city development concepts. The result will be a community that is more balanced physically and more economical to serve and operate. In addition, a balanced development pattern will guard against future failures of the city's transportation system.

ANALYSIS

PATTERNS OF MOBILITY

This section examines important elements of the transportation system that will assist in developing specific projects and policies. It discusses the structure of the city's street system and the role that its individual parts play.

The Structure of the Street System

Seward's street system grows from the survey's grid of section lines. Specifically the north/south section and half section lines. The western section line follows 8th Street and the eastern half-section line along Columbia Avenue. The grid of Seward's original plat developed within these boundaries with east/west parallel following Jackson Avenue. The Highways also following the survey's grid of section lines until entering the city. On Seward's northern end Highway 15 curves east to follow 6th Street into the heart of the city until returning to the section line south of the Blue River. Highway 34 also follows the section line until curving north and following Main Street. The diversion to the north of Highway 34 not only diverts traffic into the city but reduces the number of bridges necessary for crossing Plum Creek and the Blue River.

Later additions to the grid have been less continuous. Recent development, especially in the northern quadrants of the city, tend to extend the north/south streets but abandon additional east/west streets. This pattern directs east/west traffic onto arterial streets such as Hillcrest Drive and Pinewood Avenue.

Street Classification

The Street Classification Map displays the city's existing TEA-21 system with State functional classifications. A street segment must be designated part of the Federal Aid system to be eligible for Federal funding assistance for major improvements.

Streets are placed into four functional categories:

- Expressways*: Expressways are restricted access, free-flow roads, designed to carry high traffic volumes at high speeds with minimum friction. All traffic movement is lane-separated by flow direction, and all intersections with local and regional roads are made with grade-separated interchanges. Interstate 80 is an express 6 miles to the south of Seward.
- Major Arterials*: These roads serve regional needs and connect major activity centers. They usually serve the highest traffic corridors and are designed to accommodate relatively high speeds (usually above 40 miles per hour in urban areas). These streets often use access control devices such as raised medians to reduce traffic conflicts. Highway 15 (6th Street) and Highway 34 (Main Street) through Seward are classified as major arterials. Congestion and safety problems emerge when major arterials also are called upon to move local trips, such as trips to shopping facilities. This occurs in the absence of connected street networks, which provide alternative routes.
- Other Arterials*: These major streets connect with and complement the major arterial system by linking major activity centers and connecting various parts of the city together. Unlike expressways, other arterials usually provide access to adjacent properties and generally accommodate extensive left-turn movements and curb cuts. These major streets are designed for speeds of 40 mph or below. As a rule, these streets are spaced at 0.5 to 1.0 miles in developed urban areas and 2.0 miles in fringe areas. Seward streets in this classification include:
 - Hillcrest Drive
 - Columbia Avenue
- Collectors*: The collector system links neighborhoods together and connects them to arterials and activity centers. Collectors are designed for relatively low speeds (30 mph and below) and provide unlimited local access. Collectors run within residential areas and distribute trips from arterials to their ultimate

destinations. They also collect traffic from a neighborhood's local streets and channel it to arterials. Examples of collectors in Seward's current system include:

- Pinewood Avenue
- Moffit Street
- Seward Street
- Ash Street
- Karol Kay Boulevard
- 14th Street

- *Local Streets.* Local streets serve individual properties within residential or commercial areas. They provide direct, low-speed access for relatively short trips. Local streets may include cul-de-sacs, which should not exceed 300 feet in length only in exceptional circumstances. Numerous cul-de-sacs in the western part of the city often limit access to other parts of the city.

Capacity Analysis

A capacity analysis compares the traffic volumes on a street segment with the design traffic capacity of that segment. The ratio of volume over capacity (V/C) corresponds to a "level of service" (LOS), which describes the quality of traffic flow.

Measures of Levels of Service (LOS)

System performance of a street is evaluated using a criterion called the "level of service" or LOS. LOS is a qualitative measure that examines such factors as speed, travel time, traffic interruptions, freedom of maneuvering, safety, convenience, and operating costs of a road under specific volume conditions. A ratio of volume to capacity (that is, how much traffic the street carries divided by how much traffic the street was designed to carry) provides a short method for determining LOS. LOS categories are described as follows:

- LOS A: This describes free-flowing operation. Vehicles face few impediments in maneuvering. The driver has a high level of physical and psychological comfort. Minor accidents or breakdowns cause little interruption in the traffic stream. LOS A corresponds to a volume/capacity ratio of 0 to 0.60.
- LOS B: This condition is reasonably free-flowing operation. Maneuvering ability is slightly restricted, but ease of movement remains high. LOS B corresponds to a V/C ratio of 0.60 to 0.70.
- LOS C: This level provides stable operation. Traffic flows approach the range in which increases in traffic will degrade service. Minor incidents can be absorbed, but a local slow-down of traffic will result. In urban settings, LOS C is a good level of service to work toward. It corresponds to a V/C ratio of 0.70 to 0.80.
- LOS D: This level borders on an unstable traffic flow. Small traffic increases produce substantial service deterioration. Maneuverability is limited and comfort levels are reduced. LOS D represents a V/C ratio of 0.80 to 0.90. LOS D is frequently used as a compromise standard in dense urban settings.
- LOS E: LOS E represents typical operation at full design capacity of a street. Operations are extremely unstable, because there is little margin for error in the traffic stream. LOS E corresponds to a V/C ratio of 0.90 to 1.00.
- LOS F: LOS F is a breakdown in the system. Such conditions exist when queues form behind a breakdown or congestion point. This condition occurs when traffic exceeds the design capacity of the street.

Table 4.0 Typical Traffic Capacity by Facility Type

	Capacity at LOS "C" (vpd)	
	CBD Setting	Non-CBD
Major Arterials		
2-Lane	9,400	10,400
2-Lane with Turn Lanes	12,800	14,000
4-Lane	21,000	23,300
4-Lane with Turn Lanes	23,800	26,500
Other Arterials		
2-Lane	7,500	8,400
2-Lane with Turn Lanes	8,600	9,400
4-Lane	16,900	18,700
4-Lane with Turn Lanes	18,800	20,900
Collectors		
2-Lane	5,800	6,500
2-Lane with Turn Lanes	7,800	8,600
4-Lane	13,000	14,500
4-Lane with Turn Lanes	14,600	16,300

Source: HDR, Inc.

Street Performance Evaluation

Table 4-1 uses the volume/capacity ratio method to compute the LOS offered by each major street segment in the city, utilizing 1999 traffic volumes. Based on this computation, no street displayed an LOS of F or E and only segments of Highway 15 experienced an LOS D. Those segments included Moffit to Roberts Streets, and south of Ash Street.

In an analysis of the existing traffic system, 6th Street (Highway 15) stands out as the city's only traffic problem. In addition to linear volume movements, traffic conflicts along the streets numerous intersections with residential collectors create particular problems. A possible bypass of Highway 15 along the eastern side of the city would relieve much of the pressure caused by regional traffic.

TABLE: 4-1: Existing Traffic Capacity Analysis Seward Major Street System

Roadway Name	Segment	Volume	Capacity	V/C
Columbia Avenue	Waverly Road	355	8,400	0.04
	Pinewood Ave.	1,455	8,400	0.17
	North of Hillcrest Dr.	2,230	8,400	0.27
	South of Hillcrest Dr.	4,545	8,400	0.54
	North of HWY 34	4,395	8400	0.52
	South of HWY 34	495	8,400	0.06
6th Street (Highway 15)	North of Pinewood Ave.	4,780	10,400	0.46
	North of Hillcrest Dr.	7,170	14,000	0.51
	South of Hillcrest Dr.	8,475	14,000	0.61
	Moffit - Roberts Streets	10,030	10,400	0.96
	Jackson Ave. - Seward St.	10,160	9,400	1.08
	South of HWY 34	9,185	12,800	0.78
	Ash St.	9,295	10,400	0.89
14th Street	HWY 34	765	6,500	0.12
Waverly Road	West of HWY 15	375	8,400	0.04
	East of Columbia Ave.	370	8,400	0.04
Pinewood Avenue	HWY 15	1,980	6,500	0.31
	West of Columbia Ave.	1,910	6,500	0.59
	East of Columbia Ave	1,810	6,500	0.28
Hillcrest Drive	West of HWY 15	775	8,400	0.09
	East of HWY 15	2,215	8,400	0.26
	Columbia Ave.	2,510	8,400	0.3
Moffit Street	Columbia Ave. - 1st St.	1,265	6,500	0.19
Seward Street	10th Street	1,400	6,500	0.22
	4th - 3rd St.	1,640	6,500	0.25
Main Street (Highway 34)	City limits to 14th St.	2,885	14,000	0.21
	West of HWY 15	5,585	12,800	0.44
	East of HWY 15	6,390	12,800	0.5
	Columbia Ave. to City limits	4,870	14,000	0.35
Ash Street	Highway 15	980	6,500	0.1

Levels of Service: A Cautionary Note

While the level of service concept provides a way of “grading” traffic flow, it is important to remember that it is primarily based on the speed at which traffic can travel. In urban situations the costs and benefits of providing high speed and undelayed traffic movement versus effects on adjacent neighborhoods must be weighed. In some contexts, accepting a lower LOS as a cost for maintaining the integrity and value of a neighborhood is advisable.

In addition, relying exclusively on speed to determine street system performance can lead to very low density development, which in turn increases the total amount of vehicle miles travelled. Elapsed travel time may be the same for short distance travel at lower speeds and long distance travel at high speeds.

Traffic Volumes

The 1999 Traffic Volume indicates traffic loads on major segments of Seward’s street system. It indicates the following:

- The heaviest loads in Seward's street system occur along 6th Street between Moffit and Ash Streets, with average daily traffic (adt) between 9,185 and 10,160. Sixth Street volumes drop to 4,780 to 8,475 north of Moffit Street. The impact of these volumes is increased by local movements into access driveways.
- The second most heavily traveled corridor is Main Street peaking at the intersection of 6th and Main Streets or Highway 34 and 15, with counts between 5,585 and 6,390. Volumes decrease going west to 2,885 and east to 4,870.
- Also receiving heavy volumes of traffic is Columbia Avenue between Highway 34 and Hillcrest Drive. This section has an average daily traffic count between 4,395 and 4,545.

Table 4-2 compares traffic volumes from 1988 to 1999. These comparison indicates:

- Significant increases along those collector streets serving the northeast quadrant. The increase in residential development in this area has meant heavier traffic loads in this area.
- The east/west streets in the northern section of Seward, consisting of Pinewood, Hillcrest and Moffit Streets, have experienced a greater increases in traffic volume than corresponding north/south streets. Fewer east/west local streets in this area forces traffic onto those collector streets.
- A decrease in traffic volume along Highway 34 west of Highway 15. This could be an indication of through traffic using Interstate 80 to a greater degree.

Table 4-2: Average Daily Traffic 1988-1999

Roadway Name	Segment	1988	1991	% Change		
				1999	1988-1999	1991-1999
Columbia Avenue	Waverly Road	-	-	355	-	-
	Pinewood Ave.	715	960	1,455	103.5	51.6
	North of Hillcrest Dr.	1,650	1,775	2,230	35.2	25.6
	South of Hillcrest Dr.	2,835	3,655	4,545	60.3	24.4
	North of HWY 34	3,105	3,500	4,395	41.5	25.6
6th Street (Highway 15)	North of Pinewood Ave.	4,020	3,905	4,780	18.9	22.4
	North of Hillcrest Dr.	4,895	5,575	7,170	46.5	28.6
	South of Hillcrest Dr.	9,515	7,050	8,475	-10.9	20.2
	Moffit - Roberts Streets	7,305	8,475	10,030	37.3	18.3
	Jackson Ave. - Seward St.	8,895	8,935	10,160	14.2	13.7
14th Street	South of HWY 34	8,290	8,000	9,185	10.8	14.8
	Ash St.	7,415	7,985	9,295	25.4	16.4
	HWY 34	1,025	460	765	-25.4	66.3
	HWY 15	910	1,070	1,980	117.6	85
	West of Columbia Ave.	745	1,110	1,910	156.4	72.1
Hillcrest Drive	East of Columbia Ave	790	1,070	1,810	129.1	69.2
	West of HWY 15	1,020	735	775	-24	5.4
	East of HWY 15	2,290	2,190	2,215	-3.3	1.1
Moffit Street	Columbia Ave.	2,305	2,255	2,510	8.9	11.3
	Columbia Ave. - 1st St.	525	465	1,265	141	172
Seward Street	10th Street	1,885	940	1,400	-25.7	48.9
	4th - 3rd St.	1,685	1,700	1,640	-2.7	-3.5
Main Street (Highway 34)	City limits to 14th St.	3,015	2,700	2,885	-4.3	6.9
	West of HWY 15	5,805	5,855	5,585	-3.8	-4.6
	East of HWY 15	5,955	6,180	6,390	7.3	3.4
	Columbia Ave. to City limits	3,925	3,870	4,870	24.1	25.8
Ash Street	Highway 15	930	870	980	5.4	12

Other Transportation Modes

Sidewalks

Seward maintains a relatively complete sidewalk system within its traditional grid. However, this system breaks down in outlying development areas, suffering from some of the same discontinuities as the local and collector street system. Gradual adaptation of major pedestrian corridors to full accessibility will be an important priority for Seward's pedestrian system.

Trails

Seward lacks an extensive trail system. An extended trail system is discussed in Chapter Five "A Recreation Lifestyle".

Conclusions

This analysis suggests that:

- Seward enjoys a highly connected street network. New development must continue this level of connectivity which effectively moves local traffic around the community.
- Most of the Seward street system operates within design capacity. Future growth will need to tie into this system and ensure that traffic is dispersed evenly.
- Growth and external projects will have an impact on the planning of the city's transportation system. These influences include:
 - A Highway 15 Bypass along the eastern edge of the city.
 - Northern and southern growth that will require additional investments to maintain good street circulation.
- Seward has few facilities for bicycles.

TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

In Seward, a transportation program should meet current and future mobility needs without compromising the character of the city's urban environment. This general policy includes:

- Reducing traffic friction and safety conflicts along 6th Street and Main Street.
- Providing routes and alternative modes for local trips to prevent friction on major arterials.
- Using transportation as a formative and positive determinant of design and urban form.
- Developing a continuous network to accommodate non-automobile transportation.

The components of this program include:

- **CONTINUOUS TRANSPORTATION**
- **LOCAL CONNECTIVITY**
- **CIVIC STREETS**
- **PEDESTRIAN AND TRAIL SYSTEM**
- **NORTHERN CONNECTORS**
- **HISTORIC BRICK STREETS**

CONTINUOUS TRANSPORTATION

NEW GROWTH AREAS IN SEWARD SHOULD BE SERVED BY CONTINUOUS STREET NETWORKS THAT ARE LINKED TO ESTABLISHED PARTS OF THE CITY.

Seward's traditional city neighborhoods were built along a street grid of continuous, relatively closely spaced streets. The grid pattern generally disperses traffic by providing a number of alternative routes in and out of residential neighborhoods. However, more contemporary development patterns diverge from the grid, using cul-de-sacs and other devices to limit the through routes available through the neighborhood. This design technique tends to concentrate traffic in a few collector streets and on major arterials, increasing traffic loading and congestion on these streets. The high and growing traffic volumes on such street as 6th Street, Columbia Avenue, Pinewood Avenue, and Moffit Street illustrates this consequence.

In addition, the incremental nature of contemporary subdivision development fails to pre-designate major collector routes. As a result, these streets emerge informally and in an unplanned way, sometimes creating unintended traffic on local streets. Finally, this pattern of discontinuous streets, designed only to meet the needs of an individual subdivision, can create enclaves that separate neighborhoods from one another and from the fabric of the traditional town.

Seward should pre-plan a system of collector streets and local major links to guide traffic through developing residential areas. In addition, while contemporary subdivisions often do not use closely-spaced street grids, streets in newly developing areas should maintain the positive features of these grids — alternative routes through neighborhoods, connections to other residential areas, a network of local streets linked to collectors, and avoidance of long cul-de-sacs. New building sites should not block streets designated on the Official Map.

The Land Use Plan proposes these key transportation links:

- *Seward Street Parkway*, connecting future development in the east with the parks and recreation opportunities along the Blue River. This street already plays an important role in the community's transportation system, but should be upgraded to take on more of a role as a civic street. This does not imply widening of Seward Street.
- *East/West Arterial Links*, these would follow the section lines at Hillcrest Drive and Waverly Road.

- *Northern Collectors*, would include north/south links to the west of the Seward Country Club and an east/west link connecting the Seward Country Club with Plum Creek Park and Karol Kay Boulevard. The Northern Collector would include trails and open spaces and provides an alternate route to those living in northern Seward.
- *Karol Kay Boulevard extension and upgrade*. An extension of Karol Kay Boulevard to the south and an upgrade of the existing road to the north would serve existing and future residential development. Providing an additional collector street will reduce transportation pressures along Columbia Avenue and provide additional access to Wilderness Park.
- *A Highway 15 Bypass Study Corridor*; analyzing the need to divert heavy truck traffic away from the 6th Street corridor to the east of the city.
- *Sidewalk trail upgrades*, along 8th Street and Hillcrest Drive.

LOCAL CONNECTIVITY

THE LOCAL STREET NETWORK IN DEVELOPING RESIDENTIAL AREAS SHOULD BE DESIGNED WITH MULTIPLE CONNECTIONS AND RELATIVELY DIRECT ROUTES.

Within the framework of higher-order streets (arterials, collectors, and the collector parkway), local street systems will develop to serve individual developments. These systems should be designed with clear circulation patterns that preserve the quiet qualities of local streets while providing residents, visitors, and public safety and service vehicles access which is comprehensible and direct. This can be done by incorporating the following standards or techniques in local street design:

- *Hierarchy and Cueing*. Local street networks should have a natural order to them that provide cues, leading residents and visitors naturally to their destinations. Hybrid street networks combine the ease of use of a grid with the privacy of a contemporary suburban street pattern.
- *Connectivity*. The street network should have segments which connect to one another internally and to collector streets. Several measures to evaluate the connectivity of street networks have been developed. One measure is the ratio of the number of street links divided by the number of nodes (intersections or cul-de-sac heads). A target ratio of 1.40 produces a good neighborhood mix of connectivity and privacy.
- *Alternatives to Cul-de-Sacs*. Cul-de-Sacs are often valued by developers and home buyers for their privacy, but are difficult and expensive to serve with public safety and maintenance. Alternatives are available which maintain the positive characteristics of cul-de-sacs while limiting some of the liabilities. These include:
 - Access loops, which provide two points of access.
 - Circles or bulls at the corners of streets or access loops. These provide many of the features of cul-de-sacs, including safe environments observed by a cluster of houses.
 - T-intersections, which reduce the number of traffic/pedestrian conflicts.
 - Short cul-de-sacs, shorter than 300 feet in length.
- *Design for Low Speed*. Traffic in a local street system should move at slow speeds. This can be accomplished by:
 - Providing local streets with design speeds that are the same as speed limits. This produces self-enforcing speed limits, by which motorists drive at appropriate speeds.
 - Using traffic calming devices. Such devices include narrowings at mid-block, neckdowns at intersections, speed tables (a more gradual and spread out version of the speed bump), and gateways.

CIVIC STREETS

SEWARD'S STREETS SHOULD BE DESIGNED AS PUBLIC SPACES AS WELL AS MOVERS OF TRAFFIC.

Good streets have more than one purpose. In addition to moving traffic they are important public spaces and should be designed appropriately. The concept of civic streets defines strategic streets as parkways that connect neighborhoods, parks, and activity centers, and provide a strong and unified image for the community. These streets have special characteristics that serve to unify rather than divide neighborhoods; accommodate pedestrian and bicycle, as well as vehicular traffic; and encourage adjacent development to be oriented toward rather than away from the public right-of-way. These characteristics include:

- A pedestrian/bicycle domain set back from the roadway by street landscaping and an adequate greenway setback from curb to walk.
- Special lighting and street graphics.
- Well-marked pedestrian crossings, sometimes with features such as crossing nodes which reduce the distance that pedestrians must travel to cross the street.
- Street furniture that claims part of the street environment for people who are outside of vehicles.

Civic streets will have different roles, ranging from neighborhood circulators and collectors to major arterials. In Seward, these civic streets include:

- A northern loop
- Seward Street
- 14th Street
- Columbia Avenue

As these streets are developed or upgraded, the design features that mark civic streets should be incorporated into their design.

PEDESTRIAN AND TRAIL SYSTEM

SEWARD SHOULD MAINTAIN A CONTINUOUS PEDESTRIAN NETWORK TO COMPLEMENT THE STREET SYSTEM.

A multi-use trail and walkway system can complement automobile trips by providing a good environment for non-motorized transportation. The trail aspects of the system are described in more detail in Chapter Five of this plan. The system includes several levels of facilities:

- *Off-Street Trails*, providing exclusive paths separated from parallel streets. Seward has the opportunity to develop an extensive off-street trail system through the Plum Creek and Blue River corridors that would include:
 - The Plum Creek Trail, beginning in Plum Creek Park and follow the Plum Creek Greenway to its convergence with the Blue River.
 - The South Loop, from the convergence of the Blue River and Plum Creek the South Loop would link the Plum Creek Greenway with Moffit/Centennial/4-H Park area and the Big Blue Trail.
 - The Big Blue Trail, from Moffit/Centennial/4-H Park complex to Waverly Road.
- *On-Street Trails*, providing trail facilities parallel to streets. These trails generally include a wide multi-use pathway, and are proposed for:
 - Waverly Road link to Plum Creek Park
 - Hillcrest Drive, from 8th Street to the Big Blue Trail
 - Northern Loop, from the Seward Country Club to Plum Creek Park

- *Share-the-Road segments and sidewalks*, including designated routes for pedestrian and bicycle use. A Seward Street Parkway, from Plum Creek to 14th Street and an 8th Street link from the Northern Loop to Hillcrest Drive would include this type of trail.

“Share-the-road” designation should not relegate bicycles to specific routes. However, they do help direct bicyclist to certain routes and notify motorist that bicycles are likely to be in the area.

This proposed system links many of the major activity centers and features of Seward to residential neighborhoods.

NORTHERN COLLECTOR

A COLLECTOR STREET SHOULD BE DEVELOPED TO SERVE THE NORTHERN GROWTH CENTER.

The collector street would act as a greenway connecting the Seward Country Club and 6th Street with Plum Creek Park and Karol Kay Boulevard. The collector will provide structure for future residential development in the north and an alternate route for those traveling between residents, recreational and school sites. The open space along the route will provide a quality of life feature that many residents look for.

HISTORIC BRICK STREETS

SEWARD’S HISTORIC BRICK STREETS SHOULD BE PRESERVED AS A KEY ASSET TO THE DOWNTOWN AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER.

Seward’s brick streets include:

- Seward Street from Columbia Avenue to 8th Street
- Moffit Street from Columbia Avenue to 8th Street
- 8th Street from Hillcrest to Moffit Street
- 7th Street from Moffit to Main Street
- 5th Street Jackson to Main Street.

Seward’s brick streets are an important part of the town’s character. While these streets require non-conventional maintenance procedures, they also deliver unusual rewards in terms of community character and marketing. Seward should maintain these streets to the maximum degree possible, and then market them as a special feature. A Brick Street Festival could be used as a special community event.

CHAPTER FIVE

An outdoor life style is integral to Seward. Residents enjoy extraordinary access to excellent city and regional parks, along with the Blue River Valley. Park needs in the community include both active and passive recreation. A balance of nature and recreation and a basic connectedness between the city and the countryside is the vision of Seward's future park and open space system. Yet, in Seward, park and open space development is more than an amenity. Rather, it is an indispensable part of an overall economic development strategy.

Park System Master Planning: A Process of Added Value

Parks and natural resources within a community have both economic and humanistic attributes. They add value to the community enhancing both the experience of living and the value of property in the community. Parks can be major determinants in the stabilization of existing neighborhoods and the development of high quality new residential settings. Studies find that a high quality, diverse recreational system ranks second only to the educational system in attracting new residents to a community. Seward's parks and natural resource system should be integrated into the city's development pattern and should provide recreational opportunities for all citizens.

A Quality Park System

Seward's park facilities are relatively evenly distributed, meeting the needs of the majority of the public. The park system is balanced by Plum Creek/Seward Sports Complex and Moffit/Centennial/4-H Parks, large community parks lying on the east and west edges of the city. The northern section of the city does have fewer neighborhood parks, but this is compensated for with the Plum Creek Park and the future Sports Complex adjacent to Plum Creek Park. Seward does lack open space that is focused toward more inactive uses. This should be addressed with the development of Wilderness Park, a large greenway along the eastern edge of the city.

GOALS

To enhance its facilities and continue to use its open space system as a central element contributing to community quality, the City of Seward should:

CREATE A LINKED PARK NETWORK OF GREENWAYS AND CIVIC STREETS THAT CONNECT OPEN SPACES, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND ACTIVITY CENTERS.

Such a network can help define the city and provides convenient access to its park and open space resources. It is particularly important in Seward, where important resources like Plum Creek Park/Seward Sports Complex and Moffit/Centennial/4-H Parks are located on opposite sides of the city. The development of a linked park system has several benefits, including:

- Accommodating recreational activities that display some of the highest levels of participation, including bicycling, walking/hiking, and cross-country skiing.
- Increasing safe access to recreational facilities by non-motorized modes, and increasing the service coverage of existing outdoor recreation facilities.
- Providing linkages among various parts of the city.

PROVIDE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF NEWLY DEVELOPING AREAS.

Seward should provide neighborhood and community parks in growth areas, as well as other recreational experiences, such as nature interpretation, resource conservation, trail systems, and other passive activities. It is vitally important to set aside quality parkland/open space during planning stages of new residential developments. Planning of these neighborhood park spaces should ensure safe, convenient, and desirable pedestrian access from neighborhoods to parks. In addition, parks should fit within the framework of the greenway concept.

DISTRIBUTE ACTIVE RECREATION USE ACROSS THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF THE CITY, GUARDING AGAINST OVER-CONCENTRATION OF PARK RESOURCES IN ANY QUADRANT OF THE CITY.

The adequacy of park services is measured in both numbers and by geographic distribution. Parks that are inaccessible to neighborhoods prevent easy access and provide a lower level of service.

PROVIDE AN EQUITABLE MECHANISM FOR ESTABLISHING SERVICE STANDARDS IN GROWTH AREAS AND FINANCING PARK ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT.

The reservation and development of new park and open space areas in developing areas is a major challenge for a growing city. The establishment of service standards was once based on national norms, but are increasingly predicated on levels of local service. These establish a basis for park dedications and assessments in developing areas. Park system finance should be based on a benefit principle, apportioning costs based on who benefits from specific projects.

BALANCE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL PEOPLE OF SEWARD

The City should maintain a balance between active and passive recreation. Development of Wilderness Park will be essential to creating a balance in the city with the more active parks of Plum Creek, Seward Sports Complex and Moffit Park. Development of a greenway system will also be important in creating more passive recreation opportunities within Seward.

USE PARKS AND OPEN SPACES TO ENCOURAGE NEIGHBORHOOD REINVESTMENT AND TO HELP TO REINFORCE SEWARD'S URBAN FORM.

Parks and open spaces can help to provide structure for a growing community. In traditional towns, the green or commons was a focus for both civic life and community amenity. Park development can have equal value for contemporary development, adding a public aspect to life in new residential areas.

PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITY ANALYSIS

Park facilities are evaluated in four ways:

1. *Facilities by Classification.* Parks are classified into different categories to determine the level and area they should serve.
2. *Facilities Relating to Overall population Service Standards.*
3. *Geographical Distribution.* The service radius of each facility is analyzed to identify geographical gaps in service.
4. *Park inventory and assessment.* Improvement needs are noted for each city-owned park.

FACILITIES BY CLASSIFICATION AND POPULATION

In order to systemically analyze the park system, Seward's major recreation and open space areas are classified as follows:

Overall Open Space: Seward's public park system contains approximately 568 acres, including 495 acres of land that is undeveloped or currently being developed. Traditional park area standards recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) suggest one acre of parkland per 100 residents. Assuming a 2000 population of 6,260, Seward's ratio of 8.43 acres per 100 residents substantially exceeds this standard. Even when undeveloped land is removed from the equation Seward still has 2.8 acres per 100 residents. Based on this standard Seward would not need to add additional land but should continue to develop those areas that are not currently in use. Seward will need to maintain the current level of service through the planning period.

The park classification system developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is used to classify the facilities in Seward's system. These categories include:

- *Mini-Park:* Mini-Parks generally address specific recreation or open space needs. Generally, these parks are usually less than one acre in size and have a service radius below 0.25 miles. The city has four mini-parks with one more that will be developed in the summer of 2000. The existing parks include Armory Park, Bemis Park, Memorial Park, and Park Avenue Park.
- *Neighborhood Parks:* Neighborhood parks are considered the basic unit of a community park system and provided a recreational and social focus for residential areas. These parks desirably provide space for informal active and passive recreational activities. The typical service radius for neighborhood parks is usually 0.25 to 0.50 miles. Neighborhood parks adequate in size to accommodate the requisite facilities often contain a minimum of five acres; 5 to 10 acres is generally considered optimal. Site selection criteria include ease of access, neighborhood location, and connection to greenways. Standards call for 1 to 2 acres of neighborhood parks per 1,000 people. Seward has one neighborhood park, Karol Kay Park, of 1.2 acres. Moffit, Centennial and 4-H Parks could also be considered neighborhood parks, but because of their proximity to one another they function more as a Community Park. Seward's numerous Mini-Parks and two large Community Park areas fill the gap in Neighborhood Parks.
- *School Parks:* School parks combine the resources of schools and city agencies to provide joint recreation, social and recreational facilities. Location is based on criteria for school site selection. The city does support a small ballfield adjacent to the St. John's School playground. The city is not involved with the playground itself but the large open area does act as a School Park, filling a neighborhood need.
- *Community parks:* These include areas of diverse use and environmental quality. Such parks meet community-based recreation needs and may preserve significant natural areas and often include areas suited for intense recreation facilities. Typical criteria for community parks include:

-Adequate size to accommodate activities associated with neighborhood parks, but with space for additional activity.

-A special attraction that draws people from a larger area, such as a swimming pool, pond or lake, ice skating rink, trails, special environmental or cultural features, or specialized sports complexes.

Community parks generally contain between 10 and 50 acres (more typically 30 to 50 acres) and serve a variety of needs. The typical service radius of a community park is approximately .5 to 3 miles. Traditional NRPA guidelines for community park area, call for 5 to 8 acres per 1,000. Plum Creek Park is Seward's only stand alone Community Park. Moffit, Centennial and 4-H Park all border each other and together serve as a mid-sized community park.

- *Natural Resource Areas.* These include lands that preserve important natural resources, landscapes, and open spaces. Wilderness Park, along Plum Creek and land acquired within the Blue River floodplain provide the best opportunity for natural resource development. These areas will eventually become part of the greenway system and could be utilized as natural resource areas for education and preservation of natural habitat.
- *Greenways.* These open spaces tie park system components together to form a linked open space environment. Greenways follow either natural environments, such as drainageways, or man-made settings such as railroad corridors, parkways, and other right-of-ways. Greenways may also be pre-designated as part of development design. Wilderness Park follows Plum Creek and will be part of a greenway network that will follow Plum Creek and the Blue River connecting Seward's largest parks.
- *Sports Complex.* These spaces consolidate heavily programmed athletic fields and facilities to large sites with strategic locations. Typically, facilities have a minimum size of 40 acres. Traditional NRPA guidelines for sports complexes, which may be part of community park or school park acreages, call for 5 to 8 acres per 1,000. Seward is currently developing the Seward Sports Complex, a large sports complex adjacent to Plum Creek Park.
- *Special Use Parks.* These cover a broad range of facilities oriented to a single purpose use, including cultural or social sites, or specialized facilities. The City Bandshell in Downtown Seward and Blue Valley Campground on South Highway 15 would fall into this category.

Table 5-1 summarizes Seward's park system by type of park and summarizes available facilities. Table 5-2 examines present levels of service and future needs to accommodate projected population. The analysis indicates that:

- Seward statistically has adequate park space to meet future population needs. Some of the undeveloped areas need to be better utilized to meet the growing needs of the community, this will be accomplished with the completion of the Seward Sports Complex and Wilderness Park.
- Seward's current level of service is well above that recommended by the NRPA in all areas except neighborhood parks. This deficit is compensated for by Seward's numerous mini-parks and the community parks on opposite sides of the city. This deficit should continue to be met with the construction of the Seward Sports Complex and development of Wilderness Park.

Table 5-1: Park System Analysis

Parks by Type and Location	Acres	Playground	Playing Fields	Courts	Special Facilities
<p>MINI-PARKS Generally less than one acre, addresses limited, isolated, or unique recreational or open space needs</p> <p>Armory Park 10th & Jackson St.</p> <p>Bemis Park Highway 34 & Bemis Drive</p> <p>Bek Park 2nd and Hillcrest Streets</p> <p>Memorial Park 3rd & Seward St.</p> <p>Park Avenue Park 7th Street & Park Avenue</p> <p>TOTAL MINI-PARK AREA</p>	<p>0.5</p> <p>0.5</p> <p>0.5</p> <p>0.5</p> <p>0.5</p> <p>0.5</p> <p>2.5</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>-</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>-</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>-</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p>	<p>Grill and shelter</p> <p>Grill and Shelter</p> <p>Under development</p> <p>Gazebo and picnic tables</p> <p>Picnic tables</p>
<p>NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS Generally 5 to 10 acres; may be smaller or larger depending on the nature of the site and facilities. Basic unit park system. Provides recreational and social focus for neighborhoods. Focuses on informal active and passive recreation. Typical service area is 0.5 mile if uninterrupted by barriers.</p> <p>Karol Kay Park Bek and Rainbow Streets</p> <p>TOTAL NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS</p>	<p>1.2</p> <p>1.2</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Shelter and picnic tables</p>
<p>GREENWAYS Open spaces that tie park system together to form a linked open space environment. Following drainageways, railroad corridors, parkways, and other right-of-ways.</p> <p>Wilderness Park Plum creek</p> <p>GREEN SPACE WITH NO RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT</p>	<p>348.32</p> <p>44.14</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>Undeveloped</p>

Table 5-1: Park System Analysis

Park Facilities in Seward

Parks by Type and Location	Acres	Playground	Playing Fields	Courts	Special Facilities
COMMUNITY PARKS					
Generally 10 to 50 acres, depending on facilities; more typically 30 to 50 acres. Includes neighborhood park menu of facilities, but serves larger purpose. Meets community-wide recreational needs, and includes special facilities. May include special natural environments. Often, a major community image feature. Typical service area is .5 to 3 miles					
Plum Creek Park					
Pinewood Street & Rainbow Drive	30	Yes	Yes	Yes	Exercise equipment, 2 tennis courts, 3 ballfields, walking path, grills, shelters, picnic tables, restrooms
Moffit Park					
14th and Seward Streets	9.2	Yes	No	Yes	Tennis court, shelter, grills, swimming pool, picnic tables, restrooms
Centennial Park					
14th & Seward StreetsCounty Fair Grounds	12.8	Yes	No	No	Shelters, grills, picnic tables, restrooms
4-H Park					
14th & Seward StreetsCounty Fair Grounds	8	Yes	No	Yes	Playground, sand volleyball, horseshoe courts, basketball courts, restroom, rental building, outdoor stage, pond, ice-skating warming house
TOTAL COMMUNITY PARK AREA					
60					
SPECIAL USE PARKS					
Cover a broad range of facilities oriented to a single purpose, including cultural or social sites, or specialized facilities.					
Blue Valley Campground					
South Highway 15	9	Yes	No	No	Grills, picnic tables, 10 unit camper hookup, portable toilets
City Bandshell					
5th & Jackson Streets	0.5	No	No	No	Weekly band concerts during summer month

Table 5-1: Park System Analysis

Park Facilities in Seward

Parks by Type and Location	Acres	Playground	Playing Fields	Courts	Special Facilities
<p>SPORTS COMPLEX Generally a minimum of 40 acres. Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and facilities to a large site. Is strategically located.</p> <p>Seward Sports Complex North Karol Kay Blvd. East of Plum Creek Park</p>					<p>Underdevelopment. Will include 3 softball fields, 1 legion baseball field, 4 junior soccer fields, 2 intermediate soccer fields, 1 regulation soccer field, miniature golf course, playground, 2 picnic shelters, 2 basketball court/1 ice rink, 2 sand volleyball courts, bike trail, 2 shelters, restroom/concession building, and sports complex building.</p>
TOTAL SPORTS COMPLEX	102 - 102	-	-	-	

Table 5-2: Future Parkland needs for Seward

Park Type	Existing Acreage	Existing Acres Per 1,000 Residents	1999 Need (NRPA Standard)	1999 Surplus (Deficit)	2020 (Local Standard)	2000-2020 Need
Neighborhood/ Mini Parks	3.7	0.59	9.39	-5.69	4.6	0.9
Community Parks, Sports Complex, School Parks	162	25.87	40.69	121.31	201.45	39.45
Special Use/Greenways	9.5	1.52	NA	NA	11.85	2.35
Natural Resources	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Total Park and Recreation Area	175.2	27.99	62.6	112.6	218.21	43.01
Total Park and Recreation Area						
Including Green Spaces With No Recreational Development	567.66	90.68	62.6	505.06	706.94	139.28

Source: RDG Crose Gardner Shuker

FACILITIES BY GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Geographic park service can be evaluated using the following NRPA standards for distribution:

- Mini-parks: 1/4 mile or less radius.
- Neighborhood Parks: 1/4 -1/2 mile radius
- Community parks: 1 to 2-mile radius

Based on this analysis:

- Seward's excellent deployment of parks provides service coverage to nearly every part of the city. The southern sections of the city do lack neighborhood parks, but this gap is compensated for with the large community parks.
- Development of a greenway will extend existing parks service areas through increased accessibility.

FACILITY NEEDS

An analysis of specific facility types indicates that Seward generally meets standards for most active recreational facilities. The Seward Sports Complex will meet many existing needs in the community including soccer fields and a Legion Baseball field. Needs still exist for:

- *Swimming Pool.* The city's historic round 1912 pool is in need of significant rehabilitation. The pool is loosing 50,000 to 60,000 gallons of water per day. The pool is large enough to meet the city's growing needs but further delay in repair of the pool will only increase operating expenses. The city will need to either refurbish the existing pool or identify a location for a new pool.
- *Trails.* The city lacks significant multi-use recreational trail system. A small walking path through Plum Creek does not meet the cities needs. Development of Wilderness Park, as a greenway should address

this problem. However, additional trails will be needed to connect the heart of the city and those recreational opportunities on the western side of the city with Wilderness Park.

Major Park Development Issues

Based on the findings from the park and community services planning process, the following issues emerged for the Seward park system:

- Maintenance, rehabilitation, or enhancement of existing park facilities where needs exist, including the creation of a parks master plan.
- Continued development of a comprehensive trail and greenway system, integrated into the structure of the city, and designed to provide Seward with a linked park and open space system.
- Growth and financing of parks to serve the existing population and projected growth areas.
- Repair or replacement of the existing municipal pool to reduce inefficiencies.

THE PARK DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This section describes strategies designed to enhance the park system's status as a leading community feature. The overall concept:

- Envisions a linked park system, molding Seward's open space system into a green network that unites the community and makes each major park the territory of everyone in the city.
- Allows the park system to grow with the city.
- Proposes new centers for recreation, which are integrated into a greenway system.
- Provides recreational facilities needed to meet community priorities.

The components of this program include:

- **GREEN NETWORK**
- **GREENWAY ACCESS TO MAJOR COMMUNITY FEATURES**
- **MAJOR OPEN SPACE CENTERS**
- **PARKSITE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**
- **SOUTH SEWARD PARK**
- **NEIGHBORHOOD PARK FINANCE MECHANISM**

GREEN NETWORK

SEWARD'S PARK SYSTEM SHOULD BE A NETWORK OF PARKS, CONNECTED BY CONTINUOUS GREEN CORRIDORS DEFINED BY TRAILS, GREENWAYS, BOULEVARDS, AND CIVIC STREETS.

A linked greenway system merges parks and open spaces into all parts of the life and development of the city. It expands the use of the park system beyond individual service areas to encompass the entire city. The components of Seward's Green Network will include its existing and future parks, a circular trail system that includes major linear open space links, boulevards and civic streets. Major green space linkages will include:

- A greenway that will follow the Plum Creek from Plum Creek Park to Seward Avenue and include Wilderness Park.
- A Parkway that will include trail and greening of the Seward Street corridor.
- The Big Blue Trail following the Blue River from Moffit Park to Waverly Road.
- A Northern Greenway and trail that will link together the western and eastern Seward. This greenway will follow a future east/west collector street on the northern edge of the city.
- South Loop connecting the Big Blue Trail and the Plum Creek Greenway.
- Connecting trail links that will tie all sections of the city together.

GREENWAY ACCESS TO MAJOR COMMUNITY FEATURES

MAJOR COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTERS SHOULD HAVE PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS TO THE GREENWAY SYSTEM.

The greenway and park system should provide a secondary transportation connection to major community facilities, such as the downtown and Concordia College. Therefore, nearby links in the greenway system should have pedestrian connections to these major centers. In addition, new projects should be designed to incorporate and encourage pedestrian and bicycle access.

MAJOR OPEN SPACE CENTERS

SEWARD SHOULD DEVELOP MAJOR OPEN SPACE CENTERS THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE TO THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE TRAIL AND GREENWAY NETWORK AND PROVIDE PASSIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES.

A system of open spaces along the Northern Greenway will provide greenspace opportunities to future developments in the northern section of the city. Current recreational growth in the north is centered around highly active development including the Seward Sports Complex and the Golf Course. Development of the greenway along Plum Creek should also include large open spaces within Wilderness Park and the Plum Creek floodplain.

PARKSITE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

SEWARD SHOULD IMPLEMENT A REGULARLY BUDGETED, INCREMENTAL PROGRAM OF PARK SITE IMPROVEMENTS AND UPGRADES AT ITS EXISTING PARKS

Continued investment in Seward's existing park system will maintain its status as a major community asset. This program should include the continued use of the Adopt a Park Program. By involving community organizations in the maintenance and upkeep of existing parks Seward has been able to provide excellent mini-park facilities throughout the community.

Several common system-wide themes emerge as priorities for Seward's park system. These include:

- Updating the park master plan for the city's parks.
- Upgrading of restrooms and drinking fountains at specific locations.
- Bringing all parks into compliance with the American with Disabilities Act.
- Connecting existing parks with a future trail system.
- Continued development and expansion at specific locations.

Parksite enhancement and rehabilitation should be funded on a regular, predictable basis.

Parksite Improvements

Plum Creek Park

- Completion of a drainage project on the north and west ends of the park by the Natural Resource District
- Paved parking lot.
- Resurfacing of the tennis courts.

Moffit Park

- Replacement of damaged sidewalks
- Conversion of water pump station into handicap accessible restroom.
- Upgrading of the Boy Scout building
- Resurfacing of the tennis court or possible conversion into skateboard area
- Repair or replacement of the swimming pool, bath house, and filter house.
- Replacement of Playground equipment.
- Conversion of underground reservoir to storage area or removal of the reservoir.

Centennial Park

- Construction of accessible water fountain.
- Evaluate need for additional electric wiring to meet needs for Christmas show.

4-H Park

- Continue to add fill to low lying area along the west and south ends of the park.

Blue Valley Campground

- Construction of restroom/shower facility.
- Expansion of electrical hook-ups.

-Removal of dead timber along the Blue River.

Karol Kay Park

- Replacement of shelter roof.
- Replacement of damaged sidewalk.
- Install water hydrant.

Bandshell

-Continue improvements following 1998 fire

Park Avenue Park

-Determine alternatives for construction of a sidewalk around sewer drainage pipe.

Sports Complex

- Installation of sprinkler and lighting systems.
- Continued development of proposed facility expansions.

Wilderness Park

-Develop parksite development plan.

SOUTH SEWARD PARK

SEWARD WILL NEED TO PROVIDE PARK AND OPEN SPACE AREAS TO DEVELOPMENT SOUTH OF HIGHWAY 34.

Although Seward has abundant park land, development in the south growth center will be remote from existing parks and will require local service. As a result, a neighborhood park will be needed to serve this area should development occur. This park should be linked to other parts of the city's park network.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK FINANCE MECHANISM

SEWARD SHOULD FULLY UTILIZE ITS PARKSITE ACQUISITION FUND.

Seward has established the mechanism to finance community park acquisition in order to ensure the reservation of well-located and appropriately sized open spaces. Park acquisition may take place through one of two devices: dedication of appropriate parcels by developers or a payment in lieu of dedication to acquire other parksites. In the past developers have chosen to provide a payment over providing land for a parksite.

The obligation for land dedication (or payment in lieu of dedication) can be based on:

- Acres in development.
- Development capacity established by the development's zoning.
- Number of people per unit in Seward (2.49 according to the 1990 census).
- The city's desirable level of service standard in acres of neighborhood park per 1,000 people.

Seward's parksite acquisition fund should be utilized to purchase land along the Northern Parkway and to purchase additional park land on the north side of Highway 34 to complete the greenway system. The program should also be leveraged to acquire park land in south Seward as development occurs. It is important to note that a "benefit fee" approach to park financing must trace expenditures to the direct benefit of those areas that are paying the fee.

CHAPTER SIX

Downtowns occupy a particular place of importance within cities and towns. They are unique to their individual communities - no downtown looks exactly like any other downtown. Because of this relationship, people often measure the health of their city by the health of their traditional business center.

Downtown Seward clearly has this sense of importance for the city. The district is Seward's largest single, compact concentration of commercial development - a place where the tradition of long-standing businesses mix with new enterprises in a unique historic setting. It is also a critical mixed use center, a focus for business, civic life, entertainment and the arts, situated within some of Nebraska's most significant historic Main Street structures.

Yet, many believe that Downtown Seward's balance is fragile, as it faces the competition of large discount department stores, decentralized development pattern that the automobile has brought with it and competition from Lincoln's larger market. Yet, Downtown Seward is an essentially strong district that can benefit from strong private action and beneficial public policies and investments. This section of the plan is designed to provide a realistic development program for the downtown area that will enable it to expand and continue its role as a vital center for many kinds of activities.

GOALS

Even though it is no longer the city's exclusive retail center, Downtown Seward can strengthen its role as a mixed use center, a place that combines shopping, working, civic life, and living in a vital, richly textured way. The historic district is alive with people, and it can use its distinctive environment to maintain this vibrant district.

To position itself to meet the district's future needs, the city should:

MAINTAIN AGING INFRASTRUCTURE TO PRESERVE PUBLIC SAFETY AND THE DISTRICT'S STRUCTURES.

Preservation requires city investment in infrastructure improvements to keep pace with public service needs, including water mains adequate for fire suppression and prevention. The trees around the Seward County Courthouse and the brick streets add to the distinctive atmosphere.

STRENGTHEN DOWNTOWN SEWARD'S ROLE AS A "FLAGSHIP" DISTRICT FOR THE CITY

Downtown Seward is a psychological focus for the city. It has undoubtedly been discussed, worried about, and sometimes fought about more than any other part of Seward. The Downtown's image is bound up with that of the entire community. The downtown can capitalize on this identification by reenforcing it as a source of pride and vitality, a center that people in the city and around the region like to visit for enjoyment, commerce, and cultural enrichment.

CREATE A MIX OF USES AND ACTIVITIES

The dramatic changes in retailing that have created the shopping malls and large discount stores have eroded the exclusive role that downtowns once held in American communities. This does not mean that Downtown Seward is declining. It simply means that it has evolved and will continue to do so creating a new and equally rewarding environment. This will be a place that will continue to provide a setting for many kinds of activities, including, but not limited to, the traditional focus on general retailing.

Yet, Downtowns sometimes try to revitalize themselves by trying to make themselves into something they are not. The failure around the country of many pedestrian mall experiments on Main Streets suggests that life in a city center is a delicate ballet that includes vehicles, pedestrians, places for activity, windows on the street, and other features. The revitalization of Downtown Seward should build on the intrinsic character of the district - strengthening what is good, improving what no longer works well.

STRENGTHEN THE DOWNTOWN RETAIL ENVIRONMENT.

In many communities, the role of Downtown has changed from one of primary retailing in pre-auto era days to one of specialty retailing, small business, and service activities. Downtown Seward has many of these small enterprises, yet it still includes significant general retailing. Further improvements in the public environment can elevate the districts business environment and strengthen its attraction for shoppers and other users.

INCREASE THE ECONOMIC REWARDS OF BUILDING OWNERSHIP IN DOWNTOWN SEWARD.

Any investment must provide a reasonable rate of return to its investor. This rule is equally relevant to Downtown properties. Older buildings are often fully amortized, avoiding debt services costs that tend to increase rents. However, upper levels of buildings in Seward are frequently vacant or bring very limited revenue. As a result, property owners receive a relatively low return on investment. In addition, further investment, involving rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, or bringing structures into compliance with contemporary codes or federal regulations, may seem unattractive to building owners.

When owners can expect a good return on downtown property, investment similarly increases. Therefore, the downtown development strategy must provide reasonable economic rewards to the district's property owners.

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND THE INTENSITY OF COMMUNITY ACTIVITY IN DOWNTOWN SEWARD

Downtowns are made of people and community life as surely as they are of buildings. Downtown Seward must be alive with people and activity. Some aspects of this life are pleasant environment for its users; and should provide settings for events and programs. Other aspects are programmatic - providing attractions that attract people to the area.

Downtown Seward has the advantage of being located on both of the city's major highways. This does funnel more traffic into the downtown but it can also create a fast paced vehicular dominance.

Finally, Downtown Seward has distinct districts — areas directly around the Courthouse square have taken on more of a civic and retailing role. At the same time the sections of the downtown adjacent to the square have taken on more of a service role. They have also extended the downtowns influence north along Highway 15 and east and west along Highway 34. These special attributes create a fine downtown environment, a place that is attractive because it is distinctly different from the more mundane commercial world of the shopping strip, the parking lot, and the large, free-standing commercial building.

ANALYSIS

Issues Affecting Downtown Seward

This section examines important features of Downtown Seward that can help determine the directions of a development policy for Downtown Seward.

Land Use Patterns and the Surrounding Environment

Downtown Seward exhibits a central green development pattern, generated from the Seward County Courthouse Square. This square provides the focus for the rest of the downtown and adds to its unusual quality. Bounding the square is Main Street on the south, Seward Street on the north and 5th and 6th Streets on the east and west. A mixture of civic, office and retail uses surround the square and create the heart of Seward.

The primary commercial district is defined by a secondary area to the north, east and west. In those areas along Jackson, 4th and 7th Streets service oriented businesses and office development dominate the area. The downtown extends itself along Seward Street with addition mixed retail development. The eastern edge of Downtown quickly converges into the residential areas. The northern and western edges of Downtown are extended along Highways 15 and 34. The offices and commercial developments along Highway 15, north of downtown, are an important link to the large residential developments to the north. A mixture of residential and commercial development to the south buffers Downtown from the railroad and associated industries. South of the railroad and the Blue River is Seward's second largest commercial district. This area provides more contemporary large commercial developments and is linked to Downtown by Highway 15.

Historic Significance

Historically sympathetic reinvestment can be an important revitalization element in a Downtown program because of the availability of tax credits for certified projects. In addition to economic advantages, historic importance adds distinctive themes to a downtown development program. Seward has taken the initial steps by placing the downtown on the National Register of Historic Places. This distinction will allow Seward to take investment in the downtown to the next level.

Historic Brick Streets

Adding to the historic atmosphere that the County Courthouse Square creates are the brick streets that lead into the downtown. These streets are an important asset to any revitalization program that will focus on the historic elements of the area. Using Downtown Seward's historic designation to its full advantage will also aid in the additional expenses incurred to maintain the brick streets.

Circulation and Parking

The ability of Downtown to accommodate vehicles will be important to the future growth of the district. A successful Downtown must balance the needs of vehicular and pedestrian traffic and must accommodate the automobile without becoming dominated by it.

• Traffic Flow and Circulation.

Seward's two busiest trafficways in 1999, Main Street and 6th Street, form the heart of the Courthouse Square. Both of these corridors are regional highway links that can carry heavy truck traffic through the heart of the city's commercial district. This can cause problems accessing these streets from adjoining neighborhoods. The vehicular dominance can also decrease the pedestrian atmosphere. Traffic signals at the intersections of 6th and Seward and 6th and Main Streets also facilitate the traffic flow in the district. The convergence of the highways does give the historic district visibility to the regional traveler.

•*Local Access.*

Seward's original plat is based on the grid system, in the heart of which Seward's Downtown lies. The grid system provides numerous access points into the downtown and facilitates easy access from the surrounding neighborhoods. Seward, Jackson, 5th, and 7th Streets all feed into the downtown from the surrounding residential areas. Seward Street is one of the city's main corridors and is the location for many of the downtown's commercial and office establishments. The diagonal parking and brick streets of Seward Street and the other local streets create a more pedestrian friendly atmosphere for those visiting the downtown.

•*Parking.*

The availability of Downtown parking is important in Seward's downtown district. Parking in Seward is provided in both private and public parking lots and along the district's streets. Because parking is relatively unrestricted in Seward's downtown street grid, on-street parking becomes an especially important resource. Parking problems that do arise at the public facilities in the downtown should be assisted by the construction of a new library and adjoining parking lot.

Seward generally provides an adequate supply of parking to meet its current demand. The district is highly dependent upon its on-street parking to provide a well-distributed parking supply. However, parking needs should be continually evaluated.

•*The Pedestrian Environment.*

Downtown Seward, in common with other central business districts, is both a pedestrian and vehicular environment. Most users will park their vehicles and become pedestrians as they move through Downtown. In addition, the pedestrian environment creates a sense of civic space that can be an important part of a vital town center.

One of the district's major shopping streets, 6th Street, carries a heavy volume of traffic but does provide crossing lights at Seward and Main Streets. Seward Street is an important retail corridor and presents a relatively positive pedestrian environment. Seward Street does not carry truck traffic; pedestrian traffic is buffered from moving traffic by diagonal parking on each side of the street.

The Seward County Courthouse Square, sidewalk canopies and awnings represent the major open space and shade amenity in Downtown Seward. The large open space and trees surrounding the Classical Revival Courthouse provide a welcoming atmosphere to the downtown and are complimented by the late 19th and early 20th century buildings including the Tishue Block, J.F. Goehner Building, and the Zimmer-Rolfsmeier Building. Outside of the square there is a lack of street furniture and other pedestrian amenities including pedestrian-scale street lighting, and banners. In addition, some of the sidewalk concrete paving surfaces are in poor repair.

Opportunities

While challenged by the growth of new mass retailing along Highway 15, Downtown Seward has several important assets which can form the basis of a development strategy. These include:

- *A strong, varied business community.* Downtown Seward maintains a mix of uses including retailing, service, entertainment, financial/office and civic uses. This mixed use basis is a foundation for future development.
- *An excellent inventory of developable buildings.* The substantial building stock of Seward, 5th and 6th Streets provides excellent opportunities for development. Multi-story buildings and a demand for housing also provide incentives for conversion of upper levels of these commercial structures to alternative uses such as housing.
- *Civic and Cultural Institutions.* The Bandshell provides a unique opportunity for summer concerts and a focus for the famous 4th of July celebration. In addition to the County Courthouse, Downtown Seward

is the location for the city government and the historic Carnegie Library that will soon be replaced by a state of the art facility.

- *A central, highly accessible location.* Downtown Seward remains near the geographical center of the city and is close to most of its neighborhoods. As a result, the district remains a central part of life in the community. It is also highly visible and accessible from Highways 15 and 34.
- *Adequate Parking.* Downtown parking is generally in balance with parking demands. Potential future development could generate a need for additional stalls, especially straining the need for additional handicap parking . New planned projects should furnish their own parking.

The succeeding section, then presents development policies and concepts for Downtown Seward based on these substantial assets.

DOWNTOWN SEWARD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This section presents a strategy designed to help Downtown Seward maintain and expand its role as a regional mixed use center. The downtown development program is designed to provide realistic steps leading to the revitalization of the city center. The overall concept proposes:

- A vision of Downtown Seward as a mixed use district, placing an emphasis on office and residential development, along with civic and community activities to augment a traditional reliance on retailing.
- A strengthened downtown management system, to coordinate and implement the downtown improvement program and to provide a unified marketing and promotional effort.
- Enhancements to the district's image and public environment, in order to establish a niche as a center of entertainment, specialty shopping, and apartment living.
- Stabilized existing occupancy, and the redevelopment or rehabilitation of specific buildings and sites, including the upper levels of commercial structures.
- Redevelopment of underused areas on the south and northeast for major business development.

The components of this program include:

- **DISTRICT MANAGEMENT**
- **DOWNTOWN HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES**
- **SEWARD COUNTY COURTHOUSE SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT**
- **SEWARD STREET**
- **STREETScape AND SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS**
- **ADAPTIVE REUSE AND PRESERVATION**
- **LINKS TO HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL**
- **DOWNTOWN PLAN**

DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

DOWNTOWN SEWARD SHOULD STRENGTHEN ITS ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE TO MANAGE AND PROMOTE THE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT.

Single-owner shopping centers maintain unified management to promote businesses and the overall facility. While Seward has developed a strong downtown association, a renewed Downtown Seward Association should fill many of the roles of a shopping center manager. These roles include preparation and distribution of promotional materials, development of programs, management of improvement projects, and recruitment of businesses into Downtown Seward. The Association should also maintain a close relationship with the City and Southeast Nebraska Economic Development.

The Downtown Seward Association should organize and administer a development foundation, able to pool the resources of private contributors to make strategic investments in Downtown Seward. Examples of important investments may include rehabilitation of important Downtown Seward properties, developing financing packages to maintain key retailers in Downtown Seward, and acting as a general partner for development projects. However, the most important part of the Association's efforts will be marketing and promotional events. Some directions for the partnership include:

- *A program of Activities and Events*, providing an ongoing series of attractions that bring people into the center.
- *Marketing and Management Programs*, developing and gaining wide distribution of advertising materials to add the district to Seward's list of significant visitor attractions.

- *Establishing Uniform Service Standards and Store Hours*, establishing a uniform service mission of Downtown Seward, defining the district as an area in which customers can expect personalized, knowledgeable attention.
- *Business Recruitment*, defining business targets and actively recruiting individuals or businesses to fill the identified niches.

DOWNTOWN HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

SEWARD SHOULD INCREASE SPACE FOR NEW HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN SEWARD RETAIL DISTRICT.

Downtown housing has proven to be an effective mechanism for the revitalization of traditional business districts that have the potential to experience evening use. Housing can make Downtown Seward a neighborhood as well as a business district. In addition, adaptive reuse of second and third-floors of commercial buildings can increase economic returns for Downtown building owners and provide needed housing in the community.

Downtown Seward's building stock and configuration are particularly encouraging for adaptive reuse. The main street orientation generally gives upper levels clear views of the Courthouse Square. These developments can use a variety of financing mechanisms, including tax increment financing, equity financing utilizing the low-income housing tax credit, historic tax credits, and the use of CDBG/HOME funds. Pooling of several adjacent properties into unified developments can provide shared elevator service and help overcome difficulties with the Americans With Disabilities Act.

Downtown Seward should also encourage new development of urban housing on underused sites within the downtown and on the fringes of the district, particularly on its northern edge. These developments may include townhouses or apartments that echo the design patterns of the traditional town center. The use of the city's redevelopment powers may be necessary to assemble these sites for new development.

Downtown Seward can be a resource that accommodates a portion of the city's substantial annual housing demand. Conversely, the character and economics of the district can also benefit substantially from its evolution as a mixed-use neighborhood.

SEWARD COUNTY COURTHOUSE SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT

SEWARD SHOULD COMPLETE A MAJOR REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN THE DOWNTOWN WHICH COMBINES NEW COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH A SIGNIFICANT USE OF ITS PUBLIC SPACES

Downtown Seward experiences a relatively low first floor vacancy rate, creating a potential market for new commercial space. The challenge for Downtown Seward will be to keep that development from moving to the fringes of the city and simultaneously utilizing underused and blighted areas adjacent to the downtown. Within the surrounding area is a limited amount of land for Downtown growth, thus the existing vacant spaces take on additional importance.

The redevelopment of sites along the blocks radiating out from the Courthouse Square provide the greatest opportunities. Any future redevelopment will need to blend with the existing environment. The large open space around the Square attracts numerous events throughout the year including farmers' markets and 4th of July events. Downtown will need to continue its focus on this public space through any expansion program. Expansion of Downtown Seward should also extend the historic character of the district. New structures should be designed in an idiom that recalls and is sympathetic to the superb historic architecture of the Square and existing features such as the brick streets and historic facades should be maintained. The pedestrian atmosphere of the Square should also be expanded through pedestrian scale lighting and street furniture.

Development of these projects may include creation of a Community Renewal Authority (CRA) and use of redevelopment tools, including land acquisition, tax increment financing, and other program. The city would be rewarded with projects that fortify the assets that the Square currently provides.

SEWARD STREET

SEWARD SHOULD EMPHASIZE THE PARKWAY STREET AS A FEATURE THAT UNIFIES ITS CORE RETAIL AREA AND PROVIDES LINKS TO SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS.

Seward Street is one of Downtown Seward's unifying streets, linking the east and west sides of Seward through the central business district. Its character as a central street should be strengthened, with branches that link it to peripheral residential and recreation development. Elements of a Seward Street development strategy include:

- *A revitalized landscaping and public environment program.* This program should emphasize the quality of Seward Street as a public space, using special street design features including graphics, lighting, street landscaping, and furniture. Seward Street should take on the role of a civic corridor, slowing traffic in its heart and complementing faster traffic on its fringes.
- *Creation of a link with the greenway corridor* that will loop the city and provide easy pedestrian access and a recreational trail.
- *Creating an extension of Moffit Park and Wilderness Park.* This should include entrance features at each park that link into the parkway and connect the parks with the downtown and each other.

STREETSCAPE AND SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS

STREET IMPROVEMENTS SHOULD BE USED TO EASE CROSSING OF MAJOR STREETS AND TO INCREASE THE VISIBILITY OF PEDESTRIANS.

The pedestrian atmosphere that is created by the large green space and quieter access streets dissipates along 6th and Main Streets. The district's major streets are wider and accommodate parallel parking, making it difficult to cross the streets for pedestrians, particularly senior citizens.

Corner and crossing nodes should be installed to ease crossing at the intersections surrounding County Courthouse Square. Amenities of these nodes should include trees, benches, ornamental lighting, and information kiosks. The 6th Street intersections of Main and Seward should include contrasting paving surface that would complement the brick paving along 5th Street. In addition to concentrating landscaping and ornamental paving in strategic areas, nodes allow handicapped accessibility in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, decrease the length of street crossings for pedestrians, increase pedestrian safety, and protect parked cars.

ADAPTIVE REUSE AND PRESERVATION

HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND REHABILITATION OF KEY BUILDINGS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO COMPLEMENT OTHER PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INVESTMENTS.

Downtown Seward's built environment is one of the most salient features. The scale and continuity of buildings around the Courthouse Square District and surrounding streets helps define the special character of the area and gives it a unique sense of place. As a result, development policies should capitalize on this quality to the district's economic and environmental advantage. This principle should be implemented through three efforts: adaptive reuse, building facade rehabilitation, and a preservation ordinance.

- *Adaptive Reuse.* The city and local lenders should encourage the improvement of several existing occupied buildings in Downtown Seward, and develop an ongoing program to finance and encourage the reuse of underutilized spaces. This program should make use of available sources of funding, including TIF, CDBG/HOME funds and tax credits, combined with participation by local lenders.

- *Facade Improvements.* The community should develop a facade improvement program, providing readily available and affordable financing for facade and code improvements in buildings.
- *Preservation Ordinances.* The city should use the Seward County Courthouse Square Historic District designation to implement a program of historic designation and design review. Seward should participate in the Nebraska State Historical Society's Certified Local Government Program and the Nebraska Lied Main Street Program.

LINKS TO HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL

DOWNTOWN SEWARD SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PROSPECT OF MAJOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT ALONG HIGHWAY 15 TO INCREASE TRAFFIC IN THE CITY CENTER

The retail development along south Highway 15 provides both challenges and opportunities for Downtown Seward. In the face of mass retailing both along the highway and in Lincoln, the district is challenged to define a unique niche that is insulated from competition by mass retailers. To take advantage of this potential, Downtown should be linked to new retail development along the highway.

In order to take advantage of these opportunities, Seward should:

- Require placement of a display in a prominent location, marketing Downtown Seward and businesses within the district. This should be part of the negotiating process for the use of tax increment financing and other incentives. Such a synergy can benefit both mass retailers and traditional Square businesses.
- Establish a clear path between the highway junction and downtown, utilizing:
 - A downtown logo, used for directional signage into the district.
 - Banners leading along 6th Street to Downtown.
 - A strong downtown welcoming entrance and attractive directional information, leading visitors to major features (including parking) in the city center.

DOWNTOWN PLAN

DOWNTOWN SEWARD SHOULD DEVELOP A PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC VISION OF ITS FUTURE THROUGH A DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

Downtown Seward has sustained itself through the 1980s and 1990's by offering convenient shopping and personalized service. However, the district faces renewed competition with the expansion of mass retailers during the 1990's. Therefore, a planning process is necessary to define a new vision and niche for the district, designed to take advantage of contemporary opportunities. This process should address:

- Market focuses, such as services and specialty retailing.
- Programmatic visions, defining the character of the experience of being in Downtown Seward.
- Design visions, establishing design themes and improvements for the district.
- Service visions, defining opportunities for downtown and establishing the methods by which these opportunities will be developed.

The vision plan should be developed through a participatory process, involving a broad range of businesses, property owners, and others who have an interest in the character of Downtown Seward. The plan should include a strategic, implementable, step-by-step program that creates clear implementation responsibilities and techniques.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Seward's capital facilities represent major community investments. Residents' satisfaction with their community is tied closely to their experiences and perceptions of these basic resources. This part of the Seward Plan evaluates operation of public facilities and infrastructure, assesses their physical condition, and suggests policies and actions which will help Seward maintain quality services into the future.

GOALS

In continuing to provide good municipal services to its taxpayers and users, Seward should:

ASSURE THAT UTILITIES SYSTEMS CAN MEET CAPACITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY DEMANDS

MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF SEWARD'S PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE MOST ECONOMICAL WAY POSSIBLE.

SEEK THE GREATEST POSSIBLE EFFICIENCIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATION OF FACILITIES.

REHABILITATE AGING INFRASTRUCTURE TO MAINTAIN THE QUALITY SERVICE LEVELS EXPECTED BY RESIDENTS.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

This section examines the current conditions of Seward's public facilities, and infrastructure systems.

Table 6-1 provides a full inventory of public facilities in Seward. Public facilities include buildings and structures that are used in meeting municipal responsibilities for public services.

•City Hall

City Hall, constructed in 1909, is located in downtown Seward. The building was completely remodeled in 1994 and is in excellent condition. The building now houses administrative office space, the Police Department and storage space. The office space located on the first floor is currently meeting the city's needs but there is no room for growth. The second floor offices and storage areas are not handicap accessible and provide limited use. The removal of the Police Department to another location would provide the additional space needed by the administrative offices and the Police Department. The removal of the Parks Department to the future Public Works building south of the city will provide additional storage space on the second floor. Use of the basement is limited because of climate control problems, this also creates air quality issues within the facility that the city will need to address. A lack of parking for disabled people is also a concern for the city but could be addressed with the construction of a new library and adjoining parking lot.

• Seward Public Library

The Seward Public Library was constructed in 1913 by the Carnegie Foundation. The library is in good condition but is not meeting the city's expanding needs. The library is small, functionally obsolete, and has limited accessibility for disabled persons. The Seward Library Foundation has laid out plans for the construction of a new facility and has begun fund raising. The City will be called upon to provide funding for lot preparation, parking and furnishing of the facility. The current goal is to begin construction of the facility in 2002. The City of Seward should begin to determine possible uses for this historic community building.

• Police Department

The Seward Police Department is located within the City Hall. The facility is centrally located but the department is in desperate need for addition space and security upgrades. Possible locations include a doctors office on 1st Street and Highway 34 and an NPPD facility at 4th and Ash Street. Either of these facilities would meet growing space needs for officers, meeting rooms, and storage. An additional option would be expansion at the City Hall. This would require moving some city offices out of City Hall. The Police Department will also need to evaluate man power needs as the community continues to grow.

- **Fire Station**

The Fire Station is located on 3rd Street just north of downtown. The one story masonry building was constructed in 1972 and is in excellent condition. The facility includes 10 bays, a large meeting room, offices, kitchen and restrooms. The Seward Fire Department is made up of 48 volunteer firefighters, of which 25 are also EMTs. The Department covers an 84 square mile area for fire calls and 180 square mile area for EMS calls. The facility is currently meeting the City's needs and should do so through the planning period.

- **Municipal Building ,Public Works Shop and Yard Facility**

The Public Works Shops are located along 7th Street just north of Downtown. The Municipal Building has four bays and houses the Public Works Department and City Council Chambers. The brick building is in good shape and meeting the City's needs. The Street and Electric Shop is a brick and wood building located across the street from the Municipal Building . The original building was constructed in the 1950s, but a fire in 1987 destroyed a majority of the building. The facility is in good condition and is used to capacity. Additional storage is needed but should be met with the construction of a new Public Works building south of the city.

The yard contains outdoor storage space for the Public Works Department and the Electric Department. The facility provides storage for transformers, poles, trailers, gravel, crushed rock, and miscellaneous vehicles and equipment. The yard facility is located adjacent to the Waste Water Treatment Plant and will be the location of the new Public Works facility. The Public Works Department also maintains a wood disposal site and additional storage south of the city.

- **Airport**

The Seward Airport is located 2.5 miles south of the city on State Highway 15. It is strategically located between the City of Seward and Interstate 80 to the south. The airport has a 3,600 foot paved runway and a 3,400 foot sod runway. The airport is equipped with NDB and GPS approaches and medium intensity lighting on the paved runway. The airport has a terminal, two shop/maintenance buildings, two corporate hangers, and 16 T-hangers, all of which are in good to excellent condition. Services provided at the airport include fueling, maintenance, flight services, banners, and night signs. The City is planning for an expansion of the runway during early the part of the planning period. This expansion will likely increase the use of the airport and create a demand for additional hangers.

- **Civic Center**

The Seward Civic Center, located at 6th and Bradford Streets, was developed in two phases in 1955 and 1977. The offices for the Chamber of Commerce are located within the Civic Center along with meeting rooms, banquet areas, kitchen facilities, and an auditorium that seats 180 people. The facility is in excellent shape and maintained through funding from the Jessie Langworthy Endowment. The Langworthy Endowment more than adequately funds the facility but it does restrict use of the facility to the Chamber of Commerce and non-profit or religious organizations.

- **Lied Senior Center**

The Lied Senior Center was constructed in 1997 and is an excellent asset to the City of Seward. The facility includes a large, fully equipped kitchen, banquet area, library, offices, exercise room, pool room and garage. The Senior Citizen Center in coordination with the Chamber of Commerce also provides shuttle service to those in the community who do not have transportation of their own. This is an important amenity that the City of Seward needs to ensure continues.

• Cemeteries

The city operates three cemeteries, located throughout the city. The largest of the three is the Seward Cemetery on the northern edge of the city. The cemetery presents a highly visible, park-like setting adjacent to Highway 15. A storage/maintenance structure at the Seward Cemetery is in good condition, but it will need to be expanded with the addition of 18 acres in the last year. The city also maintains the Anderson Cemetery west of the city and the Greenwood Cemetery on north 2nd Street. Both of these cemeteries are currently meeting the city's needs. Space should not be an issue during the planning period but additional equipment will be needed.

• Parks Shop and Maintenance Facilities

The City of Seward currently maintains two parks shops. The main shop, a 20 year old brick building, is located at Plum Creek Park. The building is in good condition and except for the concession stand is meeting the city's needs. The existing concession stand, which is attached to the park shop, is too small and in a poor location. Space closer to the playing fields should be considered for construction of a new concession stand.

The City Park Shop is a small wood structure located at the County Fair Grounds. The building is owned by the Fair Board but the building and surrounding area are maintained by the City of Seward. The building is 50 to 60 years old and in poor condition replacement of the building will be necessary during the planning period.

The planned development of the Seward Sports Complex Office and Park Shop will provide office space for the Parks and Recreation Department and additional maintenance and storage areas. Development of this facility will become more pressing as the condition of the City Park Shop continues to deteriorate. Moving the Parks and Recreation Offices will also address the handicap accessibility issues associated with their existing offices in the City Hall.

PUBLIC FACILITIES PRIORITIES

Based on the inventory, Seward's highest public facility priorities are:

- Evaluation of city facility spaces needs. This study should specifically review the spaces needs of the city hall, police department and public works facilities.
- Construction of a new library.
- Construction of additional hangars as the use of the airport continues to increase.

See attached file Chapter7.xls for Tables 6.1 through 6.5

INFRASTRUCTURE

This section presents an inventory and evaluation of the city's existing infrastructure systems. It includes water distribution and storage, wastewater collection and treatment, electrical system and solid waste disposal. Tables 6-2 through 6-6 provide a complete assessment of the recommendations for the city's infrastructure systems. Key findings and projects in progress are summarized below.

WATER SUPPLY

Table 6-2 examines the city's water supply system. The city's water storage and distribution systems are all in good condition. Water quality is a concern because of elevated nitrate and copper levels. Seward will need to acquire the land necessary for the construction of a water treatment facility during the early part of the planning period. The city will also need to complete a wellhead protection program to protect future water quality. Seward will need to continue to replace aging and undersized mains as the city grows. By ensuring adequate water volumes and storage capacity the city can market itself as a preferred location for industrial expansion. However expansion of the system should be based on Seward's future land use plan.

WASTEWATER SYSTEM

The sanitary sewer system includes approximately 35 miles of sewer lines within the city's jurisdiction. Minor problems include signs of infiltration at the east interceptor line and minor root intrusions within the system. The city owned lift station is in excellent condition and a second lift station, owned by the County and located in the County Fair Grounds area, is meeting the city's needs. Seward will need to rehabilitate the east interceptor line during the early part of the planning period and address root intrusion problems as they occur. The city will also need to identify possible interceptor sewer projects in conjunction with any large scale residential or industrial development.

The wastewater treatment plant is in good condition. Equipment has been replaced as necessary, since construction of the facility in 1977. The grit handling equipment is aging and will require upgrading or replacement during the planning period. The plants principle challenges will be compliance with new environmental regulations.

Storm Water Drainage

Table 6-4 examines the storm drainage system for the City of Seward. The city drains either into the Blue River from the north, northwest and south or into Plum Creek from the east/northeast. Issues identified in the storm drainage inventory include:

- Capacity problems in the east and northeast sections of the city. Random development in the area has lead to an inconsistent storm sewer system.
- Capacity problems in the west and northwest sections of the city due to upstream development along the Blue River.
- During heavy rainfalls nuisance flows will typically reach a depth of one foot or greater at intersections in downtown and southern sections of the city.

New development in the north and south are occurring outside the 100 year flood plain and should not be an issue as long as ordinances and regulations dealing with stormwater management and floodplain development continue to be enforced. The city will need to implement the 1987 Drainage Study on Park Street and develop a city-wide plan for the upgrade and expansion of the stormwater system. The city also needs to ensure that right-of-way is dedicated for future drainage structures on the north and south sides of Seward.

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

Power for Seward's Electrical Distribution System is purchased form Nebraska Public Power District and resold to electric system users. The system is in good condition and the city has taken a proactive approach to operation, maintenance, and training. Deregulation will be the major issue facing Seward during the planning period and the city is addressing the issue through its membership to NEBESCO. Additional upgrading and expanding the system to meet increased loads due to new development will be a top priority during the planning period. The city should also encourage the placement of future power lines underground where possible.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

The City of Seward does not provide for solid waste collection but does maintain the Recycling Center. The Center is open three days a week and everyone in the community or surrounding area may drop off recyclable items. The facility is in good condition and currently meeting the communities needs. The lack of use by many in the community is the most significant issue facing the facility. During the planning period the city will need to involve the public in a city-wide awareness effort to emphasize the environmental benefits of recycling and waste reduction.

Infrastructure Priorities

Based upon the inventories provided, Seward's highest infrastructure priorities are:

- Acquisition of land for construction of a water treatment facility.
- Addressing infiltration and root growth within the sanitary sewer system.
- Upgrading or expanding the storm water drainage system city wide.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Seward's existing and future housing stock is critical to the city's future growth and development. The city's housing supply represents its single largest cumulative capital investment. Housing policy has been recognized as a particularly vital city issue through the planning process. This chapter considers housing characteristics and establishes a program to improve housing and neighborhood quality. Basic goals for neighborhood-based policies are also presented in this section.

GOALS

These goals begin with the assumption that Seward's neighborhoods have special, unique qualities that demand individualized actions to:

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT IN SEWARD THAT OFFERS BETTER HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Population growth during the 1990's has placed pressure on the housing market, reducing the supply of vacant units and limiting housing choices for many residents. The city developed about 350 units between 1990 and 1998, a rate that is commensurate with market demand. As a result, the city struggles to meet the affordable housing needs of seniors, young families, students, and long-time residents seeking to better their own housing situations.

CREATE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS THAT WILL UNITE NEIGHBORHOODS OF THE CITY.

Strengthening cooperation and involvement of residents throughout the city must include the creation of physical connections that develop subdivisions into neighborhoods of the city.

ASSURE THAT EACH NEIGHBORHOOD PROVIDES A GOOD RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT FOR ITS RESIDENTS.

A good residential neighborhood provides high quality schools, churches, day care facilities, parks, and cultural facilities to support the city's living environment. One of the most fundamental services a city can provide is to protect housing areas from major intrusions and hazards. Deteriorated streets, traffic problems, poor property maintenance, poor pedestrian circulation, and code violations can diminish the living quality that neighborhoods offer. These conditions interfere with resident's enjoyment of their own property, reduce property values, and make neighborhood rejuvenation more difficult. Thus, neighborhood policies must accentuate the positive aspects of a neighborhood, and seek to reduce negative or deteriorating influences.

CONSERVE THE CITY'S EXISTING BUILDING STOCK

The majority of the city's affordable housing resources for the next twenty years are already built and on the ground. The preservation of this irreplaceable capital resource is a vital housing priority for the city.

ANALYSIS

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

This discussion will examine housing value and physical characteristics of Seward's housing stock.

Housing Occupancy and Tenure

Table 8-1 compares changes in housing occupancy for Seward. Between 1980 and 1990, the city added 115 units, a significant amount of development. Most of this housing growth was accounted for single-family development. However, the number of rental occupied units increased by 6%, suggesting that some existing housing was converted from ownership to rental occupancy. The city's vacancy rate dropped from 7.56% in 1980 to 6.6% in 1990. Owner-occupancy also increased by 86 units in what was a difficult decade for many small and medium sized communities.

Housing Values and Rental Rates

Housing values increased significantly in Seward during the 1980's. In 1990, owner-occupied housing in Seward exhibited a median value of \$54,100, the median highest home value among comparable communities. Table 8-2 compares changes in the value of housing for Seward and other comparable communities. Most communities experienced a much smaller increase in home value during this period than Seward, which posted an increase of 25.23% while Beatrice, Chadron and Hastings all experienced increases of less than 10%. Seward's median contract rent is also the highest among comparable cities, and increased at a much more significant rate between 1980 and 1990. The Seward County Housing Market Study, prepared by Southeast Nebraska Development District in 1998, found that the average rent during the 1990's increased by more than 30 percent. The study also found that market prices for new homes ranged from \$130,000 to \$150,000.

Construction Activity in Seward

Table 8-3 illustrates the city building permit activity since 1990. Through the end of 1998, 344 housing units have been developed in Seward. Over half of these have been single family units. In addition, 150 multi-family and duplex units have also been constructed. Single-family home construction has occurred primarily on the northern periphery of the city. Some mature neighborhoods also experienced housing growth during the decade on vacant lots. Some of the newest housing in the city is also being developed along the eastern edge of the city north of Highway 34.

The largest concentration of new multi-family apartment construction and duplexes occurs north of Hillcrest Avenue. Major new retirement centers have also been constructed on the northern edges of the city. Multi-family construction in Seward slowed during the mid-1990's, adding 148 units from 1990 to 1998. Construction ranged from 26 units in 1990 to 6 in 1995 before rebounding to 78 units in 1998.

Housing Affordability

The pricing of a community's housing supply in relation to the income of its residents helps determine whether the city's housing is affordable for its citizens. Theoretically, a household budget must be divided among basic housing costs, other essential needs, and costs to maintain the house. Those households which must spend a disproportionately large share of their income for basic housing have less money for other essentials, and fewer resources to maintain their homes and neighborhoods. Table 8-4 evaluates the availability of affordable housing in the City of Seward. This analysis concentrates on those people who are most likely to experience housing affordability problems - those whose earnings are at or below Nebraska's statewide household median income.

The table compares the distribution of households by income group to the distribution of housing units in price ranges affordable to each respective income group. A positive balance indicates that more units exist within a specific cost range than people who require housing in that range; a negative balance indicates that fewer units exist in the cost range than people who can afford those units.

The analysis indicates that:

- Seward has a significant shortage of units affordable to the lowest income population groups. An estimated 454 households in Seward require housing priced at \$15,000 or below, or requiring monthly payments of \$200 or below, while only 217 units exist within those ranges. In many cases, those lower cost units also display some signs of distress.
- Seward had 1,472 housing units in 1990 valued between \$25,000 and \$75,000 or with rents between \$200 and \$500, compared to 902 households requiring housing in these ranges. Superficially, this suggests that Seward has an adequate supply of housing for moderate income groups. However, a shortage of housing with values above \$75,000 increases competition for housing in these middle cost ranges. In addition, many people with higher incomes will continue to occupy “lower cost” houses out of personal or economic choice. Thus, the production of moderate cost housing remains a significant priority for Seward.
- The city displays a significant deficit of housing in the \$75,000 to \$100,000 range. This is a key area of community concern, because it represents the typical targets for affordable new construction and first-time homebuyers. In addition, Seward, in 1990, displayed a relative lack of higher-cost housing to provide a move-up resource. Since 1990, a significant part of Seward’s new development activity has addressed this high-end market.

This analysis suggests that Seward’s primary affordable housing agenda should include:

- Securing additional low cost permanent and transitional housing, and
- Preserving/maintaining existing units serving low income residents.
- Developing moderate and middle cost housing in range of \$75,000 to \$100,000 or with rents in the range of \$500.

The community should continue to secure housing assistance funds to provide subsidies to low income residents who may only find housing at higher rent levels. Rental subsidies from housing authorities are a typical source of assistance.

Housing Development Needs

Table 8-5 presents the current estimated income distribution (by percent of households) of Seward, paired with affordable monthly housing costs for each income range. These target costs are matched to strategies that can deliver housing affordable to each income range. For example, programs that are most appropriate to families earning between \$25,000 and \$35,000 can produce housing with monthly costs between \$625 and \$875, including utilities, corresponding to houses with mortgages in the range of \$50,000 to \$80,000. Strategies which can deliver housing in this price range include rehabilitation of existing housing, manufactured housing, and affordable single-family development using financing devices such as deferred second mortgages.

Table 8-6 presents a ten-year housing development and pricing program for Seward, based on the city’s relative income distribution. The program provides production targets for various cost ranges of rental and owner-occupied units. The development program is based on the following assumptions:

- New development in Seward will be about 65% owner-occupied and 35% renter-occupied housing. This is comparable to the owner/renter distribution of occupied housing in the 1990 census.
- Owner-occupied housing will be distributed generally in proportion to the income distribution of households for whom ownership is a realistic strategy. Some of the market for lower-cost owner-occupancy may be shifted toward market rate rentals.
- Lower-income households will generally be accommodated in rental development.

The analysis indicates a need for about 149 owner-occupied units with prices below \$110,000 and 91 units with effective rents below \$500 in current dollars, a total of 240 “affordable” units. Therefore, a housing program for Seward should establish an average annual production target of about 22 units. These projections are based on current trends and do not include actions which can expand the Seward market. These include:

- Major employment expansions.
- Housing developments that can attract people from surrounding regions, such as substantial senior housing developments.

Summary

- Between 1980 and 1990, Seward has added over 340 housing units, with only slightly more single-family units being constructed than multi-family units.
- The vacancy rate dropped by a percentage point between 1980 and 1990, from 7.56% to 6.6%.
- Seward’s housing, taken as a whole exhibits higher costs and rent levels than comparable cities.
- An analysis of affordability of Seward’s housing stock indicates:
 - A shortage of units affordable to the city’s lowest income groups.
 - A high degree of competition for housing in lower cost ranges, because of occupancy of lower cost units by higher income households in the city.
 - A shortage of housing within moderate price ranges from \$75,000 to \$100,000.
 - In 1990, a relative shortage of higher cost units, a deficit that has been a major focus of the private development market since 1990.
 - Between 2000 and 2010 Seward will need to construct 149 owner-occupied units with prices below \$110,000 and 91 units with effective rents below \$600 in current dollars, for a total of 240 “affordable” units.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGIES

Land use policies, including provision of adequate land and supporting public facilities for residential development, are important components of a housing policy. This section considers additional issues for Seward's housing market. The city's primary housing challenges include:

- An increasing shortfall of available housing to meet growth demands, resulting in limited choice and a relative inability to meet the needs of new residents.
- Conservation of the city's existing housing supply.
- Development of moderately-priced housing.

Programs initiated through the Seward County Housing Corporation (SCHC) and the Southeast Nebraska Affordable Housing Council, Inc. (SENAHC) have begun to address these issues. Initiatives have include:

- A \$300,000 HOME grant to assist low and moderate income families with home ownership.
- SCHC received \$190,000 from the Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Fund to provide down payment subsidies to eligible first-time homebuyers within Seward County.
- SCHC has also encouraged local bands to apply for Federal Home Loan Bank Grants to augment underwriting down-payment assistance
- SCHC facilitated the development of a 24 unit, mixed-income, apartment complex.
- SCHC is working to develop 32 units of duplex/townhomes for lower income seniors.

In addition to these programs Seward should consider policies which include:

- **PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT FINANCING**
- **SENIOR LIVING**
- **NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION**
- **A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES**

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT FINANCING

SEWARD SHOULD WORK TO REDUCE THE COST OF LAND ACQUISITION AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT BORNE BY HOUSING UNITS IN AFFORDABLE DEVELOPMENT

Development costs can be a significant disincentive to housing development. Seward has developed an interceptor sewer system that serves most of its probable development areas. However, in any case, infrastructure and site improvement typically account for \$10,000 to \$15,000 of a house's cost. This, combined with the front-end risk of subdivision development, discourages the production of lots needed to meet housing demand. Seward should use tools to provide financing assistance for public improvements such as sewer extensions, intersections, major streets, and other necessary facilities. Financing tools can help lower this initial cost to a buyer, or lessen the initial financing burden to a developer.

Potential financing tools include:

- *Tax Increment Financing.* Within a TIF district, the tax basis of a site is frozen at pre-development levels. The added taxes created by development are then used to repay publicly-issued revenue bonds that financed public improvements. Thus, the future taxes created by a residential development pay for improvements, allowing a pass-through of the savings directly to homeowners or indirectly to renters.

- *Shared Risk/Front-End Financing.* A shared risk approach is most appropriate for situations that do not require a subsidy, but do need risk-cushioning for the developer. When this is not feasible in subsidized projects, improvements may be publicly funded.

With this technique, the city finances infrastructure through the sale of bonds or the use of appropriate public funds. The city is then repaid by a specific charge for each lot, paid at the time of issuance of a building permit. The device shares the risk of development by lessening the initial risk of financing for the private developer. Yet, it provides a pay back to the city.

- *Public Funding.* In some situations, direct public financing of infrastructure and improvements will be required or desirable. This device will be necessary in projects that require a significant subsidy, but in which the use of TIF is either unacceptable or unfeasible; or when the benefit of a public improvement flows to the general community rather than to a specific development.

Public funding tools include general obligation bonds or appropriations of general funds; Community Development Block Grants, targeted to benefit projects that have a direct benefit to low and moderate income families; and the use of various state grant programs.

- *Private Financing.* Private financing will continue to be a staple of infrastructure development in Seward. The economics of private development and city policies will help to assure that projects require relatively short, incremental extensions of sewers, streets, and utility services. This, in turn, will help produce a compact development pattern and long-term economies to the city as it provides public services.

SENIOR LIVING

SEWARD SHOULD ENCOURAGE CONSTRUCTION OF INDEPENDENT LIVING RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SENIORS

Seward provides a superior environment for senior citizens. In 1990, 1,029, or 18% of the city's residents were over the age of 65. Seward's amenities, such as the hospital, commercial services, environment, and academic resources attract retirement age residents from the surrounding region. This increases the demand for housing, which is already pronounced among young family households and low-income households. The city should encourage more new market-rate senior housing developments, within the constraints of the market.

Affordability problems are often most severe among low-income elderly renters. Seward currently provides public housing units for low-income elderly residents, and numerous programs exist to provide supplemental rent assistance. The city should continue to monitor needs for additional moderate cost senior housing.

In addition to direct project assistance, Seward is experiencing development of continuing care retirement centers such as Grand Court, which provides services from independent living to various forms of living assistance. Seward's development regulations should permit flexibility in permitting these facilities in a variety of urban settings, including residential neighborhoods.

Senior Housing With Ownership Transition Program

Development of moderately-priced senior housing may be combined with the existing Seward County Housing Corporation (SCHC) and Southeast Nebraska Affordable Housing Council (SENAHC) programs to create a Senior Housing with Ownership Transition Program. Here, the SENAHC in its role as a Community Housing Development Organization would partner with SCHC, the city of Seward and local banks to build one or two-bedroom attached units, with a target cost of (for example) \$80,000 per unit. The SENAHC and SCHC agree to purchase the senior resident's current home at \$50,000. That home is then rehabilitated and resold. If the rehabilitation cost of the house is an additional \$25,000, total sale price for a substantially new house may be \$80,000. The senior purchases the new attached unit, using the sale proceeds of the house as a substantial downpayment. The balance is amortized, with an approximate monthly cost of \$300. Assuming that additional

costs for maintenance and utilities is \$125 per month, the new housing setting costs the senior household \$425 per month, a moderate price for an appropriate new ownership unit.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION

SEWARD SHOULD IMPLEMENT NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION PROGRAMS, INCLUDING AN AGGRESSIVE RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM.

The preservation of existing neighborhoods and housing stock becomes especially important when housing shortages exist. Most of Seward's affordable housing stock is already in place. Indeed, rehabilitation and preventive maintenance are the city's most cost-effective way of assuring a continued supply of good housing. Seward should institute measures to repair existing housing units in poor and fair condition and carry out programs to protect existing good housing stock. Neighborhood conservation strategies include:

- **Land Use Policies.** Seward should maintain zoning and land use policies which protect the integrity of its neighborhoods. New zoning proposals should be evaluated with a view toward their effect on surrounding neighborhoods. The zoning ordinance should encourage project design that reduces land use conflicts between residential and other uses; and should establish buffering and screening standards to minimize external effects on neighborhoods.
- **Rehabilitation.** Seward should develop rehabilitation programs (including the use of private loans leveraged by CDBG or HOME funds) to promote the rehabilitation of housing stock that is in need of significant rehabilitation. These programs should emphasize the leveraging of private funds to extend the use of scarce public resources.

In addition to conventional rehabilitation programs, Seward should promote the use of programs which help to convert existing housing stock to owner-occupancy. These programs include the FHA 203(K) program, and FHA mortgage insurance program which combines loans for purchase and rehabilitation of property into a single, unified loan.

- **SENAHC Purchase and Resale.** In this approach, SENAHC, working with SCHC, would purchase and rehabilitate suitable houses for resale to new owners. SENAHC and/or private lenders finance the acquisition and rehabilitation, with a take-out on the interim financing funded as the FHA or conventional mortgage. Houses are marketed through the normal real estate sales process, or by the development group. A purchase and resale program can be combined with an effort to build affordable housing for seniors, described above.
- **Infill Development.** Several sites in Seward within the built-up city provide good opportunities for residential development. These include open lots scattered around the city and larger clusters in the northeast quadrant of the city. A Housing Partnership can be helpful in packaging and financing appropriate projects on these sites.
- **Rent-to-own.** The traditional approach of developing multi-family developments for low-income households is frequently difficult to locate in small communities. A new type of development, called "rent-to-own" combines affordable housing with future opportunities for homeownership.

This new approach provides an opportunity for households of moderate income establishing themselves in Seward to rent a home while building equity toward eventual purchase. In this program, SENAHC and SCHC build new rental housing in single-family, duplex, townhouse, or four-plex configurations. These units would be built with the assistance of the Section 42 tax credit, providing a significant incentive for equity investment. A portion of the family's rent is placed in an escrow that is directed toward a downpayment. At the end of a specific period, the residents can then use the accumulated escrow as a downpayment to purchase either a new house or an existing unit. Rent-to-own units also include homeowner training and counseling, preparing tenants to graduate to ownership after expiration of the tax credit recapture period.

A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES

SEWARD'S NEW GROWTH AREAS, ALONG WITH LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, SHOULD ENCOURAGE A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES.

Seward should continue to integrate a variety of housing types in new growth areas. Land development ordinances should provide adequate flexibility to accommodate innovative or economical designs within traditional town patterns. Some of these configurations may include:

- **Cluster Subdivisions.** In clusters, the overall density of a single-family project, including open space, must comply with the maximum density requirement of the zoning district. However, individual lots have smaller area and setback requirements. Clusters are useful when infrastructure costs should be minimized or environmental features exist which should be protected.
- **Single-Family attached Development.** Here, single-family units comply with the minimum lot sizes of the zoning district, but have a common wall. The opposite side yard is ordinarily larger than normal. This housing type provides construction economies and more useful side yards.
- **Townhouses.** Townhouses, which are three or more attached units, can be developed as owner-occupied or rental housing. They provide construction and land use efficiencies, while continuing the sense of a single-family neighborhood.
- **Multi-family Development.** Multi-family development should be integrated into the structure of new neighborhoods, rather than developed on peripheral sites. Design standards should provide a residential scale and prevent creating a "project" look.
- **Manufactured Home Development.** Manufactured housing development has emerged as a potential instrument to provide relatively immediate and lower cost solutions to affordable housing needs. Manufactured housing subdivisions can be designed to provide good environments for residents. However, rightly or wrongly, they often create conflicts with neighbors in adjacent or nearby conventional single-family housing, who fear neighborhood effects and reduced property values. Seward should plan for and encourage a limited amount of manufactured home subdivision development. This can help to channel the effects of potential developers to sites and housing standards that support city objectives. Likewise, problems associated with location of mobile homes on relatively small sites within otherwise conventional development can be avoided. Elements of this policy include:
 - *Encouragement of manufactured home subdivisions.* Manufactured home subdivisions are indistinguishable from conventional subdivisions, except that conventional single-family units are established on owner-occupied lots. This housing form can combine a sense of permanence and proprietorship with the affordability of pre-constructed units.
 - *Designation of specific parts of the city for manufactured home development.* These areas should be in the direction of present growth, in order to prevent the creation of subdivisions that are isolated from the rest of the community manufactured home development may be a part of the Southern and Western Growth Centers, on sites consistent with best zoning and design standards.
 - *Site development standards.* The City should adopt improved standards for manufacture home development. These standards should provide a two acre minimum park size, installation of adequate circulation and utility systems, open space, unit design standards that are compatible with conventional residential construction, and peripheral landscaping and buffering. These standards can help to assure that manufactured home developments are well-planned and consistent in appearance with their neighborhoods.

CHAPTER NINE

The eight previous chapters, with their narratives and maps, are the core of the Seward Plan. This section addresses the scheduling of plan implementation by both public agencies and private decision-makers. These key areas include:

- *Development Policies and Actions.* This section summarizes the policies and actions proposed in the Seward Plan, and presents projected time frames for the implementation of these recommendations.
- *Plan Maintenance.* This section outlines a process for maintaining the plan and evaluating Seward's progress in meeting its goals.

The table following in this chapter presents a concise summary of the recommendations of the Seward Plan. These recommendations include various types of efforts:

- *Policies,* which indicate continuing efforts over a long period to implement the plan. In some cases, policies include specific regulatory or administrative actions.
- *Action Items,* which include specific efforts or accomplishments by the community.
- *Capital Investments,* which include public capital projects that will implement features of the Seward Plan.

Each recommendation is listed as part of its them in the Seward Plan. In addition, a time frame for implementing recommendations is indicated. Some recommendations require ongoing implementation. Short-term indicates implementation within five years, medium-term within five to ten years, and long-term within ten to twenty years.

PLAN MAINTENANCE

The scope of the Seward Plan is both ambitious and long-term. Each of the many actions and policies described in the plan can contribute to the betterment of the city. Yet, presenting a twenty-year development program at one time can appear daunting. Therefore, the city should implement an ongoing planning process which uses the plan to develop year-by-year improvement programs. In addition, this process should also evaluate the plan on an annual basis in relation to the development events of the past year.

Such a process may include the following features:

- *Annual Action and Capital Improvement Program.* The Planning Commission and City Council should use the plan to define annual strategic work programs of policies, actions, and capital investments. This program should be coordinated with Seward's existing capital improvement planning and budgeting process, although many of the plan's recommendations are not capital items. This annual process should be completed before the beginning of each budget year and should include:
 - *A specific work program for the upcoming year.* This program should be specific and related to the city's projected financial resources. The work program will establish the specific plan recommendations that the city will accomplish during the coming year.
 - *A three-year strategic program.* This component provides for a multi-year perspective, informing the preparation of the annual work program. It provides a middle-term implementation plan for the city.
 - *A six-year capital improvement program.* This is merged into Seward's current capital improvement program.

In addition, this process should include an annual evaluation of the comprehensive plan. This evaluation should occur at the end of each calendar year. Desirably, this evaluation should include a written report that:

- *Summarizes key land use developments and decisions during the past year and relates them to the comprehensive plan.*

- *Reviews actions taken by the city during the past year to implement plan recommendations.*
- *Defines any changes that should be made in the comprehensive plan.*

The plan should be viewed as a dynamic changing document that is used actively by the city.

A Blending of People and Place: Development Constitution Summary					
	Type	On-going	Short	Med.	Long
REGIONAL CITY OF NEARLY 7,800 <i>Seward should capitalize on its ability to attract growth and will achieve a target population of 7,800 during the next twenty years.</i>	Policy				•
OFFICIAL MAP <i>Seward should adopt an official map which pre-plans future streets and open spaces.</i>	Policy Action		•		
A UNIFIED CITY <i>Planning in Seward should unify existing neighborhoods, bridging physical divisions between North and South, and should connect new and established parts of the Community.</i>	Policy	•			
TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD PATTERNS <i>New neighborhoods in Seward should follow the patterns of traditional neighborhoods.</i>	Policy	•			
TRANSPORTATION TO MEET CITY AND REGIONAL NEEDS <i>The transportation system should support development objectives of Seward as a county center and small city.</i>	Policy Capital	•			
A RECREATION LIFESTYLE <i>Seward should continue to provide its citizens with good access to recreation.</i>	Policy Capital	•			
A CENTER FOR NEW ENTERPRISE <i>Seward should use its strategic location and academic resources to convert the city into a center for new business growth.</i>	Action Capital		•		
PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC SEWARD <i>Seward's historic built environment must be maintained and preserved.</i>	Policy Action	•			
THE SEWARD ANNEXATION PLAN <i>Seward must establish a program of phased annexation that will create opportunities for new development and reserve land necessary to carry out the goals of the future land use plan</i>	Policy Action	•			
ADEQUATE LAND SUPPLY <i>Seward should designate enough land for new development to meet a year 2020 population target of 7,800 people.</i>	Policy	•			
COMPACT DEVELOPMENT PATTERN <i>Seward should encourage compact growth that is distributed equally around the traditional city.</i>	Policy	•			
COMPLETE AND BALANCED NEIGHBORHOODS <i>Seward will balance and guide its new residential growth to create better neighborhoods and improved mobility.</i>	Policy	•			

A Blending of People and Place: Development Constitution Summary					
	Type	On-going	Short	Med.	Long
<p>PRE-PLANNED COLLECTORS <i>The collector streets and parkway system in developing areas should be designated ahead of development and dedicated as growth takes place.</i></p>	Policy	•			
<p>STREETS AS PUBLIC SPACES <i>New collector streets in Seward should have multiple uses, becoming green corridors that link the “rooms” of the growing city.</i></p>	Policy	•			
<p>CONSERVATION RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT <i>Large lot development in Seward should maintain the quality of the local landscape and should differ in design from urban subdivisions.</i></p>	Policy Action	•			
<p>COMMERCIAL NODES <i>Seward’s new commercial development should be located within well-defined nodes or districts, each with a unique and complementary role.</i></p>	Policy	•			
<p>INDUSTRIAL GROWTH AREAS <i>Seward should provide attractive sites for future industrial and business park development.</i></p>	Action	•			
<p>HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM <i>Seward should implement a comprehensive strategy in increase awareness and maintain the integrity of important resources in its built environment</i></p>	Policy		•		
<p>FRAMEWORK FOR DECISION-MAKING <i>Seward’s future land use map and policies should provide both guidance and flexibility to decision makers in the land use process.</i></p>	Policy	•			
<p>A PROGRAM OF PHASED ANNEXATION <i>Seward should implement an annexation program that will create opportunities for new development and facilitate the goals of the future land use plan.</i></p>	Policy Action	•			

Mobility for Urban Quality: Summary Recommendations					
	Type	On-going	Short	Med.	Long
<p>CONTINUOUS TRANSPORTATION <i>New growth areas in Seward should be served by continuous street networks that are linked to established parts of the city.</i></p>	Policy	•			
<p>LOCAL CONNECTIVITY <i>The local street network in developing residential areas should be designed with multiple connections and relatively direct routes.</i></p>	Policy	•	•		
<p>CIVIC STREETS <i>Seward's streets should be designed a public spaces as well as movers of traffic.</i></p>	Policy	•			
<p>PEDESTRIAN AND TRAIL SYSTEM <i>Seward should maintain a continuous pedestrian network to complement the street system.</i></p> <p><i>Off street</i> -Plum Creek Greenway -North/ South Trail and Northern Greenway</p> <p><i>On Street</i> -Hillcrest Drive</p> <p><i>Share-the-Road signage and designation</i> -Seward Avenue</p>	Capital		•	•	
<p>NORTHERN LOOP <i>A loop road should be developed to frame the northern growth center.</i></p>	Capital			•	
<p>HISTORIC BRICK STREETS <i>Seward's historic brick streets should be preserved as a key asset to the downtown and community character.</i></p>	Capital	•			

A Recreation Lifestyle: Summary Recommendations					
	Type	On-going	Short	Med.	Long
<p>GREEN NETWORK <i>Seward's park system should be a network of parks, connected by continuous green corridors defined by trails, greenways, boulevards, and civic streets including:</i></p> <p><i>-Greenway following Plum Creek from Plum Creek Park to Seward Street .</i></p> <p><i>-North/ South Parkway and trail from Moffit/ Centennial/ 4-H Park complex to future development in the Northwest.</i></p> <p><i>-Seward Street Parkway</i></p> <p><i>-Northern Greenway linking Plum Creek Park with development along Seward's northern edge.</i></p>	Capital		•	•	
	Capital		•		
	Capital			•	
	Capital		•		•
<p>MAJOR OPEN SPACE CENTERS <i>Seward should develop major open space centers that are accessible to the community through the trail and greenway network and provide passive recreation opportunities.</i></p>	Capital			•	
<p>PARKSITE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM <i>Seward should implement a regularly budgeted, incremental program of park site improvements and upgrades as its existing parks.</i></p>	Capital	•			
<p>NEIGHBORHOOD PARK FINANCE <i>In order to finance park acquisitions seward should establish a park.site acquisition fund, financed along with new subdivision development</i></p>	Action		•		

Quality Public Services: Summary Recommendations					
	Type	On-going	Short	Med.	Long
PUBLIC FACILITY PRIORITIES <i>Major priorities for a public facility improvement program include:</i>					
•Expansion of the Police Department facilities	Capital		•		
• Construction of a new library	Capital		•		
• Construction of an additional Public Works facility	Capital		•		
• Construction of additional hangers as the airport expands.	Capital			•	
INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES <i>Major priorities for an infrastructure improvement program include:</i>					
• Acquisition of land for construction of a water treatment facility.	Capital		•		
•Addressing infiltration and root growth within the sanitary sewer system.	Capital		•		
• Upgrading or expanding the storm water drainage system city wide.	Capital		•		

A Unique and Vital Downtown Seward: Summary Recommendations					
	Type	On-going	Short	Med.	Long
DISTRICT MANAGEMENT <i>Downtown Seward should strengthen its organizational structure to manage and promote the commercial district.</i>	Action		•		
DOWNTOWN HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES <i>Seward should increase space for new housing opportunities within walking distance of the Downtown Seward retail district.</i>	Action Capital	•			
SEWARD COUNTY COURTHOUSE SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT <i>Seward should complete a major redevelopment project in downtown which combines new commercial and residential development with a significant use of its public spaces.</i>	Action Capital		•		
SEWARD STREET <i>Seward should emphasize the parkway street as a feature that unifies its core retail area and provides links to surrounding neighborhoods.</i>	Capital		•		
INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS <i>Street improvements should be used to ease crossing of major streets and to increase the visibility of pedestrians.</i>	Capital		•		
ADAPTIVE REUSE AND PRESERVATION <i>Historic preservation and rehabilitation of key buildings should be encouraged to complement other private and public investments. Components include:</i> • Adaptive reuse programs. • Facade improvement program, providing financing. • Preservation ordinances	Action Capital Action	•	 • •		
LINKS TO HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL <i>Downtown Seward should take advantage of the prospect of major commercial development along Highway 15 to increase traffic in the city center.</i>	Action Capital		•		
DOWNTOWN PLAN <i>Downtown Seward should develop a physical and economic vision of its future through a downtown development plan</i>	Action		•		

Housing and Neighborhoods: Summary Recommendations					
	Type	On-going	Short	Med.	Long
PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT FINANCING <i>Seward should work to reduce the cost of land acquisition and infrastructure development borne by housing units in affordable development</i>	Action Policy		•		
SENIOR LIVING <i>Seward should encourage construction of independent living residential development for seniors</i>	Policy	•			
NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION <i>Seward should implement neighborhood conservation programs, including an aggressive residential rehabilitation program.</i>	Policy	•	•		
A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES <i>Seward's new growth areas, along with land development regulations, should encourage a variety of housing types.</i>	Policy	•			