



CITY OF SCOTTSBLUFF

Scottsbluff Economic Development Strategic Plan





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INTRODUCTION

Since adopting the former regional economic development strategic plan in 2016, the City of Scottsbluff has made significant strides in addressing the economic, workforce, development, and entrepreneurship challenges outlined in the plan. Developed with assistance from leaders at Plaka & Associates, the 2016 plan was framed around the goal of amplifying regional collaboration and encouraging new jobs and investment.

Despite enduring the impacts of COVID-19, City leadership began considering an update to the original strategic plan. The pandemic caused a widespread economic recession that impacted industries, workers, businesses, and communities across the globe. Answering the demand to these obstacles, the City of Scottsbluff positioned itself for solid recovery and resiliency, and launched an updated planning process.

APPROACH

Scottsbluff and the greater regional economy are strongly backboneed by the retail and tourism sectors with specializations in healthcare. During an initial evaluation to understand the successful implementation of existing strategies and their outcomes, the assessment found room for growth in elevating the cohesive brand of the region, a strong need for additional housing, deeper and authentic inclusion of Latino residents, and a system to support small business and entrepreneurs. Additionally, consideration for focusing outreach efforts on workforce and education development is strongly encouraged in this analysis and aligns with a proven track record for higher returns for the City of Scottsbluff.

Using the original strategic plan's foundation and its successful implementation, the main issues were organized into six key focus areas.

- Housing
- Community Development
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Workforce and Education
- Small Business and Entrepreneurship
- Marketing

A Steering Committee was formed at the beginning of the strategic planning process and was a cornerstone of its development. The Committee was charged with providing oversight and guidance on the focus areas, strategies, and how to measure success. Stakeholders were convened via interviews and workshops to help refine objectives, compile quantitative and qualitative data, and review case studies and best practices to help inform and craft the City's future initiatives.

MAJOR RESULTS

Talent Remains an Acute Challenge

Out of the 10 original objectives outlined in the 2016 Economic Development Strategic Plan, three included a focus on talent. With the changes in market conditions and the impact of the pandemic, the topic remains a critical component of the region's economic prosperity. Challenges with barriers to employment remain, including quality childcare and housing amenities, as well as the up-skilling of existing and emerging talent from the K-12 system.

In regards to attracting talent to the Scottsbluff region, establishing a stronger community brand to capture the region's unique assets, especially those of outdoor recreation, is recommended to draw attention from people outside of the region.

Without Additional Investment in Housing, Growth Will Be Limited

Data collected during the planning process clearly identified a strong need for a wide spectrum of housing, from middle-range priced homes for homeowners to affordable housing and rental homes for low- to moderate-income families. With an update of the 2016 regional housing study in progress, discussions on cohesive strategies to develop critical support structures continue to occur. Corporate relocations and talent recruitment efforts alike are hampered by the region's limited housing inventory, as well. Major investments in new housing development will be critical to building along the spectrum of housing – from affordable to workforce to market rate. Public-private partnerships will be a cornerstone to the success of accelerating the residential development in the region and supporting the community's future growth and sustainability.

Greater Scottsbluff Is Building a Strong, Inclusive Community

Incidents across the U.S. have shined a spotlight on the question of equity and inclusion. With generations of the Latino community having roots in Scottsbluff as residents, workers, students, and entrepreneurs, the entire Scottsbluff community is reflecting on the growing awareness of the need to improve economic outcomes for all residents.

Culture and Arts are Central to the Economic Prosperity of Scottsbluff

Data has long shown the symbiotic relationship between arts organizations and their communities, thus the City of Scottsbluff leaders, businesses, government agencies, funders, and engaged citizens understand the overall intensity and capacity of the community's arts and culture sector. Doubling down on these integral assets will increase the competitiveness of Scottsbluff, enabling talent and companies to consider where to relocate their operations and what markets are ripe for touring performances or exhibitions. The Scottsbluff region can benchmark itself against an aspirational set of communities and understand what sets them apart by examining the underlying dimensions of demand, supply, and public support for arts and culture.

A photograph of a diverse group of people sitting around a conference table in a modern meeting room. They are engaged in a discussion, with some looking at laptops and others gesturing. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark filter.

Renewed interest in creating a strong structure to **support entrepreneurship** promises to bring greater progress toward supporting new and aspiring entrepreneurs and helping existing entrepreneurs scale.

Building an Ecosystem for Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses is a Clear Priority

During the previous planning process in 2016, the Scottsbluff entrepreneurial community had a small core of local entrepreneurs driving the support for the greater startup community. Assets such as accelerators, capital funds, and seamless connectivity to the greater ecosystem are needed. Renewed interest in creating a strong structure to support entrepreneurship promises to bring greater progress toward supporting new and aspiring entrepreneurs and helping existing entrepreneurs scale.

Outdoor Amenities are Bringing National Attention to Scottsbluff

It is well-known that the Scotts Bluff National Monument and Chimney Rock are among the finest national landmarks in the U.S. Tourists and relocated talent alike are drawn to these outdoor treasures and have made these natural resources transformational to the economy and positively impacted tax revenues. As additional investments in recreation and retail amenities are made, the branding and image of the Scottsbluff region will continue to illustrate the desirability of the community and attract more visitors, talent, and companies.

FOCUS AREAS

Workforce and Education



WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION

With the increasing competition and the changing skills and shifts in demographics, the development, retention, and recruitment of the workforce are critical to position the region for economic prosperity. The City of Scottsbluff stakeholders such as the Scottsbluff and Gering Public Schools, Western Nebraska Community College (WNCC), and anchor employers are focused on implementing strategies and targeting investment for young, educated, and skilled workers to choose the Scottsbluff region as their home.

Strategies

- Coordinate with employers, WNCC, and NEXT Young Professionals to boost the retention of existing employees and pipeline development of new talent
- Promote remote worker opportunities in partnership with regional employers and tourism leaders
- Prioritize storytelling to showcase the talent that has recently relocated to the region
- Concentrate resources on obstacles hindering workers, such as childcare, bilingual information shared, and housing

Action Steps

- Increase partnerships among WNCC and Scottsbluff and Gering public schools for additional needed training opportunities
- Evaluate existing class offerings to ensure a match for automation, tech, trades, and entrepreneurship (i.e., for jobs of the future)
- Emphasize the benefits and opportunities of the skilled trades including supporting the WNCC Trade program and curricula for K-8 grades
- Continue support for the Career Academies and broaden emphasis on entrepreneurship and innovation
- Greatly increase marketing efforts to attract new and former students and residents back to the Scottsbluff region
- Strongly support the retention and attraction of teachers system-wide through placemaking initiatives

Existing Conditions

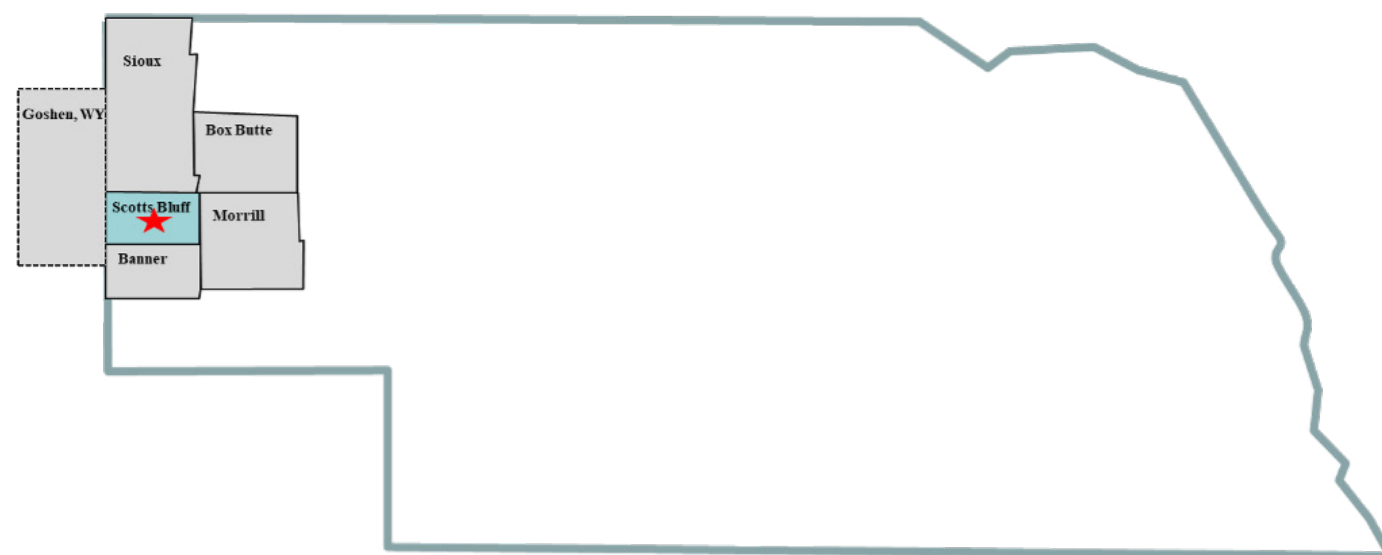
Analysis of an area’s workforce provides information about workers at local businesses, regardless of where they live. Analysis of workforce data provides insights into the types of businesses that have been and are likely to be successful within a region. Table One below provides information on the relative size as measured by preliminary 2020 annual employment, compensation paid, and the most recent five-year change in employment for very broad categories of Scotts Bluff County businesses.

Note: Study Area Identification

The geographic area selected for this study is based on proximity to Scotts Bluff County. As shown in Figure One below, four Nebraska counties (Banner, Box Butte, Morrill, and Sioux) and one Wyoming county (Goshen) border and have direct road links to Scotts Bluff County. Together these six counties make up the Study Area.

Figure One

City of Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff County, Study Area



Source: EMSI Q4 2021 Data Set | www.economicmodeling.com

Table One

2022 Scotts Bluff County Study Area Workforce (Local Jobs)
Average Wages and 5-Year Job Change by Industry
Preliminary 2020 Annual Data

NAICS	Jobs	Avg Ann Wages (\$)	5-Year Change	
			Jobs	Percent
NAICS 90 Government	6,713	42,952	-188	-2.7%
NAICS 62 Health Care and Social Assistance	3,881	49,157	-447	-10.3%
NAICS 44 Retail Trade	3,101	28,409	-293	-8.6%
NAICS 48 Transportation and Warehousing	2,366	88,392	-391	-14.2%
NAICS 72 Accommodation and Food Services	2,239	15,754	-23	-1.0%
NAICS 11 Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1,517	31,631	-104	-6.4%
NAICS 42 Wholesale Trade	1,332	57,378	-205	-13.3%
NAICS 31 Manufacturing	1,322	47,965	-412	-23.8%
NAICS 23 Construction	1,300	44,636	27	2.1%
NAICS 81 Other Services (except Public Administration)	1,196	23,088	-115	-8.8%
NAICS 52 Finance and Insurance	932	57,868	-86	-8.4%
NAICS 56 Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	923	40,487	-308	-25.0%
NAICS 54 Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	671	48,256	32	5.0%
NAICS 51 Information	330	41,881	-91	-21.6%
NAICS 53 Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	194	38,372	37	23.5%
NAICS 71 Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	189	22,917	-31	-14.1%
NAICS 22 Utilities	152	70,836	29	23.5%
NAICS 55 Management of Companies and Enterprises	105	93,952	-5	-4.6%
NAICS 61 Educational Services	94	21,557	-91	-49.2%
NAICS 21 Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	25	42,680	0	0.0%
Total	28,583	44,016	-2,645	-8.5%

Source: EMSI Q4 2021 Data Set | www.economicmodeling.com

Major Occupations and Wages

The composition of occupations, including associated skill levels, employed within a region is determined by the mix of existing industries. An analysis of average area compensation relative to national averages provides information on the relative skill levels and the attractiveness of an area for the retention and growth of industries dependent upon specific skills.

Table Three

Scotts Bluff County Study Area Workforce (Local Jobs) and Labor Force (Resident Jobs) Net In-Commuters, and Average Wages

Preliminary 2020 Annual Data

Standard Occupational Code	Local Jobs	Location Quotient	Residents Working in Occupation	Net In-Commuters	Average Hourly Wage (\$)
43-0000 Office and Administrative Support Occupations	3,524	0.94	3,723	-200	\$17.18
41-0000 Sales and Related Occupations	2,742	1.05	2,982	-240	\$17.02
53-0000 Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	2,704	1.11	2,832	-128	\$22.19
35-0000 Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	2,437	1.12	2,566	-129	\$12.26
25-0000 Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	2,273	1.29	2,354	-81	\$23.60
29-0000 Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	1,890	1.11	2,023	-134	\$36.75
11-0000 Management Occupations	1,579	0.96	1,669	-90	\$41.41
31-0000 Healthcare Support Occupations	1,490	1.10	1,568	-77	\$15.24
49-0000 Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	1,409	1.25	1,514	-105	\$24.00
47-0000 Construction and Extraction Occupations	1,391	1.19	1,459	-68	\$21.34
51-0000 Production Occupations	1,284	0.77	1,359	-75	\$19.74
45-0000 Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	1,126	5.09	1,316	-189	\$14.32
37-0000 Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	966	1.08	1,039	-73	\$13.95
13-0000 Business and Financial Operations Occupations	845	0.49	889	-43	\$31.10
21-0000 Community and Social Service Occupations	749	1.42	748	1	\$21.82
39-0000 Personal Care and Service Occupations	506	0.78	526	-21	\$13.65
33-0000 Protective Service Occupations	472	0.70	495	-23	\$22.16
15-0000 Computer and Mathematical Occupations	313	0.34	322	-10	\$33.11
27-0000 Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	224	0.57	222	2	\$22.13
19-0000 Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	211	0.78	207	5	\$28.54
17-0000 Architecture and Engineering Occupations	177	0.35	169	8	\$35.23
23-0000 Legal Occupations	151	0.66	147	4	\$35.61
00-0000 Total	28,583		30,271	-1,688	\$21.79

Source: EMSI Q4 2021 Data Set | www.economicmodeling.com



As shown in **Table Three** on the previous page, **the largest 2-digit, standard occupational code (SOC) category when measured by jobs within the Study Area, 3,524, is SOC 43-0000 Office and Administrative Support Occupations. 43-0000 Office and Administrative Support Occupations is also the largest occupation when measured by the number of residents living in the Scotts Bluff County Study Area, 3,723.** The next five largest occupations when measured by jobs within the Study Area are SOC 41-0000 Sales and Related Occupations, 2,742; SOC 53-0000 Transportation and Material Moving Occupations, 2,704; SOC 35-0000 Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations, 2,437; SOC 25-0000 Educational Instruction and Library Occupations, 2,273, and SOC 29-0000 Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations, 1,890. Among the top six occupations, three have average annual local hourly wages greater than the Study Area average of \$21.79 (SOC 53-0000 Transportation and Material Moving Occupations, \$22.19; SOC 25-0000 Educational Instruction and Library Occupations, \$23.60; and SOC 29-0000 Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations \$36.75).

The large proportion of jobs in SOC 43-0000 Office and Administrative Support Occupations is a very common occurrence as the need for these skills is prevalent in a very large number of industries. **The proportion of jobs in SOC 51-0000 Production Occupations is small, relative to Nebraska and many similarly-sized communities. This is due to the modest size of the Study Area's manufacturing sector.**

As shown in Table three, there are on the net a substantial number, 1,688, workers commuting to jobs outside the Scotts Bluff County Study Area. This suggests there may be a sizable pool of workers that could be available to firms able to provide above-average compensation packages. Also shown in Table three, the Scotts Bluff County Study Area is a net exporter of workers in SOC 51-0000 Production Occupations. This suggests the possibility of potential expansion of local manufacturing.

Table Four shows employment, recent and projected employment change, estimated 2020 hires, and average hourly wages as a percent of the US average at the 2-digit SOC level. More than half (14) of the occupations experienced employment losses during the last five years and only 8 experienced employment gains. Given the disruptions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, employment declines in the 14 industries are relatively modest.

Occupations with the largest declines during the most recent five-year period were SOC 41-0000 Sales and Related Occupations, a decline of 678; SOC 43-0000 Office and Administrative Support Occupations, a decline of 611; and SOC 53-0000 Transportation and Material Moving Occupations, a decline of 413. Occupations with the largest increases were SOC 31-0000 Healthcare Support Occupations, 86; SOC 11-0000 Management Occupations, 86; and SOC 47-0000 Construction and Extraction Occupations, 84.

Also shown in Table Four, 17 of the 22 occupations are expected to see employment growth over the next five years. **The largest employment growth is expected to occur in SOC 35-0000 Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations, 317; SOC 25-0000 Educational Instruction and Library Occupations, 107; and SOC 11-0000 Management Occupations, 52.**

The largest employment declines are expected to occur in SOC 43-0000 Office and Administrative Support Occupations, decline of 133; SOC 29-0000 Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations, a decline of 89; and SOC 41-0000 Sales and Related Occupations, with a decline of 28.

Table Four

Scotts Bluff County Study Area Workforce (Local Jobs), 2015-2020 Change in Workforce, 2020-2025 Projected Change, 2020 Hires, and Area Wage as a Percent of US Average by Occupation, Preliminary 2020 Annual Data

SOC	Jobs 2020	Job Change 2015-20	Projected Job Change 2020-25	2020 Hires	Local Wage Percent US Average
43-0000 Office and Administrative Support Occupations	3,524	-611	-133	2,149	84.4%
41-0000 Sales and Related Occupations	2,742	-678	-28	2,373	76.8%
53-0000 Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	2,704	-413	14	2,360	114.2%
35-0000 Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	2,437	-212	317	3,237	92.2%
25-0000 Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	2,273	-161	107	1,066	80.7%
29-0000 Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	1,890	-89	-89	528	88.9%
11-0000 Management Occupations	1,579	86	52	830	69.0%
31-0000 Healthcare Support Occupations	1,490	86	15	957	98.9%
49-0000 Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	1,409	-126	30	816	95.0%
47-0000 Construction and Extraction Occupations	1,391	84	-19	1,412	82.3%
51-0000 Production Occupations	1,284	-176	36	825	98.3%
45-0000 Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	1,126	-103	1	1,911	99.5%
37-0000 Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	966	-229	40	1,000	89.6%
13-0000 Business and Financial Operations Occupations	845	16	39	422	80.3%
21-0000 Community and Social Service Occupations	749	47	36	385	86.7%
39-0000 Personal Care and Service Occupations	506	-87	32	443	89.3%
33-0000 Protective Service Occupations	472	-53	23	261	87.8%
15-0000 Computer and Mathematical Occupations	313	26	19	118	71.3%
27-0000 Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	224	-82	12	128	70.8%
19-0000 Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	211	29	6	109	74.9%
17-0000 Architecture and Engineering Occupations	177	-15	5	68	81.0%
23-0000 Legal Occupations	151	30	-1	40	66.0%
00-0000 Total	28,583	2,630	508	21,439	80.8%

Source: EMSI Q4 2021 Data Set | www.economicmodeling.com

How Is Progress Measured?

These metrics should be used to track the implementation progress of Workforce and Education strategies.

- Number of workers (re-)trained
- Number of recruited workers
- Domestic inbound migration
- Number of existing and new training courses for future industries
- Number and quality rating of bilingual courses offered and occupied
- Number of remote workers



CASE STUDY

Talent Attraction in Rural Communities

Many community leaders and experts discuss in various articles the importance of understanding what young talent wants in an employer and in a town, listening to those individuals closely, and then executing these ideas. In Michigan, leaders believed that bikeability, walkability, and close neighborhood connectivity are some of the elements that contribute to livability and make an area more attractive to newcomers and current residents. Many communities work regionally to attract talent and build assets that recruit and retain talent. Additionally, leadership training and networking opportunities help develop committed young professionals, through programs such as Young Professional's Networks and job shadowing opportunities. Additionally, towns are working with employers to offer relocation support, improved onboarding, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training.

Minnesota has done extensive research on rural talent attraction and leaders note the increase and diversification of public, private, and nonprofit sources as a result of the changes made to the city or region. Minnesota towns view talent attraction as an ongoing process that does not end when someone moves in but should continue to ensure an engaged citizen base. One study found that less than one-third of movers (people who moved to rural MN in the past 1-5 years) moved due to a job or job offer (31%). The top reasons for moving were finding a good environment

for raising children (76%), living closer to relatives (67%), and finding a safer place to live, taking advantage of the slower pace of life, and living in a small community (all at 64%). Additionally, only 25% of newcomers had lived there before and returned. Even more notable, individuals who strongly agreed that the community is welcoming were nearly twice as likely to report they plan on living in the community for at least five years. The most expansive type of recruitment strategies in MN are those that are fully-funded strategic multichannel recruitment efforts that have dedicated staff, strategic and operational plans, and resources to carry out resident recruitment plans. The efforts are multichannel because they have a portfolio of activities that frequently include branding, advertising, engagement, coordination, and program management functions. Advertising is developed based on the local branding that is identified by what the city or region has to offer. (Outside of Minnesota, a good example is Marquette, MI whose dedicated website even has information about moving from the big city to Marquette and addresses some of the things people see as “weaknesses” of living in rural communities). A combination of local and regional placemaking efforts might be beneficial to all communities involved. Rural citizens are more likely to travel further for work and recreation, thus regional approaches can increase the benefits and draw that towns try to have with potential newcomers.

Additionally, other communities are working to bolster their rural communities and attract new talent through a program called the Rural Innovation Network and Rural Innovation Initiative. These rural communities typically

have: existing high-speed broadband, partnership with a nearby college or university, committed local leadership, and a willing nonprofit or local/regional government prepared to raise matching funds. This type of program connects communities to other similar communities across the country. After completing the Initiative, communities can join the Network which gives them access to national experts in economic development and talent attraction as well as experts in rural development. As of now, there are no Nebraska communities in the network.

Other states, such as Alabama, North Carolina, and Maine are striving to enact multiple initiatives and strategies, including broadband expansion, micro-credential and mentorship opportunities, and incentivizing lenders and investors to commit to rural projects.

A newly published study examined factors in returning back to a rural community after leaving for college or other opportunities, up to 20 years later. The study found that adolescent school attachment, place characteristics, and social identities contributed to the return. The importance of positive connections during school were clear as the impact of positive attachment to school was statistically significant even after controlling for socioeconomic status and neighborhood effects. Unlike studies of recent returners, this study found no significant impact of distance between hometown and college on the outcome of returning.¹

¹Rural College Graduates: Who Comes Home. *Rural Sociology*. Stephanie Sowl, Rachel Smith, Michael Brown.

FOCUS AREAS

Housing



HOUSING

Addressing regional housing challenges is a primary concern for community leaders, employers, and the region as a whole. The prior economic development strategic plan emphasized regional collaboration with the Western Nebraska Economic Development coalition to improve various needed assets in the panhandle, specifically with housing as a primary area of focus. Recommendations below amplify the work implemented in the previous plan.

Strategies

- Implement the updated 2022 WNED Housing Study recommendations
- Host developer and community roundtable discussions to highlight the development opportunities and leaders' willingness to collaborate with developers
- Evaluate public-private partnerships with employers for workforce housing solutions
- Develop stronger relationships with banks to creatively serve lower-income families
- Create capacity-building opportunities and pilot projects with immigrant-owned subcontractors in the residential construction industry

Action Steps

- Examine options for pilot projects, including tiny homes, container homes, inter-generational homes, or creative design/materials
- Define new incentive options to draw more regional developers
- Identify and implement solutions across the housing pricing and ownership spectrum

Existing Conditions

The 2016 Regional Housing Study provides statistical and narrative data identifying a housing profile and demand analysis for Scotts Bluff, Morrill, and Kimball Counties in Nebraska, including each Community and the Rural, unincorporated portions of each County, identified as the Balance of the County. The Study describes the past, present, and projected demographics, economic, and housing conditions in each County, as well as a "Five-Year Regional Housing Action Plan," identifying future housing projects.

The main objectives of the housing study were to: (1) analyze the recent past and present housing situation in each County, with emphasis on determining the need for workforce, elderly and both rental and owner housing options; (2) provide a process for educating and energizing the leadership of each County and Community to take an active role in improving and creating modern and safe, both market-rate and affordable housing options; (3) identify the future target housing needs for the Counties and each Community; (4) design program-specific housing projects to address homeownership, a continuum of housing care for older adults and persons with special needs and all housing types necessary to both retain and expand job opportunities in each County; and (5) address and eliminate any impediments and/or barriers to fair housing opportunities for all citizens of the three Counties and each Community.

To meet the needs of current and future residents, the Counties should strive to develop up to 777 units, including 521 owner and 256 rental housing units by

2021, throughout Scotts Bluff, Morrill, and Kimball Counties. The breakdown of housing demand for each County includes the following:

- SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY: 625 new units; 431 owner, 194 rental
- MORRILL COUNTY: 60 new units; 32 owner, 28 rental
- KIMBALL COUNTY: 92 new units; 58 owner, 34 rental

The Region has the potential to experience an Economic Development “ED Boost” through additional job creation and full-time employment opportunities (FTEs). The ED Boost scenario, consisting of a Region-wide 1.45 percent population increase, or an increase of 655 persons, and the creation of 220 FTEs through 2021 would increase the housing target demand to an estimated 1,010 total units, including 664 owner and 346 rental housing units. The breakdown of ED Boost housing demand for each County includes the following:

- SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY: 828 new units; 556 owner, 272 rental
- MORRILL COUNTY: 76 new units; 42 owner, 34 rental
- KIMBALL COUNTY: 106 new units; 66 owner, 40 rental

A majority of newly-constructed owner and rental housing units will be located in the larger communities of the Region, including Scottsbluff, Gering, Mitchell, Morrill, Bayard, Bridgeport and Kimball. Housing development in the Balance of County, or the rural areas of each County, should focus solely on developing owner housing in planned subdivisions adjacent to the Corporate Limits of the Region’s Communities. The remaining smaller Communities should focus on purchase- rehab-resale and/or re-rent housing activities.

How Is Progress Measured?

These metrics should be used to track the implementation progress of the Housing strategies.

- Number of new units - owner-occupied and rental
- Number of renovated units
- Number of new developers
- Ratio of public to private dollars used
- Number of workers attracted and retained due to housing
- Median price for homes and rentals



CASE STUDY

Public-Private Partnerships for Housing

[Localities](#) can support and encourage private-sector employers to initiate an Employer Assisted Housing program (EAH) by offering a dollar-for-dollar match for employer contributions, administrative assistance to employers wanting to start a program, property tax credits, and management program. Local governments can also partner with a non-profit to provide these services. Some communities might provide down payment or closing cost assistance to purchase a home within a certain distance from the employer or within the city or county. Rent support can be provided by covering security deposits and/or first- and last-month's rent if needed upfront. Typically the assistance is a grant or loan that is forgiven over time as long as the employee stays at the company. Some communities or companies might include other eligibility requirements such as time at the job prior to applying, ongoing employment in the community (rather than at the specific employer), maximum income thresholds, first-time home buyer status, etc. Local governments can consider putting thresholds of the level of support provided for EAHs, such as limiting eligibility for

matched dollars to employers who contribute a specific amount (e.g., \$1,000 per employee).

In North Dakota, Teacher Housing Grants are available to all North Dakota teachers and staff through the [Teacher Next Door Program](#). All teachers, grades Pre-K thru 12, as well as administrators and staff, will receive a minimum of a \$1,000.00 (maximum of \$6,472.00) non-repayable grant to be used toward the purchase of a home. In addition to the grant, you may also be eligible for down payment assistance of up to \$10,681.00. Next Door Programs offer grants, down payment assistance, and other benefits for public service employees in partner communities, including teachers, school staff and administration, police/fire, nurses, public servants, and active military/veterans. A similar program exists for teachers located in [Nebraska](#), as well.

[McKenzie County, North Dakota](#) (population 13,836) stands at the southeastern edge of the Bakken oil fields. Since hydraulic fracturing wells at the nearby Parshall Field sparked a boom in 2006, North Dakota has become one of the largest oil-producing states in the nation, second only to Texas. The growth of energy exploration and extraction in northwestern North Dakota has led to

a massive influx of workers and their families. This rapid growth created a significant shortage of housing and a corresponding increase in prices, which made recruiting employees difficult for local employers. One strategy for providing affordable housing is for local employers to develop new housing; this was the strategy that McKenzie County Healthcare Systems (MCHS) undertook for its essential service workers.

Faced with the prospect of recruiting employees for its planned new hospital in a city without the affordable stock needed to house them, MCHS constructed a \$6.3 million, 24-unit apartment building to make recruiting and retaining these essential service workers easier. Completed in July 2015, the 3-story building includes 18 apartments reserved for essential service workers at MCHS or other employers, and the remaining 6 units can be rented to anyone, with preference given to low-income applicants. Rents are determined by the occupant's income and household size and are set lower than the market rate.

MCHS donated the site and funded the bulk of the development costs, although the project also benefited from local and state financing. The North Dakota Housing

FOCUS AREAS: Housing



Incentive Fund, which issues tax credits to voluntary contributors and distributes the funds as deferred-payment loans to affordable housing developers, furnished \$1.83 million. Watford City contributed \$50,000 from a community development fund generated by local sales taxes, and the Bank of North Dakota's Flex PACE for Affordable Housing program contributed an \$830,000 interest buy-down for the project.

MCHS has not been alone in opting to develop housing for employees. In 2013, the Watford City and McKenzie County governments partnered with the Watford City School District to create a nonprofit, which facilitated the construction of Wolf Run Village. That 42-unit development, open only to essential service workers employed by the city, county, and school district, includes a daycare center for 200 children. Other employee housing developments in Watford City include Wolf Run Village II, Watford City Apartments, and McKenzie Village.

At the time they opened, the MCHS development and the other affordable employer-assisted housing projects offered rents several hundred dollars below the market rate for the area. However, when oil prices unexpectedly dropped in 2015, oil field workers began leaving the area. Falling market-rate rents became comparable to the MCHS development's reduced rents, and as a result, only

eight of the development's units are currently occupied, all by hospital employees. Daniel Kelly, chief executive officer of MCHS, expects more tenants as the price of oil recovers. Construction of the new hospital has entered its second phase, which in the long term, will help address the anticipated increase in demand for housing.

The University of Pennsylvania provides an EAH to stimulate the housing market as a component of neighborhood revitalization. The University notes that the programs can help employers improve their brand, increase productivity, and increase employee retention. Additionally, homeowners often work harder and longer for their employer and are more willing to "go the extra mile" to help their company grow and succeed.

Small communities in Minnesota have implemented various models of EAH initiatives to meet the needs of small and mid-sized local employers. For example, in Perham, MN (population 3,506), the Housing and Redevelopment Authority leveraged funding from the city, local employers, and state resources to create an employer-assisted down payment assistance pool. The city contributed \$100,000, local employers provided up to \$55,000 and the state fund matched all employer contributions with a funding maximum of \$2,500 per homebuyer purchasing a home in the city.

HRA administered the program and committed up to \$100,000 to provide up to \$2,000 in 0%, 30-year deferred loans to qualified homebuyers accessing the funds. Two local employers contributed to the funds (one with 565 employees and one with 335 employees) and each chose their own levels of support. In Roseau County, MN, two employers and the state housing officials worked to construct single-family and multi-family developments. The employers contributed cash and the funders incentivized developers through low-interest construction financing, reduced price lots, fee waivers from the city, and a value-gap pool that could be accessed if the homes did not sell as envisioned.²

²*Employer-Assisted Housing Resource Guide. Greater Minnesota Housing Fund.*

FOCUS AREAS

Marketing



MARKETING

Capitalizing on the Scottsbluff region’s major assets – from the national parks to major employers to critical infrastructure – can drive investment and talent attraction. Several initiatives from the previous plan support this marketing focus, as well, including building on the tourism assets, increasing business attraction, and driving talent recruitment. Scottsbluff leaders are tasked with strengthening the region’s marketing strategies by concentrating on the unique natural assets, recreational opportunities, and remote work opportunities.

Strategies

- Design a collaborative branding strategy for the greater Scotts Bluff region focused on tourism, economic development, housing, and workforce
- Collectively fund comprehensive marketing initiatives
- Organize a common tourism/event calendar for the greater community and include bilingual translation options
- Evaluate the economic impact of arts and cultural amenities as a strong driver for economic development

Action Steps

- Define the complementary roles with organizations and leaders leading marketing, tourism, and project ‘deal closer’ initiatives. Create a working group to lead the collaborative activities.
- Evaluate the feasibility of a physical visitor center for downtown Scottsbluff and Gering or a virtual option with a website
- Examine the feasibility of co-location of services, such as economic development, tourism, human services, and city representatives
- Highlight activities, talent, and amenities specific to the Arts and Creative Economy
- Showcase Latino and immigrant events and activities as a part of the inclusive community

Existing Conditions

With the Scotts Bluff National Monument and Chimney Rock Historic Site being a majestic draw for the western United States, the Scottsbluff community has had proven success with its tourism strategies and related events, such as the 2019 Total Solar Eclipse.

The greater Scotts Bluff region is undergoing a comprehensive marketing and branding study that will create a collective voice and targeted campaign to draw visitors, talent, and residents, particularly from the Colorado-Nebraska-Wyoming region.

Additionally, leaders from the City of Scottsbluff are working to establish a Creative District designation in their downtown, through the Nebraska Creative District program. This Creative District would highlight how arts and culture are an economic driver in the Scottsbluff region and help elevate the value of its impact.

How Is Progress Measured?

These metrics should be used to track the implementation progress of the Marketing strategies.

- Number of increased visitors
- Economic and fiscal impact of visitors
- Number and occupation of workers attracted to the region (remote and local occupations)
- Website and social media analytics



CASE STUDY

Encourage Rural Community Colleges to Serve as Anchors for Creativity-Based Economic Growth.

As geographically based centers with research capacity and cultural amenities, community colleges can support arts-based rural economic development by training future arts entrepreneurs and helping communities map creative assets, among other activities. Wyoming has a strong community college culture, and that advantage is contributing to the development of creative sector activities in rural regions centered on cities such as Cheyenne (population: 64,099) and Sheridan (population 17,938). Both cities are undertaking long-term planning processes focused on creative initiatives to benefit the surrounding rural regions. Each effort has a strong community college component, as well. Sheridan, in the rural northern part of Wyoming, has been beefing up its creative economic development for at least a decade. In 2008, the city collaborated with the Northern Wyoming Community College district, the chamber of commerce, and the local economic development organization to commission a cultural sector inventory. Subsequently, the partners cooperated to form a local Creative Economies Council, with representatives from the community college and local artists' guild. As these local efforts proceeded, the Wyoming Arts Council provided funding support for the district's theater and dance programs, as well as other local nonprofit arts organizations in the community. Because of these related activities, Sheridan's arts and

cultural organizations grew to become prominent parts of the local asset portfolio — and the community became engaged in the quintessential cycle of investments and re-investments that build on themselves and are so necessary to lift a community to a new place economically. The state partially funded the massive redevelopment of a local Performing Arts and Education Center, which became a cultural anchor affiliated with the community college theater and dance programs.¹

Our Town Grant: NEA's Creative Placemaking Grant

Our Town² is the NEA's creative placemaking grants program. Through project-based funding, the program supports activities that integrate arts, culture, and design into local efforts that strengthen communities. Our Town projects advance local economic, physical, or social outcomes in communities, ultimately laying the groundwork for systems change and centering equity. These projects require a partnership between a nonprofit organization and a local government entity, with one of the partners being a cultural organization. Grants range from \$25,000 to \$150,000, with a minimum cost share/match equal to the grant amount.

Our Town encourages applications for projects that integrate arts, culture and design into strategies for [strengthen communities](#). Arts, culture, and design may uniquely:

- Bring new attention to or elevate key community assets and issues, voices of residents, local history, or cultural infrastructure.

- Inject new or additional energy, resources, activity, people, or enthusiasm into a place, community issue, or local economy.
- Envision new possibilities for a community or place—a new future, a way of overcoming a challenge, or approaching problem-solving.
- Connect communities, people, places, and economic opportunities via physical spaces or new relationships.

The NEA is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and fostering mutual respect for the diverse beliefs and values of all individuals and groups. Our Town supports a variety of projects across the country in urban, suburban, rural, and tribal communities of all sizes.

Project Types

Our Town projects must demonstrate a specific role for arts, culture, and design as a part of strategies that [strengthen communities](#) by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes. Competitive projects often pilot new proposed activities and establish new or deepen existing cross-sector partnerships, while also demonstrating how they strive to lay the groundwork for long-term systems change. Projects may include activities such as:

¹NGA Rural Arts Report https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGA_RuralArtsReport.pdf

²Our Town Grant <https://www.arts.gov/grants/our-town/program-description>

Arts Engagement:

- Artist residency: A program designed to strategically connect artists with the opportunity to bring their creative skill sets to non-arts institutions, including residencies in government offices, businesses, or other institutions.
- Arts festivals: Public events that safely gather people, often in public space or otherwise unexpected places, to showcase talent and exchange culture.
- Community co-creation of art: The process of engaging stakeholders to participate or collaborate alongside artists/designers in conceiving, designing, or fabricating a work or works of art.
- Performances: Presentations of a live art work (e.g., music, theater, dance, media).
- Public art: A work of art that is conceived for a particular place or community, with the intention of being broadly accessible, and often involving community members in the process of developing, selecting, or executing the work. Temporary public art may be included. These are works that are meant for display over a finite period of time using easily-removed materials, and are often used to prototype an idea, product, or process.

Cultural Planning:

- Cultural planning: The process of identifying and leveraging a community's cultural resources to inform decision-making (e.g., creating a cultural plan, or integrating plans and policies around arts and culture as part of a city master planning process).
- Cultural district planning: The process of identifying a specific geography with unique potential for community and/or economic development based on cultural assets (e.g., through designation, branding, policy, plans, or other means).
- Creative asset mapping: The process of identifying the people, places, physical infrastructure, institutions, and customs that hold meaningful aesthetics, historical, social and/or economic value that make a place unique.
- Public art planning: The process of developing community-wide strategies and/or policies that guide and support commissioning, installing, and maintaining works of public art and/or temporary public art.

Design:

- Artist/designer-facilitated community planning: Artists/designers leading or partnering in the creative processes of visioning and developing solutions to community issues.
- Design of artist space: Design processes to support the creation of dedicated spaces for artists to live and/or to produce, exhibit, or sell their work.
- Design of cultural facilities: Design processes to support the creation of a dedicated building or space for creating and/or showcasing arts and culture.
- Public space design: The process of designing elements of public infrastructure, or spaces where people congregate (e.g., parks, plazas, landscapes, neighborhoods, districts, infrastructure, and artist-produced elements of streetscapes).

Artist and Creative Industry Support:

- Creative business development: Programs or services that support entrepreneurs and businesses in the creative industries, or help cultivate strong infrastructure for establishing and developing creative businesses.
- Professional artist development: Programs or services that support artists professionally, such as through skill development or accessing markets and capital.

FOCUS AREAS

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

The City of Scottsbluff recognizes that shared prosperity is key to economic sustainability and success. Strategies focused on inclusivity broaden the appeal of the region to a more diverse population and encourage stronger partnerships among educational institutions and anchor employers. While the inclusive focus branches across various sub-units, such as housing, small business/entrepreneurship, education, and training, the implementation of strategies must be authentic, intentional, and collaborative with the Latino Scottsbluff community.

Strategies

- Create a collaborative working group to develop systems for inclusive small business development and entrepreneurship
- Raise the profile of inclusive economic development and diversity across regional partner organizations
- Collaborate with educational institutions (i.e. Scottsbluff and Gering public schools and WNCC) to coordinate affordable Spanish language courses and programs, especially focused on workforce-related language skills
- Develop authentic partnerships with immigrant resource providers
- Ensure bilingual translation and interpretation resources are available to the public

Action Steps

- Co-develop cultural competency initiatives and programs for schools and businesses
- Inventory and create a pipeline of bilingual translation and interpretation services

- Increase board diversity among regional nonprofit organizations and companies
- Highlight businesses owned by people of color in marketing materials and through digital marketing channels to increase awareness of Scottsbluff's diverse business community. Promote their success to the region at large.
- Advertise any unique DEI-focused programs offered by the region's educational institutions and businesses
- Allocate resources and identify outside funding sources to establish a Community Liaison to the Scottsbluff Latino community
- Work with the Nebraska Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to help connect business owners to resources
- Initiate a Hispanic Business Association to meet on a monthly basis

Existing Conditions

The Latino American Commission (originally Mexican-American Commission) was created by LB 1081 of the second session of the Eighty-second Legislature in March of 1972. In February 2010, LB 139 changed the name to Commission on Latino Americans in order to reflect more inclusiveness of the increasingly diverse Latino population in Nebraska. It was the first such Commission in the United States and remains the only one created by statute.

The mission of the Latino American Commission is to serve as a link between the Nebraska State Government and Latino Americans/Latinos and as a voice in the Nebraska State Government for Latino Americans/Latinos.

A 2018 Report let by the Latino American Commission offers the following analysis:

- Over 1 billion dollars in sales by Latino firms located in Nebraska
- The number of Latino firms nearly doubled (97.5%) over five years, from 3,063 to 6,048, while Non-Hispanic firms only grew by 2.8%
- 50% employment growth over five years despite an economic recession
- Average of \$1.5 million dollars in annual sales per Latino firm
- Over 4 out of 10 Latino firms are owned by Latino women
- “Construction” is the economic sector that concentrates most of the Latino ownership (22.4%), followed by “Health Care and Social Assistance” (13.9%)
- Over 8 out of 10 Latino owners in the “Health Care and Social Assistance” sector are females, and over 9 out of 10 Latino owners in the “Construction” sector are males
- Male participation in the Construction industry increased from 20% in 2007 to 42.8% in 2012, while female participation in the Health Care and Social

Assistance sector decreased from 42% to 27.3% during the same time period

- 38% of all Latino-owned firms are located in Douglas County, followed by 13% in Lancaster County
- Thirty-eight-point one percent of Latino-owned firms are located in Douglas County, followed by 12.6% in Lancaster County, 8.5% in Sarpy County, 7.1% in Hall County, and 6.6% in Scotts Bluff County

Anecdotal information collected via stakeholder interviews indicates the Scottsbluff Latino community has several generations of families relocating to the region and thriving over the years.

How Is Progress Measured?

These metrics should be used to track the implementation progress of the DEI strategies.

- Number of training programs and initiatives offered to workers on DEI and cultural competence
- Number of participants in the DEI and cultural competence
- Number of new minority new business starts
- Number of retained minority businesses
- Number of new minority FTEs
- Level of capital investment by Latino businesses
- Number of new Latino political candidates and success rate



CASE STUDY

Increasing cultural competency in small, rural communities

Save Your Town [suggests](#) communities look for and break down barriers by rethinking some of the “norms” in space rental and business startup, including not requiring first/last month rent, or hosting entrepreneur events that allow for smaller conversations so that those who aren’t native English speakers or learn differently can still engage in the event, rather than hosting a talk or webinar that forces people to sit still and only hear from “experts”.

[Family](#) relationships and respect are core values for Latino individuals in rural communities. When trying to expand your relationship with these families, making the event family-centric could be beneficial, including providing meals. Successful engagement includes programs that involve the entire family, value culture, and are culturally relevant. Having bilingual and bicultural staff (or volunteers) is essential to working with the Latino community. Making this a priority increases the trust and respect Latinos have for an agency/person.

Latino communities are used to organizations coming and going, prejudice, racism, and anti-immigrant notions which make them less likely to interact with the larger community who are in the outreach roles. Involve the community in the discussions of how to support Latino Entrepreneurs, what they want to see in a downtown

community, and who wants to have a voice (that can be responsible for decisions) at the table. Latino communities want to form relationships, prefer to discuss their opinions rather than writing them or filling out a survey, and will often listen to what someone they trust says. If someone says an agency or person is acting in bad faith or is looking for them just to be a token, they will not respond. Building trust and personal relationships is more likely to garner support and participation than typical fliers/emails/etc. Give youth and adults the opportunity to be leaders and mentors. It is also important that staff commit to increasing their cultural competency and realize that this is an ongoing lifelong process. Organizations can provide opportunities for staff to be trained, encourage or require the training, and incentivize the completion of trainings. Staff should know that they can learn from other cultures and be willing to break down stereotypes or preconceived notions about the community.⁴

The National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families recommends that trust building and starting cultural competency starts with conversations with people from different cultural groups to gather opinions and viewpoints that are representative. They provide a guide and numerous resources for community-based organizations to be more culturally competent, provide culturally competent services, and more.⁵

The City of Long Beach implemented a Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative as an effort to dismantle

and eliminate systemic racism, recognizing the necessary starting point is dismantling anti-Black practices and institutions. The work was completed by city staff members, third-party facilitators, and community members. The City conducted listening sessions that were hosted by community members and city staff and conducted surveys as well. Other community members and stakeholders were engaged in stakeholder convenings. However, the Black community and other stakeholders felt the goals were not entirely representative of the feedback given, which might have eroded trust in the process.⁶

The University of [Nebraska](#) Institute of Agriculture and natural Resources Extension program has a variety of resources on cultural competency, including microaggressions, gender stereotypes, the case for cultural and global competencies, and the importance of cultural competence.⁷

⁴*Best Practices for Outreach and Engagement to Latino Audiences Using Community-based Programs.* Liliانا Vega, Barbara Brody, Missy Cummins.

⁵*Developing Culturally Responsive Approaches to Serving Diverse Populations: A Resource Guide for Community-Based Organizations*

⁶*Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative Initial Report, City of Long Beach*

⁷*Survey of Rural Challenges Report 2021 and Survey of Rural Challenges 5 year themes*

FOCUS AREAS

Community Development



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

An activated and dynamic community core is a critical part of attracting and retaining talent and businesses. City leaders in Scottsbluff have long invested in the re-development of the downtown core to create a more exciting center of gravity. Continued focus on bold investments is encouraged with strategies to create a thriving arts and culture scene.

Strategies

- Evaluate public-private partnerships for childcare solutions
- Create opportunities for experiential activities related to amenities and retail to fuel demand for tourists and residents
- Adopt tactical urbanism initiatives to activate vacant and underutilized retail space
- Partner with the Urban Land Institute and other planning think tanks to evaluate retail development solutions
- Encourage new mixed-use commercial and residential development downtown
- Pair arts and culture with real estate (re)development to unlock potential for new businesses, residents, families, and street life

Action Steps

- Identify and prioritize family-friendly oriented amenities and sites for investment
- Host and promote “pop-up shops” to encourage artisans/creative entrepreneurs and attract regional visitors to new retail opportunities
- Invest in arts and culture initiatives that enhance the quality of place for residents, workers, and tourists
- Host interactive activities, such as geocaching or Pokemon Go, to appeal to specific, younger audiences
- Continue work with the Creative District Steering Committee to receive Creative District Designation through the Nebraska Arts Council to make the district a destination

Existing Conditions (Arts and Culture)

For the sixth consecutive year, SMU DataArts, the National Center for Arts Research, is pleased to provide the Arts Vibrancy Index Report, which draws upon a set of data-informed indices to recognize arts-vibrant communities across the United States.⁸ Accompanying each community’s ranking on the metrics and measures are highlights that reflect the story of what makes it unique and vibrant. Doing so portrays the activity, life, and vigor that are reflected in the numbers. Local arts councils, arts alliances, convention and visitor bureaus, and other agencies provided these descriptions of their community’s exceptional characteristics.

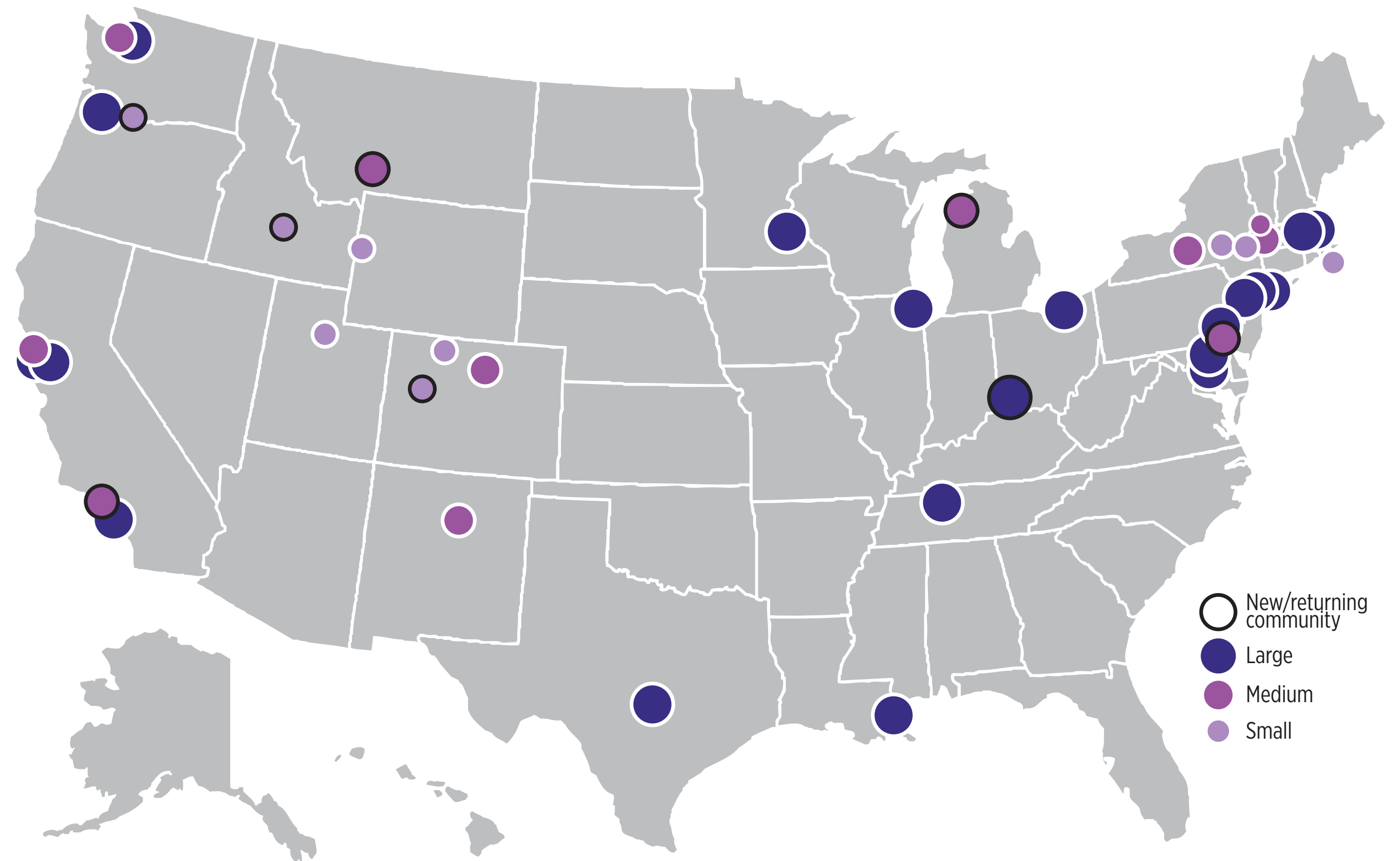
⁸https://culturaldata.org/media/2152/arts-vibrancy-index-report-vi_smu-dataarts_sept2020.pdf

2020 Key Findings

- **No part of the country has cornered the market on arts vibrancy.** Every region of the country has vibrant arts communities that appear in this report (see Figure 1 and Tables 1, 2, and 3). This finding arises naturally out of an objective analysis of the data, not from the hand selection of communities to achieve geographic representation. Large and medium metropolitan areas are represented in all regions of the country, whereas the list of small communities is dominated by those located in the West (Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Utah, Wyoming) and Northeast (Massachusetts, New York, Vermont).
- **Arts vibrancy continues to take many shapes.** Some top Arts-Vibrant Communities have a profusion of smaller and mid-sized organizations and venues; others have a concentration of large nonprofit arts and cultural institutions and little else; some benefit from their close proximity and ties to another arts-vibrant community; and others are artist magnets or tourist destinations. Numerous arts sectors flourish in some communities, while other cities are known for their strength in a particular art form, which emerges through the data.
- **A community's arts vibrancy is dynamic, but changes tend to be evolutionary, not revolutionary.** New communities made the list this year, and there is reshuffling in the rankings of communities that made the list in prior years. Ten percent of the communities are entirely new to our lists this year, while another 10 percent return after not being included in the 2019 report.- Hailey, ID, a small community, made the list for the first time. Hood River, OR, and Glenwood Springs, CO, reappear on the small community list following a hiatus. Jackson, WY-ID, Bennington, VT, and Heber (formerly Summit Park), UT, have made the list every year since 2015.

Figure 1

Top 40 Arts-Vibrant Communities, by Location and Size



Source: Arts Vibrancy Index Report VI, September 2020; SMU | DataArts

Top 10 Small Communities

This section provides insights into the arts and cultural scene for the top 10 small MSAs, listing each community’s ranking on Arts Providers, Arts Dollars, and Government Support. All 10 communities listed here are considered Micropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) by the Census Bureau, meaning they are counties with a principal city that has a population between 10,000 and 50,000, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of integration with that core city. The Census Bureau names the MSA for the principal city rather than the county. However, it is important to keep in mind that all MSAs are comprised of at least one county, so we capture the activity of the entire county, not just the principal city.

The rankings on each metric and measure are from a high of 1 to a low of 947, because there are 947 unique MSAs and Metro Divisions. Many of these communities might be described as small artist colonies or tourist destinations supported by part-time residents. Arts Providers and Arts Dollars are weighted at 45% each in determining the rankings, and Government Support is weighted at 10%. Any ranking between 1 and 95 still puts that community in the top 10% of cities on that measure, and a ranking of 96-190 means the community is in the top 20th percentile, etc. Ranking in the top 10 roughly means being in the top 1% on that measure.

Table 3

Top 10 Arts-Vibrant Small Communities (MSAs with population under 100,000)

Rank	MSA	Region	2019 Population
1	Jackson, WY-ID	West	35,606
2	Steamboat Springs, CO	West	25,638
3	Heber, UT	West	76,236
4	Hailey, ID	West	24,127
5	Glenwood Springs, CO	West	77,828
6	Vineyard Haven, MA	Northeast	17,332
7	Oneonta, NY	Northeast	59,493
8	Hudson, NY	Northeast	59,461
9	Bennington, VT	Northeast	35,470
10	Hood River, OR	West	23,382

Source: Arts Vibrancy Index Report VI, September 2020; SMU | DataArts

How Is Progress Measured?

These metrics should be used to track the implementation progress of Community Development strategies.

- Number of new amenities (re) developed
- Increase of occupancy rate for retail venues
- Number of new quality daycare providers
- Increase mileage of trail systems, parks, and open space
- Number of new residential units added to downtown

CASE STUDY

Marketing Vacant Retail Spaces

[Save your town](#) and the [Idea Friendly Method](#) is an approach that typically starts with a local incubator for one or several entrepreneurs. Leaders partner with an owner of an empty building and builds buy-in to rent the space below market rate while scouting the community and hosting events to identify potential tenants. Similarly, a cooperative can be formed to help get a business that the community wants or needs off the ground – e.g., a group investing in a building to help a bakery launch. Once the bakery succeeds, it can buy back the building and the cooperative can move to the next venture. Communities of less than 1,000 (e.g., Waynoka, OK) have found success in these models. A year after starting the “Idea Friendly Method,” a small community in Ohio was able to fill all but one building in the downtown area with a variety of businesses (and includes more restaurants than antique stores). A local real estate developer offers free rent for a year to entrepreneurs who could not afford the rent to get their business started. Columbiana, Ohio was nominated as the nicest place in Ohio and eventually won the nicest place in America. The community credits the idea of taking pride in their town and being responsible for sharing that pride.

Showing off vacant buildings and potential space helps draw people in. Inviting people into the space, hosting tours, and talking about the spaces on local/regional radio

can help build networks of people who want to utilize the space. One [person](#) in a town of 3,500 in Alabama has rented a large space in the downtown area (that had mostly boarded-up storefronts) and turned it into a space to teach art, music, and fitness, and includes a makers market that hosts four vendors. Teachers and vendors can rent the space to try out a business idea to see if it can grow into its own location. Teachers get paid on a commission basis: the more classes they do, the more revenue they make.

[Starting small](#) could include testing out different ideas for how to market and utilize business fronts in the downtown area. Create a temporary version of what you want your downtown to be – borrow plants, use pavers to add additional sidewalk space, and organize temporary shops, cafes, and art. Then ask people what they like and what they don’t. This allows a community to test out changes, gets the community excited about what could be, and can generate new ideas from the community.

[Crowdfunding](#) through sites such as Small Change and Main Street LLC can be beneficial for small towns looking to find investors for repairs, rehabilitation, and redevelopment.

[Small Change](#) matches investors with developers raising funds for transformative real estate projects where developers can partner with community members to invest. Main Street LLC is an investment group that works with local leaders to crowdfund the resources they need for projects. They work with communities to identify what will work in their towns and help create the crowdfunding

plan. The site allows for online and offline donations as well as volunteer sign-up opportunities. They provide coaching along the way if fundraising is challenging.

[Promoting Arts and Culture](#): Hailey, ID, is “Idaho’s Hometown in the Mountains” and is nestled in the majestic Central Idaho Rockies, 150 miles from Boise. Hailey shares the Metropolitan Division with Sun Valley, also rich in arts and culture. Hailey has an abundance of arts and cultural activities and events, including theater, renowned music festivals, and a thriving community of artists living in a city that supports the arts in its many diverse forms. The Hailey Arts Commission manages the Percent for Art Program, which mandates that 1% of the total cost of all construction, improvements, or renovation projects undertaken by the city be set aside for public art projects. Sun Valley is home to the Sun Valley Museum of Art, the annual Sun Valley Jazz and Music Festival, Company of Fools Theatre, and The Spot. The area has more than a dozen galleries, the lauded Writers’ Conference, the Sun Valley Film Festival, Argyros Performing Arts Center, and free summer symphony concerts in the Sun Valley Pavilion. Art, culture, and agriculture intersect at the annual Trailing of the Sheep Festival, which celebrates Basque cultural heritage with folk dancers and storytelling. The festival is rated as one of the top 10 fall festivals in the world by msn.com and has international appeal, drawing over 25,000 visitors from around the world. Hailey is in the top 1% on independent artists per capita and ranks 9th on program revenue.

FOCUS AREAS

Small Business
Development and
Entrepreneurship



SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

National data from the U.S. Census indicates that that all net new jobs are created by startups less than five years old, demonstrating that the importance of investing in a robust entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem is critical for economic prosperity and sustainability. Local data from interviews and workshops in Scottsbluff signified a desire and need for systems and resources to support entrepreneurship and small business growth in the region. These are the proposed strategies and action steps to achieve this growth.

Strategies

- Launch a major entrepreneurship and innovation program based on the successes of the region's legacy entrepreneurs and industries of the future
- Bolster succession planning for entrepreneurs nearing retirement
- Ensure immigrant-owned businesses have and are aware of bilingual business support organizations (BSOs) and resources
- Encourage entrepreneurship-mindset initiatives and curriculum development for the K-12 public school systems

Action Steps

- Identify and create a virtual front door to entrepreneurs where they know where to access capital, available office/co-work space, mentors, and other entrepreneurs
- Partner with national virtual incubators and accelerators to support entrepreneurs across the industry spectrum
- Host virtual and in-person reverse pitch competitions to help solve organization's or large company's challenges to developing their product or service⁹
- Support and promote the Mastermind mentor group to amplify the concentration and success of entrepreneurs in the region

- Launch new partnerships for capital funding sources for Scottsbluff startups including Invest Nebraska, Nebraska Angels, Nebraska Innovation Fund
- Increase entrepreneurial initiatives and programs in Scottsbluff and Gering public schools
- Partner with large employers to invest in local innovation and capital for startups
- Work with the city's LB840 Application Review Committee and LB840 Citizen's Oversight Committee to make retail businesses eligible for funding under the city's LB840 Plan
- Connect with Bunker Labs - Nebraska to assist veterans transitioning out of the military to start their own companies in the Scottsbluff region
- Build stronger connections between regional and statewide entrepreneurial support organizations and other panhandle communities to share resources and responsibilities

⁹Unlike a traditional interaction where an entrepreneur pitches their idea to a potential

Existing Conditions

To understand some of the capital gaps in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, data was pulled from the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council's Community Reinvestment Act database.¹⁰

¹⁰[https://www.ffiec.gov/craadweb/aggregate.aspx?Activity=5&Year=2020&State=31&Msa=99999&County=157&strStatetext=31-NEBRASKA%2b\(NE\)&MSAtext=&Countytext=157+-SCOTTS+BLUFF+COUNTY](https://www.ffiec.gov/craadweb/aggregate.aspx?Activity=5&Year=2020&State=31&Msa=99999&County=157&strStatetext=31-NEBRASKA%2b(NE)&MSAtext=&Countytext=157+-SCOTTS+BLUFF+COUNTY)

MSA Income Characteristics		Loan Amount at Origination <= \$100,000		Loan Amount at Origination > \$100,000 But <= \$250,000		Loan Amount at Origination > \$250,000		Loans to Businesses with Gross Annual Revenues <= \$1 Million	
		Num of loans	Amount (000s)	Num of loans	Amount (000s)	Num of loans	Amount (000s)	Num of loans	Amount (000s)
2020 CRA MSA Aggregate Report - Table 1-1									
Loans by County									
Small Business Loans - Originations									
MSA: NA									
Outside of MSA/MD, NE									
SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY (157), NE									
Low Income									
9537.00		37	1,026	2	269	5	2,507	17	456
Subtotal for Income Group		37	1,026	2	269	5	2,507	17	456
Moderate Income									
9535.00		42	594	3	419	3	1,035	28	1,154
9536.00		24	554	0	0	0	0	10	225
Subtotal for Income Group		66	1,148	3	419	3	1,035	38	1,379
Middle Income									
9529.00		27	406	2	379	2	580	16	964
9530.00		29	493	0	0	0	0	17	185
9531.00		30	353	0	0	1	450	22	684
9532.00		16	252	0	0	0	0	6	122
9533.00		33	733	4	605	2	922	16	911
9538.00		49	1,038	4	689	4	2,155	30	635
9539.00		40	656	1	122	0	0	26	563
Subtotal for Income Group		224	3,931	11	1,795	9	4,107	133	4,064
Upper Income									
9534.00		43	817	1	129	2	813	18	293
Subtotal for Income Group		43	817	1	129	2	813	18	293
Tract Not Known									
Subtotal for Income Group		6	92	0	0	0	0	4	50
County Total		376	7,014	17	2,612	19	8,462	210	6,242

2020 CRA MSA Aggregate Report - Table 1-1A
Lenders by County
Small Business Lenders in Area - Originations

Institution Name	Agency	Num of loans	Amount (000s)	MSA: NA Outside of MSA/MD, NE Loans to Businesses with Gross Annual Revenues <= \$1 Million	
				Num of loans	Amount (000s)
SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY (157), NE					
MSA - NA					
Alerus Financial NA	1	1	733	0	0
American Express National Bank	1	64	759	22	122
AMERICAN NATIONAL BANK	1	2	315	2	315
AMERIS BANK	3	3	14	0	0
Bank of America, N.A.	1	7	131	2	11
BANK OF COLORADO	3	1	540	1	540
Bank of the West	3	1	48	0	0
BMO Harris Bank N.A.	1	3	283	0	0
Capital One Bank (USA), N.A.	1	21	117	10	55
Capital One, N.A.	1	5	17	1	3
CAPITOL FEDERAL SAVINGS	1	1	252	0	0
CITIBANK, N.A.	1	37	202	32	160
CROSS RIVER	3	1	11	0	0
Customers Bank	2	2	100	0	0
Dacotah Bank	2	2	228	0	0
Discover Bank	3	3	24	3	24
EAST WEST BANK	2	1	313	0	0
FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF OMAHA	1	67	4,168	58	2,423
FLAGSTAR BANK	1	1	29	1	29
Glacier Bank	3	20	521	15	199
Great Western Bank	3	36	3,660	14	1,467
John Deere Financial, f.s.b.	1	16	191	0	0
JPMorgan Chase Bank, NA	1	26	484	8	115
Lake Forest Bank & Trust, NA	1	4	687	0	0
Live Oak Banking Company	3	1	215	0	0
Mechanics Bank	3	1	171	0	0
MetaBank N.A.	1	3	392	0	0
Pinnacle Bank	3	3	24	3	24
SECURITY BANK OF KANSAS CITY	3	2	199	0	0
State Farm Bank	1	1	18	1	18
STEARNS BANK N A	1	1	179	0	0
Synchrony Bank	1	7	20	0	0
TEXAS CAPITAL BANK	1	1	104	0	0
Truist Financial	3	3	28	2	20
UNION BANK AND TRUST COMPANY	3	3	650	1	32
US BANK NA	1	26	1,059	22	365
WELLS FARGO BANK, N.A.	1	23	1,140	12	320
WEX Bank	3	12	62	0	0

How Is Progress Measured?

These metrics should be used to track the implementation progress of Small Business and Entrepreneurship strategies.

- Number of new business starts
- Number of retained entrepreneurs
- Number of acquisitions and level of investment
- Number of new FTEs of startups (under 5 years old)
- Amount of investment from angel and venture capital firms
- Number of high-growth firms

CASE STUDY

Reverse Pitch Competition

In response to Portland's smart city goals, Greater Portland Inc (GPI) developed a two-part reverse pitch competition and networking event to connect the region's public sector and the tech community to collaboratively address community challenges. For the first part, each agency/city/organization presented at least one challenge to an audience of problem-solving technology firms, and then each tech firm pitched its problem-solving capacity to the audience of agencies. Following the pitches, teams from both sides ranked the presentations, and matches were made by GPI. In the second part, agencies and tech companies that matched the highest met one-on-one to answer questions, tackle additional problem solving, and plan potential next steps. Although this program focuses specifically on connecting the public sector and the private sector, similar events could be held to connect startups to existing businesses or entrepreneurs to mentors.





APPENDIX A: STAKEHOLDERS

Steering Committee

Bill Trumbull
 Kevin Spencer
 Liz Loutzenhiser
 Marla Marx
 Nate Merrigan
 Starr Lehl

Stakeholders

Andrea Margheim
 Andrew Dick
 Angela Scanlan
 Becky Estrada
 Brenda Leisy
 Cinda Munoz
 Conrad Bostron
 Dan Morford
 Debbie Wagner
 Eric Reichert

Herb Gibson
 Hod Kosman
 Jake Aulick
 Jeanne McKerrigan
 Jerry Darnell
 John Mentgen
 Jordan Colwell
 Jordan Diedrich
 Karen Anderson
 Karla Niedan-Streeks
 Katie Bradshaw
 Kevin Kelley
 Kristin Wiebe
 Mary Ann Shockley
 Matt Larsen
 Melissa Schneider
 Melody Baily
 Michele Denton

Michelle Coolidge
 Nathan Green
 Nicole Regan
 Pat Heath
 Ralph Paez
 Rawnda Pierce
 Scott James
 Selena Lerma
 Valeria Rodriguez



Scottsbluff Economic Development Strategic Plan