

2013

Seward Strategic Plan

Adopted March 5, 2013

Resolution No. 7-13

(JEO Project No. 120088.00)



Introduction

As a comprehensive plan prepares a community for future growth and development; a community's strategic plan helps identify and prioritize the specific projects that will assist the city to reach its ultimate destination. These projects do not happen overnight, nor are they accomplished by one person. Careful planning and consideration should be given to each. The city should rely on staff, appointed officials, elected officials, community groups, and other organizations to help achieve these identified projects planned for the benefit of the entire community. The projects may include those necessary to maintain status quo, while others will be necessary or desired for continued community growth. The Seward Strategic Plan will identify many possible projects within the community but will ultimately expand upon the top eight that were selected during the strategic planning workshop. The top eight projects or goals of the community will include a list individual concerns, objectives, actions, timelines, responsible groups/agencies, potential resources, and measurable outputs for each goal.

The Seward Strategic Planning Process began with city staff identifying a number of potential projects in and around the City of Seward, Nebraska. These projects, along with a brief description, were then placed on a community scorecard to seek the input of Seward residents. The Seward City Council approved the Community Scorecard at their September 18th, 2012 City Council meeting and it was subsequently placed on the city's website on October 31st. The public had until December 31st to take part in the survey. The Scorecard was also presented to and made available to various focus groups, including the School Board, Rotary Club, High School students, Middle School students, Kiwanis Club, School Administrators, Young Professionals Club, City Department Heads, Senior Center, Library Foundation, and Chamber of Commerce. Paper copies of the Community Scorecards were also available and collected until December 31st.

The purpose of the scorecard was to 1) generate awareness of the many projects that the City of Seward has on their list and are in need of prioritization; 2) identify any other project that might be needed in Seward; and 3) to begin the project prioritization process. The results of the scorecard, project descriptions, other projects that were identified, and comments are included in the following pages.

On January 23, 2013 members of the Seward City Council, City staff, and concerned members of the community held a strategic planning workshop to discuss and prioritize various projects in and around Seward. A total of 16 stakeholders participated in the workshop. JEO Consulting Group, Inc. facilitated the workshop which followed an agenda geared to inform, educate and build consensus of the group. The group examined the goals and objectives within the Comprehensive Plan, reviewed the results of the Community Scorecard, and discussed additional identified projects. The goal of the strategic planning workshop was to establish consensus on civic betterment initiatives so the City could formulate strategies and target local resources (both human and financial) to accomplish the goals. Another goal was to compare the workshop prioritization with the results of the scorecard.

It was agreed that a formal plan of action is needed to keep Seward moving forward and to provide efficiency in its resources, regardless of personnel changes. This plan will be reviewed and referenced for ongoing consistency in future planning initiatives.

Seward, Nebraska - 2012 Strategic Plan Community Scorecard

Circle the corresponding number to rate each project. (Project descriptions on back)	Don't Know	Least Important	Somewhat Important	Important	More Important	Most Important
ADA Study and City-wide Compliance	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
ADA Upgrades - Dowling Aquatic Center	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Alternate Truck Route Planning and Development	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Animal Shelter and Rescue Facility Planning and Fund Development	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Blight Studies - Redevelopment Areas Redefined and Updated	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
City 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update and Master Planning	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Concordia University - Joint Master Planning - Community Projects	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Fairgrounds/Fishing Pier - Independence Landing Improvements	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Fiber Optic Installation and Expansion for Private and Public Businesses	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
New Ballfield Lighting Improvements	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Pet Park and Dog Run Planning and Fund Development	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Quality Water - Electric Wastewater Infrastructure Improvement	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Regional Economic Development/Business Retention Activities	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Regional Rail Campus - Site Development	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Regional Wellness & Tech Training Center Development	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
RV Park Site Feasibility and Location	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
South Highway 15 Expansion - 4 lane to I-80	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
South Highway 15/I-80 Study and Annexation Determinations	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Succession Planning for City Staff	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
SW Industrial Park Development	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Updated Trails Plan - Trail Connections Locally and Regionally	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Water Park - Splash Pad Improvements	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Waverly Road and East Hillcrest Expansions/Matske Road Connection	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Other _____	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5
Other _____	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	3	4	5



Project Descriptions

ADA Study: Secure planning and compliance grant resources to have city's required ADA compliance reports/studies fully updated

ADA Aquatic Center Upgrades: Determine costs grant resources, and timelines to make our Dowding Aquatic Center fully ADA compliant

Alternative Truck Route: Seek out planning and grant resource funding to plan a future ATR to relieve truck-semi traffic on Hwy 34/15

Animal Shelter and Rescue: Continue work with private sector funding resources on site location and funding options available

Blight Studies - Redevelopment Area: Re-examine current redevelopment areas and determine allowable areas to be included for future incentives such as Tax Increment Financing

City 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update: Conduct full examination and update of existing City of Seward's Comprehensive Plan

Concordia University - Joint Master Planning: Development future community quality of life planning projects with CUNE for highest and best combined use of this area.

Fairgrounds/Fishing Pier - Independence Landing: Determine cost and private funding options available for construction of this pier

Fiber Optic Installation and Expansion: Seek out final funding for fiber optic upgrades/offers to connect city downtown facilities

New Ball Field Lighting: Secure grant and private source contributions to construct sports complex field lighting systems & upgrades

Pet Park/Dog Run: Complete site location and secure funding resources for the construction of this Pet and Dog Run Park

Quality Water Infrastructure: Continue to upgrade and replace older and existing electrical above-ground and underground lines, decades-old and deficient water and sewer lines, and construct required fiber optic and other required quality of life city improvements

Regional Economic Development: Continue to assist and provide regional business expansion, retention, and recruitment activities as needed or requested within the city's growth area or county region

Regional Rail Campus: Continue next phase of site & buildings planning process with Dept. of Econ Dev., BNSF and potential tenant

Regional Wellness & Tech Training Center: Complete master plan site and feasibility process with public/private consortium development group for new Regional Wellness and Community Tech-Learning Center/Retail/Condo housing project on old middle school site

RV Park Site Location: Determine feasibility of new RV park facility for City/Region and location near Plum Creek Sports Facility

South Highway 15 Expansion - 4 lane to I-80: Re-establish Nebraska Dept. of Roads negotiations on south Hwy 15 corridor expansion

South Highway 15/I-80 Study and Annexation Determinations: Conduct planning and development study of the south Highway 15 corridor area to Interstate

Succession Planning for City Staff: Begin Succession Planning process with City department heads and key city staff to ensure continued quality service delivery for residents

SW Industrial Park Development: Continue next phase of site & buildings planning processes with Dept. of Econ Dev., BNSF, and potential tenant

Updated Trails Plan - Trail Connections: Create master plan study for new five-mile Seward Trail Project and its connector links

Water Park - Splash Pad: Determine cost and grant resource-funding options available for installation of these concepts for city rec.

Waverly Road and East Hillcrest Expansions/Matske Road: Secure road infrastructure funding with multiple local units of government for right-of-way acquisition, widening, grading, and hard surfacing of these highly used structures in and out of the city

Results

Seward, Nebraska – 2012 Strategic Plan Community Scorecard

Circle the corresponding number to rate each project.
(Project descriptions on back.)

	Total/ Average	Least Important	Somewhat Important	Important	More Important	Most Important
ADA Study and City-wide Compliance	146/2.44	31/21%	50/34%	44/30%	12/8%	9/6%
ADA Upgrades - Dowding Aquatic Center	174/2.53	40/23%	49/28%	49/28%	24/14%	12/7%
Alternate Truck Route Planning and Development	187/3.18	29/16%	31/17%	48/26%	35/19%	44/24%
Animal Shelter and Rescue Facility Planning and Fund Development	191/2.53	48/25%	52/27%	47/25%	29/15%	15/8%
Blight Studies - Redevelopment Areas Redefined and Updated	166/2.69	38/23%	54/33%	56/34%	15/9%	3/2%
City 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update and Master Planning	167/2.69	27/16%	54/32%	43/26%	30/18%	13/8%
Concordia University - Joint Master Planning - Community Projects	180/2.93	19/11%	53/29%	53/29%	32/18%	23/13%
Fairgrounds/Fishing Pier - Independence Landing Improvements	191/2.60	41/21%	43/23%	68/36%	29/15%	10/5%
Fiber Optic Installation and Expansion for Private and Public Businesses	184/3.06	15/8%	55/30%	49/27%	34/18%	31/17%
New Ballfield Lighting Improvements	187/2.80	40/21%	49/26%	42/22%	21/11%	35/19%
Pet Park and Dog Run Planning and Fund Development	189/2.30	71/38%	41/22%	44/23%	15/8%	18/10%
Quality Water - Electric Wastewater Infrastructure Improvement	194/3.52	9/5%	27/14%	60/31%	50/26%	48/25%
Regional Economic Development/Business Retention Activities	176/3.34	14/8%	24/14%	57/32%	50/28%	31/18%
Regional Rail Campus - Site Development	174/2.83	26/15%	43/25%	56/32%	33/19%	16/9%
Regional Wellness & Tech Training Center Development	186/3.35	17/9%	35/19%	47/25%	39/21%	48/26%
RV Park Site Feasibility and Location	184/2.27	54/29%	61/33%	42/23%	20/11%	7/4%
South Highway 15 Expansion - 4 lane to I-80	190/3.21	24/13%	34/18%	50/26%	43/23%	39/21%
South Highway 15/I-80 Study and Annexation Determinations	181/3.07	24/13%	34/19%	60/33%	32/18%	31/17%
Succession Planning for City Staff	169/2.59	33/20%	46/27%	56/33%	25/15%	9/5%
SW Industrial Park Development	173/2.91	19/11%	48/28%	56/32%	30/17%	20/12%
Updated Trails Plan - Trail Connections Locally and Regionally	192/3.13	24/13%	40/21%	55/29%	33/17%	40/21%
Water Park - Splash Pad Improvements	188/2.41	53/28%	52/28%	49/26%	21/11%	13/7%
Waverly Road and East Hillcrest Expansions/Matske Road Connection	189/3.54	19/10%	17/9%	55/29%	39/21%	59/31%
Other <u>See Attached</u>						
Other <u>See Attached</u>						



Other priority comments suggested on the Community Scorecard

Complete Seward Memorial Library (mentioned multiple times)
YMCA
Amusement Park
Traffic around middle school
Police protection/equipment
Shut off back lights at middle school
Skate Board Park
Open 4th Street to Waverly Road
Youth Center
Replace dying trees
Pedestrian Bridge over Highway 15
Traffic light on Highway 15
Prohibit pedestrian traffic on Waverly Rd.
Parking
Plum Creek ball field lighting
Use of Middle School Gym for children activities
Dog Park
Fix dips at the intersection of North Columbia and Bek Avenue
Master Planning on the old Middle School with Concordia
Regulations on signage
Commuter rail line between Lincoln and Seward
Animal Shelter
Highway 15 bypass
Road improvement at East Hillcrest
Expand the golf course to 18 holes
Extend Kay Karol Blvd south to Hillcrest, then to Highway 34
Expand Highway 34 to four-lanes
Park Improvements
Work more closely with Seward County Economic Development Corporation

The results of the Community Scorecard were tabulated by awarding one point to “Least Important” responses; two points to “Somewhat Important” responses; and so on. “Don’t Know” responses were not included in the overall tabulation of the scorecard.

Based upon the scorecard results, nine issues or projects scored a 3.0 average, or higher. Those issues/projects included:

- Waverly Road and East Hillcrest Expansions/Matzke Road Connection (Average: 3.54)
- Quality Water-Electric-Wastewater Infrastructure Improvement (Average: 3.52)
- Regional Wellness & Technology Center (Average: 3.35)
- Regional Economic Development/Business Retention Activities (Average: 3.34)
- South Highway 15 Expansion – 4 lane to I-80 (Average: 3.21)
- Alternate Truck Route Planning and Development (Average: 3.18)
- Updated Trails Plan - Trail Connections Locally and Regionally (Average: 3.13)
- South Highway 15/I-80 Study and Annexation Determinations (Average: 3.07)
- Fiber Optic Installation and Expansion for Private and Public Businesses (Average: 3.06)

These nine strategic issues were presented at the workshop and the stakeholders agreed with their importance, but also with two adjustments. It was agreed that the South Highway 15 Expansion and South Highway 15/I-80 Study and Annexation Determinations would be grouped together under Annexation. It was also agreed that the public library project (mentioned a number of times as other projects to consider) was important to the community and should be considered in the project prioritization process. These nine strategic issues or projects were discussed in detail to identify all associated issues, concerns, opportunities and constraints.

The stakeholders were then asked to consider each of the nine projects and identify their top five priorities. Participants could place more than one vote on a particular project but were allowed only a total of five votes. Based upon the voting, the top eight (8) projects identified were:

1. Waverly Road and East Hillcrest Expansions/Matzke Road Connection
2. Updated Trails Plan and Trail Connection
3. Regional Wellness & Technology Center
4. Fiber Optic and Electrical Improvements
5. Economic Development (tied for 4th)
6. Alternate Truck Route
7. Annexation
8. Public Library

The project/issue of Quality Water-Electric-Wastewater Infrastructure Improvement was discussed but did not receive any votes.

The next step of the workshop prioritization process included a decision matrix assignment. Two judgments were necessary to complete the decision matrix: 1) the strategic issue’s importance to the community; and, 2) how well Seward is doing to address that issue. A ranking of Excellent indicates that the community is doing an excellent job at addressing that particular strategic issue, while a vital ranking illustrates that particular strategic issue’s importance to the community. The results of the Strategic Issues and Priority Setting Matrix exercise are summarized in the following figure:



Strategic/Project Planning Workshop Decision Matrix

Community Performance

Excellent			B	
Very Good		H	C	
Average		G	A, E, F	D
Below Average				
Poor				
	Of Little Importance	Of Some Importance	Important	Very Important
	<i>Community Importance</i>			

Project
Code Strategic Issue

Project
Code Strategic Issue

A. Waverly Rd & East Hillcrest Expansion/Connect

B. Updated Trails Plan and Trails Connection

C. Regional Wellness & Technology Center

D. Economic Development

E. Fiber Optic Improvements

F. Alternate Truck Route

G. Annexation

H. Public Library

I. _____

J. _____



Special attention should be given to those projects that are very important or vital to the community. Issues in which the City was given credit for doing a “very good job” should be continued; whereas those ranking “very important” - but falling behind in performance - should be studied based upon their overall importance to the community.

Based upon the Strategic Issues and Priority Setting Matrix, the Seward Strategic Planning Group developed a Community Action Plan to strengthen the Seward community and improve the quality of life for the citizens of the City. This Plan will empower Seward residents and businesses to look towards the future with confidence and resolve and boldly commit to undertaking the identified issues.

The final step in the prioritization process was to divide the strategic issues into short-term (defined as 1-3 years), mid-term (defined as 4-6 years), long-term (defined as 7-10+ years), and ongoing project development timeframes. The timeframe for priority projects include:

Short-Term

- Waverly Road and East Hillcrest Expansions/Matzke Road Connection
- Regional Wellness & Technology Center
- Fiber Optic Improvements
- Updated Trails Plan and Trail Connection
- Public Library

Mid-Term (None)

Long-Term

- Alternate Truck Route

Ongoing

- Regional Wellness & Technology Center – Operation and Maintenance
- Fiber Optic Improvements – Operation and Maintenance
- Public Library – Operation and Maintenance
- Updated Trails Plan and Trail Connection – Operation and Maintenance
- Annexation
- Economic Development

All of the strategic issues identified in the process were important to the community in some way; however stakeholders felt that in an era of tight municipal budgets, limited local resources should be dedicated toward specific projects which will assist the City of Seward in reaching its destination as it continues to grow into a modern municipality. These nonessential services/amenities should be reconsidered when the City updates its Strategic Plan in the future, or as funding permits.

For this reason, the Seward Community Action Plan has focused on the eight (8) priority goals of the City. The plan lists individual concerns/needs, objectives, actions, timelines, responsible groups/agencies, potential resources, and measurable outputs for each goal. Although the following goals are numbered, it is realized that such goals may take on different forms, be consolidated with other goals/projects or be re-prioritized based upon unforeseen issues or opportunities. In such cases, this strategic plan shall be re-examined and adopted to provide proper guidance. At a minimum, the City should conduct an annual review of the adopted Seward Strategic Plan to assure all goals, objectives and actions are kept current.

Goal #1: Waverly Road and East Hillcrest Expansions/Matzke Road Connection.

Concerns/Issues

- City will need to work with Nebraska Department of Roads.
- A traffic study will need to be completed.
- Road improvements are needed with construction of new Middle School.
- The road improvements are on the 1&6-Year Road Plan.
- Waverly Road connects to Highway 34 and would be paved out to Matzke Road (238th St).
- Looking at a joint project with City and County.
- Trail is to be located on north side of Waverly Road.

Objective #1: Determine the need for improving Waverly Road and East Hillcrest and connect with future arterials and collectors.

- Action Step #1:* Procure the services of a professional traffic engineer to study the need for expanding Waverly Road and East Hillcrest.
- Action Step #2:* Evaluate the existing condition of Waverly Road and East Hillcrest.
- Action Step #3:* Conduct traffic studies and counts to determine current usage.
- Action Step #4:* Evaluate traffic accidents and fatalities to determine expansion needs.
- Action Step #5:* Develop recommendations and cost opinions for long-term improvements to Waverly Road and East Hillcrest.
- Action Step #6:* Undertake a life-cycle analysis to determine the long-term costs of alternative pavements types.

Timeline: 2013.

Objective #2: Design of Waverly Road and East Hillcrest expansion and connections.

- Action Step #1:* Cooperate with Nebraska Department of Roads to develop plans for expansion and identify necessary public right-of-way.
- Action Step #2:* Develop preliminary design plans for expansion.
- Action Step #3:* Solicit political/public support for the expansions and connections of Waverly Road and East Hillcrest to Matzke Road and other future arterials and collectors.
- Action Step #4:* Hold an informational meeting on expansion plans.
- Action Step #5:* Acquire necessary rights-of-way and identify points of access for Waverly Road and East Hillcrest expansions and connections.
- Action Step #6:* Prepare plans and specifications for the Waverly Road and East Hillcrest expansion project.
- Action Step #7:* Hold a town hall meeting to solicit public comment on the expansion and connection designs.
- Action Step #8:* Make necessary revisions.
- Action Step #9:* Finalize plans and specifications.
- Action Step #10:* Programming of public funds for the construction of the project.

Timeline: 2013 - 2014.

Objective #3: Implement construction of Waverly Road and East Hillcrest expansion and connection project with appropriate shoulders, sidewalks and trails.

- Action Step #1:* Continue ongoing political/public support for the improvements to Waverly Road and East Hillcrest.
- Action Step #2:* Conduct an environmental review process, as required by the project's public funding agencies.
- Action Step #3:* Secure necessary permits/approvals.
- Action Step #4:* Bid phase to include advertising, letting and contract award to lowest responsible/responsive bidder.
- Action Step #5:* Undertake construction related activities.
- Action Step #6:* Complete construction and project close-out.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Group/Agency

City of Seward, Seward Planning Commission, residents, Seward Chamber of Commerce, Seward County, Nebraska Department of Roads, Federal Highway Administration, Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District.

Potential Resources

General Obligation Bonds, Seward Capital Improvement Fund, Seward General Fund, Local Option Sales Tax, County-wide sales tax, Special Assessment Districts, Nebraska Surface Transportation Program, and the Federal-Aid Transportation Fund Purchase-Sale Program (LB98).

Measurable Outputs

Waverly Road has been identified by the County and City as needing to be improved from the Highway 34 east to Matzke Road (238th Street). Planned improvements will include expansion from two lanes to two lanes with shoulders, sidewalks/trails, and possible turning lanes on the stretch of road from Highway 34 to Karol Kay Boulevard. These improvements will provide easier access to the new Seward Middle School and to Plum Creek Park, create safe pedestrian access and circulation to the area, and allow for continued residential development north of Waverly Road.

Road improvements from Karol Kay Boulevard east to Matzke Road would include a hard surfaced two-lane road with shoulders. Such improvements to Waverly Road and related infrastructure, including the recently installed water main (north side of Waverly Road between Highway 34 and Karol Kay Boulevard), will promote economic development to the City of Seward and the surrounding area and increase the safety of pedestrian and vehicular users.

East Hillcrest has also been identified by the City and County as needing improvements and connection east to Matzke Road and to other future arterials and collectors in order to provide alternative routes to Plum Creek Park, Concordia University, and the east and northeast areas of the City of Seward.

Goal #2: Updated Trails Plan and Trail Connection.

Concerns/Issues

- City has a trails master plan.
- Trail has been planned to loop around city to the west, north and west to connect to trail on east side.
- Loop trail needs to connect with community assets/amenities and downtown.
- Connectivity of pedestrian ways throughout the city and regional.
- Like to see trail system eventually connected to trail at Fallbrook in Lincoln and to Branched Oak Lake.
- Work with Great Plains Trails Network and Nebraska Department of Roads.

Objective #1: Determine the need for trails in Seward and the surrounding area.

- Action Step #1:* Evaluate the existing trail system and demands for development.
- Action Step #2:* Review the City's Trails Master Plan and Comprehensive Plan to identify future trail connections and land uses.
- Action Step #3:* Review current sidewalk plan to determine which pedestrian ways should be widened to trail standards.
- Action Step #4:* Make necessary changes to City's Trails Master Plan.

Timeline: 2013 – 2014.

Objective #2: Incorporate trails into future land developments.

- Action Step #1:* Hold an informational meeting on the need for trails development.
- Action Step #2:* Work with developers to assure trails and parks are programmed into their future developments, as indicated in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Action Step #3:* Require certain amount of land to be dedicated for parks and trails or a fee in lieu of through the administration of the City's Subdivision Regulations and subdivision agreements.
- Action Step #4:* Dedicate necessary rights-of-way or easements for trails.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Objective #3: Design of public trails in Seward and surrounding area.

- Action Step #1:* Develop preliminary design plans for a new or expanded trails system.
- Action Step #2:* Solicit political and public support for trail development.
- Action Step #3:* Hold an informational meeting to review trail development plans.
- Action Step #4:* Acquire necessary rights-of-way or easements for trails development.
- Action Step #5:* Prepare plans and specifications for trail project.
- Action Step #6:* Hold a public hearing to solicit public comment on the designs.
- Action Step #7:* Make necessary revisions.
- Action Step #8:* Finalize plans and specifications.
- Action Step #9:* Programming of public funds for the construction of the project.

Timeline: 2013 - 2016.

Objective #4: Implement construction of trails and trail connections.

- Action Step #1:* Continue ongoing political/public support for the trail development.
- Action Step #2:* Investigate and pursue cost-sharing assistance opportunities.
- Action Step #3:* Conduct an environmental review process, as required by the project's public funding agencies.
- Action Step #4:* Secure necessary permits/approvals.
- Action Step #5:* Bid phase to include advertising, letting and contract award to lowest responsible/responsive bidder.
- Action Step #6:* Undertake construction related activities.
- Action Step #7:* Complete construction and project close-out.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Group/Agency

Seward City Council, residents, private developers, Planning Commission, Community Redevelopment Authority, Seward Public School System, Chamber of Commerce, Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Nebraska Department of Roads, and Seward County.

Potential Resources

Local Fund, Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District monies, Recreational Trails Program, Tax Increment Financing, Land and Water Conservation Fund, developers, park dedication land/fees, special assessment districts, private donations, local volunteers, and local fund raising events.

Measurable Outputs

Trails can serve all types of people, with many different interests and capabilities – seniors, children, families, people with disabilities, and visitors to the area. Indeed, in the future new user groups and requirements are likely to emerge in the future.

The City of Seward seeks to increase the overall mobility and wellness of its citizenry by providing an integrated, non-motorized network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the community, connecting every subdivision and neighborhood to the downtown, recreational complex, city parks and other Seward amenities and to the regional trails and parks. The City can achieve maximum public benefit, with limited local resources by constructing trail facilities in a planned, phased and coordinated manner. A vital first step towards achieving this community goal is to follow the City's Trails Master Plan.

The Seward Trails Master Plan will serve as a long-range guide to Seward residents, trail users, property owners, governmental agencies, developers and decision-makers about the future location of trails throughout the community. The Plan documents and analyzes existing and preferred trail locations and recreational service areas which will inevitably improve connectivity between where people live and where they learn, work, recreate and relax.

Goal #3: Construct a safe, aesthetically-pleasing, scale-appropriate, energy-efficient, fully accessible Regional Wellness and Technology Center.

Concerns/Issues

- Structure needed to house YMCA, nutrition education, etc.
- Size of the facility will ultimately depend on demanded amenities.
- Technology Center may allow guaranteed membership for companies and would work with existing businesses and provide training for PayPal, Facebook, Websites, etc.
- Possible swimming component.
- Could provide internships for students at Concordia University.
- Location of the building is a question but land available in the downtown area.
- Developer looking at Tax Increment Financing.
- Perception of taxes will be an issue.
- Possible housing, wellness and religious arts center.
- Needs to be ADA compliance.
- Could be a city facility with partners.

Objective #1: Determine the physical and spatial needs of the new Regional Wellness and Technology Center.

- Action Step #1:* Form a Seward Regional Wellness and Technology Center Steering Committee to explore all options for the development of a future multipurpose Regional Wellness and Technology Center.
- Action Step #2:* Identify the future usage of the new multipurpose facility, including special demands and needs for physical amenities.
- Action Step #3:* Inventory Regional Wellness and Technology Centers recently built in the region. Visit with local officials to determine their likes, dislikes and regrets with their new facility.
- Action Step #4:* Present the physical needs and expectations of the planned Regional Wellness and Technology Center to the residents of Seward and to the local decision-makers.

Timeline: Completed.

Objective #2: Design a structure that will accommodate the physical and spatial needs of the Seward Regional Wellness and Technology Center.

- Action Step #1:* Inventory vacant and structurally sound buildings/vacant lots within the community that meet the spatial requirements for such a facility.
- Action Step #2:* Procure the services of a licensed, professional architectural/engineering firm to assist in assessing all potential options for the new Regional Wellness and Technology Center.
- Action Step #3:* Hold an informational meeting of local stakeholders (business community, school district, Seward residents) to solicit expectations for the new facility.
- Action Step #4:* Review with the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Ordinance to determine if the future site is suitable for the multipurpose venue.

- Action Step #5:* Consider the pros and cons of each site, including access, parking, utilities, traffic and price.
- Action Step #6:* Prepare architectural renderings and opinion of costs for renovating potential structures, or for the construction of a new facility, emphasizing energy-efficiency and accessibility.
- Action Step #7:* Present the draft results of the schematics/opinion of costs to the local stakeholders for their review and consideration. Incorporate any revisions into the final draft.
- Action Step #8:* Present the final design schematic/opinion of cost to the Seward public for their review/consideration/comments. Modify design schematics/cost opinions, as necessary, to reflect comments of local residents.
- Action Step #9:* Select the most cost-effective future location for the Seward Regional Wellness and Technology Center.
- Action Step #10:* Hold a town hall meeting to discuss and solicit public input on the Seward Regional Wellness and Technology Center, as proposed.

Timeline: Completed.

Objective #3: Determine the long-term ownership and operational structure of the new Seward Regional Wellness and Technology Center.

- Action Step #1:* Based upon the programming of the Seward Regional Wellness and Technology Center facility, hold a meeting of local stakeholders and the City of Seward to determine the most appropriate entity to eventually own and operate the new facility, once constructed.
- Action Step #2:* Identify the operational structure for the future facility.
- Action Step #3:* Identify financial means for the ongoing operation/maintenance of the Seward Regional Wellness and Technology Center.

Timeline: 2013 - 2014.

Objective #4: Identify potential resources (both human and financial) for the construction of the new Seward Regional Wellness and Technology Center.

- Action Step #1:* Meet with the Fiscal Agent for the City of Seward to determine the long-term debt capacity of the community.
- Action Step #2:* Identify local, regional, state, federal and in-kind resources for construction of the future Seward Regional Wellness and Technology Center.
- Action Step #3:* Commence fundraising efforts to solicit public and private contributions for the construction of the new Seward Regional Wellness and Technology Center.
- Action Step #4:* Leverage local funds with "outside" resources.
- Action Step #5:* Package all financial resources for the construction of the new venue.

Timeline: 2013 - 2014.

Objective #5: Construction of the new Regional Wellness and Technology Center.

- Action Step #1:* Conduct an environmental review process, as required by the project's public funding agencies.
- Action Step #2:* Enter into a professional services contract with a professional architectural/engineering firm to develop plans and specifications for the project, as well as for construction observation/management services.
- Action Step #3:* Develop plans and specifications for the future facility, pursuant to the responses offered by regulatory agencies and the requirements of public funding sources (International Energy Conservation Code, Americans with Disability, Historic Preservation, etc.).
- Action Step #4:* Submit plans and specifications to the public agencies (as appropriate) for their review/approval.
- Action Step #5:* Secure necessary permits/approvals from public agencies.
- Action Step #6:* Bid phase to include advertising, letting and contract award to lowest responsible/responsive bidder.
- Action Step #7:* Construction related activities.

Timeline: 2014 - 2016.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

Seward City Council, residents, Seward Public School System, Concordia University, private developers, Seward Chamber of Commerce, and Seward County Economic Development Corporation.

Potential Resources

General Obligation Bonds, Seward General Fund, Local Option Sales Tax, Private Donations, local fundraising events, private foundations, Local Capital Campaign, Lease-Purchase Agreement, USDA Rural Development Community Facility Loan/Guarantee Program, Joint Public Agency Act, Community Development Assistance Act, Local Civic, Cultural and Convention Center Financing Fund (LB789), Keno funds, and fee for usage.

Measurable Outputs

A Regional Wellness and Technology Center is a public facility where members of a community may gather for group activities, social support, public information, recreational activities, and other civic purposes. It's more than a building, however. It's a community focal point that offers unmatched value in personal enrichment and community connection through life-long-learning, leisure activities, special community events, outreach activities and facility rentals.

The City of Seward has a fantastic opportunity to revitalize the parcel of land where the former middle school property southeast of the courthouse square exists today. Through the generosity and support of the new owner of the redevelopment site and existing facilities, a proposed redevelopment plan for the site includes three distinct components: an approximate 50,000 square foot Regional Wellness and Technology Center; renovation of the 1915 school building; and new residential housing. All existing structures except the 1915 school building will be demolished in order to make room for the new buildings. The existing five-acre redevelopment property will be divided into separate parcels for each of the future project components.

The new Seward Regional Wellness and Technology Center will be located in the center of the redevelopment property. The proposed facility will become a central gathering space for members of the community and region of all ages to join together for special wellness, exercise, nutrition, strength, obesity and technology programs offered in a possible two-level facility and will serve the residents, private and public employers, Concordia University, and surrounding communities.

This proposed “YMCA” type facility will allow access to recreation, fitness, and nutrition and technology activities for all ages during times that will best meet the needs of seniors, adults, and children. The new center will also support partner companies in our area as a way to enhance benefits they provide employees to promote wellness and to help improve health by reducing health care costs and absenteeism. It can serve residents of our senior care facilities and hospital with rehabilitation programs. The facility will also serve as a location to assist Concordia University with classes that now have to be held in Lincoln because the community lacks indoor swimming facilities and racquetball courts. The City will be able to benefit from academic programs at Concordia University for students in the Health and Human Performance program through internships where students will serve and learn at the new facility. The proposed facility would likely become the new home of the City of Seward’s Park and Recreation Department.

The new Regional Wellness and Technology Center will be flanked by additional facilities to the north and south. Renovation of the 1915 school building (northeast parcel of the property) is being proposed as the new home of The ROCK Lutheran Church. The facility would include worship space, a kitchen, and support spaces. An analysis of the structural integrity of the building, as well as review for compliance with existing building codes, is currently underway to help determine the extent of renovation needed to accommodate the church. The ROCK will partner with Concordia University to allow the University to use space in the facility for its Worship Arts Program and the Center for Liturgical Art.

The south parcel of the property is being designated as a possible location for new residential construction that would face the existing neighborhood on the east, south, and west. The proposed new residential construction to the south end of the redevelopment would be designed as handicap accessible and driven by the needs of the Seward community.

Construction costs for each of the redevelopment projects are still being developed and the project construction schedules are still in negotiation.

Goal #4: Improve the Fiber Optic Systems within Seward.

Concerns/Issues

- The City has a franchise agreement.
- Capacity is here but need to arterialize it.
- Need dedication of fiber optic carriers.
- No direct concerns from Economic Development prospects but is an expectation.
- Have had businesses wanting high speed redundancy.
- Concordia University needs additional speed and connectivity.
- Current providers are Windstream and Time Warner.
- Used by Emergency Management (mobile networks)

Objective #1: Evaluate the physical condition and capacity of the existing fiber optics system within Seward and develop a Fiber Optics Assessment Plan.

- Action Step #1:* Engage the services of the fiber optic carrier to assess the current condition and capacity of fiber optic service.
- Action Step #2:* Identify any deficient condition that may exist within the system, above ground and below.
- Action Step #3:* Meet with major users in the area to determine their future needs, concerns, and expectations.
- Action Step #4:* Develop a list of recommended upgrades, feasible alternatives aimed at correcting deficient conditions, and opinion of costs for selected upgrades.
- Action Step #5:* Calculate the impact of upgrades on any projected rates.
- Action Step #6:* Hold a public meeting to discuss the findings of the fiber optic carriers.
- Action Step #7:* Develop a Fiber Optics Assessment Plan.
- Action Step #8:* Develop a Capital Improvements Plan to coordinate and budget for future upgrades.

Timeline: 2013 - 2014.

Objective #2: Create a GIS mapping plan to show the precise location of fiber optic components.

- Action Step #1:* Identify locations of fiber optic components.
- Action Step #2:* Create a GIS Mapping Plan to depict the precise location of components.
- Action Step #3:* Integrate maintenance records into the GIS database.

Timeline: 2014.

Objective #3: Undertake prioritized capital improvements.

- Action Step #1:* Authorize the fiber optic carrier to proceed with plans and specifications for long-term capital improvements.
- Action Step #2:* Procurement of general contractor(s), as needed.
- Action Step #3:* Construction-related activities.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Group/Agency

Fiber optic carriers, Seward City Council, Planning Commission, Community Redevelopment Authority, residents, City Engineer, private investors/businesses.

Potential Resources

Conventional General Obligation Bonds, User Fees, LB840 funds, Seward Capital Improvement Program, Seward General Fund, Tax Increment Financing, U.S.D.A Rural Development Community Facility Loan Program, and USDA Rural Development Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program.

Measurable Output

Most inhabitants of a modern industrialized city are unaware of the costly and complex infrastructure systems – operating almost exclusively underground – that support public health, safety, general welfare, aesthetic and environmental quality of life in the community. In this way, public infrastructure, such as municipal water, wastewater, electrical, and fiber optics should be viewed as essential components to community living, rather than mere luxuries.

The capability of the Fiber Optics System in Seward has raised concerns about the overall adequacy of the system. In order for Seward to make an informed decision about its future communications system, it must first have a practical and usable, yet visionary, Fiber Optic Plan. Through a Fiber Optic Assessment Plan, the City can achieve maximum public benefit, with limited local resources by upgrading, replacing and extending fiber optics in a planned, comprehensive and systematic manner.

A Fiber Optics Assessment Plan involves a comprehensive evaluation of a community's entire system. From this analysis, fiber optic carriers can develop recommendations for necessary upgrades and future needs. This planning approach will allow the carrier to accurately develop computer models to determine what impact, if any that recommended upgrades will have on the remainder of the integrated fiber optic system.

By applying a planned schedule of expenditures for capital improvements, the City can assure consumers that long-term expenditures can be averaged out so that major debt is not incurred all at once, and that maintenance, renewal and replacement requirements of the fiber optic system are adequately addressed to protect the City's investment and maximize the useful life of facilities.

To further compliment the Fiber Optics Assessment Plan, the City should create a GIS utility mapping system showing the precise location of the components. Maintenance record should be integrated into the GIS system for future upgrades. This information will enable officials and maintenance workers to quickly respond to concerns in their system, should an emergency exist.

Goal #5: Promote economic development within the City of Seward.

Concerns/Issues

- Business succession planning. Need retention and recruitment.
- The City has an active Chamber of Commerce.
- 90% of rural economic development comes from existing businesses.
- Looking for technology.
- LB 840/TIF – Concordia, Tenneco, Hughes Bros., micro businesses.
- 61.7% of the county work outside of the county.
- Primary jobs vs. retail.
- Like to have free land, site ready – how to secure land.
- Agriculture businesses and transportation/logistics.
- Attitude of business owners as well as first impressions.
- Patronizing local businesses important.
- Housing study and rental housing.
- Vacancy on Main Street is low.
- Looking at Southeast Community College – Entrepreneurial Development
- Need niche businesses but don't limit completion.
- I-80 access is a positive and should be promoted.

Objective #1: Examine the economic profile of the City of Seward.

- Action Step #1:* Establish a broad-based Seward Economic Development Committee.
- Action Step #2:* Hold focus group session with local leaders to identify a five-year trend in the Seward business community (business failures, expansions or relocations).
- Action Step #3:* Review economic indicators (housing starts, employment, unemployment, per capita income, net taxable sales, and existing business make-up).
- Action Step #4:* Survey of the Seward business community to gather information on product/service, number of employees, salary ranges, fringe benefits, plans for the future, and strengths/barriers to economic development within the City.
- Action Step #5:* Survey of the Seward community to gather information on pertinent demographics, income, commuting patterns, purchasing characteristics and community economic development needs.

Timeline: 2013

Objective #2: Evaluate exogenous influences that may influence future economic development.

- Action Step #1:* Consider the opportunities and threats associated with Highways 34 and 15 through the City of Seward and Highway 15 connection to the Interstate.
- Action Step #2:* Consider the opportunities and threats of a “commuter” population base.
- Action Step #3:* Consider the opportunities of new economic expansion within the immediate area, especially throughout Seward County.

- Action Step #4:* Consider the opportunities and threats associated with economic leakages.
- Action Step #5:* Consider the availability of labor in and around the community.
- Action Step #6:* Consider the availability of “site ready” sites within Seward and its extraterritorial jurisdiction.

Timeline: 2014 - 2015.

Objective #3: Examine the strengths and barriers to local economic development.

- Action Step #1:* Examine the characteristics of the local economy.
- Action Step #2:* Consider the economic composition of the City of Seward to determine its susceptibility to business cycles, comparative advantages, potential value-added business prospects, and other economic factors that will lead to community sustainability.
- Action Step #3:* Consider the capacity of existing public infrastructure/utilities to support future economic development.
- Action Step #4:* Consider the capacity of public safety (fire protection, law enforcement) to support further economic development.
- Action Step #5:* Analyze the existing housing situation in Seward.
- Action Step #6:* Review the City's Land Use Plan/Zoning Ordinance to ensure adequate/appropriate space for business expansion/recruitment.
- Action Step #7:* Inventory available business space within the existing downtown area.

Timeline: 2014 – 2015.

Objective #4: To quantify and qualify the economic potential of Seward, Nebraska.

- Action Step #1:* Create an Economic Development Vision for the City of Seward.
- Action Step #2:* Establish clear public policy as it relates to dedicating resources for economic development activities.
- Action Step #3:* Establish economic development goals, objectives, action steps and timelines.

Timeline: 2015.

Objective #5: To develop strategies for promoting/fostering economic development in Seward.

- Action Step #1:* Develop strategies to promote the success of existing Seward businesses.
- Action Step #2:* Identify businesses that have enormous growth potential within the local economic environment including businesses that slow economic leakages, value-added businesses, new businesses and diversification of existing businesses.
- Action Step #3:* Outline intervention strategies that respond to specific barriers and opportunities of economic development, including job training, housing affordability/availability, labor market skills, new marketing strategies, public infrastructure, and economic development resources.

- Action Step #4:* Identify growth areas within the community which are suitable for economic development. Consider the feasibility of constructing a new industrial park within the zoning jurisdiction of the community.
- Action Step #5:* Identify partners for economic development, including financial assistance partners, technical, educational and job training assistance partners, improve communication among business and government leaders, and foster cooperation among industry coalitions, and local residents.
- Action Step #6:* Review activities associated with Seward 4th of July Celebration and the Seward County Fair, and identify other activities that may enhance the economic impact of the annual community events. Continue to actively promote any of the civic celebrations on a regional basis.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Objective #6: Support small business development and entrepreneurial training.

- Action Step #1:* Survey the residents of Seward to determine community economic development leakages, patronage potential and interest in and concerns about starting a small business within the City.
- Action Step #2:* Tabulate and analyze survey results.
- Action Step #3:* Consider the feasibility/possibility of addressing the concerns of potential small business concerns.
- Action Step #4:* Offer ongoing training and education to small business and entrepreneurs about accessing capital, preparing business plans, effectuating niche markets, expanding market share, fostering economic clusters, or developing effective marketing strategies.
- Action Step #5:* Implement the findings of the survey.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsibly Groups/Agencies

Seward City Council, Planning Commission, Seward Chamber of Commerce, residents, Southeast Nebraska Development District, Seward County Economic Development, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Small Business Administration, USDA Rural Development, U.S. and Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration.

Potential Resources

Local Funds, Tax Increment Financing, LB840 Local Option Sales and Use Tax, U.S.D.A. Rural Development Programs, Utility Providers, Nebraska Investment Finance Authority Programs, Nebraska Business Development Center, Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED), GROW Nebraska™, Southeast Nebraska Development District, Seward County Economic Development Corporation, Nebraska Economic Development Corporation, Nebraska Department of Roads, Small Business Administration, U.S.D.A. Rural Development Programs, U.S. Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration.

Measurable Outputs

Community and government leaders across the country have, for the past 15 to 20 years come to the realization that they not only can, but must initiate programs to enhance their local economies. Governments have sometimes provided enormous subsidies to try to entice large businesses to build manufacturing plants within their communities; while others have started small loan funds to encourage "micro-enterprise" businesses or created "incubators" that provide office space and services to a variety of small businesses. Results of these rural economic development efforts have been decidedly mixed.

"Smokestack chasing" has lost favor with many rural economic development practitioners because of the unintended impact it has had on community systems and local fiscal restraints. In these difficult environments, the City of Seward must have a clearly focused and structured economic development strategy that is consistent with the vision statement and values contained within the Comprehensive Plan. This guide is an important first step in attaining the City's long-term commitment of job creation, increased pedestrian traffic within the downtown area, filling vacant store fronts, sales tax revenues, promotion of Seward as an attractive place to visit, live, work, and invest.

Most often, successful organizations are achieving their goals as a result of having community support for a well-conceived "plan of action" which serves as a blueprint for an economic development program. The LB 840 Plan for Seward will provide a powerful yet focused guide for the community in formulating intervention strategies that will allow Seward to achieve economic prosperity. Likewise, the Plan must emphasize the importance of preserving the high quality of life enjoyed by local residents and support community values such as environmental preservation, small town atmosphere, recreational facilities, and human resources.

In the extremely competitive field of economic development, those with the highest degree of readiness are most likely to succeed. Seward has recently become Economic Development Certified and this state-sponsored program through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development could assist the City of Seward in their pursuit of economic development. The purpose for this program is to accommodate new business prospect inquiries and support expansions. By going through the application process, the City has had the opportunity to learn about the importance of "site-readiness" and what impact that might have on luring business expansion opportunities.

The City of Seward should observe the requirements of the Economic Development Certified Community program while maintaining the designation. These requirements include:

- Designation or establishment of a local economic development organization and formation of a prospect handling team;
- Completion of a comprehensive community assessment and community profile and development of a strategic plan to address deficiencies;
- Updated and consistent web presence through local site, LOIS and NEDI;
- Establishment of an active business retention and expansion program;
- Community identified targets/markets showing stakeholder participation;
- Identification of available industrial/commercial sites OR one available buildings;
- Infrastructure capacity to meet needs of identified target or plan with budget and timelines showing how needs could be met; and
- Local financing and incentive assistance.

Furthermore, the City of Seward should also now consider the ongoing cost/requirements of Economic Development Certified Community recertification. Every five years, communities with EDCC designation must submit a recertification application that includes the following:

- An updated community profile;
- A long-range strategic plan;
- Annual economic development work plan;
- A long-range funding plan; and
- An economic development evaluation.

Clearly, this program is not realistic for all communities, but the processes to help identify capacities, stimulate focused planning and deliberately structure websites are invaluable for all communities, particularly the City of Seward.

The following narrative provides factual information about the constraints/barriers faced by small business concerns. A review of this information can provide insight so economic development stakeholders can formulate policies/programs aimed at meeting the needs of existing and future business concerns.

Business Succession Planning

Sustaining established family-owned businesses into the next generation is an important issue for rural southeast Nebraska. Many businesses throughout Nebraska are family-owned, but statistics clearly show that few survive beyond the retirement of the current owner. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, only 30% of all family businesses succeed into the second generation, and of these, only 15% survive into the third generation. These alarming facts, combined with the realization that many new businesses fail within the first five years, demonstrate that losing established small businesses can severely impact economic stability.

No one plans to fail, they just fail to plan. Even though this old adage of yesteryear attests to the importance of thinking ahead, national statistics indicate that a significant number of small business owners are aging and do not have an exit strategy in place. For some, the thought of giving up ownership and control of a business they have built over many years of hard work is too difficult to contemplate. Others are under the misconception that someone will appear at the door ready, willing and able to offer a fair price for the company when they want and/or need to sell their business. There are still others who are forced into selling/transferring their family-owned business because of circumstances beyond their control (e.g., health issues, age, death, bankruptcy). In any one of these situation, it is clear that transition will come.

One common thread of any successful business transition plan is that it requires time - oftentimes as much as two decades. During this transition period, the existing small business-owner must plan their estate, identify a successor(s), and allow the new buyer time to learn the business, build the equity needed to secure the financing, and perhaps create new economic enterprises within the business. Without this advance time, heirs and business successor may be vulnerable to considerable estate taxes and management upheaval; further contributing to the failure rate of generational business transfer.

Business succession planning is important because it helps retain businesses that, by default, may have otherwise closed due to retirement, or possibly be sold and relocated to another community. According to business succession planning experts, the ramifications of a poorly planned sale of a business can be multi-faceted and detrimental. In the event the business transition is not well managed, it can fail due to change in ownership or leadership. Purchase arrangements can create a large tax burden for the buyer, seller, or both; and if done poorly, the impact on the entire community can be emotionally and economically catastrophic. National statistics show that once an existing business closes, it is very difficult to reopen.

Entrepreneurial Development

Entrepreneurship is the starting point, the foundation and the backbone of economies at every level. In fact, the origins of most large companies can be traced, directly or indirectly, to one or more entrepreneurial founders.

Promoting entrepreneurial development however, is a relatively new and increasingly popular approach to economic development for rural communities. The approach has gained favor because it builds on the skills and talent already existing within the community.

Entrepreneurs are at the heart of the American economy because they drive innovation. Small businesses are established on the premise that they can do a better job of creating new products and services, change the competitiveness of the market, institute new and dynamic ways of doing business, reduce economic leakages within the local economy and connect the community to the larger global market. Creating value through innovation is a common theme that penetrates nearly every accepted definition of entrepreneurship.

The value of American entrepreneurship cannot be overstated. According to the Office of Advocacy, Small Business Administration, entrepreneurial businesses:

- are typically owned and operated by individuals with higher education levels. Over two-third of all present-day college students intend to become entrepreneurs at some point in their career.
- represents 99.7% of all employers;
- employ half of all private sector employees;
- pay 44.3% of the total U.S. private payroll;
- generate 70% of net new jobs annually over the last decade;
- created more than 50% of non-farm private gross domestic product (GDP);
- produce 13 to 14 times more patents per employee than large patenting firms;
- are employers of 39% of high tech workers (such as scientists, engineers and computer workers);
- are 53% home-based and 3% franchises; and
- made up 97% of all identified exporters and produced 29% of known export value.

These staggering statistics prove that entrepreneurial development can serve as a powerful engine for economic development in rural areas. Besides the tangible benefits, small business are known to be more environmentally-friendly than large employers, have the unique ability to blend into the existing business climate, and radiate a quaint charm that attracts people to a community's Main Street.

Effective entrepreneurial development requires a thorough understanding of obstacles faced by rural entrepreneurs. With the odds stacked squarely against them, small business concerns need cooperation from public and private stakeholders in devising intervention strategies that will enhance their chances of success. Common barriers faced by rural entrepreneurs include:

- isolation from markets, service providers and other entrepreneurs;
- limited opportunities for mentoring and networking;
- absence of clusters to support networking;
- lack of capital and other support infrastructure; and
- local culture that does not support entrepreneurship.

Creating support strategies that intentionally focus on the needs of rural entrepreneurs can provide small businesses and would be entrepreneurs with the intellectual resources essential to starting a business on solid footing, thereby maximize their chances for a higher degree of success.

Goal #6: Alternate Truck Route to lessen traffic congestion, and to increase traffic safety.

Concerns/Needs

- Looking to expand Highway 15 from two lanes to 4 lanes to I-80
- May reduce Central Business District activity.
- Requires Nebraska Department of Roads cooperation and financial assistance. Funding for project will be challenge.
- Requires railroad cooperation and possible crossing improvements.
- Route to include Waverly Road east. Collector road to Matzke Road.
- Industrial development will occur on south side of Seward.
- Possibilities of routing traffic to west side of city.

Objective #1: Evaluate the need for developing a truck route.

- Action Step #1:* Procure the services of a professional engineer that specializes in transportation planning and design.
- Action Step #2:* Conduct a Truck Route Study to evaluate the existing road system and demands for expansion.
- Action Step #3:* Evaluate truck route based on efficient truck travel, neighborhood impacts and safety, and appropriate roadway design.
- Action Step #4:* Evaluate traffic accidents and fatalities to determine expansion needs.
- Action Step #5:* Develop opinion of costs for truck route alternatives.
- Action Step #6:* Perform a cost-benefit analysis to determine the economic impact of the truck route.

Timeline: 2013 - 2015.

Objective #2: Design of Alternate truck route.

- Action Step #1:* Cooperate with Nebraska Department of Roads and railroad to develop plans for expansion and identify necessary public right-of-way.
- Action Step #2:* Hold an informational meeting on expansion plans.
- Action Step #3:* Acquire necessary rights-of-way and identify points of access for truck route.
- Action Step #4:* Develop preliminary design plans for expansion.
- Action Step #5:* Solicit political/public support for the development and construction of the truck route.
- Action Step #6:* Prepare plans and specifications for the truck route project.
- Action Step #7:* Hold a public hearing to solicit public comment on the project designs.
- Action Step #8:* Make necessary revisions.
- Action Step #9:* Finalize plans and specifications.
- Action Step #10:* Programming of public funds for the construction of the project.

Timeline: 2015 - 2017.

Objective #3: Implement construction of the proposed truck route.

- Action Step #1:* Continue ongoing political/public support for the development of an Alternate truck route.
- Action Step #2:* Package the funding required to implement the alternate truck route.
- Action Step #3:* Conduct an environmental review process, as required by the project's public funding agencies.
- Action Step #4:* Secure necessary permits/approvals.
- Action Step #5:* Bid phase to include advertising, letting and contract award to lowest responsible/responsive bidder.
- Action Step #6:* Undertake construction related activities.
- Action Step #7:* Complete construction and project close-out.

Timeline: 2017 - 2023.

Responsible Group/Agency

City of Seward, Planning Commission, residents, Seward Area Economic Development, Seward Chamber of Commerce, Seward County Economic Development Corporation, Nebraska Department of Roads, Railroad Companies, Seward County, Federal Highway Administration, Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District.

Potential Resources

Municipal Bonds, Seward Capital Improvement Fund, Seward General Fund, Local Option Sales Tax, County-wide sales tax, Tax Increment Financing, Nebraska Department of Roads Program, Federal Highway Administration programs, and Federal-Aid Transportation Fund Purchase Sale Program (LB98).

Measurable Outputs

The development of an alternate truck route (ATR) will increase the safety of pedestrian and vehicular users. It will designate an acceptable route for trucks to access the State Highway System or Interstate in order to complete their extended distance travel, thus acknowledging the importance of truck access to not only industrial locations but also residential areas as well (barring any physical conditions that may limit particular trucks on the local street network such as dimensions or weight). The ATR system, therefore, will limit through truck movements in ways which attempt to preserve neighborhood character while maintaining acceptable passage. Problems may occur when truck drivers are making multiple stops within the network and/or attempting to decide the locally preferred route between the state highway and the source or destination of their trip.

The establishment of a truck route system does not prohibit trucks from using any public roads necessary to reach their destinations – as long as there is a reason for them to be on that particular road. However, it does direct regulated trucks to use the roads that are most suitable for their larger size as a result of design, maintenance, and land use compatibility issues. It also seeks to protect the City's quality of life and road infrastructure asset by minimizing (but not prohibiting) truck travel on roads that have land uses more sensitive to the noise and vibration resulting from their heavier weight or roads that present more difficult movement due to more restrictive geometric features.

To be effective, an ATR system must be promoted and be visible. Methods of accomplishing this include signage and route mapping.

Signage: Truck routes are usually marked throughout the system by posting traffic control signs to delineate where the route travels.

Route mapping: Various types of computerized mapping services are available and the City's truck route system should be incorporated into as many of these as possible to disseminate and publicize the system. Such mapping systems include:

1. Posting of a passive map for users to download and print;
2. Development and hosting of a routing algorithm on the City's web-site that could be used by truckers; and
3. Provision of City truck route information to commercial mapping providers.

The purpose of truck route planning is to define the existing street network, or new road, that will provide the safest route for the movement of large vehicles, supports local and regional commerce, and provides enough capacity and adequate design features to accommodate the anticipated volume, size and weight of vehicles.

To implement effective truck route planning, the City should hire a professional transportation engineer to study various designs and routing schemes associated with the new ATR. Evaluation criteria should be used to balance the objectives of efficient truck travel, neighborhood impacts and safety, and appropriate roadway design. The evaluation criteria can be grouped into four categories, three of which are weighted according to their level of importance to the planning process. The fourth category is comprised of criteria that are intended to identify "fatal flaws" or easily identifiable and insurmountable reasons that a roadway cannot become a truck route.

The evaluation criteria can include:

1. Economic Assessment
 - a. Availability and frequency of service to major origins and destinations
 - b. Efficiency and economy of truck travel
 - c. Equity of distribution
 - d. Economic impact on the community
 - e. Connectivity with and access to freeways
2. Sensitivity and Safety Assessment
 - a. Number of institutions along potential truck routes
 - b. Number and types of driveways along routes
 - c. Amount of on-street parking allowed
 - d. Presence of playgrounds, parks and multi-use trails
 - e. Accident statistics for potential routes
 - f. Level of current multi-modal use (bicycles, pedestrians, transit) along route

3. Compatibility of Roadways and Intersections with Truck Traffic

- a. Traffic volume
- b. Vertical grades
- c. Turning radii
- d. Number and width of lanes
- e. Signals per mile

4. Road Condition and Fatal Flaws

- a. Pavement type and depth
- b. Height and / or weight restrictions
- c. Posted speed limits

Special requirements and considerations for undertaking truck route planning include:

- Assessment of the presence of nuisances related to truck traffic, such as noise or vibrations;
- Evaluation of the impact on quality of life and property values,
- Strengthening enforcement regulations;
- Anticipation, planning and incorporation of future development access needs;
- Development of time periods prohibiting trucks traveling through communities;
- Development of off-peak deliveries program in key commercial areas;
- Development of a list of prohibited and allowed goods hauled by trucks on certain routes;
- Incorporation into and/or modification of major thoroughfare plan;
- Development of freight-supportive land use guidelines; and
- Development of the plan as part of regional approach to moving goods around.

Goal #7: Consider annexation of adjacent land, existing subdivisions, and South Highway 15 development.

Concerns/Issues

- Look at recent annexations into the city.
- Some annexation possible to north of city.
- Consider annexing land south and west of city along highways.
- Evaluate infrastructure when considering annexation.
- Land annexed for Tax Increment Financing and redevelopment.
- Look to other communities such as York for examples.

Objective #1: To consider adjacent land and existing subdivisions within the City's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction to be legally annexed into the corporate limits.

- Action Step #1:* Identify potential land and existing subdivisions to be legally annexed, as indicated in the Comprehensive Plan and other studies.
- Action Step #2:* Conduct appropriate annexation studies on specified sites to determine feasibility, cost-benefit and legality of the annexation, including the incorporation of any road system.
- Action Step #3:* Hold a public hearing of the Seward Planning Commission and City Council to solicit public input on the annexation.
- Action Step #4:* Prepare an appropriate annexation Plan and Plat.
- Action Step #5:* Approval of annexation ordinance.
- Action Step #6:* Consider expansion of extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction resulting from annexation.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

Seward City Council, Planning Commission, Fiscal Agent, Seward Redevelopment Authority, residents, Seward Public School System, Seward Business Association, Seward property-owners, private developers, Seward County, and the Seward County Economic Development Corporation.

Potential Resources

Local funds, Local option sales tax, Tax Increment Financing, Special Assessment Districts, General Obligation Bonds, and Revenue Bonds.

Measurable Outputs

As the City grows in size it must look for opportunities to extend its borders to continue to provide a high quality of life for its residents. To do this, the State of Nebraska has established a process for communities to expand their municipal boundary into areas that are contiguous to the community, provided such actions are justified. However, this power should be used when development becomes urban rather than rural in nature. In addition, State Statutes restrict annexation to land that is within 500 feet from the corporate limits of the municipal boundary. There are three ways annexation can be pursued. These include:

- Property owners can request annexation;
- The municipality can annex any contiguous or adjacent tracts, lots, or streets/roads that are urban or suburban in nature; or
- When land is platted adjacent to Seward's Corporate Limits it could be annexed at the time of approval of the final plat with a pre-annexation agreement.

In the case of the first method, the property owner must submit a plat prepared by a licensed surveyor. The plat must be approved by the city engineer and filed with the clerk along with a written request signed by all owners of record for the proposed annexation properties. Annexations must be approved by both the Planning Commission and City Council.

To adopt an annexation ordinance, a majority of affirmative votes are required by the governing body at each of the three readings of the ordinance. Then the certified plat is filed with the County Assessor, County Clerk, and Register of Deeds along with a certified copy of the ordinance. The city then has one year to adopt a plan for the extension of services to the annexed area.

Seward's annexation policy for any platted SIDs should be to include an SID once it becomes adjacent and contiguous to the corporate limits and the debt load of the SID is such that it can be absorbed into the city's debt structure with minimal impact on the taxpayers of the community.

Future annexation policies for subdivisions not developed as SID's, should be to annex these properties into the corporate limits as soon as they meet the State Statutes of adjacent and contiguous as well as urban and suburban in character.

Goal #8: Construct meeting rooms and a genealogy room and make other improvements to the lower level of the Seward Public Library.

Concerns/Needs

- Library is serving local businesses by providing conferences and meeting room space.
- Existing library is looking to finish and develop the lower level of the building.
- Library has or will have 125 person business meeting room and genealogy room.
- Fundraising is underway for library expansion/improvements.
- Library is a quality of life amenity and attracts “good people”.
- Seward is a growing community and the public library should support it.

Objective #1: Determine the physical, spatial, educational and technological needs of the meeting room and genealogy room and other improvements to the lower level of the Seward Public Library.

Action Step #1: Charge the Seward Library Foundation with inventorying and analyzing similar Public Libraries within the region to determine services/programs offered, event hosting, spatial layout, technological amenities, operations issues, maintenance costs/problems, area for improvement, etc.

Action Step #2: Charge the Seward Library Foundation with exploring all options for the development of the lower level and issue a Request for Qualifications for professional Architectural Services.

Action Step #3: Examine the Library amenities/services/programs offered by the Seward Public Schools and Concordia University to avoid unnecessary duplication of amenities/services/programs.

Action Step #4: Identify the future usage of the remodeled lower level, including special demands and needs for physical amenities.

Action Step #5: Present the needs and expectations of the lower level to the residents of Seward and local decision makers.

Timeline: 2013 - 2015.

Objective #2: Design the lower level of the Public Library to accommodate the physical, spatial, educational and technological needs of Seward and the County.

Action Step #1: Engage the services of a licensed professional architectural/ engineering consultant to prepare a programming plan for the future space of the Public Library.

Action Step #2: Develop a program plan.

Action Step #3: Consider the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of renovating the lower level of the Public Library.

Action Step #4: Prepare preliminary design and opinion of cost for the lower level improvements.

Action Step #5: Hold an informational meeting to present the draft results of the design/opinion of costs to the local stakeholders. Incorporate any revisions into the final draft.

Action Step #6: Prepare and approve the final design schematic/opinion of cost.

Timeline: 2013 – 2016.

Objective #3: Identify potential resources (both human and financial) for the lower level improvements of the new Seward Public Library.

Action Step #1: Meet with the Fiscal Agent for the City of Seward to determine the long-term debt capacity of the community/responsible entity.

Action Step #2: Identify local, regional, state, federal and in-kind resources for the improvements of the lower level of the future Seward Public Library.

Action Step #3: Commence fund-raising efforts to solicit public and private contributions for the improvements to the lower level.

Action Step #4: Achieve maximum project impact by leveraging local funds with "outside" resources.

Action Step #5: Package all financial resources for the construction of the new venue.

Timeline: 2013 - 2016.

Objective #4: Construction/Remodel of the lower level of the Seward Public Library.

Action Step #1: Conduct an environmental review process, as required by the project's public funding agencies.

Action Step #2: Enter into a professional services contract with a professional architectural/engineering firm to develop plans and specifications for the project, as well as for construction observation/management services.

Action Step #3: Develop plans and specifications for the lower level, pursuant to the responses offered by regulatory agencies and the requirements of public funding sources (International Energy Conservation Code, Americans with Disability, Historic Preservation, etc.).

Action Step #4: Submit plans and specifications to the public agencies (as appropriate) for their review/approval.

Action Step #5: Secure necessary permits/approvals from public agencies.

Action Step #6: Bid phase to include advertising, letting and contract award to lowest responsible/responsive bidder.

Action Step #7: Construction related activities.

Timeline: 2016 - 2017.

Responsible Group/Agency

City of Seward, residents, Public Library Foundation, Community Club, Concordia University, and Seward Public Schools.

Potential Resources

Conventional General Obligation Bonds, Seward Capital Improvement Fund, Seward General Fund, Local Option Sales Tax, Local Civic, Culture and Convention Center Fund, USDA Rural Development Community Facility Loan Program, private donations, local capital campaign, Community Development Assistance Act - Tax Credit Program, and local fund raising events.

Measurable Outputs

A Public Library is more than a repository of books and computers--it is an essential part of the community. As a tax supported, free public library, its purpose is to serve the diverse informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs and interests of all the residents of Seward. The Seward Public Library strives to maintain excellent service by:

- Providing a wide variety of resources that reflect the City's interests and needs;
- Promoting literacy, lifelong learning and intellectual freedom;
- Providing the technological infrastructure necessary to support quality library services; and
- Fostering interaction among diverse groups by serving as a focal point for library and community activities.

The City of Seward should work with the local stakeholders to identify plans for renovations to the lower level of the existing Public Library.

Any addition should be equipped with state-of-the-art technological amenities and provide adequate space for current needs and ample room for continued expansion of the Library's collection and services.