

The Intentional Tourist
by Jarrod McCartney
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Downtown Red Cloud is getting another facelift. Hotel Garber construction has begun! When finished, most guests will have great views of the recently restored National Willa Cather Center as well as newly renovated buildings across the street owned by Dennis & Sally Hansen.

The last 10 years have brought significant changes to Red Cloud. We have new buildings like The Valley Child Development Center and South Central State Bank and improvements to buildings that seemed derelict that now house Red Cloud Athletic Club and Back Alley Bicycles. "Frey's Corner" turned an abandoned liquor store into a landing spot for 4 businesses. There have also been improvements or expansion to at least 10 additional downtown businesses. Juan's Bar & Grill and Hometown Market have become fixtures in the community and have possible expansion plans. Red Cloud schools have made several improvements and the Scout Lodge has been renovated.

Due to lack of column space, I'm leaving a lot out. But one thing is clear: far from dying, this town's economy is growing and people want to be here. Many wouldn't have believed that these changes were possible back in 2013. The Hotel Garber is only going to speed up Red Cloud's revival as it brings more consistent traffic to businesses and generates additional tax revenue.

If you're interested in purchasing a building downtown, there are still great opportunities available. If you want to help make the Hotel Garber the best that it can be for Red Cloud, please invest or donate. All donations over \$1,000 will be recognized on an on-site donor wall.

A building in dire need of your help is The Gathering Place (Elm Street Center). Due to reasons beyond the current Board's control, the Webster Country Senior Services Committee is in a perilous position. If that organization is to continue to exist and if the building is going to continue to be useable, then the support of the community is needed now. The community is making progress, but it is depressing to think of the needs of our Senior Citizens being neglected. If you're interested in helping, please contact Charlie Meyers at 402-746-2775.

Our initial "E3" Business After Hours meeting was a resounding success. 26 people representing 19 different Red Cloud businesses attended and had great conversations about what they need to be able to succeed in the Red Cloud market. Financing and marketing presentations from Nebraska Enterprise Fund and GROW Nebraska were particularly effective. GROW Nebraska's presentation illustrated the need for businesses to go beyond Facebook if they really want to engage their audiences. Local businesses must take ownership of their online presence if they want to win more customers.

Finally, if you know a college student with an interest in marketing and/or small businesses who will live at home this summer (within 50 miles of Red Cloud), please have them give me a call. We want to hire a full-time "E3" paid intern and need to identify someone by March 31st.