

Red Cloud

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Grow Here*

Application for
Nebraska Department of Economic Development
Leadership Certified Community

January 2022



Red Cloud

Leadership Certified Community Application

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Section One: Community

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

A. Resolution of support from applicant community.

- a. Attachment: Resolution of Support from City Council dated August 3, 2021 (*See Appendix 1*)

B. Letters of support from any regional economic development entities such as multi-county economic development agencies, regional chambers of commerce, or development districts.

- a. Attachment: Support letter from SCEDD dated March 11, 2021, Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce dated July 7, 2021, and Heritage Tourism Development dated July 7, 2021 (*See Appendix 1*).

C. Include a copy of the original application intention letter

- a. Attachment: Letter of Intent from Mayor dated 5-12-2021 (*See Appendix 2*)

COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

A. Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce

Mission statement and purpose: The Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce is organized for the purpose of advancing the economic, industrial, professional, cultural, and civic welfare of the Red Cloud area; to encourage the growth of existing industries and businesses while giving proper assistance to any new firms or individuals seeking to relocate in the Red Cloud area; to support all of those activities believed to be beneficial to the community and area, to oppose those which might be detrimental; and in general, to promote the welfare of all area citizens, following always those policies intended to accomplish the greatest good for the greatest number.

Red Cloud is located in the heart of south-central Nebraska, approximately 7 miles north of the Nebraska-Kansas border. With its quaint lodging options, rich history, regular cultural programs, historic attractions, and recreational activities, there is never a shortage of fun and worthwhile things to do while visiting the community.



Due to the emergence of Heritage Tourism Development, that organization has begun to focus more on community and economic development while the Chamber maintains its position as an advocate for local small businesses and functions as a de facto community club. The Chamber is primarily responsible for Street Car Days (pictured left), the Farmers & Merchants Banquet, the Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween Parade, the holiday Shopping Extravaganza, and a variety of other

community activities. All of these activities require coordination and collaboration between its leaders, City officials, and community volunteer organizations.

All of the collaborative partners hosted the Tour de Nebraska group in June 2021. In 2018, Red Cloud won Best Host Community when the BRAN bike ride visited town. This required significant collaboration and for the City of Red Cloud to allow use of property and services. By doing so, it created an influx of local business generated by out of town spending.

B. Red Cloud Heritage Tourism Development:

Heritage Tourism Development is a collaboration between the Red Cloud Community Fund, the Willa Cather Foundation, the City of Red Cloud, and the Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce. First formulated as an idea in 2012, the office came into existence in 2015 and eventually hired Jarrod McCartney as the first Heritage Tourism Development Director in July of that year. In 2019, Heritage Tourism and the Chamber of Commerce merged branding and marketing efforts and became Red Cloud Tourism & Commerce though both entities retain their own boards and the Chamber retains its legal/operating structure.

RCHTD focuses on using the Assets Based Community Development model first articulated by the McKnight Foundation and championed by the Nebraska Community Foundation. Red Cloud leaders identified developing heritage tourism assets as critical to the long-term survival of the community in 2012. The Director of RCHTD/Red Cloud Tourism & Commerce effectively serves in a hybrid role of economic development director, tourism director, and provides input and direction with City planning efforts.

Red Cloud Heritage Tourism Development provides numerous services that benefit the community, many of which are supported by the City of Red Cloud. In fact, the City of Red Cloud provides a portion of the funding to the Heritage Tourism Development Office. By pooling resources and creating one full-time Director to conduct duties as the Chamber and Heritage Tourism, greater collaboration is guaranteed between all members of the partnership. The director serves many roles, but for the City the position serves as a conduit between it and the various state and regional development entities. Since the creation of this position, Red Cloud has a much greater presence in the state and the region not only because of promotion and marketing efforts but because of a purposeful effort to collaborate with organizations like the South Central Economic Development District, the Nebraska Travel Association, the Nebraska Tourism Commission, the Nebraska Chamber, the Nebraska Community Foundation, and more.

In 2020, the City Council, the Heritage Tourism Advisory Council, and the Red Cloud Community Fund (through its parent organization the Nebraska Community Foundation) renewed their collaborative agreement. A summary of the [5-year plan](#) for 2020-25 and [a 5-year review](#) of 2015-2020 is available upon request as is the original 2012 Hargrove Report created by the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship (now Entrepreneurial Ecosystems) that led to the creation of the Heritage Tourism development strategy. Collaborative work spearheaded by Heritage Tourism



Development and the City of Red Cloud led to the community receiving honorable mention for the 2017 Governor's Showcase Community Award and winning the award outright in 2018 (pictured).

C. Red Cloud Community Fund

In 2019, the Red Cloud Community Fund held a community visioning session that identified creating a vibrant downtown as one of the core commitments/objectives for the community going forward. Since that time, Heritage Tourism Development has created forward momentum on several downtown projects including the Hotel Garber project, the rehabilitation of the old hardware and video store by a local farmer, the rehabilitation of an old liquor store into its historic storefront for a local honey business, the establishment of a coffee shop/boutique (The Corner Nook), a bakery, a new bar & grill, a dance studio, a thrift store, and the rehabilitation of an old barber shop. Additionally, Heritage Tourism has facilitated the acquisition of additional buildings and is laying the groundwork for the acquisition of buildings presently being used for storage. Heritage Tourism also reached out to South Central Economic Development District (SCEDD) and applied and received the Downtown Revitalization CDBG funding from the state, for a Planning grant. This would potentially help make up for the lack of a LB840 plan and create a much needed loan program for storefront improvements to bolster the relatively meager one the Chamber of Commerce implemented in 2018.

The Red Cloud Community Fund and Heritage Tourism Development have started conversations with the Webster County Community Hospital and other entities about identifying a project that would help jumpstart a USDA REDLG revolving loan program as the City of Red Cloud's utilities have already been approved to participate in this program. The possibility of obtaining Downtown Revitalization CDBG funding is exciting as the Nebraska Department of Transportation has announced plans to replace crumbling downtown roads/sidewalks as soon as 2025. Should these developments be able to work in concert and extend the progress already being made with the Cather Center and the Hotel Project, Red Cloud could be looking at a dramatic facelift.

D. Red Cloud Tourism & Commerce

In February 2019, the Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce joined forces with Red Cloud Heritage Tourism Development and became Red Cloud Tourism & Commerce for marketing purposes. Both entities retain their autonomy and executive boards but work together to promote the community, especially to visitors. The Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce is a 501c6 non-profit organization and operates on membership dues and dollars generated from fundraising events. They are working to help the community bring in new businesses, support existing business, and share the splendor of the community with others.

The City, Chamber, and Tourism all share one website, <https://www.visitredcloud.com/>, with everyone working together as a clearinghouse of information. This provides a one-stop site for residents and visitors to find information about the community, City, Chamber, Tourism, and Economic Development opportunities.

About Tourism in Webster County

Webster County is blessed to be one of the leading Heritage Tourism sites in the state of Nebraska. With nearly 50 sites associated with author Willa Cather in Red Cloud, Bladen, and the places in between, the Starke Round Barn (the largest "true" round barn in the world) just outside of Amboy, deep connections to Baseball Hall of Famers Cy Young and Dazzy Vance, and underdeveloped sites such as the Pike-Pawnee Village near Guide Rock and various sites near Cowles, visitors can spend a long weekend exploring Nebraska history and culture. Two of the 20 Nebraska National Historic Landmarks are located here (The Cather Childhood Home in Red Cloud and the aforementioned Pawnee Village).

According to the History Nebraska, "Heritage Tourism is defined as the experience of visiting museums and historic sites. To more and more travelers it is getting a sense of 'real' history. For others, it is an opportunity to explore Nebraska through its back roads and byways. Nebraska's heritage attractions tell important stories about that state--stories that can only be experienced firsthand, thus creating a compelling incentive to choose the Cornhusker State as a travel destination. And heritage tourism allows Nebraskans to share their rich history and culture with others." You can read the [full Heritage Tourism in Nebraska report here](#). The Value of Heritage Tourism report, July 2015 through October 2021, is posted online: <https://www.visitredcloud.com/government/city-ordinances-zoning-and-planning-documents> > Additional Research Reports.

Willa Cather Foundation

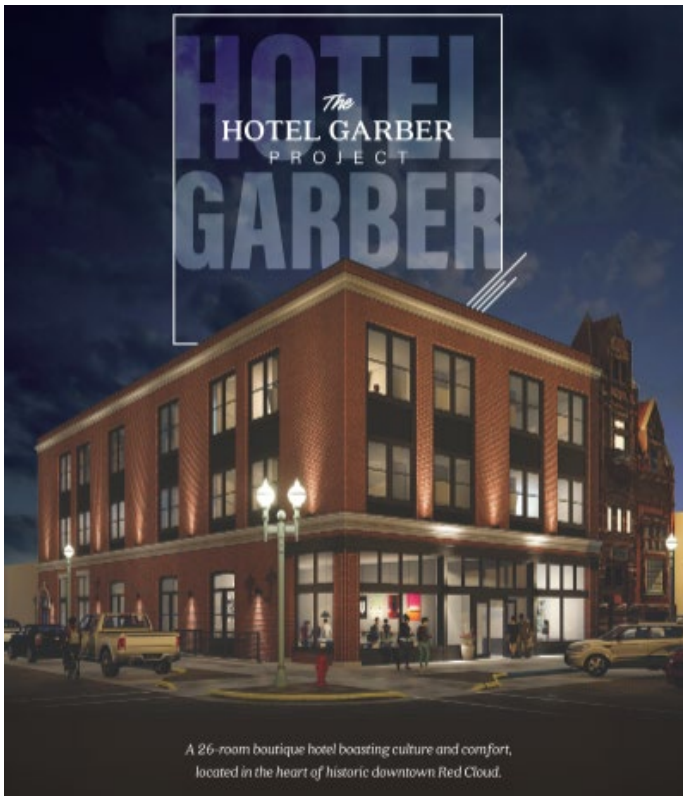
The Willa Cather Foundation is one of the leading employers in Red Cloud and in Webster County. WCF provides support to Heritage Tourism by providing office space and working with the collaborative partners to develop the community and promote its tourism resources. A \$1M annual budget is spent primarily locally, with the biggest expenses being 9 full-time and 5 part-time staff.



As an example, the National Willa Cather Center was selected for the 2021 Nebraska Passport Program. It was one of seventy stops included in the 2021 program where Nebraskans and tourists travel through the state collecting stamps to earn prizes, while also supporting Nebraska's tourism destinations and local businesses. Travelers had from May 1 through September 30 to visit attractions and get their stamps with 1,411 visitors having their Nebraska Passport stamped at this Red Cloud site. The total number of visitors to the National Willa Cather Center during this program timeframe was 3,594.

The relationship goes deeper than that, with WCF investing over \$19 million in downtown Red Cloud and Webster County since 1990s to present. The investments have gone towards the Oprah House renovation of \$1.7M, and \$1.1M towards operations and staffing. WCF raised \$7.3M to renovate the Moon block to create the National Willa Cather Center. Over \$9M has been invested for historic site restorations, programming, an endowment and investment in the development of the downtown Hotel Garber Project (depiction pictured left), working in concert

with Heritage Tourism Development. This 26-room boutique hotel will boast culture and comfort, meeting the identified need for lodging and dining.



Additionally, WCF is presently rehabilitating several historic properties in Red Cloud including the Willa Cather Childhood Home, the Burlington Depot, the Cather Second Home Guest House, the Farmers & Merchants Bank Building, and the Pavelka Farmstead (near Bladen). All of these projects as well as the National Willa Cather Center's completion in 2017 occurred in part due to WCF's collaboration with the City of Red Cloud. By collaborating with WCF on the Heritage Tourism Development vision, funding from the Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCCFF) was obtained for the current projects. Earlier projects utilized a relationship with the City to secure CDBG funding, including Tourism Development Initiative (TDI) funds.

In 2017, the Willa Cather Foundation received the Nebraska Preservation Award from History Nebraska and, along with Tru-Built Construction, the Build Nebraska work

thanks to its efforts to create the National Willa Cather Center. 2017 also saw the National Willa Cather Center receive the award for Outstanding Tourism Attraction at the Nebraska Travel Conference. In 2018, WCF received the Governor's Arts Award for Organizational Achievement.

E. Housing Organizations or Developers

The Red Cloud Housing Authority (RCHA) was established in 1961 by a Cooperation Agreement between the housing authority and the City of Red Cloud, and provides clean, safe and affordable housing in efficiency, 1, 2, and 3 bedroom units as well as handicapped accessible units. The RCHA has three sites: Park View, Park View Addition and Valley View. The Park View and Park View Addition sites are situated within a few blocks south of downtown. The Valley View site is located directly south of the elementary school and football field and north of Cherry Corner Estates, an assisted living facility. Cherry Corner Estates was a progressive project built by the City in 2011 to provide much needed housing to senior citizens with 14 units. The funding for Cherry Corner Estates was passed in a public election in 2009.

The RCHA has a two-member staff and five part-time maintenance and janitor/custodians. The RCHA is governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners appointed by the mayor who serve five year staggered terms. The board members hold a regular monthly meeting. A website is maintained to show current RCHA housing options: <http://redcloudhousingauthority.com/>.

In 2019, a local housing committee was created with local contractors, city officials, real estate agent, and public input. COVID-19 stalled initial progress but plans to reconvene are underway to utilize the Board of Trust purchased houses and rehabilitate as well as consideration for building a spec house. This committee helped encourage progress with the purchase of two substandard houses by the City and resold to a developer in 2021 who rehabilitated one which is now a rental home and the second house is in progress of renovation. An additional third home was sold in 2020 to a different developer and is in progress to resell. These had historically been nuisance or condemnation property, which greatly improved the aesthetics of two neighborhoods while also serving the need to improve housing on the market.

There are three developers who have purchased multiple properties with an eye towards rehabilitation including some historic homes of the Kaley House, Cutter House, and renovations of upper lofts in the downtown district for rentable units. The upper story renovations completed included 3 units above the Willa Cather museum, ongoing rehabilitation of three rentable units above The Corner Nook coffee shop with one now rented, and future plans include renovating Shade West country wester store upper level into multiple rental units.

F. LB840 Committee

Red Cloud does not have LB840. The 10-year economic development plan created in 2018 included a pathway towards eventually obtaining LB840, however, due to the 1996 ballot measure to increase the sales tax never sunsets. LB357 would have to be passed in order to push the sales tax up .05% and/or rescind the 1996 resolution to proceed. At this time, Red Cloud has chosen to continue the 1996 resolution to support ongoing community infrastructure.

G. Downtown or Main Street Organization

Heritage Tourism Development and the Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce partner as a Main Street equivalent partnership as Red Cloud Tourism & Commerce do serve some of the same functions as a traditional downtown or main street organization. Red Cloud has collaborated with the Nebraska Main Street program in the past and is looking into doing so again.

Red Cloud's downtown business owners also meet amongst themselves to discuss current and future promotions for customers and then relay this information to Red Cloud Tourism & Commerce for advertisement, especially via social media. There are three promotions that are held over the course of each year by participating businesses: Small Business Saturday, Fall and Spring Shopping Extravaganzas, and Chamber Bucks promotions. The Chamber also hosts Easter (pictured left) and Christmas events meant to give kids and families activities to participate in, but also to get people shopping downtown and throughout the community. In November 2021, a Downtown Revitalization Tour is hosted to highlight six downtown buildings undergoing renovations.



There are informal collaborations between businesses in Red Cloud that are facilitated through business owner to business owner communication, but through no official organization. These chats have resulted in events and promotions such as Ladies Night Out, a fashion show and wine tasting, and so on. During the pandemic, local businesses partnered together to deliver their products throughout the immediate region.

In October 2021 Red Cloud submitted a letter of intent to become a Creative District in the State of Nebraska and has become “pre-certified” by the Nebraska Arts Council, meaning that the application to obtain certification is in progress. The Red Cloud Creative District will likely encompass much of the 68970 zip code and portions of the Bladen zip code. Once approved, the district would be administered by the Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce.

H. Community Redevelopment Authority

The City has a Community Development Agency under 18-2101.01 code with the City governing TIF related changes. Past initiatives include the completion of two substandard and blight studies – one for downtown in 2020 and residential in 2018. The downtown study findings were substandard and blight, thus a cost benefit analysis is being pursued. The City Council continues to work on behalf of the community through the CDA to rehabilitate or redevelop areas that are substandard or blighted in accordance with the Nebraska Community Development Law.

I. Other Organizations Within the Community

There are many examples of collaborative efforts between the City and other entities. Besides the aforementioned Heritage Tourism Development collaboration between the City, the Chamber of Commerce, the Red Cloud Community Fund, and the Willa Cather Foundation the City works closely with Webster County officials, the Red Cloud Community Schools, local churches, and the Webster County Community Hospital. As the Hospital has started fundraising for a variety of possible developments, the City has been integral in providing space for related fundraisers and public meetings. The City also works with the Cowles American Legion and the Sons of the Legion on various community events, as well as Webster County EMTs, the Lions Club, and the Red Cloud Airport Authority. Recent initiatives from the Red Cloud Community Fund sub-committee for Health & Recreation, have forged a partnership with the City for the initial development of phase one of a walking/bike trail.

VOLUNTEERISM

A. How does your community recruit volunteers?

Volunteers are recruited in a fairly informal way but a direct ask is always made. Organizations tend to see who might have the energy and the skillset that is needed on a particular group. Word of mouth after initial relationship building is probably the biggest way volunteer commitments are secured. The Red Cloud Community Fund and its subcommittees are probably the most active in this regard, but local churches and groups like the Lions’ Club, PEO, the volunteer fire department, the Republican Valley Arts Council, and the Chamber of Commerce are also active.

B. What types of volunteer opportunities are available?

Red Cloud is fortunate to have many active community groups. These groups are made up entirely of volunteers. A wide variety of interests are supported as witnessed by the following brief list/descriptions:

American Legion Auxiliary	Red Cloud Community Fund
Auld Public Library Foundation	Red Cloud Community Fund Youth FAC
Bacan Dog Rescue	Red Cloud HS Alumni Association
Cornerstone Assembly of God	Red Cloud Recreation & Health
Cowles American Legion, Post 116	Red Cloud Women's Chamber
Elm Street Center	Republican Valley Arts Council
First United Methodist Church of Guide Rock	Revival Tabernacle
First United Methodist Church of Red Cloud	Rise Up – RCHS Youth Leadership
Guide Rock Unite Methodist	Sacred Heart Catholic Church
Inavale Church of Christ	Teammates
Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witness	Trailblazers RC&D
Lion's Club	Veteran's of Foreign Wars
Pheasants Forever	Webster County Community Hospital Foundation
Red Cloud Athletic Association	Webster County Senior Services
Red Cloud Bible Church	Wesleyan Church
Red Cloud Booster Club	Zion Lutheran Church

Red Cloud is fortunate to have a volunteer fire department to serve the city and the surrounding countryside. There are twenty-five volunteer fire fighters on the Red Cloud Fire Department. The fire district extends 8 miles north, 6 miles south, 5 miles east, and 8 miles west of Red Cloud for a total of 182 sq. miles. Several members of the department attend fire school each year to improve their skills and knowledge to better serve and protect the community.

Members of the fire department hold meetings on the first Thursday of each month. In addition to their community service, the Firemen host their annual Soup and Hamburger Feed in March as a fundraiser, host the City Dad's feed as an appreciation event for local community and business

leaders including police, EMS, medical personnel, and business owners. The VFD also prepare and serve the popular beef barbeque at the annual Street Car Days celebration.

City Committees: Board of Trust, Library Board, Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment, Board of Health, Board of Park Commissioners, Cemetery Board, Housing Authority Board, Tree Board, Community Redevelopment Agency, and Assisted Living Facility Board. The Board of Trust is very active as they have facilitated City wide initiatives for rehabilitation of property through recruitment of developers and contractors, while also gaining public support for needed initiatives. All are volunteers either appointed by the Mayor or elected. They work to further the community's interests on a variety of issues.

Additional community collaboration occurs with The Webster County Community Hospital Foundation opening of the Repeat Street Thrift Store in 2021, entirely ran by volunteers and donated inventory. The Teammates program boasts 15 mentor mentee matches of local adults devoting a weekly meeting to mentoring a young Red Cloud student through the school.

C. Is there a list of volunteer and leadership organizations on the website?

Community organizations that offer leadership opportunities are included in the Business & Community Directory:

<https://www.visitredcloud.com/community/business-and-community-directory>

and on the Community Organizations page:

<https://www.visitredcloud.com/community/community-organizations>

Recognition of volunteers occurs during the annual Farmers and Merchants Banquet, see Section 4.8. Kyle Klein was recognized in the 2021 banquet as the AARP Nebraska 2021 Winner of the Andrus Award for Community Service. This distinct award recognizes Klein for hit time, talents, and countless contributions towards the Webster County Community Hospital, Webster County Senior Citizens Committee, Red Cloud Community Fund, Lions Club, and Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce, as well as an active member of his local church. His nomination at the state level will be a competitive entry at the national level.

Other volunteer recognition in the community includes the *Ardys Miksch* award for volunteer service given to an outstanding community volunteer each year, and The Willa Cather Foundation hands out the *Miriam Mountford Award* annually since 2004, recognizing local volunteer(s) that contribute their time and talents to the Red Cloud Opera House and other events. The Red Cloud Community Foundation recognizes its members and donors at the annual Community Celebration during Memorial Day weekend.

LEADERSHIP

A. Who are the current leadership organizations in your community?

The Red Cloud Community Fund; the Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce; Lions' Club; Red Cloud Athletic Association; and Red Cloud Recreation committee are very active and recruit new leaders to be a part of their organization. The Red Cloud Recreation committee has been

instrumental in working with the City to develop the first phase of a walk/bike trail linking the school to the Valley Child Development Center. The Red Cloud Athletic Association collaborated with the City to propose developments in the ballfield park. They secured \$40,000 in in-kind and donations and submitted for a 2022 Nebraska Game & Parks Commission matching grant to build a new concession stand, crow's nest and storage shed in addition to renovation of the current restroom facilities to benefit the youth and visitors to the park.

The Red Cloud Alumni Association hosts a Facebook group where they communicate with alumni on annual events and cross-promoting community tourism and recreation events. Mailings to alumni include a March invitation to the Memorial Day weekend alumni gathering which is in conjunction with the Community Fund banquet that kicks off the weekend.

A new program similar to the Synovation Leadership Valley County program in the Ord and Burwell areas, is being developed as part of the E3 Energizing Entrepreneurial Ecosystems business leadership program discussed in the Business section 4.

B. Who in your community has participated in leadership programs and how have they assisted the community?

Jarrod McCartney, the Heritage Tourism Development Director is a graduate of Class IX from the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Nebraska program. He now serves on the Alumni Advisory Committee for the Leadership Nebraska program. McCartney also was in Cohort 16 of the Sherwood Foundation's Catalyst Program and is currently hosting Cohort 41 of that program. McCartney also just finished his term as President of the Nebraska Travel Association. Additional program areas of involvement include membership with the Nebraska Community Foundations, Community Engagement Committee member by leading visioning sessions for communities, and an active participant on the Energizing Entrepreneurial Ecosystems (E3) project. Additional members of the community have joined the E3 project to promote development of entrepreneurs in rural Nebraska.

Ashley Olson, Executive Director of the Willa Cather Foundation, has also been a member and a host of the Sherwood Foundation's Catalyst programs. Olson is continuing in her second term as a Commissioner for the Nebraska Tourism Commission. She has joined as an active participant on the Energizing Entrepreneurial Ecosystems project.

Clint Shipman, owner of Shipman Seed, graduated from the Nebraska LEAD program in 2017.

Beyond building networks and relationships, all of these programs helped the participants understand how to get things done in a small community and how to be more strategic with their participation in community organizations. One area of involvement has been through the Community Catalyst program hosted by the Sherwood Foundation. McCartney and Olson have both been a participant in the 18-month program and then continued through hosting a cohort to current day.

McCartney and Olson's work has definitely garnered statewide attention and made the community much more visible in Lincoln and Omaha and on the radar of leaders across the state. McCartney

and Olson both interface with state officials and political leaders on a frequent basis. We feel like prior to these programs you sometimes had to let people know where Red Cloud was (unless they were huge Cather fans!).

C. Does your community have youth leadership programs?

The community has created unique youth leadership programs to instill community pride and a philanthropic spirit. The creation of groups like the RISE UP group at the school and the Community Fund's Youth FAC/Warrior Youth Leadership group fosters leadership in our youth.

In 2019, the Red Cloud Community Fund started the Youth FAC, Fund Advisory Committee called the Warrior Youth Leadership, comprised of two leaders from each class in grades 7-12. The group identifies projects that are needed in the community and fundraises to make them a reality. They are trained in how to create a community immersed in the values of philanthropy. Community leaders work with Youth FAC to have them present at Community Fund meetings to encourage engagement. The Community Fund encourages pride in their community by gifting *O Pioneers* and *My Antonia* in 9th grade as well as to graduating high school seniors along with a personal letter encouraging them to return to Red Cloud and/or stay invested in our community long-term. The Community Fund hosts traditional and non-traditional scholarships to retain community members especially targeting those that live and work in the community.

The school also recently launched a "Rise Up Leadership" program under the direction of the school's guidance counselor. This group is very much service oriented and has already teamed up with several entities including the Lions' Club and assisted the Tour de Nebraska summer biking event with logistics support. The Rise Up Leadership group serves at the Famer's and Merchants Banquet recognizing local chamber businesses. At present, the group is looking into cleaning up the wildlife sanctuary next to the Elm Street Center (Senior Center) and the adjacent Harry Obitz park. Rise Up youth leaders also provide welcome tours to new students as serve as peer ambassadors, and address with their peers how to deal with bullying, drug and alcohol pressure, and other social issues facing teenagers.

Both the Warrior Youth Leadership and Rise Up Leadership participants attend ESU hosted youth leadership training, as well as mentoring and guidance from community and school leaders to develop their skills. The FFA chapter participates in local and state leadership development activities, training, and competitions.

Red Cloud's Future Farmers of America FFA program is active serving the community and alumni banquets and always being the first to help at other community events. FFA also looks for service opportunities in the community including home repairs and yard upkeep for community members unable to complete on their own.

Section Two: Strategic Planning

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

A. Describe the process and tools used to conduct the community assessment.

The Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund hosted a *Community Visioning Session* on November 12, 2019 facilitated by the Nebraska Community Foundation and Civic Nebraska. Community residents were invited to dinner and childcare was provided. The focus question posed was “What future do we want to create for Red Cloud?”.

Crafting Red Cloud’s Story Comprehensive Development Plan included a Community Needs Assessment (CNAS) conducted in 2014, Red Cloud Comprehensive Plan Public Input Survey Conducted in 2017, and a Community Engagement Institute and Community Conversations/Deliberative Dialogue conducted by Global Horizons, LLC in 2017.

Results from additional community assessments will be discussed where applicable in the Community Assessment – community services sections. Those assessments were:

- Community Strengths Report (CSR), Hollman Media Group, 2016; 104 surveyed, 54 residents, 9 commuters, and 41 visitors
- Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Survey, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, January 2020 and April 2021, 16 businesses surveyed
- Red Cloud Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours (BAH) event, August 2021, 15 surveyed

B. Describe the involvement of stakeholders and the community at large.

In November of 2019, the Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund hosted a Community Visioning Session. This visioning session was facilitated by the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF) and Civic Nebraska. Invited to this session were local community leaders and stakeholders, business owners, city representatives, as well as representatives from Willa Cather Foundation, Webster County Community Hospital and Red Cloud Community Schools. This session was advertised through the local newspaper, word of mouth, social media, flyers and emails from partners. A total of 33 community and regional representatives participated in the visioning session. There were also students that were invited and participated representing the junior and senior high schools at Red Cloud Community Schools.

The purpose of this visioning session was to work to set new goals for the community, review Red Cloud’s vision, mission and value statements as part of an Action Planning Update with NCF. As a part of this Action Planning Update in addition to the visioning session held on November 12, 2019 a youth visioning took place that involved the entire junior and senior high schools at Red Cloud Community Schools. Helpful information was gathered from these visioning sessions, and the kids got excited about the future of their place and their potential role in it.

The City of Red Cloud worked with South Central Economic Development District, Inc. (SCEDD) to conduct the CNAS in March of 2014. The questionnaire was divided into seven areas of interest:

demographics, city services/projects, community/lifestyle, business and economic development, education, child care, and housing. Volunteers trained by SCEDD staff, hand delivered and picked up the surveys during the week of November 13 through 20, 2013. An envelope was provided for each household to seal their survey to ensure confidentiality. For rural households, SCEDD mailed the surveys to each household with a return envelope addressed to SCEDD. The community displayed a strong turnout— 369 households returned surveys, for a 75% response rate.

As part of the planning process, SCEDD created a survey geared entirely toward the planning process. These questions focused on community and infrastructure needs, housing and neighborhoods, child care, and demographics. There were thirty-one (31) responses to this survey. The response rate was .03% of the Red Cloud population.

Community Engagement Institute and Community Conversations/Deliberative Dialogue

The City of Red Cloud worked with Global Horizons, LLC and SCEDD to conduct a deliberative dialogue focusing on the participants' current feelings of Red Cloud and their hopes for its future. The focus was on community culture, welcome to newcomers, and how decisions are made. There were four (4) sessions held at different times:

- Friday, March 31, 2015, 5:30 to 8:30 pm — no one attended
- Saturday, April 1, 8:30 to 11:30 am — no one attended
- Thursday, April 6, 1:30 to 4:30 pm — twenty (20) people attended
- Friday, April 7, 5:30 to 8:30 pm — eight (8) people attended

A total of twenty-eight (28) adults who participated in these dialogs, a response rate of .03%. There were three bonus sessions held with the Washington High School students — 7th and 8th graders, 9th and 10th graders, and 11th and 12th graders. A total of fifty-eight (58) middle and high school students attended these meetings.

It should be noted that immediately before this planning period, residents had a strong attendance rate at Marketing Hometown America and Community Action Planning/Hometown Competitiveness civic engagement meetings. This could indicate a public involvement "burnout" by the time the planning process began.

The facilitation of committees to tackle the needs in Red Cloud occurred at the Town Hall meeting to present the CNAS results to the citizens of Red Cloud. This resulted in the formation of task forces to create strategies and timeframes to complete the goals set forth by the committees.

C. Describe the results from the assessment process.

Results from the *Community Visioning Session* in November 2019 was brainstorming around the focus question: "What future do we want to create for Red Cloud?". The group came away with seven key areas: Commercial Business Retention; Community Pride; Improved Infrastructure; Thriving Downtown; Enhanced Recreation; Improved housing and Enhanced Educational Facilities and Opportunities. Groups were encouraged to continue meeting in task forces of their area of interest over the next year.

What Future DO We Want to Create for Red Cloud?

2019 Community Visioning Session Outcomes:

Commercial Business Retention	Community Pride!!	Improved Infrastructure	Thriving Downtown	Enhanced Recreation	Improved Housing	Enhanced Educational Facilities and Opportunities
Grain elevator improvements	More empathy as small community	New main street	Animal shelter	Expanded ball field opportunities	Well manicured lawns	Update school buildings, state champ banners
24/7 truck stop	Work here-live here	Smooth brick streets	Public art and green space	Expanded indoor recreation	Appealing houses	Update HS building
	Nuisance property abatement	Truck route	No empty bays on main street	New weight room	Affordable improved housing	School additions (HS, Elementary, TVCDC)
	Keep town entrances clean	Infrastructure improvement	Movie theater	Expand hospital facility and services	New housing	More educational opportunities
			Full main street buildings	Rec center	Improved housing and storefronts	Opportunities for high achieving students
			New hotel	Health and rec center	Improved streets and housing	
			Revitalize main street	YMCA (near hospital)		
			Nice restaurant	Walking/biking trail		
			Increase in downtown businesses (food-shopping)	New swimming pool		
			Thriving hotel	Fitness center		
			Family-owned restaurant			



Picture: November 2019 Community Visioning Session

Residents identify challenges in the area of the general appearance of the community, highway entrances, residential areas, vacant house and lots, the conditions of streets and sidewalks, and enforcements of zoning and animal control. Several priorities from this community visioning session two years ago has resulted in actionable achievements. A donor was identified to purchase four 'Welcome to Red Cloud' signs placed on the highway from each direction into town. The City is partnering on landscaping and installation to beautify the first impression of the town and instill community pride.

The 'Improved Housing' and 'Community Pride' priorities are being consistently addressed through the City's continued implementation of the nuisance abatement program. With some of the worst recurring blighted properties now sold to developers, the City is focusing on the next tier of houses needing repairs. Currently, 24 properties are identified as problematic with correspondence and action required by the homeowner, with an additional 14 that are common

recurring properties. This demonstrates the City is listening to its constituents to improve the overall appearance and quality of housing in Red Cloud, a direct objective from the Community Visioning Assessment.

The main street and improved brick downtown streets projects planned for 2024-2025 in conjunction with the Nebraska Department of Transportation, as well as a Downtown Revitalization planning grant underway in 2022, focus on the 'Improved Infrastructure' and 'Thriving Downtown' priorities. The Garber Hotel downtown project in development will fill a need in the community for a quality hotel and potential restaurant, emphasized as a community need, to complement the Willa Cather and other local attractions to attract tourists. Flood management has also been a concern for the community and the 2021 awarded Public Works CDBG grant awarded will rehabilitate a dam just north of town to improve flood water control. A drainage study is also approved for 2022 to address needed improvements, grading culverts, and storm sewers. The NDOT downtown streets project for 2024-2025 will also address needed wastewater runoff, and the City is planning replacement of the main waterlines through all areas of construction while the downtown roads are being rebuilt. These comprehensive planning projects are reflected in the City's Capital Improvement Plan and directly address the Assessing Wastewater Infrastructure Needs (AWIN) sustainability risk assessment that places Red Cloud in the high risk category for needing additional assistance to be in compliance due to the community's socioeconomic factors.

'Enhanced Recreation' and 'Enhanced Educational' priorities have also been progressing as the RC Public School is pursuing a new health and fitness center facility in 2022 to expand the weightlifting equipment. The new building will be adjacent to the school and still maintain community access to this amenity to serve the needs of the residents. Additionally, the Red Cloud Community Fund Health & Recreation committee has raised \$9K initially for phase one of a walking/bike trail to link the elementary school to the Valley Child Development Center. The City is working with RCCF for future phased development of walking/bike trails and is pursuing Nebraska Game and Parks Recreational Trail Program grants. The City together with volunteers, renovated the old Scout lodge in Hardwick park with the addition of a parking lot planned to serve park patrons in 2022 after acquiring a dilapidated adjacent home. The Red Cloud Athletic Association's initiative to apply for Nebraska Game and Parks Commission matching funds to \$40K in local donations, if awarded, will refurbish the existing ballpark restrooms and provide a new concession stand, crow's nest, and storage shed at this park.

The 'Enhanced Educational Opportunities and Facilities' category is further addressed by the school with the 2015 new Career Education building opened for industrial arts and woodworking. The addition of a greenhouse acquired through FFA grants and school funding, was a collaboration with the science department and FFA, opening in 2019 to increase curriculum opportunities. A new parking lot is planned in conjunction with the new health and fitness center. Additional school improvements include new windows and doors to improve accessibility for both the elementary and high school buildings, with the addition of fob access to enhance security for both buildings. In the next five years, additional playground features are also planned.

Various other community assessments have been completed to provide insight into the strengths, challenges, and opportunities of the community in multiple areas. In 2014, a full CNAS was also

completed. The community identified strong support for City services, and projects including the enforcement of city codes, and some support for funding economic development staff, city park playgrounds, law enforcement, library. Residents also showed support for curb & gutter construction, downtown streetscaping and enhancements, paving gravel streets, a free lot program for new residential construction, New heater for swimming pool, curbside recycling, tree replacements, the visitor center and Expanding the program to refurbish historic homes.

The 2014 CNAS as well as the 2020 and 2021 Business Retention & Expansion program surveys demonstrated respondents showed support for creating and recruiting new businesses to the community. Residents also were supportive of developing tourism and supporting local s businesses serving tourists. Specific types of businesses that residents would support include: a thrift store, an appliance/repair store, an Optometrist, a Handyman service and an Auto body shop. The Webster County Hospital Foundation just opened the Repeat Street Thrift Store in 2021 in direct response to this resident feedback ran solely with volunteers. It was unknown if some of the other new businesses noted of interest were needed, therefore profitable and feasibility studies were recommended.

D. Specifically address findings in the following noted below, with particular information on the residents' perception of a community's opportunities and services:

1. Communications

All major cellular providers are available in Red Cloud. Home telephone service is provided by Great Plains Communications and Frontier Communication. Internet providers in Red Cloud are: Great Plains Communications, Vyve Broadband and Glenwood Communications. Providing adequate internet connection allows Red Cloud to stay connected, current, and informed of issues outside of their community on a bigger platform than only having access to local news sources.

Cell phone coverage: BAH results:

- Three people (20%) were very satisfied
- Five people (33%) were somewhat satisfied
- Six people (40%) were not very satisfied
- One person (7%) were not at all satisfied

Broadband Capabilities: BAH results:

- Two people (13%) were very satisfied
- Ten people (67%) were somewhat satisfied
- One person (7%) was not very satisfied
- Two people (13%) were not at all satisfied
- BRE Survey results: Quality of life infrastructure internet issue was cited as a top challenge for the community by 3 of the 16 respondents (19%).

2. Health Care

Quality healthcare is necessary for a healthy population. Webster County Community Hospital and the Webster County Clinic are located at 621 North Franklin Street in Red Cloud. The hospital is a thirteen (13) bed critical access hospital. It provides general medical and surgical care for inpatients and outpatients. Emergency room services are available twenty-four (24) hours a day. There is one medical provider on staff for both the clinic and emergency room setting. Patients are offered a variety of outpatient services from specialty physicians across Nebraska, including orthopedics, infectious disease, and oncology.

Red Cloud residents also have access to the Main Street Clinic, managed by Franklin County Memorial Hospital. It is staffed by an APRN with a physician medical director. There are also two (2) regional hospitals in Kearney and one (1) regional hospital in Grand Island.

Landgren and Uden Family Dentistry, located at 109 West 4th Avenue, provides dental procedures in Red Cloud.

The hospital participated in a "Community Health Needs Assessment Strategy" in 2018 as part of an effort by the South Heartland District Health Department. This process was Mobilization for Action Through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP), which is a strategic approach to community health improvement. The top 2 gaps in health services were identified as mental health services and mental health practitioners and substance abuse prevention and treatment services. Since this assessment, the South Heartland District Health Department worked with area providers to build their Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) Development: <https://southheartlandhealth.org/public-health-data/community-health-needs-assessment.html>

Locally Available Healthcare: BAH results:

- Two people (13%) were very satisfied
- Ten people (67%) were somewhat satisfied
- One person (7%) was not very satisfied
- Two people (13%) were not at all satisfied

3. Housing

Red Cloud's greatest asset is its people. The City's ability to attract and retain residents is tied directly to the health of its neighborhoods, both old and new. Quality housing is an important need for every resident at every stage of life. Therefore, a significant number of the 2014 CNAS questions were geared toward the identification of several types of housing needs geared at both homeowners and those who rent. The results to follow describe the 2014 results, however, the smaller surveyed group of 15 After Hour Business responses are also provided.

The first question asked if the household owned or rented their residence. Seventy-five percent (75%) of households owned their home, while 25% rented theirs. When compared to rural households outside the city limits, only 10% of households were renters.

The next step was to identify how many families were “cost burdened.” These individuals pay more than 30% of their income to occupy their residence plus utilities. Survey results showed one third of all respondents were “cost burdened.” Of these households, 71% were owners and 29% were renters.

An important factor in assessing the housing stock of Red Cloud was having residents to rate the quality of their residence. Options were good; needs minor repairs (under \$5,000); needs moderate repairs (between \$5,001-\$25,000); needs major repairs (more than \$25,000). Of the 371 respondents, 70% stated their residence was in good condition. Approximately one quarter of households indicated their home needed moderate repairs, only 5% said their home was in need of major repairs.

There was a focus on getting housing feedback from renters. Available rental properties and options are very limited in Red Cloud, not unlike the rest of rural Nebraska. The questions asked pertained to the adequacy of the renter’s current residence, their preference to rent or own, and what keeps those that want to buy houses from doing so. Out of the 95 renters, 86% feel their needs are met, while 14% feel their needs are not met. Of the current renters, when asked if they would prefer to rent or own, 60% stated they prefer to rent, while the remaining 40% of current renters would prefer to own. The question, “What is preventing these renters from owning their homes?” was of great interest for the City of Red Cloud. The thirty-five renters were asked to identify the greatest barriers preventing them from purchasing a home. The participants selected multiple barriers, but lack of a down payment was identified as the number one barrier with twenty-four responses. Personal credit rating and lack of available housing tied for second most common barrier with twenty-one responses. Lack of lot or building site was listed as a barrier for nine people.

Nineteen of the twenty-four renters that preferred to own but lacked a down payment showed interest and a willingness to apply for down payment loan assistance. These responses gave insight into the needs and feasible opportunities for the renters within the community and their willingness to improve their housing situation.

Homeowners were also presented with specific questions to help identify their housing needs. The first question asked if the homeowner had considered changing their residence, to either upgrade or downsize. Forty-one homeowners want to downsize, while forty-three want to upgrade. Homeowners were asked what the barriers were to changing residences, in which they could choose multiple responses. Of the 41 homeowners considering downsizing, 17 listed financial concerns as a barrier, 6 stated lack of available housing, and 1 stated a lack of a building site was a barrier preventing them from downsizing. Eighteen seeking to downsize said they were not changing residences for other reasons. Of the 43 homeowners considering upgrading their current residence, 30 selected financial concerns as a barrier to change, 10 listed lack of available housing, 3 stated lack of a building site, and 6 said they were not changing for other reasons.

Availability of Housing: BAH results:

- One person (7%) was very satisfied
- Four people (27%) were somewhat satisfied

- Six people (40%) were not very satisfied
- Two people (13%) were not at all satisfied
- Two people (13%) did not respond
- BRE Survey results: Quality of life housing issue was cited as the top challenge for the community by 13 of the 16 respondents (81%).

4. Education



When asked about the relationship between the community and the school, 61% of respondents rated the relationship between the community and the school as good or excellent. Nearly 1/3 felt the relationship was fair, and only 10% stated a poor relationship existed. There was no significant difference in opinion between households with children in school and those with no children in grades K-12.

The survey had two questions about curriculum within the Red Cloud Schools. An overwhelming majority, 94% of respondents, felt that Advanced Placement classes should definitely or probably be available for high school students. (Pictured: Washington High School, grades 7-12). Regarding whether Willa Cather history and writing should be emphasized within the local curriculum, 65% of all respondents indicated this definitely or probably should be emphasized.

Educational Opportunities for Pre-K-12: BAH results:

- Four people (27%) were very satisfied
- Five people (33%) were somewhat satisfied
- Three people (20%) were not very satisfied
- Two people (13%) were not at all satisfied
- One person (7%) did not respond
- CSR Survey results: The following attributes are most important to people in selecting a community: there are good quality schools was ranked as 3.47 on a scale of 1 to 5 as being important with the 104 Red Cloud respondents.

Educational Opportunities for Continuing Education: BAH results:

- One person (7%) was very satisfied
- Four people (27%) were somewhat satisfied
- Six people (40%) were not very satisfied
- Three people (20%) were not at all satisfied
- One person (7%) did not respond

5. Employment

From the Comprehensive Plan, like most of Nebraska, there is a low unemployment rate of 3.6% in Webster County. In both Nebraska and Webster County, the relatively low unemployment rate reflects the fact that most people who want to work are employed. Red

Cloud does have a significant portion of the population who will be aging out of the workforce in the coming years. Those jobs will need to be filled by an incoming workforce. The unemployment rate of a community is also used as a signaling device to companies looking for a place to locate their business. A too-low unemployment rate indicates that there is not a workforce available to fill the new job opportunities. Both Nebraska and Webster County's unemployment rates indicate a healthy employment market with a large enough workforce available for new economic opportunities.

The average weekly wage in Webster County is far below that of the average weekly wage of the entire state. Average wages across the state are increasing more rapidly than those in Webster County. On average, wages across Nebraska increased nearly eighteen percent (18%) between 2010 and 2015. During that same time period in Webster County, wages only increased ten percent (10%).

Webster County has a variety of job sectors to offer the residents of Red Cloud. The total amount of jobs in Webster County has decreased between 2013 and 2015. However, educational services and retail trade have increased. Webster County's local economy is heavily reliant on agriculture.

Seventy percent (70%) of workers remain in Webster County to work. A majority of those who commute out of Webster County work in Adams County. This can be attributed to the City of Hastings, which is a regional economic hub. Only eight percent (8%) work in other counties such as Clay, Franklin, Nuckolls, and other surrounding counties. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, 110 workers live and work in Red Cloud, while 371 workers live in Red Cloud but leave to work in other areas. 282 people come into Red Cloud but do not live there.

Locally Available Job Opportunities: BAH results:

- One person (7%) was very satisfied
- Ten people (67%) were somewhat satisfied
- Two people (13%) were not very satisfied
- Zero people (0%) were not at all satisfied
- Two people (13%) did not respond
- CSR Survey results: The following attributes are most important to people in selecting a community: there are good quality schools was ranked as 3.17 on a scale of 1 to 5 as being important with the 104 Red Cloud respondents.

If you have available job openings, is it difficult to find labor with the skills needed from within the community: BAH results:

- Seven people (47%) stated very difficult
- Three people (20%) stated somewhat difficult
- One person (7%) stated not very difficult
- Four people (0%) did not respond

6. Recreation/Tourism

Heritage tourism is a driving economic force for the City of Red Cloud and Webster County. The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past” and includes “cultural, historic, and natural resources.” Red Cloud has a storied past and is able to invoke that sense of authenticity in its visitors.

The City of Red Cloud has worked tirelessly to preserve its unique history. When many other communities were replacing their courthouse, Webster County preserved their 1914 “County Citadel” type courthouse with Second Renaissance Revival architectural characteristics. In partnership with the Willa Cather Foundation, the City has preserved nearly fifty (50) sites associated with the author, including her childhood home. Just south of town, the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie offers visitors a trip back in time to a land returned to its 19th century topography. The Moon Block Restoration Project was completed in 2017. This project included the renovation of the National Willa Cather Center and the creation of three (3) downtown apartments and three (3) retail bays.

Investment in this type of historic preservation is vital to the success of Red Cloud. Each year, approximately 8,000 to 10,000 visitors come to experience the living history provided by these historic places. These visitors eat in local restaurants, sleep in local accommodations, and shop in local stores. This is out of town revenue that would not otherwise be available in the City.

In April of 2016, the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship conducted an Impact Analysis on Heritage Tourism Development in Red Cloud and Webster County. It concluded that Heritage Tourism has already had a significant impact on the City. With the increase in lodging created in 2012 with the Cather Second Home Guest House renovation and 2014 opening of the Kaley House Bed and Breakfast, lodging sales increased from \$139,000 in 2011 to a high of \$273,000 in 2015— a ninety-six percent (96%) increase. The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship estimates that the total visitor spending will more than triple between 2015 and 2024 if Red Cloud continues to invest in Heritage Tourism activities.

Since 2015, new, tourism related businesses have opened, primarily in the restaurant industry. Two of these businesses, The Corner Nook (a specialty coffee and gift shop) and On the Brix (a wine tasting room that also features Nebraska craft beer and high end cocktails), are outstanding examples. On the Brix also occupies one of the newly created retail bays in the National Willa Cather Center and brings a different type of product to the community. Both were created/recruited in part to appeal to the more affluent visitors Red Cloud hopes to attract but also to improve the quality of life of Red Cloud citizens. The National Willa Cather recently filled its other 2 retail bays by adding the Repeat Street Thrift Store and the YWCA School of Dance.

The Cather Center experienced a forty-nine percent (49%) increase in visitors in 2017, a thirty-five percent (35%) increase in tours and a sixty-one percent (61%) increase in seven building



tours, which is the most profitable and time consuming tour. The Cather Bookstore experienced a forty-five percent (45%) increase in sales, a majority of which came after the grand opening of the Cather Center in June, 2017. Finally, the Starke Round Barn (pictured left) has seen an eighty-nine percent (89%) increase in visitation from 2016-2017.

Currently, the largest challenge the City faces in regard to tourism is the lack of quality lodging in the City. There are plans underway to address this by developing the Brenda's Shoppe building on the southeast corner of Fourth Avenue and Webster Street into a Boutique Hotel in addition to the Hotel Garber project for downtown. Red Cloud should continue investing in viable historic projects to expand on their niche for heritage tourism.

Recreation and Tourism Opportunities: BAH results:

- Four people (27%) was very satisfied
- Nine people (60%) were somewhat satisfied
- Two people (13%) were not very satisfied
- Zero people (0%) were not at all satisfied

7. Community Infrastructure

Water System

The City of Red Cloud owns and operates their public water system. The system consists of two (2) wells, located four (4) miles north of town, which are both around 200 feet deep. The City also has a 250,000-gallon water tower that was built in 1987. The water is not treated. However, to ensure water safety and quality, the City conducts monthly water quality testing and meets all Federal and State standards. Current water rates in Red Cloud are forty dollars (\$40.00) a quarter— thirteen dollars and thirty-three cents (\$13.33) per month— plus a usage rate of one dollar (\$1.00) per 1,000 gallons of water. The main waterlines will be replaced in conjunction with the two NDOT replacement of downtown sections of streets in 2024-2025 as well as improvements to all wastewater runoff through these project sections.

Sewer Collection and Treatment

Red Cloud owns and operates a gravity flow wastewater system that runs south of town about a mile to the lift station at the sewer plant. From there, the wastewater is pumped into a three cell lagoon system. A drainage study will start in 2022 to address needed improvements, grading culverts and storm sewers.

Solid Waste Collection

Red Cloud's solid waste collection is conducted by R&M Disposal, LLC. out of Red Cloud, Nebraska. R&M Disposal, LLC. utilizes the Hastings Solid Waste Landfill/Wood Waste Facility, located in Hastings, Nebraska. Their rate is fifteen dollars (\$15.00) a month per residential

dwelling. The City provides a Compost Site located at 763 Highway 281. Adjacent to the Compost Site is a newly constructed Construction and Demolition Landfill. The first cell of this project was completed in 2017 with a second cell constructed when needed.

Electric

The City of Red Cloud purchases its power from Nebraska Municipal Power Pool (NMPP). Additionally, power is sourced from Western Area Power Association (WAPA). The electricity is delivered into town on a sixty-nine (69) KV line owned by Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD). The City owns a generating facility that is capable of producing over four (4) megawatts of electricity. The power plant consists of four (4) Fairbanks-Morse opposing piston engines that run on diesel fuel or natural gas.

Currently, the base electric rate for residential dwellings is twenty-three dollars (\$23.00) per billing period. In addition to the base rate, there is a charge of \$.1283 per kilowatt-hour for the first 700 kilowatt-hours used per month. During the winter, there is an additional charge of \$.0953 per kilowatt-hour for any usage over the first 700 kilowatt-hours.

Natural Gas

Red Cloud's natural gas provider is Black Hills Energy. The base rate customer charge for a single family home with one (1) meter is fifteen dollars and two cents (\$15.02) per month. There is a safety and integrity charge of four dollars and ninety-two cents (\$4.92) per month. Black Hills Energy also has a distribution charge calculated at \$.4675 for the first twenty (20) therms and \$.1338 per therm for any exceeding the first twenty (20) therms.

Water/Sewer/Utilities: BAH results:

- Three people (20%) was very satisfied
- Eight people (53%) were somewhat satisfied
- Three people (20%) were not very satisfied
- 1 person (7%) were not at all satisfied

Streets/Sidewalks: BAH results:

- Zero people (0%) were very satisfied
- Five people (33%) were somewhat satisfied
- Five people (33%) were not very satisfied
- Five people (33%) were not at all satisfied

Public Facilities: BAH results:

- Three people (20%) were very satisfied
- Eight people (53%) were somewhat satisfied
- Two people (13%) were not very satisfied
- Two people (13%) were not at all satisfied

8. Community Services

Police/Fire/Rescue: BAH results:

- Eight people (53%) were very satisfied
- Four people (27%) were somewhat satisfied
- Zero people (0%) were not very satisfied
- Two people (13%) were not at all satisfied

Public Library: (pictured right) BAH results:

- Ten people (67%) were very satisfied
- Four people (27%) were somewhat satisfied
- 1 person (7%) was not very satisfied
- Zero people (0%) were not at all satisfied



Senior Center: BAH results:

- Two people (15%) were very satisfied
- Ten people (67%) were somewhat satisfied
- 1 person (7%) was not very satisfied
- Zero people (0%) were not at all satisfied

Youth Programs: BAH results:

- 1 person (7%) was very satisfied
- Six people (50%) were somewhat satisfied
- Two people (17%) were not very satisfied
- Three people (25%) were not at all satisfied

Civic Center: BAH results:

- Four people (27%) were very satisfied
- Six people (50%) were somewhat satisfied
- One person (8%) was not very satisfied
- Two people (17%) were not at all satisfied

Child Care: BAH results:

- Ten people (67%) were very satisfied
- Four people (27%) were somewhat satisfied
- 1 person (7%) was not very satisfied
- Zero people (0%) were not at all satisfied



In the 2014 CNAS, a total of 147 children under twelve years of age were reported by 105 households. Twenty-nine households indicated they definitely or probably anticipate needing childcare within the next five years. The highest demand for school age childcare was after school and during summer; an equal number of households (59) stated they would use a center at these times. The next highest demand was for non-school days; 49 households would utilize a childcare center on these days. Seventeen households stated they would use a childcare center for school age children before school. Twenty-two households stated they use childcare on a regular basis; of these, fifteen had childcare in Red Cloud and seven utilized childcare located elsewhere. Of the households that stated they use childcare on a regular basis, 17 stated they would definitely or probably use a childcare center if one was available in Red Cloud.

The Valley Child Development Center (pictured above) opened in 2018 thanks in part to a Public Works CDBG grant and CDAA Tax Credits. The facility has played a critical role in serving child care needs in the Red Cloud community. The City of Red Cloud donated the land upon which the facility was built.

Community Action Agency Services: BAH results:

- Twelve people (86%) were very satisfied
- Two people (14%) were somewhat satisfied
- Zero people (0%) were not very satisfied
- Zero people (0%) were not at all satisfied

E. Attach a copy of any reports developed as a result of the community assessment.

Located here: <https://www.visitredcloud.com/government/city-ordinances-zoning-and-planning-documents> > Business & Retention & Expansion Reports | Survey Results | Additional Research Reports

- 2018 Hollman Media Community Strengths Report
- 2021 Business Retention & Expansion Report
- 2021 Business After Hours Survey
- 2019 Community Visioning Session

Section Three: Community Planning & Zoning

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A. Describe the community's comprehensive plan, including the process used for its development.

In 2017, the City began the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan, which included meetings with stakeholder groups, city of Red Cloud staff, City Council, Planning Commission, and the community at large to assess community needs. These meetings were led by consultants from the South Central Economic Development District, Inc. (SCEDD), to gauge community needs in order to create strategies for the Comprehensive Plan.

During the Comprehensive Plan planning process, stakeholders met with the consultant to discuss community needs, and community meetings were held to gain input from the community. The involvement of stakeholders and the community was essential in forming the areas of focus for the plan and identifying community strengths to build upon. Topics addressed included Red Cloud's geography, history, population, economy, historic preservation, housing, community facilities, environmental conditions, land use, transportation, and energy.

SCEDD, working with the City of Red Cloud, conducted a community needs assessment and conducted individual interviews with key community members, which provided a platform to discuss their broader opinions of the community and its future opportunities. The input received during this process was used in the formation of the Community's future goals and strategies. A town hall meeting was held where the community at large was invited to work alongside the SCEDD planning team to identify future growth and redevelopment areas to assist the overall Land Use Plan. The draft Land Use Plan was then presented at an open house, and residents had the opportunity to comment on the Plan elements. SCEDD prepared the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Red Cloud, which was finalized in January 2018 and presented to the Red Cloud City Council on March 6, 2018. The Council voted to suspend the three readings of the Comprehensive Plan Update and as such it was read by title and moved for final passage on March 6, 2018.

SCEDD also worked with the City of Red Cloud to update the City's Zoning Ordinances to reflect the new Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission met with SCEDD and reviewed the updates and recommended that City Council approve the updates. At least three-fourths of the Council voted to suspend the three readings of the Zoning Ordinance Update and as such it was read by title and moved for final passage on March 6, 2018. Due to errors in the 2018 Zoning Ordinance, the City Attorney worked with SCEDD to update the City's Zoning Ordinances to correctly reflect the new Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission met with SCEDD and reviewed the updates and recommended that City Council approve the updates. At least three-fourths of the Council voted to suspend the three readings of the Zoning Ordinance Update and as such it was read by title and moved for final passage on September 8, 2020. The City of Red Cloud has been following its Comprehensive Plan and updated Zoning Ordinances since adoption.

B. Comprehensive Plan online link.

Crafting Red Cloud's Story: Comprehensive Development Plan, City of Red Cloud, Nebraska, 2018-2038; Economic Development 10-Year Strategic Plan; Heritage Tourism 5-Year Plan 2020-2025; Heritage Tourism 5-Year Summary 2015-2020; the Value of Heritage Tourism; and LB840 & LB357 Reports all found here:

<https://www.visitredcloud.com/government/city-ordinances-zoning-and-planning-documents> > Comprehensive Plans

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A. Provide the capital improvement plan or provide a link to an online version.

In late 2021, the City developed a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2022-2031 years and approved by the City Council in early 2022. A resolution was passed for annual review and examination of the CIP to aid the City in their comprehensive planning. The major equipment is also inventoried and reflected in the CIP. The City will utilize this comprehensive list of major equipment as a planning tool to predict the replacement cycle for equipment then prioritize the budget items as needed. Capital improvement projects completed in 2020 and 2021 include the purchase of a mini-excavator for the cemetery and a shed build, the Hardwick park Scout lodge remodeled, and replacement of the Community Center's HVAC system. Walk/bike trail development is a community priority and is captured in the 10-year plan for the first two phases determined and additional funds sought, with hopes that future phases can be funded in part with the RCCF and City funds.

The City has hired the JEO Engineer company to develop a One and Six Year Street Plan, with the most current one for 2020/21 – 2026/27 in progress. Those street improvement projects are also captured in the CIP.

The CIP is located on the City website, along with the One and Six Year Street Plan:
<https://www.visitredcloud.com/government/city-ordinances-zoning-and-planning-documents> > Capital Improvement Plan.

ZONING AND SUBDIVISION ORDINANCES

A. Provide the zoning and subdivision ordinances.

Municipal Planning including Zoning and Subdivision Regulations are located in Chapter 11, Article 1 and 2 of the City's Municipal Code:

<https://www.visitredcloud.com/government/city-ordinances-zoning-and-planning-documents>
> Zoning and Blight/Substandard Study (Ch. 11, pg. 1-2)

BUILDING CODES

A. Are building codes in place?

Building codes are located in Chapter 9, Article 5 of the City's Municipal Code:
<https://www.visitredcloud.com/sites/default/files/files/1/chapter9.pdf>. (Ch. 9, pg. 7)

B. Are housing codes in place?

Housing codes are referenced in Chapter 9, Article 5 of the City's Municipal Code,
<https://www.visitredcloud.com/sites/default/files/files/1/chapter9.pdf>. (Ch. 9, pg. 7)

C. Are nuisance ordinances in place?

Nuisance Ordinances have been in place for a number of years and are found in Chapter 4, Article 3, and Chapter 6, Article 4 of the Municipal Code. Numerous properties have been cleaned up through the enforcement of the nuisance regulations and continues to be a priority of the City and its residents.

<https://www.visitredcloud.com/sites/default/files/files/1/chapter4.pdf>

<https://www.visitredcloud.com/sites/default/files/files/1/chapter6.pdf>

D. Provide building codes, housing codes, and nuisance ordinances or provide a link to online versions.

Both the Building Codes and the Housing Codes can be found in the City of Red Cloud Municipal Code in Chapter 9, Article 5, at the following link:

<https://www.visitredcloud.com/sites/default/files/files/1/chapter9.pdf> (Ch. 9, pg. 4)

Nuisance Ordinances can be found in the City of Red Cloud Municipal Code in Chapter 4, Article 3:

<https://www.visitredcloud.com/sites/default/files/files/1/chapter4.pdf>. (Ch. 4, pgs. 3-7)

Nuisance Ordinances are also found in Chapter 6, Article 4:

<https://www.visitredcloud.com/sites/default/files/files/1/chapter6.pdf>. (Ch. 6, pgs. 13-14)

CODE ENFORCEMENT

A. Who is responsible for code enforcement?

The Utilities Superintendent for the City of Red Cloud is authorized to enforce the provisions of Building Codes. The Red Cloud City Council and the City Attorney enforce Nuisance Codes and City Ordinances.

B. How often are inspections done?

The Red Cloud City Council addresses nuisance abatement at Council meetings. When authorized by the City Council, inspections are made and notices are sent by the City Attorney for nuisances and zoning violations. The City Clerk also sends notices when properties are not mowed and there

is excessive growth of worthless vegetation. Nuisances are prosecuted by the Webster County Attorney. Numerous properties have been cleaned up through this enforcement process. The most frequent violations are weeds, yard waste, excessive trash and unsightly items. The Utilities Superintendent becomes involved if complaints involve a building structure, animal and some zoning violations.

C. How many violations have there been in the past 24 months?

There have been 43 nuisance violation notices sent in the past 24 months. This number includes notices sent to properties with recurring problems over the prior 24 months.

BUILDING PERMITS

A. Describe the process for issuing building permits in your community.

All building permit applications, for both residential and commercial construction, are reviewed by the Utilities Superintendent for compliance with the City's standards as well as other applicable zoning regulations, including landscaping, parking, and setback requirements, with input and assistance from the City Attorney. Additionally, all sign permits are reviewed and approved through the Planning and Zoning Department.

B. How many building permits were issued within the last year?

The City of Red Cloud approved 21 building permits and 14 fence permits within the last year.

Section Four: Business and Technology

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION PROGRAM

<https://www.visitredcloud.com/government/city-ordinances-zoning-and-planning-documents> >
Business Retention and Expansion Reports

A. Provide detailed information on the community's Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) Program:

The Red Cloud Tourism and Commerce office is the primary point of contact for business assistance. The Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit organization that works to help the community by bringing in new businesses, supporting existing businesses, and sharing the splendor of the community with others.

1. How many businesses are in the community?

There are 65 businesses currently located and operating in the City of Red Cloud.

2. How are businesses identified or targeted for visits?

Businesses are identified based on their industry type, employment, and impact on the downtown, local community and regional economy.

3. How many businesses are visited with annually?

Following the guidelines below, approximately 15 businesses are visited annually.

Population:	Number of Interviews
Less than 1,000	10
1,000 – 3,000	15
3,000-5,000	20
5,000- 7,000	25
7,000-10,000	30
Over 10,000	35

Over a span of 14 months (February 2020-April 2021) a total of 16 BR&E visits were conducted. These visits were conducted by DED staff as well as Red Cloud Tourism and Commerce staff. The following businesses were visited including their industry sector codes (see attached link to survey):

<u>Business Name:</u>	<u>Industry (2-digit NAICS):</u>
1. Willa Cather Foundation/Book Store	71: Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
2. On The Brix	72: Accommodation and Food Services
3. M Guest House	72: Accommodation and Food Services

4. Fat Fox's Restaurant	72: Accommodation and Food Services
5. Village Pharmacy	62: Health Care & Social Assistance
6. Energized Electric LLC	54: Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
7. The Valley Child Development Center	61: Educational Services
8. Webster County Hospital	62: Health Care & Social Assistance
9. Gottsch Feedyard	44-45: Retail Trade
10. Hometown Market	44-45: Retail Trade
11. Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	71: Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
12. Kenny's Lumber	44-45: Retail Trade
13. GTA Insurance Group	52: Finance and Insurance
14. South Central State Bank	52: Finance and Insurance
15. Heritage Bank	52: Finance and Insurance
16. Riverwood Bakery	72: Accommodation and Food Services
17. Corner Nook	44-45: Retail Trade

4. How are visits conducted, and who is involved?

Most visits are conducted by the Director of Red Cloud Tourism and Commerce and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development regional business staff. These are more formal visits that include the completion of a BR&E Visitation Survey. The Director of Red Cloud Tourism and Commerce also makes regular informal visits to local businesses to see how their business is going and to offer any assistance as needed. The summer of 2021, Red Cloud Tourism and Commerce brought on an intern to further connect with local businesses and provide information on programs and resources.

5. What is done with the data collected?

The data is kept with the Red Cloud Tourism and Commerce office so that the Director has direct knowledge of the needs of the business owners. This information can also be used to help with recruiting new businesses, expansion assistance, and employment needs. This information is also used to help develop new business assistance programs, as well as enhance existing programs.

6. How is follow-up initiated and tracked?

After the BR&E interviews, the business owner will be given the opportunity to schedule a follow-up visit. Typically, follow-up after a BR&E visit is done via email, phone, or an in-person visit.

7. Provide an explanation of how local businesses are communicated with.

The City of Red Cloud remains open for communication and provides support when needed. Red Cloud Tourism and Commerce utilizes the following forms to communicate with local businesses:

- Email list to market upcoming events and communicate programs and initiatives
- Facebook page posts (facebook.com/visitredcloud)
- Instagram posts (instagram.com/visitredcloud)
- Monthly Chamber meetings
- Events posted regularly on website calendar
- Monthly Tourism & Commerce Newsletters
- Press releases
- Business and Community Directory
- Face-to-Face meetings
- Welcome to Red Cloud YouTube Video
- Community Welcome Packet
- Twitter - handles [#weareRC](#), [#visitredcloud](#), [#redcloudproud](#)

The City and Red Cloud Tourism and Commerce communicated a great deal of news and support to businesses during the pandemic. These included updates to any local, regional or statewide health initiatives. The City and Red Cloud Tourism and Commerce made businesses aware of federal assistance programs such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Small Business Administration (SBA) Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program. They also advised about statewide programs such as the Small Business Stabilization (SBS) grants through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Assistance included helping businesses find local and regional resources to assist with these applications.

8. Provide an explanation of how local businesses are recognized.

The City collaborates with Red Cloud Tourism and Commerce regarding ribbon cuttings and recognition in the monthly Tourism & Commerce Newsletters. Each business is featured in the Red Cloud Business and Community Directory on the Red Cloud Tourism and Commerce website. Each business has a link where individuals can click to find more information about them. On the bottom of the Red Cloud Tourism and Commerce website scroll testimonials about living, working and visiting Red Cloud. Many of these include stories of how friendly and welcoming local businesses are to people coming to Red Cloud.

A Farmers and Merchants Banquet is held annually to recognize area businesses and community leaders. This year's banquet was held in September 2021 with 82 businesses, non-profits and other organizations invited.

Greetings from Historic Red Cloud: Great Stories Grow Here!

Set amid brick-lined streets, charming homes, historic buildings, and the immense beauty of the prairie, Red Cloud offers a glimpse into a storied American past while maintaining a progressive vision for the future. Great stories start in Red Cloud--add your own chapter today!

Community News



Red Cloud Animal Health Named Business of the Year, Kyle Klein named Outstanding Volunteer of the Year during 71st Farmers & Merchants Banquet

ONLINE PRESENCE

A. Provide link for community information on Location One Information System (LOIS)

LOIS website: [Red Cloud locality listing on LOIS](#)

B. Who is responsible for updating the community's web presence?

The Director of the Red Cloud Tourism and Commerce is responsible for updating the community's website presence. He is responsible for maintaining Red Cloud's online presence. He updates the website as needed to provide accurate and current information for the community's residents. The Red Cloud website was updated in the Spring of 2017 and organized to appeal to visitors and locals alike. Red Cloud is quickly garnering a reputation for being a tourist community and many of the amenities and cultural venues that attract folks from all over the country make the quality of life in Red Cloud exceptional for local residents as well, especially for a town of our size. The website has listings for lodging, dining, and retail and a complete business inventory. The community section of the website is where residents can pay their utility bill, read City Council minutes, and find community calendars, a full listing of major events, and news. www.visitredcloud.com.

The city clerk provides updates to the needed updates for the Government portion of the website.

C. Community website must include: <https://www.visitredcloud.com/>

1. Identification
 - a. Name of community
 - b. Name of STATE – Nebraska clearly shown
 - c. Map showing location of community within Nebraska
 - d. Location identification should be found on EVERY page (e.g., on secondary pages).
 - e. Action photos showcasing your community
 - f. All links must be working links.
2. Contact Information
 - a. Full/complete information (physical address, telephone with area code, email)
 - b. Found clearly on home page and in the footer/header/sidebar of EVERY page on site
 - c. Emails should be “hot” or working. They should be spelled out – not somebody’s name underlined or a sentence saying “email us.” Remember the people that want to print off the paper and call or email you later.
 - d. If the page has a “Contact Us” button or tab – it should open another page
 - e. on the website with the same look and feel and it should contain contact information. This should NEVER be a link that automatically opens an email.
3. Navigation
 - a. Should be intuitively easy to follow
 - b. Easy to identify where at all times within the site
 - c. Provides way back home without having to use “back” button
4. Community Information
 - a. Employment opportunities
 - b. Housing
 - c. Utilities
 - d. Businesses
 - e. Restaurants
 - f. Local attractions/recreation
 - g. Local groups/volunteer opportunities
 - h. Local events information

Section Five: Implementation

BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURIAL ASSISTANCE

Local leaders, McCartney and Olson, are incorporating the Energizing Entrepreneurial Ecosystems (E3) initiatives over the next three years. A community engagement forum overviews a statistical profile of the county followed by asset mapping will be offered to all in the 40-mile radius of Red Cloud in late 2021 through 2023. Red Cloud leaders will be working with other Nebraska community leaders to start USDA REDLG revolving loan fund and reenergize the local investment club.

This local investment club funded the acquisition of the city's grocery store in 2017 to transition ownership from CPI, Cooperative Producers Inc., to a private ownership. This facilitated a smooth transition for uninterrupted grocery service with enhanced options to serve the area community. The investment club has been called upon when the community shows need to retain and expand key businesses.

LOCAL FINANCING AND BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

Currently there is a utility rebate program the City of Red Cloud offers businesses, up to \$1200 in their first year of operation. In addition, the Chamber matches up to 50% not to exceed \$600 in a rebate to participating businesses of the utility rebate program. Through the utility rebate program, the Chamber has awarded over \$6,000. The Historical Preservation Committee also awards small grants to help owners of businesses and residential properties to cover materials costs.

Storefront Improvement Program (SIP)

The purpose of the Storefront Improvement Program is to encourage businesses and property owners to improve the front exterior of their commercial properties, making these areas more attractive to shoppers and growing their vitality and economic performance. This is a relatively new program. The program reimburses owners of commercial buildings and businesses which provide goods and services to the community, with a grant which will provide up to \$500 towards the total cost of eligible improvements. Applicants must be current, dues paying members of the Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce (aka Red Cloud Tourism & Commerce). Applicants should not start work assuming they will get the grant until they receive a signed copy of the application from the Red Cloud Tourism & Commerce/Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce. Through the Storefront Improvement Grant the Chamber has awarded \$1,500.

Tax Increment Financing

Local Board of Public Trust acquires distressed real estate, with the city providing some funding if the property is identified as nuisance, unsafe, or blighted. Property clean-up is accomplished to prepare for resale in an improved condition so it can return to the tax rolls as a contributing property. This board has managed to flip back property after it is abated and in a livable condition. Considerations to address commercial property needs is used when needed with the Public Trust working with the business to take the next step.

The City is exploring TIF options for the Hotel Garber project as well with a projected construction start date of April 2022 and be open for business the summer of 2023. CPI (Cooperative Producers, Inc.) has utilized TIF funding in the past with a 15-year payout period just ending.

The Lodging & Sales Tax Revenue also provides a source of funding, showing consistent growth since 2010.

Fig. 1: Lodging Tax Trends in Webster County. Heritage Tourism was launched as a strategy in 2012 and essentially began with the construction of the National Willa Cather Center and gained further momentum and structure in 2015 with the hiring of a Heritage Tourism Development Director. Despite historic floods and a global pandemic lessening the impact of tourism in 2019-20, the trend is still heading in the right direction. The rolling 5-year average is probably more representative of market trends than the linear projections as it does a better job of accounting for anomalies/exceptional events.

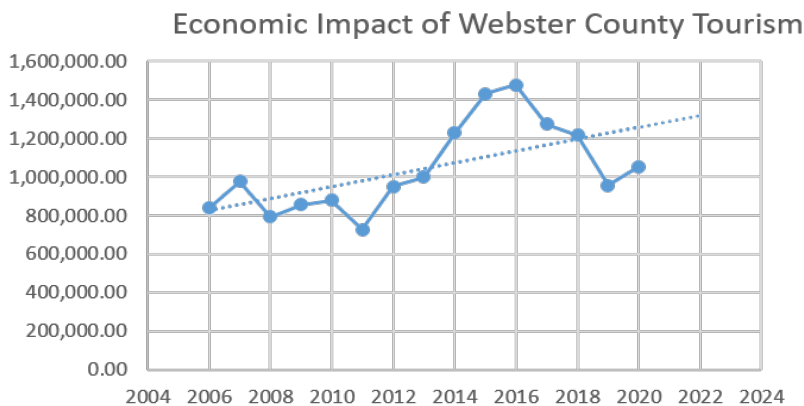
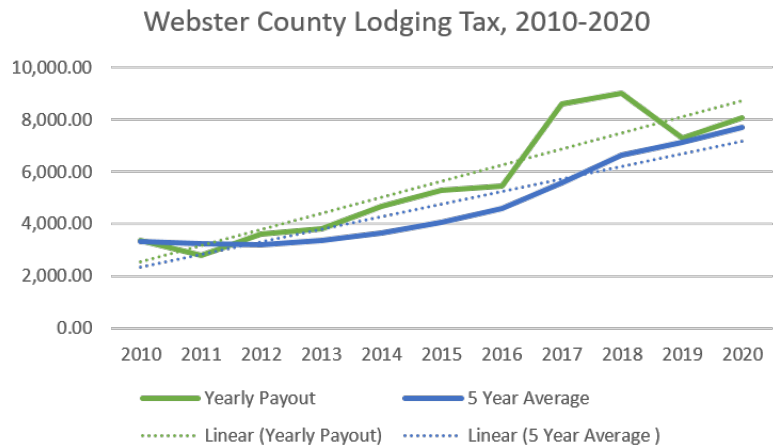


Fig. 2. Economic impact is based on a formula created by UNL-Extension and data from Dean Runyan & Associates. It attempts to project what someone actually spends when they visit and is derived from the lodging tax. *This data does not account for everyone who comes here and does not stay the night, however. Because of that, I feel that it really underestimates the impact of tourism on the county.* For broader perspective, using these data sets

and comparing them to overall sales tax generated within Webster County indicates that tourism accounts for about 12-15% of the total economy. Bordering counties are typically in the 3-5% range (excluding Adams). Just as in the previous chart, recent catastrophes (flooding in Nebraska, pandemic) have hampered what has otherwise been pretty dramatic growth. When the Hotel Garber is online these numbers are expected to double or triple in short order. We are hoping that we hit and possibly exceed the five-year trend lines for 2021 & 2022 in the interim. There should be pent-up demand.

Regional financing options:

South Central Economic Development District, Inc. (SCEDD)

SCEDD has a revolving loan fund available for eligible small businesses in the District, to which the City of Red Cloud, Nebraska and Webster County, Nebraska, belong.

<http://www.scedd.us>

Center for Rural Affairs /Rural Enterprise Assistance Program (REAP)

REAP offers the financing option of micro-loans to eligible businesses.

<http://www.cfra.org/reap>

United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA RD)

The financial programs offered by USDA RD promote economic development through loans to businesses provided through banks, credit unions, and community-managed lending pools.

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/programs-services-businesses>

Central Community College – Entrepreneurship Center

Small businesses represent a high percentage of all employers and are critically important to the ongoing growth of our community and country. In 1990, the CCC Foundation received some specific donations, micro loan funds and grants to establish the Small Business Institute to encourage the formation of new, small businesses and to assist existing small businesses with growth opportunities. In 2020, the Small Business Institute (SBI) was rebranded to the Entrepreneurship Center.

<https://www.cccneb.edu/entrepreneurship-center>

Nebraska Enterprise Fund

Nebraska Enterprise Fund provides various lending options to small and micro-businesses to support their capital needs and growth. These programs include: direct lending, GAP financing, invoice financing, loan guarantees, and intermediary lending.

<http://nebbiz.org>

Small Business Administration

Small Business Administration provides the following funding opportunities: general small business loans, disaster loans, microloans, real estate & equipment loans.

<https://www.sba.gov/loans-grants>

Nebraska Economic Development Corporation

Provides assistance with SBA 504 loans to small business owners in Nebraska. These loans can help finance new infrastructures and repair existing establishments.

<https://nedcoloans.org>

D. Business and Entrepreneurial Assistance

Submit a summary of local or regional business assistance programs, including technical support, management support, and entrepreneurial support.

Local business support programs are offered by the Red Cloud Chamber of Commerce and the Red Cloud Development Corporation. Any business seeking assistance in Red Cloud can contact

the Director of these organizations for technical assistance or for small business loans. Regional business assistance is offered by a variety of organizations, as listed below.

South Central Economic Development District (SCEDD)

SCEDD staff provides technical support to businesses in all phases of development, including business start-up, business expansion or retention, or business succession.

<http://www.scedd.us>

Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED)

DED is the official lead economic development agency for Nebraska. The Business Development Division provides direct assistance to businesses, while also providing assistance to communities with business and economic development programs and recruiting businesses to the state.

<https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/>

Center for Rural Affairs (CRA)/Rural Enterprise Assistance Program (REAP)

Through business training, technical assistance, and networking, REAP strengthens rural communities through small, self-employed business development.

<http://www.cfra.org/reap>

United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA RD)

USDA RD offers technical assistance and information to help agricultural producers and cooperatives start their businesses and improve the overall effectiveness of their operations.

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/agriculture-innovation-center-program>

University of Nebraska – Lincoln Extension – Rural Prosperity Network

Jason Tuller (402) 768-7212, email: jtuller2@unl.edu

UNL Extension offers connections to resource providers for business assistance. The Community Vitality Initiative is a UNL Extension program that focuses on working with resource providers and programs to help grow businesses.

<https://ruralprosperityne.unl.edu>

Nebraska Business Development Center

Associate Center Director: Sara Bennett, (308) 382-9210, email: benettsa2@unk.edu

Business Consultant: Chuck Beck, (308) 865-8244, email: cwbeck@unomaha.edu

Nebraska Business Development Center provides technical assistance for businesses through financial planning, aiding in the development of loan applications and proposals to various funding sources, completing business plans, and many other vital services that promote economic growth.

<https://www.unomaha.edu/nebraska-business-development-center/index.php>

Central Community College - Entrepreneurship Center

Director: Maggie Esch, (402) 461-2406, email: maggieesch@cccneb.edu

Small businesses represent a high percentage of all employers and are critically important to the ongoing growth of our community and country. In 1990, the CCC Foundation received some specific donations, micro loan funds and grants to establish the Small Business Institute to

encourage the formation of new, small businesses and to assist existing small businesses with growth opportunities. In 2020, the Small Business Institute (SBI) was rebranded to the Entrepreneurship Center.

<https://www.cccneb.edu/entrepreneurship-center>

United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA RD) – Business Programs

Specialist: Kelley Messenger, (308) 455-9837, email: kelley.messenger@ne.usda.gov

USDA RD offers technical assistance and information to help agricultural producers and cooperatives start their businesses and improve the overall effectiveness of their operations.

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/programs-services-businesses>

Nebraska Enterprise Fund

Tonia Franklin, Senior Business Loan Officer & Mentor, (402) 685-5500 ext. 207, email:

toniaf@nebbiz.org

Nebraska Enterprise Fund provides business acceleration training, business acumen workshops, and one-on-one mentoring with cash flow analysis, market planning, and business planning.

<http://nebbiz.org/business-resources/training-and-mentoring>

Small Business Administration

Nebraska District Office, (402) 221-4691, email: Elizabeth.Yearwood@sba.gov

Small Business Administration assists with business planning, launching a business, business management, and business expansion.

<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide>

GROW Nebraska

308-338-3520, email: info@grownebraska.org

Grow Nebraska provides business training, technical assistance, promotion, and access to markets. Grow Nebraska also provides free training that is open to the public and is known as Third Thursday Training. Grow Nebraska also hosts the MarkeTech Conference to inform attendees of how to integrate marketing and technology into their business strategy.

<http://www.grownebraska.org>

SCORE Central Nebraska

Sandra Barrera, 308-380-6915, email: sandra.barrera@unl.edu

SCORE provides business assistance for startups, current businesses, or business owners looking to transition out/retire. Business owners are paired with a mentor to receive business advice.

SCORE also hosts workshops covering topics from marketing, finance and accounting, management, and more. SCORE also provides free tools to business owners that vary from local business templates, guides, current blogs, and other various resource tools.

<https://centralnebraska.score.org>

Women's Business Center

Women's Business Center Director, Jessica Campos, 402-870-1521 email: wbc@cfra.org

The Women's Business Center is part of REAP. The Women's Business Center provides specialists that provide training and outreach to rural women entrepreneurs. Other services provided include connecting to resources to launch a business, business expansion, and getting into the global marketplace. <https://www.cfra.org/reap/wbc>



Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce

Justin Armstrong, President

P.O. Box 327

Red Cloud, NE 68970

Cell: (402) 746-3963

Chamber Line: (402) 746-4065

huskerarmstrong@msn.com

www.visitredcloud.com

facebook.com/visitredcloudnebraska

July 7, 2021

Kelly Gewecke
Nebraska Department of Economic Development
P.O. Box 94666
Lincoln, NE 68509-4666

Dear Kelly,

The Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce fully supports the City of Red Cloud's decision to pursue certification through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development as a Leadership Certified Community. The City has always been a willing and active partner in our attempts to grow the community and make it a more attractive place for people to relocate to and to visit. We work together to improve the quality of life in Red Cloud too, with the City of Red Cloud's support being vital to being able to have events like our annual Street Car Days celebration.

The City of Red Cloud works with various organizations within the community to complete necessary projects to further the sustainability and growth of their City. We have been fortunate enough to work with City on a variety of projects but are particularly grateful for their support of Heritage Tourism Development over the years. This project---a collaboration between the City, the Red Cloud Community Fund, the Willa Cather Foundation and our organization, has led to steady renaissance of downtown. We are now beginning to see construction projects get launched downtown and businesses filling most of the previously empty retail bays and plans to fill others. Designation as a Leadership Certified Community would distinguish Red Cloud as a community that is being proactive in their community and economic development efforts and help us continue to competitively pursue a variety of opportunities.

If awarded a Leadership Certified Community designation, Red Cloud will benefit greatly as well the businesses the Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce supports. It will also be a great recognition of all of the hard work everyone has been putting in to make Red Cloud a great place to live, work, and play.

Sincerely,

Justin Armstrong,
President

The Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce is organized for the purpose of advancing the economic, industrial, professional, cultural, and civic welfare of the Red Cloud area and seeks to encourage the growth of existing industries and businesses while giving proper assistance to any new firms or individuals seeking to relocate in the Red Cloud area. The Chamber also supports all activities believed to be beneficial to the community.



March 11, 2021

Kelly Gewecke
Nebraska Department of Economic Development
P.O. Box 94666
Lincoln, NE 68509-4666

Dear Kelly,

South Central Economic Development District, Inc. (SCEDD) fully supports the City of Red Cloud's decision to pursue certification through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development as a Leadership Certified Community. The City has been working diligently to continue the betterment of their community through various aspects of economic development. Many rural communities throughout Nebraska struggle to maintain, however, Red Cloud is actively engaged in activities that foster growth and local development.

The City of Red Cloud works with various organizations within the community to complete necessary projects to further the sustainability and growth of their City. There is a strong partnership between the City of Red Cloud, the Red Cloud Heritage Tourism Development, the Willa Cather Foundation, the Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Red Cloud Community Fund. Designation as a Leadership Certified Community would distinguish Red Cloud as a community that is being proactive in their community and economic development efforts.

If awarded a Leadership Certified Community designation, Red Cloud will benefit greatly. SCEDD recognizes the initiative and forward thinking of the Red Cloud and therefore fully supports the city in their endeavors.

Sincerely,

Sharon Hueftle
Executive Director

Mayor
Todd Brown

Council Members
Gene Horne, President
Don Beittler
Mike Goebel
Kyle Bryan

City Clerk
Casie Olson
(402) 746-2215
citycasie@gpcom.net

City Superintendent
Mike Clark
(402) 746-2214
citysuper@gpcom.net

City of Red Cloud

540 North Webster Street
Red Cloud, Nebraska, 68970
(402) 746-2215
Fax: (402) 746-2393



May 12, 2021

Nebraska Department of Economic Development
PO Box 94666
Lincoln, NE 68509-4666

ATTENTION Kelly Gewecke

Dear Kelly:

The City of Red Cloud is submitting this Letter of Intent to let you know that we will be working on an application for the City to become a Certified Leadership Community. As a community, we have already completed several of the requirements for the designation.

However, we realize that the designation is not an "end" but rather a "beginning" for Red Cloud in terms of community development opportunities, funding opportunities and to demonstrate that we want to set the foundation for future growth, development and success.

We are pleased to partner with our community leaders in the development of this application. Our goal for submission is sometime in summer 2021.

If you require additional information, please contact me.

Sincerely,



CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2019

As per notice in the Red Cloud Chief, the Mayor and City Council met in regular session on Tuesday, November 5, 2019, 7:00 p.m. in the conference room of the Red Cloud Community Center. Members present: Mayor Brown, Councilmen Horne, Beitler, Goebel, Mahin; Attorney McCracken; Superintendent Clark and Clerk Meline.

Mayor Brown called the meeting to order and asked those present to join the council in reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. He then stated the Open Meetings Act is posted on the west wall for public viewing.

At this time Mayor Brown swore in Casie Olson as the new City Clerk/Treasurer.

Discussion was held on recent events with Brandon Mohlman's dogs. Goebel made the motion and was seconded by Beitler to declare the dogs dangerous. Horne made the motion and was seconded by Goebel for a letter to be sent to Mohlman regarding this. It was then Horne made the motion and was seconded by Mahin to approve the Sheriff's Report. Motion carried.

Kelly Gewecke from the Department of Economic Development met with the Board about the Leadership Certified Community Program. She gave a short presentation on the qualifications of becoming a Leadership Certified Community and how being certified might aid in receiving grants. Horne made the motion to pass Resolution #716 on becoming a Leadership Certified Community and Mahin seconded. Motion carried.

Dennis Hansen gave a brief update for the Red Cloud Community Foundation. They are hosting a Visioning Session to talk about dreams and goals for the future of Red Cloud on Tuesday, November 12 at the Community Center. Ashley Olson visited with the Board about the Heritage Tourism Development Initiative and what they have been able to accomplish from 2015-present. Mahin made the motion to extend the agreement with the Red Cloud Community Foundation, Cather Foundation and the City for the Tourism Development Director at \$15,000.00 per year. Goebel seconded. Motion carried. Horne stated he would like to see an updated job description to be approved by all parties.

The Board of Public Trust along with Josh Sholtz and a handful of students from the high school gave an informative power point presentation on the house project they're working on at 1005 N Webster. They described what they have been able to achieve so far and what they plan to do to the house. Board of Public Trust will be having a fundraiser on March 28, 2020 and touched on properties belonging to them and what the future holds.

Jarrold McCartney informed the Board on current tourism data for Webster County. While Webster County was 2nd highest out of 6 counties in visitor spending, it was 2nd lowest in overnight visitors. He said that since 2015-2016 there has been a 13.1% increase in Visitor Spending, and 8.7% increase in Tax Revenue for the State and a 39% increase in Lodging Tax Revenue. Jarrold informed the Board that the Shopping Extravaganza will be held November 26 and Small Business Saturday is November 30. Horne made the motion and seconded by Mahin for Jake Yost to be added to the Economic Development Advisory Board. Motion carried.

There was no public comment.

Goebel made the motion and was seconded by Horne to approve the minutes. Motion carried.

Mahin made the motion and was seconded by Beitler to approve the Financial Reports and City Sales Tax Report. The City Sales Tax received in October for August was \$21,344.38 compared to \$15,912.91 for the same month last year.

Horne made the motion and was seconded by Goebel to approve the claims for payment. Motion carried.

Horne made the motion and was seconded by Beitler to reluctantly accept Jason Franssen's resignation letter and expressed gratitude for his service through the years. Motion carried.

Mayor
Todd Brown

Council Members
Gene Horne, President
Don Beidler
Kevin Daehling
Kyle Bryan

City Clerk
Casie Olson
(402) 746-2215
citycasie@gpcom.net

City Superintendent
Mike Clark
(402) 746-2214
citysuper@gpcom.net

City of Red Cloud

540 North Webster Street
Red Cloud, Nebraska, 68970
(402) 746-2215
Fax: (402) 746-2393



Resolution 757

WHEREAS, The Mayor and the City Council of the City of Red Cloud, Nebraska desire to adopt the *Capital Investment Plan for the City of Red Cloud*; and

WHEREAS, the Board will resolve to review the *Capital Investment Plan* annually for City planning purposes and maintain records and updates as such.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Chairman and the Mayor of the City of Red Cloud, Nebraska that the *Capital Investment Plan for the City of Red Cloud* is hereby adopted.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED THIS 4th DAY OF January, 2022.

Mayor

Chairman



ATTEST:

City Clerk





January 10,2022

Jarrold McCartney
Economic Development and Heritage Tourism Director
540 North Webster
Red Cloud NE 68970

Congratulations! The Nebraska Department of Economic Development is pleased to congratulate the City of Red Cloud on completing all the requirements to become a Leadership Certified Community.

The Department would like to recognize this accomplishment and present Red Cloud with a framed certificate. Please send me possible meeting dates and times that will work for Red Cloud so we can arrange to have staff present the certificate. We would like to take a picture to be included with a press release and would hope that you let your local newspaper know that it would be a great opportunity to be present at this time.

The Department will be sending out a press release to announce Red Cloud has been certified a Nebraska Leadership Certified Community. Please submit to me via email, a few bullet points, as soon as possible, about Red Cloud that you or the city would like to have included in the press release. I am looking for items such as recent economic or community development accomplishments and any information the community would like to include as quotes from the Mayor or other key persons. **The Department requests that you do not make any public announcements until we have presented the certificate and issued the press release.**

The Leadership Certified Community designation will allow you to gain extra points when applying for grants through the Nebraska Economic Development Department. Please continue to be diligent in keeping the City's website and LOIS information up-to-date, as there will be an annual review of the website to assure continued consistency and updated information.

This certification will be good for five years or until January 0f 2027. You will receive notification for renewal prior to this date. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at kelly.gewecke@nebraska.gov or 308-627-3151.

Sincerely,
Kelly Gewecke
Kelly Gewecke
Nebraska Department of Economic Development
Leadership Certified Community Program Coordinator
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