

TASK FORCE MISSION STATEMENT

*To proactively create and promote
strategies that will enhance quality of life
and business success in Hamilton County.*

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TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Brian Baxter, co-chairperson
Kurt Johnson, co-chairperson
Julie Jensen, facilitator

Members:

Dana Anderson
Beau Andrews
Brian Baxter
Heidi Baxter
Glen Beran
Tim Bergen
Rod Blase
Chad Carlson
Alex Cerveny
Don Cornett
Justin Dose
Diane Epp
John Ferguson
Jessica Ferguson
Jeanette Friesen
Jeff Gustafson
Chris Holliday
Phillip Hupf

Members:

Libby Johnson
Kurt Johnson
Diane Keller
Doug Kittle
Mark Klute
Jim Koepke
Dave Long
James McDonald
Jim McHargue
Sue Mitchell
Gordon Quiring
Jane Reeson
Marlin Seeman
Dylan Senff
Kylee Sexton
Cathy Sigler
Julie Stevenson
John Williamson
Jeri Willis

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Plan

This document, the Hamilton County 2010 Strategic Plan, has been developed to provide information and guidance to community organizations and local government entities for project planning and implementation. The strategic planning process began with a survey being developed and distributed to Hamilton County residents. The feedback received as a result of this survey was used by the Task Force Committee to make recommendations on goals for the next 3-5 years. The goals outlined in this document are divided into five sections: (1) Business Vitality, (2) Economic Development, (3) Education, (4) Family & Youth Opportunities, and (5) Recreation.

Methodology

The Aurora Area Chamber & Development Corporation (AACD), in conjunction with volunteer help, have sponsored a 2010 Strategic Planning Task Force to assist in developing a plan to aid the short and long-term activities of the volunteer, civic, and governmental bodies throughout the county.

Conclusion

The survey confirmed our belief that most residents of and workers in Hamilton County have pride in our county and a vision for its future. Though this strategic planning document has no specific jurisdiction or funding attached, what it does offer is community consensus on a number of important issues.

It is hoped that all citizens will consider the ways they can help move their community and county forward with a contribution of time, talent and/or money. Furthermore, it is hoped that local groups, organizations and governmental entities will use this document as a source of confirmed opinion on issues that deserve priority treatment in the next three to five years.

Any group that identifies a piece of this broad puzzle that fits their own priority list is encouraged to pursue that goal, using the 2010 Strategic Plan as a helpful source of reference.

Communities Represented

The Strategic Planning process involved representation from all communities in Hamilton County including: Giltner, Phillips, Stockham, Marquette, Hordville, Hampton and Aurora.

BUSINESS VITALITY

Rationale: Maintaining healthy businesses benefits entire communities through providing products and services, creating job opportunities, and generating tax revenue. It is essential that business owners and managers have a vision for the future as well as the support of the communities in which they reside. Health care is included in this section as it is a service business.

Existing Business Districts and Businesses

Condition and Vacancy of Existing Older Buildings in County's Downtown Areas

1. Need: Create accountability for building owners in downtown districts.

Action Steps:

- a. Review building codes and revise as necessary to make relevant.
 - b. Enforce current building codes, fines and penalties.
2. Need: Identify what types of retail businesses are absent.

Action Steps:

- a. Conduct a focused survey to find perceived retail business needs.
- b. Ask AACD office to informally track what visitors ask for.

Venture Capital

1. Need: Entrepreneurs often do not have the capital to open a retail business.

Action Steps:

- a. Investigate opportunities: Becoming an Entrepreneurial Community Act (BECA), Tax Increment Financing (TIF), private investors, grants, banks

E-commerce in Existing Businesses

1. Need: Business owners can be more successful when they expand their customer base.

Action Steps:

- a. Offer e-bay seller education to those retailers who would like to sell online.
- b. Offer e-bay seller support to retailers.
- c. Form an e-bay seller discussion group to support each other.
- d. Create websites (at least informational) for Hamilton County businesses.

Promote Existing Businesses

1. Need: Develop a county-wide business directory

Action Step:

- a. Identify group to compile and funding for project.
2. Need: Continue to raise awareness and “keep in front” of public.

Action Steps:

- a. Emphasize benefits of shopping locally (trust, save time, gas, etc.)
- b. Emphasize value to local economy of shopping locally (sales tax benefits)

More Participation in Aurora Area Chamber and Development

1. Need: Encourage participation from commercial club members in small communities from county as well as development people.

Action Steps:

- a. Determine who is currently serving in leadership position for each commercial or community club.
- b. Invite them to participate in AACD
- c. Investigate possible periodic retailer meetings with merchants from entire county or industries from across the county, etc.

Maintain and/or Increase Number of Trade Positions

1. Need: Currently there is either a shortage or there will be a shortage due to retiring mechanics, plumbers, electricians, carpenters and other trade specialties.

Action Steps:

- a. Provide trade school student loans through foundations that could be forgiven contingent upon returning to work in Hamilton County for a specified period of time.
- b. Apprenticeships

Capitalize on I-80 Corridor

1. Need: Market businesses in Hamilton County to entice people to get off Interstate

Action Step:

- a. Explore possibility of kiosk at Love’s to market businesses and attractions
2. Need: Fill I-80 Aurora exit with variety of business establishments

Action Steps:

- a. Identify types of businesses that will benefit from regular traffic and increased traffic as concentrated times (e.g. State Fair, State volleyball, Husker Harvest)
- b. Recruit chain motel tied with chain restaurant

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- c. Discuss, with Love's officials, possibility of Love's adding a motel to their property

Agriculture

1. Need: Honor agricultural roots

Action Steps:

- a. Improve education to dispel myths and misconceptions.
- b. Establish zoning ordinances that do not hurt agricultural interests.

2. Need: Strive to be a livestock-friendly county

Action Step:

- a. Encourage county commissioners to pursue that designation.

3. Need: Improve infrastructure of county roads and bridges to accommodate modern agriculture equipment

Action Steps:

- a. Farm groups to present statistics and information to County Commissioners
- b. Request Nebraska Dept. of Roads load limits report/map.

4. Need: Recruit a food-quality grains processor

Action Step:

- a. Work with AACD to recruit a business that would partner with a local coop to build a facility to process white corn (for corn chips and other food products)

5. Need: Plan for exit of agriculture's baby-boomers

Action Step:

- a. Develop a Farmer's Forum to educate mature farmers and young farmers about estate planning

Preserve Community Pride

1. Need: Pride in our communities is special and must be preserved

Action Step(s):

- a. Enforce local codes to keep communities clean and appealing
- b. Participate in Nebraska Community Improvement Programs (NCIP)

Health Care

Health Clinic and Hospital

1. Need: Additional promotion and marketing for hospital procedures and visiting specialists
Action Step:
Consider additional promotion of hospital services such as billing staffers, additional media (e.g. TV, Internet), use of thank you notes and other “warm fuzzies.”
2. Need: Recruit a female family practice physician for the Memorial Health Clinic
Action Step:
Individuals or group to present suggestion to the Hospital Board
 - a. Consider female physicians that grew up in Aurora.
 - b. Aggressively recruit Rural Health Opportunities Program (RHOP) graduates.
3. Need: Identify additional Memorial Hospital services that are lacking or could be expanded
4. Action Step:
Hamilton County residents encourage the specialists they see out-of-town to begin seeing patients in Aurora.

Emergency Services

1. Need: Increase awareness of the role of first responders in Hamilton County’s small towns
Action Step:
 - a. Request an article in Aurora News Register possibly during Emergency Medical Service Week in May.
2. Need: Make citizens aware that Hamilton County Ambulance Service (HCAS) is held up as a model service by the state.
Action Steps:
 - a. Article in newspaper
 - b. Presentation to civic groups
3. Need: Overnight housing at Hamilton County Ambulance Facility
Action Step:
 - a. Research funding possibilities and present need at a County Commissioner meeting.

Retirement Communities

1. Need: Project numbers of citizens who may desire retirement accommodations in next 20 years
Action Step:
 - a. Analyze current and upcoming census figures
2. Need: Elderly may be interested in maintenance-free townhome or condo properties in each Hamilton County community.
Action Step:
 - a. Look at feasibility of projects in all Hamilton County communities.

Wellness Centers

1. Need: More opportunity for all ages (emphasis on elderly) to stay in own communities with access to facilities that offer complete exercise programs.

Action Step:

- a. Survey communities for interest and present findings to town boards. Explore private business opportunities and possible partnerships with hospital or other health agencies.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Rationale:

The growth of Hamilton County can be directly contributed to continued success in recruiting and retaining businesses in our area. The Economic Development subcommittee has been tasked with identifying and defining areas of development for Hamilton County. The following document will act as a road map for the communities in Hamilton County to attract businesses to the area and assist in building upon our current successes.

The online survey conducted by the AACD touched on several broad topics and included were questions related to economic development. The economic development sub-committee prioritized our activities around the eight (8) key areas that were highlighted during the survey phase of the process.

Areas of focus:

1. Recruitment of Restaurants
2. Local Leadership Development
3. Job Creation
4. Marketing & Advertising of Tourism
5. Business Site & Infrastructure Development
6. Development of the Hamilton County I-80 Corridor
7. Housing
8. Technology Infrastructure

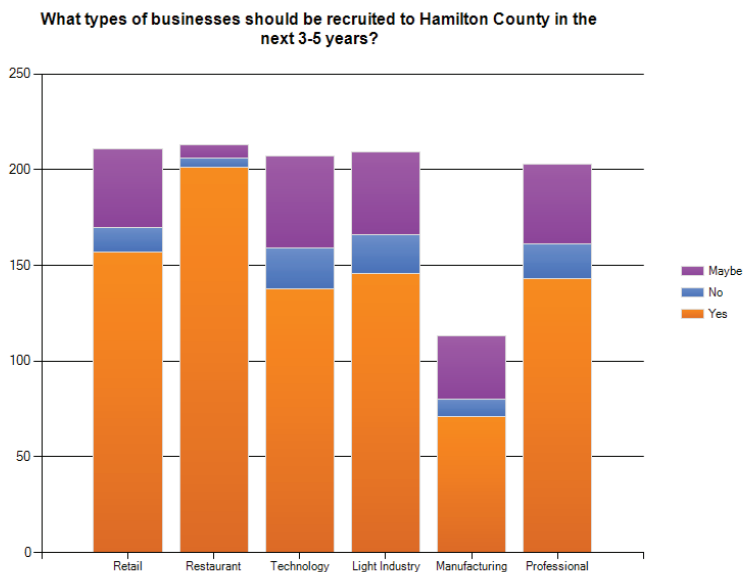


Figure: Survey Question #3 - Economic Development Targets

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The following comments were made by survey respondents relating to economic development:

"Technology based businesses are key to the long-range growth of Aurora. The changing world economy and the ease at which companies can obtain overseas manufacturing labor I feel will limit the number of light industry or manufacturing jobs available to higher wage areas like ours."

"It's kind of sad that a community the size of Aurora doesn't have a nice restaurant to go out to eat."

"Need to develop I-80 even more; need more retail"

"Distribution and Logistics"

"Need to develop I-80 even more; need more retail"

"We need more recreational items for adults and places open past 6 p.m. and on Sunday"

"Perhaps to add to the retail more actual arts, fine wood working, glass and pottery studios etc."

"If we want to grow, we need to attract people from all points in the spectrum--but especially those who are college educated who will provide leadership, financial support, and be enthusiastic community members."

"Controlled growth is much better than uncontrolled (and unplanned) growth."

"I would like to have Hamilton County be a cultural and business center. I would like us to have a "focus"--maybe art, or extension of the technology center. That way we could draw in the people for the focus and perhaps tourism as well. I'd like to see the square FILLED! Our schools are a drawing card but we have to make sure the schools are visionary also. If we look to encouraging college educated young people to come, they will want their children to have extended opportunities, not just basics."

Recruitment of Restaurants

Purpose

The economic development committee recognizes that recruitment of chain and specifically non-chain restaurants is a key to the vitality of our communities with 93% of our respondents ranking this as a top priority.

The committee defined several areas that need to be explored in order to promote a favorable business climate to enable restaurant startups. These areas are available land, capital, and equipment. It was also discussed that a second survey be conducted to have the community define the types of restaurants that are highly desirable to attract.

Questions needed for clarification should include:

- Chains vs. Non-Chain
- Types of Foods served
- Price Points
- Service of Alcohol v. Non-Alcohol
- Hours of Operation specializing in breakfast, lunch, dinner or a combination?

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Other Factors to be considered when recruiting restaurants to Hamilton County:

- Available workforce
- Identification of potential high traffic locations
- Funding Options (Venture Capital, Private Investment Groups, etc)
- Out of the Ordinary Solutions
 - Caterers needing to expand
 - Traveling Vendors
 - Partnerships with existing restaurants

Action Steps

1. Determine the proper group or funding required to conduct Restaurant Recruitment Survey.
2. Conduct research on other communities that are similar to those in Hamilton County to determine what has worked for them.

Community Leadership

Purpose

For decades, Hamilton County has been looked at by persons both in and out of state as a place that does an excellent job recruiting, retaining and grooming community leaders. In order to continue this tradition our area needs to focus on developing the next generation of leaders. Leadership development is particularly important when it comes to economic development. There is a tremendous amount of intellectual knowledge that is developed in recruiting, retaining and successfully negotiating economic development projects. For these reasons identifying, recruiting, and mentoring prospective future leadership will be key to the health and vitality of the communities within Hamilton County.

Areas of Focus

- Leadership training via programs such as Leadership Tomorrow and Leadership Nebraska
- Business Training such as the entrepreneur training offered through the Hamilton Strategic EDGE classes
- Creation of county-wide program that informs alumni of business opportunities
- Evaluate current chamber committees and sub-committees efforts
- Develop and formalize a leadership mentoring program
- Rotate county chamber meetings to create a free exchange of communication and establish a set of best practices.

Action Steps

1. Create a schedule that details out a county-wide chamber meeting schedule.
2. Conduct research within the communities as to the perceived “barriers” to involvement at the community level.
3. Establish a subcommittee whose goal is to establish a formalized mentoring program.

Job Creation / Employment Opportunities

Purpose

The end result of any economic development project is to create jobs and employment opportunities in Hamilton County. Research indicates some businesses have a greater financial impact on communities based on a higher than average level of capital (infrastructure investment, increased tax base, etc) investment per employee than those who have a lower investment level per employee. Utilizing an economic multiplier a community can define which types of businesses are more desirable to attract to their community. The economic multiplier takes in to account several factors, but the primary indicator is the wages paid for jobs and the real impact a dollar earned has on a dollar spent.

Businesses that operate on a regional or national level are most attractive as they create a positive balance of trade for our area. Jobs are secured at a local level but the businesses clientele is often regionally, nationally, or internationally based. Therefore, the business is importing dollars into the community.

Action Steps

1. Conduct research to define opportunities that would enhance existing businesses:
 - a. Light Manufacturing
 - b. Heavy Manufacturing
 - c. Agri-Business
 - d. Professional
 - e. High Tech Spin-offs
 - f. Retail
 - g. Other

2. Identify county-wide resources that may promote existing or new industry growth:
 - a. I-80 Access (Logistics, Manufacturing, etc)
 - b. Rail Access (Agri-business, Inter-Modal, etc)
 - c. Airport Access (Private Operators, Manufacturing, Instrumentation, etc)

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Marketing & Tourism

Purpose

Continued growth is an essential component to the health and prosperity of Hamilton County and the efforts to attract business to our area. The development and implementation of a unified “Brand” for Hamilton County was discussed. Once the brand is established this will aid area communities in building a synergy to promote tourism. The following paragraphs will cover items that need further development and definition.

Development of a Regional Hamilton County Brand

- Create a Hamilton County brand and develop a holistic strategy for marketing the county.
- Development of a new tourism map for Hamilton County outlining available points of interest and suggested day trips.
- Encourage each community within the county to develop a town, city or village website. These sites should be linked together to promote each community’s assets.
- Encourage each community to appoint a liaison from its local board to communicate information to/from the AACD Publicity and Tourism Committee.

Development of Niche Tourism Markets

- Agri-Tourism
 - Working Farms and Ranches
 - Organic Farms
 - Wineries
 - Prairie Plains Institute and the Art Farm
 - Seasonal Opportunities (Pumpkin Patches, Corn Mazes, Tree Farms)
 - Ag-related manufacturing and processing companies
 - Hunting, Fishing, and Camping

- Arts & Sciences
 - Renaissance Center
 - L’Eglise Arts Center
 - FamFest
 - Edgerton Science Center
 - Plainsmen Museum
 - Historical Buildings or Homes Tour
 - Bed & Breakfasts

Action Steps

1. Quantify and promote current communities assets such as commercial properties and building sites. These should be promoted via a regional or combined website.
 - a. Include all necessary workforce statistics, technology capabilities, and financial incentives.
2. Explore funding sources for website development and maintenance. Possible sources of funding could include the Hamilton County Tourism Committee, Nebraska Public Power District, and local foundations.
3. Determine what media outlets will best promote Hamilton County’s tourism marketing plan.

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Business Development Sites & New Construction

Purpose

For the continued growth of Hamilton County, a task force should be assembled to define the areas that are most fit for development and determine which industries should be targeted. The areas to be chosen should make the most logical sense to minimize the financial impact on new infrastructure costs and maximize the footprint for housing, retail and small/large business development.

Action Steps

1. Define areas for potential development and contact land owners to determine if they are interested.
 - a. South Highway 14 to I-80
 - b. West Highway 34
 - c. Corners of Hwy 34 and Hwy 14
2. Define which businesses would be best suited for targeted areas of development.
 - a. Heavy and Light Manufacturing
 - b. Professional
 - c. Technology
 - d. Restaurants
 - e. Transportation and Logistics
3. Identify and pursue enterprises that complement existing businesses in the county and available sites for those enterprises. For example, a research and development incubator to complement the Aurora West facility.
4. Explore funding sources for financing site acquisition and development. Possibilities include venture capital, partnerships, private endowment, and business grants.

I-80 Corridor Development

Purpose

County wide there are several assets at the respective I-80 interchanges for Phillips, Giltner, Aurora, and Hampton. Further development of these corridors is encouraged. All properties located along these corridors should be identified ahead of time as a “more likely than not” area for potential development. In those areas that currently have infrastructure and buildings in place we ask that the communities address aging infrastructure by working with current property or land owners to clean up each community’s “front door.”

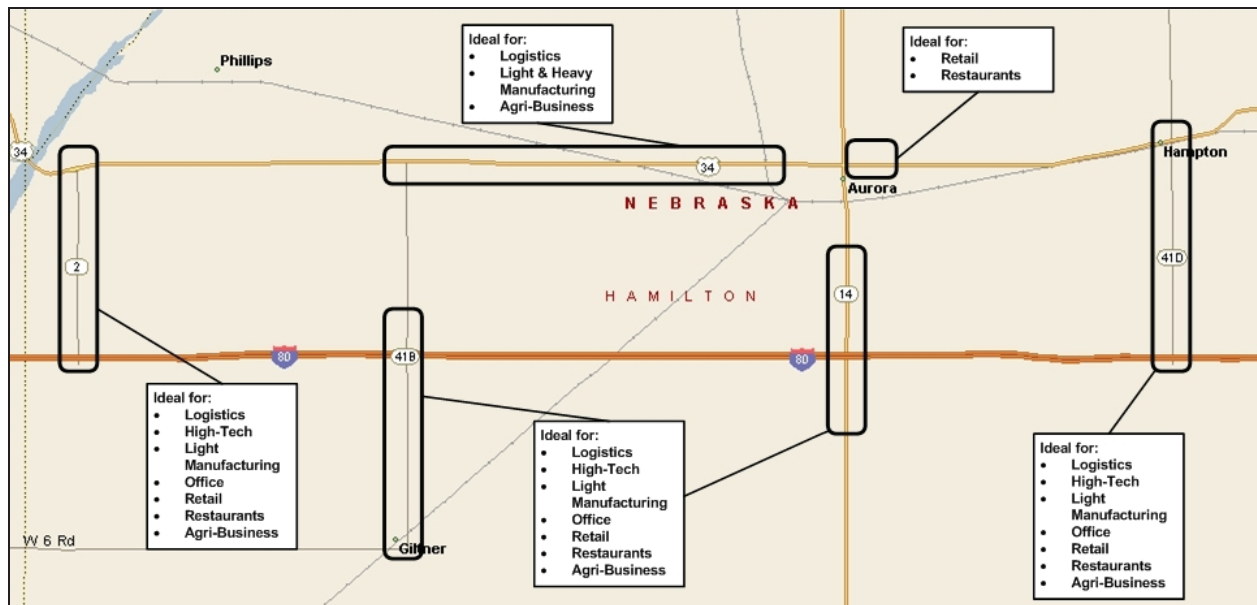
Action Steps

1. Research and determine how the State Fair move to Grand Island will affect the hotel/motel and restaurant industry in our region.
2. Define potential businesses for each of the community’s I-80 corridor exits and target market these assets.

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3. Search for potential “alternate” uses for current infrastructures such as old hotels, gas stations, etc.
4. Determine if community economic development organizations have the resources and time to acquire and re-condition these assets for sale or lease.
5. Determine if there are current businesses in the community that would like to partner with the economic development organizations to retro-fit current buildings or structures to enhance their operations.

Figure: Hamilton County I-80 Corridors



Housing

Purpose

In order for Hamilton County to continue to grow and thrive adequate housing will be required to satisfy current residents as they move up and across the property ladder. Housing should also be considered an asset to attract prospective residents from other communities in and outside of the county as we recruit industry to the area. For the first time in a long time Hamilton County has several developments being created for multiple- and single-family housing.

Developments (Currently underway)

- 1) Northridge Development – Phase I (30 homes), Phase II (30 homes)
- 2) Greenway Development (30 homes)
- 3) Crown Project (10 homes)
- 4) Platteview Estates - Phase I (30 homes), Phase II (25 homes)
- 5) Madison Gardens (6 Townhomes)
- 6) Hampton Development Corp. Subdivision (10 Residential lots, 2 Commercial lots)
- 7) Giltner Subdivision (18 residential lots)

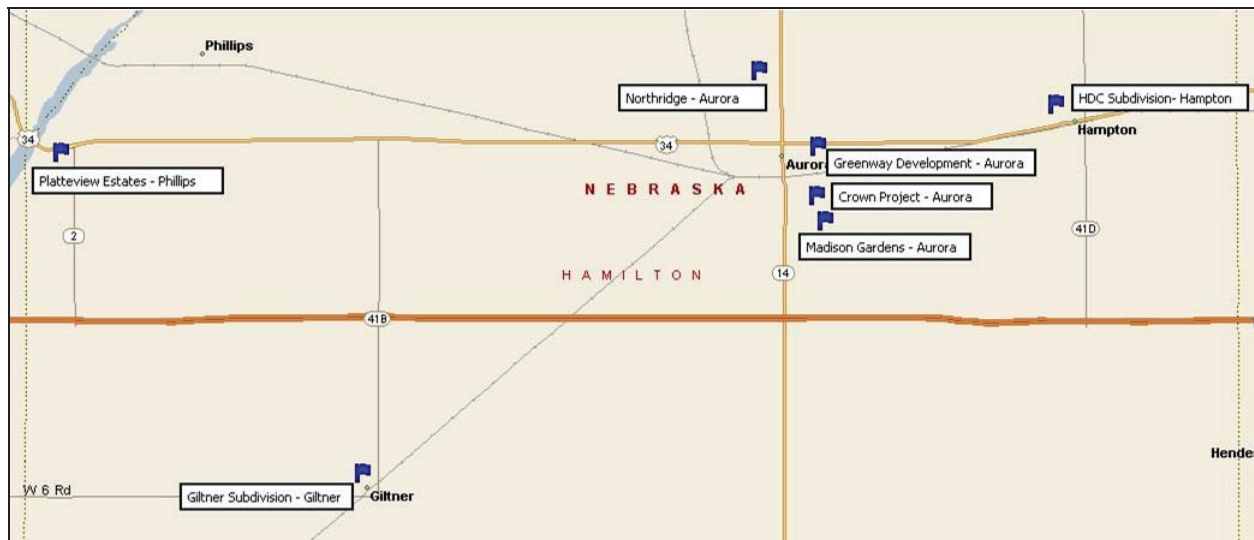


Figure: Current Hamilton County housing development locations

Action Steps

1. Develop a mechanism that periodically (annually) measures the housing inventory vs. jobs market.
2. Determine how Hamilton County housing will look in next 3-5 years. Which communities will need housing as they attract industry?
3. Identify which communities have available or potential areas for housing development.

Technology Infrastructure

Rationale:

Technology was defined by our group as a major factor that enables business and industry to grow and migrate to Hamilton County. Small, medium, and large businesses use technology to connect with colleagues, customers, and suppliers. Available and affordable telecommunications services allow businesses to sell products or services to a diverse customer base in/outside Hamilton County. The ability to attract customers from outside the area creates a favorable balance of trade for our communities by importing dollars. Residents and businesses have several choices available to them regarding providers for these services.

The local telecommunications network utilizes both copper and fiber optic networks to provide high speed internet and telephone services to all residents of Hamilton County. Compared to other Nebraska communities Hamilton County is unique in that several major telecommunications carrier routes are located throughout the area. The incumbent telecommunications provider has established relationships with these carriers in order to scale up their network requirements to meet any customer's voice or data transmission needs.

The underlying technology and network infrastructure in Hamilton County is comparable to larger cities. The network is designed in a way that creates redundancy of services to multiple points-of-presence. This ensures services are available despite man-made or natural disasters.

Technology Services Available in Hamilton County:

- Local Landline and Long Distance Access
- High Speed Broadband Internet
- Data Transport T-1, DS3, OC - xxx
- Ethernet Internet Transport Services
- Computer Sales and Support
- Unlicensed Wireless or Satellite Internet
- Cable & Satellite Television
- Managed Hosting & Online Data Backup Services

Action Steps

1. Define industries or businesses looking to create a primary or secondary site for their business.
2. Work with local, state, and private entities to create a plan to establish Hamilton County as a technology hub for research, learning, and development.
3. Conduct a county-wide residential & business technology survey to determine emerging trends and needs of area residents and businesses. For instance, wireless households, Next Generation Wireless Internet, Fiber to the Home, IPTV, etc.

EDUCATION

Rationale:

"Education is the power to think clearly, the power to act well in the world's work, and the power to appreciate life." Brigham Young.

Recognizing that education is the foundation of all strong societies, this sub-committee focused on ways to provide more educational opportunities in the next five years for Hamilton County residents of all ages.

Adult Education

1. Need: Increase community awareness of the classes at Aurora Technology Center so its optimum level is utilized.

Action Step:

Discuss possible marketing campaigns with Aurora Technology Center

2. Need: Increase the awareness of Central Community College Learning Center opportunities.

Action Step:

Discuss with Central Community College representatives

3. Need: Increase community awareness of distance learning opportunities in Hamilton County schools.

Action Step:

Discuss with principals of Aurora, Giltner, and Hampton

4. Need: Increase the availability of on-line college credit classes and distance learning classes.

Action Step:

Discuss with principals of Aurora, Giltner, and Hampton

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Youth Education

1. **Need:** Increase youth leadership opportunities for all youth in Hamilton County.
Action Step:
Discuss with Aurora Business Department, principals of Aurora, Giltner, and Hampton
2. **Need:** Develop business and school partnerships that would provide internship opportunities for senior students.
Action Step:
Collaboration between AACD Executive Director and Aurora Business Department
3. **Need:** Provide students in the county “outside the box” learning opportunities they may not be receiving in their local school district. This may include shared staff between schools in the county. Year-round school and/or summer school (e.g. Home Building Program, Chief Custom Homes).
Action Step:
Discuss with principals of Aurora, Giltner, and Hampton
4. **Need:** Expand alternative education programs for all schools in Hamilton County.
Action Step:
Discuss with principals of Aurora, Giltner, and Hampton
5. **Need:** Implement upper level summer school classes for all students in Hamilton County.
Action Step:
Discuss with principals of Aurora, Giltner, and Hampton
6. **Need:** Pool teaching resources within the county schools to provide more dual credit opportunities for students
Action Step:
Discuss with principals of Aurora, Giltner, and Hampton
7. **Need:** Provide Career/Technical Education programs for all students.
Action Step:
Discuss with principals of Aurora, Giltner, and Hampton

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Awareness/Communication

1. Need: Increase internal and external communication between schools and the AACD

Action Step:

Discuss with superintendents of Aurora, Giltner, and Hampton

2. Need: Have all schools develop a brochure that “markets” their district.

Action Step:

Discuss with principals of Aurora, Giltner, and Hampton, Marketing Class, Class Officers (2010 Senior Class Project)

3. Need: Involve county schools in assisting in recruiting business and industry.

Action Step:

Request that AACD involve school personnel in recruiting trips and visits from businesses.

4. Need: Adding web links from community schools to prospective community members.

Action Step:

Involve webmasters at each school

FAMILY & YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

Rationale:

An important ingredient in the future success of the United States, Nebraska and Hamilton County is devoting time and attention to strengthening families and youth. Societies that place families and child development as high priorities will be healthier emotionally and economically than those that do not. Strong families = strong children = strong communities.

Attract and Retain Families

1. Need: Assemble “Taste of the Community” packet – with items like a one-day pool pass, ticket to theater, etc. – to distribute to new residents to the county

Action Step:

- a. Identify group with interest in collecting items and assembling packets
2. Need: Develop webpage with links to “where to go for what” for each community in the county.

Action Steps:

- a. Include “Buttons” suggested for the webpage to link to appropriate information: New to the community, health care, businesses, recreation, community calendars, youth center, services, courthouse information, city information, utilities, schools, museums, libraries, churches, community organizations, day care providers, blog.
 - b. Include website option to request a mentor to give the community a “face” for those who would like a visit from a person.
 - c. Include an “ask the expert” button where someone would reply with an answer. (Need both “real people” for specialized questions and web information available.)
3. Need: Attractive advertising to recruit families to live in Hamilton County.

Action Steps:

- a. Erect a billboard citing Hamilton County as a great place for families to live.
- b. Use other media to recruit families.

County Program Director

“The community needs someone, full time, to schedule, create, and plan events for the community. This would be a huge asset to the community.”

1. Need: It would be extremely beneficial to have a specific person to coordinate and promote activities held in all parts of the county.

Action Steps:

- a. Encourage county commissioners to consider new funding for this part-time or full-time position.

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- b. Encourage community event planners (FamFest, Hampton Booster Days, Giltner AutumnFest, A'Ror'N days, etc.) to include special activity for newcomers to the county.
- c. Coordinate adult and youth sports, and other year-around activities
- d. Coordinate a web-based connection between volunteers and house-bound individuals
- e. Organize supervised summer park activities for grade school kids

“Come Back to Hamilton County” Campaign

1. Need: Hamilton County would benefit from an organized campaign to invite adults of all ages who are living elsewhere to return to Hamilton County to live.

Action Steps:

- a. Develop &/or maintain data base from each school
- b. Utilize alumni data bases from each school to contact alumni
- c. Ask businesses to consider internships to attract young people back to the community

Community Caring and Involvement

1. Need: All Hamilton County communities could benefit from the offering of more community-building, interactive activities as well as more use of existing opportunities.

Action Steps:

- a. Promote Youth Center for all youth grades 6-12 in Hamilton County
- b. Recruit volunteers to teach recreational and educational classes
- c. Explore offering foreign language classes for adults
- d. Invite exchange students to share about their countries, cultures, and language
- e. Offer inter-generational activities at assisted living or long-term care homes.
- f. Address Hamilton Ministerial Association about a possible “Day of Caring” to do projects in the county

“I see a lot more families with two working parents. Organized community activities and before/after school are things that would be welcome services.”

2. Need: Dual-income households and the resulting parent work schedules mean many Hamilton County children go home after school to empty houses. The availability of before and after school programs for elementary children would give these children a safe and healthy place to go.

Action Steps:

- a. Support the programs offered through the new Aurora Day Care Center
- b. Evaluate the need for before and after school programs in all communities
- c. Monitor need for additional programs and encourage churches or other groups to meet that need

RECREATION

Rationale:

This sub-committee carefully considered the responses obtained from the community survey. After careful consideration and analysis of the responses, the 2010 Hamilton County Recreation Sub-Committee has developed the following items for consideration.

"I would like to see more activities throughout the county as a whole, especially more recreational opportunities that bring in people from throughout Nebraska to the area, which would attract more businesses, especially retail and otherwise"

Indoor Recreation Facility

"I think the community needs an activities center. There are many reasons for it but kids need to be busy after school and during the summer. The community has SOAR, the Bremer Center, and other small activities. The community needs a large enough venue where they can conduct crafts, sports, hunter safety, driver's ed, quilting, art shows. Not just for the youth but for everyone in the community."

1. Need: The community survey results indicate that residents want an indoor recreation facility.

Action Steps:

- a. Create a committee to develop a concise action plan to develop an Indoor Recreational Facility while working with the Sales Tax Committee.
- b. Work with city of Aurora/Hamilton County to find a location considering the following locations and more:
 - i. Hwy 14 South of cemetery (5 acres)
 - ii. Southwest corner of Hwy 34 and 1st Street
 - iii. Southeast corner of Hwy 34 and Hwy 14
- c. Explore funding sources
 - i. City Sales Tax
 - ii. Grants and Foundations
 - iii. Individual and Corporate Gifts
- d. Identify facility amenities desired
 - i. Swimming pool / Lap pool
 - ii. Walking track
 - iii. Basketball / Volleyball courts
 - iv. Intramural sports
 - v. Weight lifting
 - vi. Childcare
 - vii. Classes (spinning, aerobics, etc)
 - viii. School programs, during and after school

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- e. Consider staffing needs
 - i. Hire county Activities Director
 - ii. Part-time employees

Swimming Pool / Water Park

“(Aurora needs) A better swimming pool meant for various ages, especially younger kids.”

- 1. **Need:** The Parkview Pool has deteriorated to the point that it is not feasible to repair it. It also does not meet the expectations of today’s swimming pool/aquatic center visitors.

Action Steps:

- a. Create a committee to develop a concise action plan to develop a swimming pool / water park while working with the Sales Tax Committee.
- b. Work with the city to find property for location
- c. Explore funding sources
 - i. City sales tax
 - ii. Grant and foundation funds
 - iii. Individual and corporate gifts
- d. Identify facility amenities to include:
 - i. Zero entry
 - ii. Multiple slides
 - iii. Diving boards
 - iv. Concession area
 - v. Swimming area/lap swimming

Pioneer Trail Recreation Area

- 1. **Need:** This recreation area is currently not being fully utilized by the general public. It has the potential to be a popular spot for outdoor activities

Action Steps:

- a. Get permission from Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District (NRD) to put together a plan for development / enhancement of the current facility
- b. Consider possible attractions for the area
 - i. Biking – Fishing – Sledding – Skating -- Kite-flying – Star-gazing
- c. Consider possible facility and equipment needs
 - i. Tables -- Grill / Fire pits – Restrooms -- Camping hook-ups – Pavilion
- d. Funding
 - i. Upper Big Blue NRD
 - ii. Foundations & grants
 - iii. Private gifts
 - iv. County funds

2010 Hamilton County Strategic Plan

Trails

1. Need: Many Hamilton County residents enjoy biking, walking and jogging. According to survey respondents, the current trails are inadequate.

Action Steps:

- a. Work with the city and county to find the best areas for trails to be established.
 - i. Connect city parks in Aurora
 - ii. Connect communities (Aurora to Hampton, Aurora to Marquette)
 - iii. Streeter Park north to cemetery
 - iv. Streeter Park west to Lincoln Creek
- b. Explore possible funding options
 - i. Nebraska Game & Parks
 - ii. T21 (Federal Highway Grant)
 - iii. Stimulus money
 - iv. City sales tax
 - v. NRD

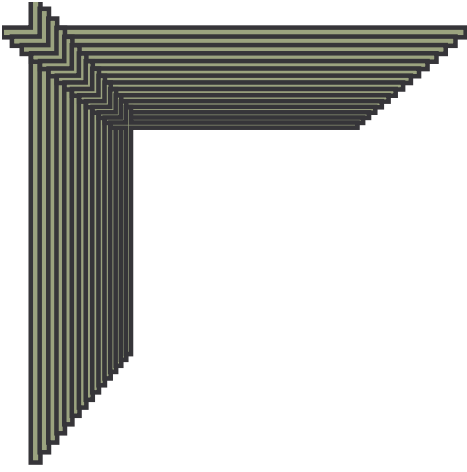
Arts & Entertainment

"I would like to see additional activities for those not involved in sports."

1. Need: Offering fine arts activities appeals to a segment of the population that responded to the survey. It is important to include the fine arts as part of recreation along with physical activities.

Action Steps:

- a. Explore the feasibility of Community/County Theater that would perform in each community in the county.
- b. Investigate the possibility of an amphitheater /band shell at Streeter Park
- c. Host artist competitions



HAMILTON COUNTY

2010

STRATEGIC PLAN

