

The Intentional Tourist
by Jarrod McCartney

On June 17th, I received some jaw dropping news. The State of Nebraska awarded the Potter Block Development Project a “Shovel Ready” grant worth \$2,335,600! Additionally, \$150K in donations and investments and \$1 million in Historic Tax Credits from the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office were also secured, meaning that the Hotel project landed nearly \$3.5 million in June. While the June windfall seemed to arrive overnight, the fact is that it was the culmination of years of careful planning and fundraising efforts spearheaded by the Red Cloud Hotel, LLC Board. Nearly \$6.2 million has been raised for the project, which will create 26 rooms, meeting space, a catering kitchen, a lounge and dining area, a luxury suite, and allow ADA accessibility into the historic Farmers & Merchants Bank.

The June successes mean that the project can now be put out to bid and that construction efforts can likely begin in the Fall. Local businesses should start envisioning how they will profit from the new influx of visitors, many of whom will be looking for places to shop and eat. It's easy to envision the Hotel forging mutually beneficial partnerships with all local dining, retail, and service establishments, as well as emerging businesses like the recently opened Red Cloud Athletic Club and Back Alley Bicycles as well as Twisted Petal Too—which aims to add baked goods and breakfast items soon. For many downtown businesses, guests will be able to get a direct, consistent view of your storefront.

With that in mind, I want to shift gears and talk about the City of Red Cloud's Downtown Revitalization study. We've discussed downtown revitalization in the past in general terms to refer to the work that individual business owners and organizations have been doing downtown. The forthcoming study is potentially connected to Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from the State of Nebraska. This would allow for a transformation of downtown like what happened recently in Superior. Possible roadwork downtown in 2025 might allow Red Cloud to redo sidewalks, gutters, and water and sewer in the area and have the State of Nebraska pay. This likelihood means that the Downtown Revitalization study should likely focus on storefront improvement and beautification efforts and, possibly, improvement of sidewalks, etc in the areas of downtown not covered by the future street repair project. The most we could receive is \$500K which would require a \$100K match.

It is absolutely critical that downtown business owners and interested citizens get involved in the forthcoming public discussions about this study and join a committee (speak to Kevin Daehling if you're interested). It's a great opportunity to have your say. A small group of people have an outsized influence on what's happening in the community precisely because we're the ones coming up with ideas, putting in the work, and then raising the money to make our vision become a reality. If you're involved in too many things, I'd suggest finding one or two to drop—this work is that important.