

COMPREHENSIVE INVESTMENT & STABILIZATION PRE- DEVELOPMENT STUDY

LEXINGTON, NEBRASKA

JANUARY 28, 2014

Prepared By:



INTRODUCTION

Background

On August 6, 2013, the City of Lexington, Nebraska, was notified that it was the recipient of a \$10,000 grant from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) to assist in the implementation of projects within a designated area within the City, hereinafter referred to as the “*study area*.” In Lexington, that study area is delineated by Census Tract NE0003619. Figure 1 identifies the selected census tract and the concentration of low to moderate income households in Lexington. Figure 2 identifies the study area as consisting of the downtown business district, commercial and industrial properties, and surrounding residential lots.

The funding was part of a new Comprehensive Investment & Stabilization (CIS) category under the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) geared toward communities in the 5,000 – 20,000 population range. The objective of the program is to provide flexible investments in targeted communities that will contribute to the stabilization, revitalization, or redevelopment of housing and infrastructure systems in neighborhoods with a high concentration of lower-income residents.

DED has awarded these CIS Program funds to the City of Lexington to carry out project implementation through multi-year pre-development studies and comprehensive development projects that meet required national and state CDBG objectives. The first phase will result in the completion of a well-defined multi-year Comprehensive Investment & Stabilization Pre-development Study. The Phase I study will define a series of specific desired outcomes with goals and action steps for improvements to the study area.

The second phase (Phase II) may be awarded to the City after the successful completion, negotiation, and approval by DED of the multi-year Comprehensive Investment & Stabilization Pre-development Study. These funds will be used to implement physical projects identified in the pre-development study. Upon approval by DED of the pre-development study, the City of Lexington may apply for additional CDBG funds ranging from \$150,000-\$250,000 per year for the next three additional years to implement activities. Eligible activities are those identified as State CDBG Priorities in the Housing, Public Works, and Planning categories.

Phases I and II both require a 25% a local match, however, DED encourages a 50% local match on Phase II initiatives.

Public Outreach and Engagement

The City of Lexington recognizes that public participation is a critical element of any planning process. Adequate public notice and comment are vital to ensuring that the planning documents created truly reflect the views of the citizens, business owners, and organizations in the study area, and the city as a whole.

The public participation program utilized by the City of Lexington during the both pre-development workshops involved outreach and engagement. Various outreach techniques were used by the city to raise stakeholder awareness of the pre-development process, including:

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- Personal invitations
 - Social media (Facebook)
 - Electronic (Emails and posting on the City's website)
 - Newspaper Articles and Notices in the Lexington Clipper Herald
 - Public service announcements on KRVN Radio
 - Flyers
 - Direct mailing

The ultimate goal of this effort was to inform the greatest number of stakeholders about the planning project and opportunities for public participation in the decision-making process. Those stakeholders targeted during the outreach effort included residents of the study area, property owners, nonprofit organizations, neighborhood organizations, schools, religious organizations, civic organizations, business groups, city officials, and advocacy groups.

To facilitate the public engagement process and to help formulate the Pre-Development Study, the City of Lexington hired JEO Consulting Group, Inc. During the planning process, JEO utilized a series of accepted planning techniques to improve the scope, quality, and efficiency of its interactions with study area stakeholders and citizens. The overarching goals of this public engagement process were to:

- Providing more/better opportunities for stakeholders to provide input to and participate in City initiatives.
- Better understand the diversity and strength of public opinion.
- Share different viewpoints and learn from each other.
- Generate new ideas and solutions.
- Build trust in decision-makers and more capacity at the City of Lexington
- Enhance community capacity and social connections

The actual techniques used by JEO to engage stakeholder input during the process are discussed in subsequent sections of this Pre-Development Study.

Pre-Development Workshop #1

On December 19, 2013, the City of Lexington commissioned its Phase I Pre-development Study to prioritize the physical needs and financial demands of an older neighborhood within the community, officially delineated by Census Tract NE0003619. This neighborhood, or study area, has deteriorated and become substandard and blighted for a variety of reasons. These conditions are considered beyond the remedy and control of the normal regulatory process or impossible to reverse through the ordinary operations of private enterprise. For this reason, public investments are needed to reverse deteriorated conditions and encourage private redevelopment of the area.

City of Lexington
Investment Strategy
Map

Legend

- Downtown District
- Census Tract Boundary



Created By: J. Sather
Date: July 2012
Revised: Dec 2013
Software: ArcGIS 10.2
File: 130078.00

This map was prepared using information from record drawings, aerial photography, and other sources. The City of Lexington does not warrant the accuracy of this map or the information used to prepare this map. This map is not to be used for any other purpose.

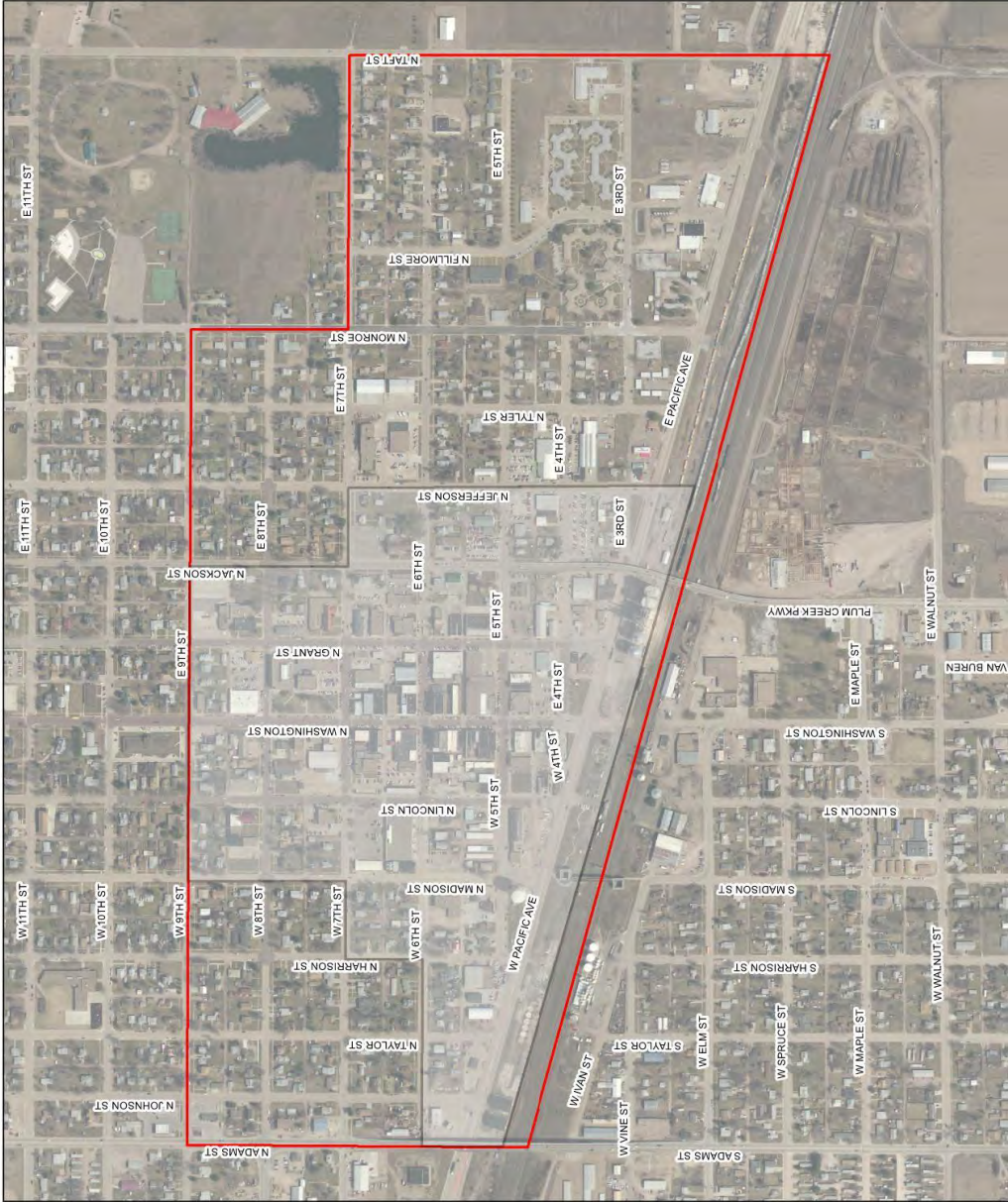


Figure 2

The goal of the workshop was to establish community consensus on future capital improvements so the City could begin budgeting for projects to keep Lexington and the study area moving in the right direction. The purpose of the workshop was to inform and educate the stakeholders about the CIS Program, identify the needs or goals of the study area, define the needs (issues/concerns), prioritize the needs of the study area, identify potential resources for project implementation, and formulate a plan for investment and stabilization of the study area.

Approximately 20 city staff members, business owners, advocacy representatives, and community residents attended the first workshop to discuss and prioritize various projects/goals within Census Tract NE0003619. The sign in sheet of attendees can be found in Appendix #1 of this Study.

At the onset of the workshop, stakeholders reviewed the goals, objectives and policies contained within the recently adopted Lexington Comprehensive Plan (2013) in order to gain a better understanding about the generalized goals of the entire community. In addition, all other recent events or projects that had been undertaken since the completion of the comprehensive plan were also identified. These events/projects (whether positive or negative) may ultimately impact the future growth of the community and help define priority goals of the study area. JEO Consulting Group, Inc. utilized these planning techniques to inform, educate and build consensus among the stakeholders.

These recent events or projects include:

- New Comprehensive Plan
- Updated Zoning Ordinance
- Plum Creek Park Master Plan
- Kirkpatrick Memorial Park Master Plan
- Downtown Revitalization Study and Implementation
- Lexington Regional Health Center Expansion
- Jackson Street Reconstruction
- Renovation of Majestic Theater
- County-Wide Housing Study - underway
- Lexington Fieldhouse with Indoor Soccer

GOAL SETTING AND PRIORITIZATION

Next on the pre-development workshop agenda, the group was to identify any current or needed project facing the study area/census tract within the City of Lexington which could be formulated into a possible goal. A total of nine projects or strategic issues were identified. These projects were then discussed in detail and specific issues or concerns were documented. After discussion, the group was asked to complete a dot prioritization exercise where the stakeholders ranked their top five projects/issues/goals into a first tier category. Each participant was given five dots in which to assign priority to individual issues. These projects would be considered the highest priority. The results of this first round are as follows:

First Tier Priority Goals/Projects/Issues

- Street Improvements – 14 votes first round
- Housing Needs – 13 votes first round
- Removal of Blighted and Substandard Conditions – 13 votes first round
- Economic Development – 12 votes first round

With the remaining six projects/goals, the group was again asked to place dots next to their top five goals. This second tier ranking was to identify those goals that had low to medium priority with the stakeholders. Those results are as follows:

Second Tier Priority Goals/Projects/Issues

- Downtown Business District Improvements – 4 votes first round, 13 votes second round
- Storm Drain Improvements – 3 votes first round, 0 votes second round
- Youth Activities – 2 votes first round, 10 votes second round (This was considered a strategic issue only)
- Parks and Open Space Improvements – 0 votes first round, 9 votes second round
- Accessible Ramps and Sidewalks – 1 vote first round, 8 votes second round
- Sanitary Sewer – 1 vote first round, 7 votes second round (This was considered a strategic issue only)

At the completion of the second tier exercise it was decided by the group to combine street improvements and storm drain improvements because the two infrastructure needs should be completed simultaneously.

GOAL COMPLETION PERIOD

The remaining step in the pre-development process was to assign an implementation timeframe to each priority. For purposes of this exercise, timeframes used were: short term which is 0-3 years, mid-term which is 4-7 years, long term which is 8-10 years or more, and ongoing. The results of this exercise are as follows:

Short Term Goals/Projects

- Housing Needs
- Removal of Blighted and Substandard Conditions (short term to long term)
- Economic Development (short to long term)
- Downtown Business District Improvements (short term to ongoing)

Long Term Goals/Projects

- Parks and Open Space Improvements

Ongoing Goals/Projects

- Street and Storm Sewer Improvements
- Accessible Ramps and Sidewalks

Pre-Development Workshop #2

On January 9, 2014, the City of Lexington held the second and last workshop. Although the city used the same public outreach process as the first workshop, only ten stakeholders were able to attend. The sign in sheet of attendees can be found in Appendix #1 of this Study.

The purpose of this second workshop was to present, review, and discuss the Community Action Plan developed by JEO after the initial workshop. Simply put, the Community Action Plan is the road map for achieving the stated goals of the study area in the timeframe set forth by stakeholders. The format of the Plan outlines the concerns/issues for each goal, and their associated objectives, action steps, timeframes, responsible groups/agencies, potential resources, and measurable output that might be expected if the goal is implemented.

Attendees were asked to review the Community Action Plan and provide city staff with any comments or corrections. Those revisions were subsequently made before the draft was Plan was emailed to the City for inclusion into the Council packet for the January 28, 2014 City Council meeting.

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

The following nine strategic issues/projects/goals identified at the Pre-Development workshop were listed in order of their highest ranking with their recommended time of completion and their associated concerns and/or needs. Although the following goals are numbered, this goal setting process shall not limit the city from addressing unforeseen issues or taking advantage of any opportunities to complete such goals/projects in the study area regardless of their order.

Goal #1:	<i>Improve Street and Storm Sewer conditions with the study area.</i>
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Concerns/Needs:

- Need improvements on 7th and 8th Streets between Adams and Lincoln, including valley gutter, storm sewer, and intersections.
- East 4th around Jefferson is in flood zone and need to remove.
- Improvements needed in street to correct drainage on east side of courthouse.
- Need to improve parking aprons on 5th and 6th from Grant to Lincoln Streets. Need to improve storm sewer on east side of courthouse.
- Improve roadways and intersections on Lincoln Street from Highway 30 north.
- Need improvements to 6th Street from Grant to Taft. This is in budget already and a Federal Aid project.

Objective #1: To evaluate street conditions throughout study area.

- Action Step #1:* Gather information on the existing streets/storm sewer system serving the study, including as-built drawings, surveys, maintenance records, and previously prepared studies.
- Action Step #2:* Engage the services of a Professional Engineer to conduct a block-by-block investigation of street and storm sewer conditions throughout the study area.
- Action Step #3:* Evaluate the underlying cause of any existing pavement failure and surface drainage issues.
- Action Step #4:* Provide recommendations for long-term street/storm drainage improvements.
- Action Step #5:* Provide opinion of cost for recommended long-term street/surface drainage improvements per block.
- Action Step #6:* Recommend proven maintenance strategies to preserve the life expectancy/physical condition of local streets.

Timeline: 2014

Objective #2: To prioritize streets which, if reconstructed, would provide maximize public benefit to residents and property-owners of the study area.

- Action Step #1:* Hold a town hall meeting to review and discuss the results of the Study Area Street Condition Evaluation.
- Action Step #2:* Gather public input on the evaluation.
- Action Step #3:* Consult and incorporate priority projects into the City's One- and Six-Year Road Plan.
- Action Step #4:* Provide a framework (i.e., phasing plan) to ensure that long-term street/surface drainage improvements can be identified, prioritized and implemented with maximum public benefit.
- Action Step #5:* Map priorities to ensure proper phasing of street/surface drainage improvements.

Timeline: 2014

Objective #3: To determine the City's ability to finance priority street/surface drainage improvements.

- Action Step #1:* Evaluate the City's street budget and effectiveness of local maintenance expenditures.
- Action Step #2:* Ensure a proper balance between street construction and street maintenance.
- Action Step #3:* Meet with the City's fiscal agent to determine the City's debt capacity.
- Action Step #4:* Identify local, regional, state and federal resources for street improvements.
- Action Step #5:* Consider applying for Phase II CDBG CIS funds for street/storm sewer improvements within the target area.
- Action Step #6:* Maximize project impact by leveraging local funds with outside resources.
- Action Step #7:* Package all financial resources for maximum public benefit.

Timeline: Ongoing

Objective #4: To undertake long-term, priority street/surface drainage improvements, as funds permit.

- Action Step #1:* Cause to have prepared plans and specifications for long-term street/drainage improvements.
- Action Step #2:* Conduct necessary engineering services to prepare bid documents.
- Action Step #3:* Bid phase to include advertising, letting and contract award to the lowest responsible/responsive bidder.
- Action Step #4:* Undertake construction-related activities in a planned systematic manner.

Timeline: Ongoing

Responsible Groups/Agencies

City of Lexington, City Staff, Residents, Professional Engineer, and Dawson Area Development.

Potential Resources

Lexington General Street Fund, Community Development Block Grant Funds, General Obligation Bond, Local Option Sales Tax, Surface Transportation Funds, LB98 Funds, and Special Assessment Districts.

Measurable Outputs

Streets might be thought of as the skeleton of the community. They form the dynamic framework for movement, social communication and orderly relationships among buildings and properties. Their importance can be seen in the fact that about one-fifth of the total area of the average American city is used for streets. Furthermore, a large part of the average municipal budget is likely to go into upkeep and building of streets.

Streets exist for the interaction and movement of people, but they serve other functions as well. The physical condition of local streets serves as a measure of civic health and vitality. A well-maintained street network can enhance community pride, increase property values, provide safer, more attractive neighborhoods and even encourage residents to become vigilant in routine property-upkeep. They may also relay an image to visitors and tourists that the community is a sound place in which to live, work, visit and invest.

Clearly, land development - especially residential and commercial - is most desirable when it occurs along a “hard surface” road. For that reason, an improved roadway is not only aesthetically beneficial, but it serves a functional role in promoting economic development, particularly with recruiting small/medium-sized business concerns that rely on walk-in customers, or require truck service. Conversely, deferred or patchwork maintenance can have negative economic impacts on the local community. Poorly maintained streets can restrict the ability of residents and visitors to conduct commerce, as well as personal business and recreation activities.

Despite the importance of streets, the necessity of maintaining and upgrading street conditions within a community remains a mammoth commitment and economic challenge for local governments. Most officials realize that a period of consistent policy, planning and action will be required to make progress toward addressing the condition of local streets in their community. However, a city can achieve maximum public benefit, with limited local resources, by making street improvements in a planned, comprehensive and systematic manner. This can only be realized though, if there is first an effective, “holistic” and professional evaluation of the entire street system, in terms of condition, capacity and recommended upgrades.

A Street/Storm Sewer Improvement Evaluation will examine street and subterranean conditions throughout the study area – in terms of physical condition and capacity – and provide comprehensive recommendations for necessary upgrades and future needs. This comprehensive planning approach will allow a Professional Engineer to accurately describe each street surface; the type and causes of existing street failure; a street condition rating based on a predefined street rating system (e.g., new, good, fair poor, rock, etc.); drainage capacity of storm sewers; recommendation for long-term improvements (including surface drainage); cost estimates for recommended improvements, including but not limited to, estimated cost for recommended street improvements, surface drainage facilities, contingencies, legal, administrative and financing and for engineering fees.

From this “holistic” analysis, the Professional Engineer can submit recommendations to the City of Lexington – *with utmost confidence* – of targeted projects and a specific course of action over the next several years. Suggested improvements will be prioritized and each phase will include an opinion of costs so the City can follow a planned schedule of capital expenditures, rather than suddenly calling upon taxpayers to finance large-scale street/surface drainage upgrades all at once.

Once complete, future street/surface drainage improvements in the study area should be made in accordance with the findings and recommendations found within the Lexington Street/Storm Sewer Improvement Evaluation. This period of consistent policy, planning and action will enable the City Council to make progress toward addressing the street condition needs of the community, while remaining fiscally responsible to the property-owners and lower-income residents of the study area.

Improving street and storm sewer conditions with the study area is an ongoing priority of the community.

Goal #2:	<i>To improve the quality and quantity of the housing stock in the study area.</i>
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Concerns/Needs:

- There are a number of older housing units in the study area
- Scattered housing throughout the study area is in need of rehabilitation or replacement.
- Last owner occupied rehab was undertaken in 2007
- Two or more-bedroom housing units are in demand. Suggest more duplex rentals and 2-3 bedroom units.
- Housing tenure in the study area is 50/50 owner/renter occupied.
- There is a need for residential housing demolition of dilapidated structures.
- There is a need for market rate apartments.
- In Lexington you pay more money for less quality of rent and people are looking outside of community to get better housing for less money.
- There are vacant lots along 5th Street which would be optimal for redevelopment by the Lexington Housing Authority.
- An inventory/space available study for the area is needed.

Objective #1: To assess the need for housing rehabilitation within the study area.

- Action Step #1:* Conduct a community attitude survey to solicit information from study area residents about the physical condition of their current housing unit.
- Action Step #2:* Conduct a “windshield survey” to assess the physical survey of existing housing conditions within the study area.
- Action Step #3:* Conduct a town hall meeting to gather public input on the need for a housing rehabilitation program, both owner- and renter-occupied
- Action Step #4:* Conduct a focus group session with study area landlords to discuss the need/interest in a renter-occupied housing rehabilitation program.
- Action Step #5:* Cooperate with neighboring communities to establish a regional housing rehabilitation program. (This is currently underway.)
- Action Step #6:* "Pre-market" the proposed Lexington Housing Rehabilitation Program by accepting applications for housing rehabilitation assistance from owner/occupied and landlords.
- Action Step #7:* “Pre-market” the proposed Lexington Rental Housing Rehabilitation Program by accepting applications from study area landlords.

Timeline: 2014.

Objective #2: To provide financial assistance to those homeowners who could not otherwise afford a conventional home improvement loan.

- Action Step #1:* Revisit the Program Guidelines from the City’s previous Housing Rehabilitation Program. Discuss any issues that hindered the implementation of past programs.
- Action Step #2:* Formulate and officially adopt revised guidelines which will govern the fair and efficacious implementation of Lexington Housing Rehabilitation Program. Include specific language that addresses the responsibilities of the homeowner during the compliance period.

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- Action Step #3:* Identify local, regional, state and federal resources available for housing rehabilitation activities.
 - Action Step #4:* Consider applying for CIS Program funds to establish the Program.
 - Action Step #5:* Package and secure funding for housing rehabilitation activities.
 - Action Step #6:* Structure resources to accommodate payback potential of low- and moderate-income homeowners of the study area.

Timeline: 2014-2015.

Objective #3: To provide financial assistance to study area landlord to incentivize reinvestment into their investment properties.

- Action Step #1:* Consider Program Guidelines that would govern the implementation of a Renter-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program. Review Guidelines from previous Programs implemented in other communities. Discuss any issues that may have hindered the implementation of those programs.
- Action Step #2:* Formulate and officially adopt revised guidelines which will govern the fair and efficacious implementation of Lexington Renter-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program. Include specific language that addresses the responsibilities of the landlord during the compliance period.
- Action Step #3:* Identify resources available for housing rehabilitation activities.
- Action Step #4:* Consider applying for CIS Program funds to establish the Program.
- Action Step #5:* Secure funding for a renter-occupied housing rehabilitation program.
- Action Step #6:* Structure resources to accommodate payback potential/return on investments for landlords that own rental properties in the study area.

Timeline: 2014-2015.

Objective #4: To solicit participation from Lexington homeowners for housing rehabilitation activities.

- Action Step #1:* Advertise the Lexington Housing Rehabilitation Program, using local media outlets, online resources, direct mailing, and/or social service agencies.
- Action Step #2:* Conduct a town hall meeting to discuss eligibility requirements for participation in the Program.
- Action Step #3:* Accept applications from eligible homeowners; verify eligibility.

Timeline: 2015 - Ongoing.

Objective #5: To solicit participation from study area landlords willing to participate in the Lexington Renter-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program.

- Action Step #1:* Advertise the Renter-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program, using local media outlets, online resources, direct mailing, and/or social service agencies.
- Action Step #2:* Conduct a town hall meeting to discuss eligibility requirements for participation in the Program.
- Action Step #3:* Accept applications from eligible and interested landlords; verify eligibility.

Timeline: 2015 - Ongoing.

Objective #6: Provide an environment that encourages and promotes residential development within the study area.

- Action Step #1:* Conduct a housing market study to quantify and qualify the housing needs of the entire City, with special emphasis on the study area. (This is currently underway.)
- Action Step #2:* Quantify and qualify the future housing needs of the study area.
- Action Step #3:* Hold a Housing Developers Summit to discuss housing demand opportunities and local policies.
- Action Step #4:* Complete the housing market study and present the result to the public. (This is currently underway.)
- Action Step #5:* Upload study to the City's website and disseminate it to housing developers.
- Action Step #6:* Review the Comprehensive Development Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Regulations to ensure they promote housing development. Consider needed amendments.
- Action Step #7:* Develop public/private partnerships, where necessary, to facilitate new housing development.
- Action Step #8:* Consider all public financing option that may be used to promote, incentivize and stimulate housing development on infill properties.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

City of Lexington, Lexington Planning Commission, Lexington Community Development Agency, City Staff, local residents, Media Outlets, Social Service Agencies, Dawson Area Development, Community Housing Authority, private developers, landlords, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Fannie Mae, U.S.D.A. Rural Development, Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, Nebraska Energy Office, Community Action Partnership of Mid-Nebraska, Greater Lexington Corporation, Council for Economic Development, and local lending institutions.

Potential Resources

Local lending institutions, Tax Increment Financing, private funds, Nebraska Energy office, Community Action Partnership of Mid-Nebraska, NIFA Programs, Fannie Mae Programs, Nebraska Department of Economic Development Housing Programs, CDBG Re-Use monies, and U.S.D.A. Rural Development Programs.

Measurable Outputs

The study area's housing stock is its largest total physical investment. The neighborhood's quality as a living environment is largely determined by the quality of its housing structures. Since most of the housing supply that will be present by the end of 2014 is already standing today, conservation of the existing housing supply is very important to the vitality of the community. Consequently, the City of Lexington should consider establishing another owner-occupied, single family housing rehabilitation program and a renter-occupied housing rehabilitation program, if demand warrants. The investment of these resources will provide the financing to significantly improve living conditions of low and moderate-income homeowners of area; property-owners who could not otherwise afford a conventional loan. Strategically utilizing public/private resources will allow financial assistance to be provided to lower-income homeowners/landlords, at a rate which will accommodate their payback capacity.

To further expand housing choice, Lexington should consider sponsoring updated Housing Market Studies to qualify and quantify the future housing needs of the community, in particular, those of the study area. The Analysis is meant to help the City and local developers better understand the strengths and weaknesses of its residential housing market. The ultimate goal of the study is to help create a balanced community, one that adequately serves its residents with the greatest needs, and offers new and exciting housing opportunities for existing and potential residents.

There are two separate elements of the Housing Market Analysis. The demographic analysis describes the population, including the composition of the population, that is, trends in population numbers, age, household sizes, affluence and racial diversity. The residential analysis describes the makeup of the City's housing stock in terms of dwelling unit characteristics, owner and renter occupancy information, and factors that affect the supply and demand aspects of the local housing market.

Improving the quantity, quality and appearance of the study area's housing stock is a short-term and ongoing priority of the community.

Goal #3:**Removal of Blighted and Substandard Conditions within the study area.****Concerns/Needs:**

- Vacant buildings.
- Problem with properties having old buildings with limited use that have been rented for car lots for short periods of time.
- Need to look at acquisition and demolition.
- Storm sewer needs to be improved in certain places.
- Many sidewalks are an issue and need to be improved.
- Need to concentrate on areas where two or more buildings exist and then redevelop.
- Area between Madison and Jackson and from Highway 30 to approximately 9th Street is currently blighted.
- Highway 30 to 3rd Street could be redeveloped using tax increment financing (TIF) since it is in a redevelopment area.

Objective #1: *To request a voluntary participation of property-owners to improve substandard lots.*

Action Step #1: Promote a public education campaign about the nuisance abatement policies of the City, using local media outlets, direct mailings, and social service agencies. (This is currently underway.)

Action Step #2: Send notification letters to non-conforming property-owner requesting their voluntary assistance in improving substandard lots. Request feedback. (This is currently underway.)

Action Step #3: Discuss the needs (both human and financial) of those owners with substandard properties.

Timeline: Currently underway.

Objective #2: *To establish a program that will improve the appearance of the study area.*

Action Step #1: Identify organizations that are willing to donate time, labor and equipment to assist willing property-owners in the clean-up process. (This is currently underway.)

Action Step #2: Encourage property-owners to discard appliances, inoperable automobiles, machinery, hazardous materials and unsightly debris from substandard properties. *Note: Seek cooperation and obtain permission from property owners before commencing.* (This is currently underway.)

Action Step #3: Upgrade maintenance on all City property. (This is currently underway.)

Action Step #4: Encourage landscaping on public and private properties with assistance from the Natural Resources District, Statewide Arboretum and County Extension, area Master Gardeners and interested residents. (This is currently underway.)

Action Step #5: Raise awareness of City's recycling program. (This is currently underway.)

Timeline: Currently underway.

Objective #3: To assess the overall appearance of the study area and utilize legal procedures to improve substandard properties.

- Action Step #1:* Conduct a physical inventory of all public and private property within the study area. (This is currently underway.)
- Action Step #2:* Identify properties that are substandard, pose an immediate public health or safety concern to area residents, or violate local code deficiencies. (This is currently underway.)
- Action Step #3:* Consider legal options available to the Lexington City Council to deal with non-responsive property-owners. (This is currently underway.)
- Action Step #4:* Consult the City Attorney as to possible enforcement of Nebraska Nuisance Statutes. (This is currently underway.)
- Action Step #5:* Utilize the court system to gain compliance from homeowners to upgrade substandard properties. (This is currently underway.)
- Action Step #6:* Continue to enforce the Lexington Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Ordinance that allows the city to promote the health, safety, morals or general welfare of the community. (This is currently underway.)

Timeline: Currently underway.

Objective #4: To determine the long-term community beautification needs of the study area.

- Action Step #1:* Assess the impacts of previous community beautification programs.
- Action Step #2:* Identify locations throughout the community that lack proper landscaping.
- Action Step #3:* Identify the purpose of potential landscaping initiatives (to promote color, to hide eyesores, to introduce native plantings, to forward a landscaping theme).

Timeline: Ongoing.

Objective #5: To determine the long-term public infrastructure and housing needs of the study area.

- Action Step #1:* Review and discuss the need to upgrade public infrastructure systems within the target area. Please see Street/Storm Sewer, Park and Open Space, Sidewalks, and Sanitary Sewer goals contained within this Action Plan.
- Action Step #2:* Review and discuss the need to improve housing conditions within the study area. Please see Housing Goal contained within this Action Plan.
- Action Step #3:* Review and continue to implement the results of the Lexington Downtown Plan. Please see Downtown Goal contained within this Action Plan.
- Action Step #4:* Review and continue to implement the City's Economic Development Plan and Policies. Please see Economic Development Goal contained within this Action Plan.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

City of Lexington, City Staff, Lexington Planning Commission, Lexington Community Development Agency, Property-Owners, Nebraska Forestry Service/State Arboretum, Civic Organizations, Central Platte Natural Resources District, Private Developers, Federal Home Loan Bank, Social Service Agencies, and Dawson Area Development.

Potential Resources

Many of the potential resources available to address blight and substandard conditions have already been mentioned in other sections of this Action Plan. Resources that have not specifically mentioned thus far include: City Funds, Private Donations/Monies, General Obligation Bonds, Tax Increment Financing, Business Improvement District, Community Development Assistance Act, Local Option Sales Tax, Community Volunteers, Nebraska Forestry Service/Statewide Arboretum Programs, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Program, Dawson County Extension Service, and programs through the Central Platte Natural Resources District.

Measurable Outputs

The City of Lexington believes that attractive community appearance will provide visitors with a positive "first impression" of community and create an atmosphere that Lexington is an inviting place to visit, work, invest and live. A community with a positive self-image will encourage private investment or reinvestment, thereby saving tax dollars, stabilizing and improving the community's (study area's tax base), and protecting the public/private investments that have already been made.

On the other hand, blighted and substandard areas are harmful to the social and economic well-being of the entire area in which they exist. Conditions in many such areas are considered beyond the remedy and control of the normal regulatory process, or impossible to reverse through the ordinary operations of private enterprise. The Nebraska Community Development Law enables communities to take steps to eliminate blight through the acquisition, clearance, and disposition of property for redevelopment or through the conservation and rehabilitation of property.

Very briefly, an area may be designated as Blighted / Substandard if it has enough deficiencies that private investment is not occurring. A summary of the definitions of Blighted and Substandard are listed below, but for complete details, please refer to Nebraska's Community Development Law on the State of Nebraska Legislature Web site – specifically Statutes 18-2101 through 18-2154.

Paraphrased from Nebraska Law, an area can be designated as "**Substandard**" if it:

1. has a predominance of buildings that are:
 - dilapidated/deteriorated,
 - obsolete, or
 - have inadequate ventilation, light, air, sanitation or open spaces,
2. has population overcrowding,
3. has conditions that endanger life or property, by fire and other causes,
4. has a combination of factors that are conducive to ill health, transmission of disease, infant mortality, juvenile delinquency, and crime, and/or
5. is detrimental to public health, safety, morals, or welfare.

Paraphrased from Nebraska Law, an area can be designated as “*Blighted*” if it:

1. includes a substantial number of deteriorated or deteriorating structures,
2. has a defective or inadequate street layout,
3. has a faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness,
4. has insanitary or unsafe conditions,
5. is experiencing deterioration of site or other improvements,
6. has diversity of ownership,
7. has tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land,
8. has defective or unusual conditions of title,
9. has improper subdivision or obsolete platting,
10. has conditions which endanger life or property by fire or other causes,
11. has factors that substantially impair or arrest the sound growth of the community, delay the provision of housing accommodations, or constitute an economic or social liability,
12. is detrimental to public health, safety, morals, or welfare in its present condition and use, and has one or more of the following conditions:
 - an unemployment rate of at least 120% of the state or national average,
 - an average age of the residential or commercial units that is at least 40 years,
 - more than half of plotted and subdivided property has been within the city for 40 years and has remained unimproved during that time,
 - the per capita income is lower than the average per capita income of the city, or
 - stable or decreasing population, based on the last two decennial censuses.

A finding of “Blighted and Substandard” can be made if these factors are present to a great enough extent that public intervention appears to be appropriate or necessary to assist with any development activities. In addition, these factors should be reasonably distributed throughout the area so basically good areas are not arbitrarily found to be blighted and substandard simply because of proximity to areas which are blighted and substandard.

Nebraska Community Development Law recognizes the need to utilize appropriate private and public resources to eliminate problems and issues identified in blighted and substandard areas that are detrimental to the social and economic well-being of the area. Redevelopment Laws in the State of Nebraska authorize the City of Lexington to implement and provide public financing to activities that eliminate or prevent the spread of blight, encourage needed rehabilitation, provide for the redevelopment of blighted and substandard areas, and/or undertake such activities or other feasible municipal activities as may be suitably employed to achieve the redevelopment goals and objectives of the area.

To improve the physical appearance of the study area, the City of Lexington should continue its inventory of all public and private property to identify sites which pose a public health and safety concern, or violate local building codes. Every effort should be made to encourage voluntary compliance with community clean-up goals, but should realize that there are legal means to gain compliance from negligent property-owners in the removal of junk cars, inoperable appliances, tires, hazardous materials, and dilapidated housing units.

Other activities that will proactively promote a public/private partnership in the redevelopment of the study area include: acquisition of public property, demolition and clearance activities, housing rehabilitation/development, modernize public infrastructure systems, economic development and job creation, downtown revitalization initiatives, historic preservation, development of parks and open spaces, clean-up of derelict properties, and installation of various landscaping features.

Removal of blighted and substandard conditions prevalent in the study area is a short-term and ongoing priority of the community.

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Goal #4:	<i>Promote economic development throughout the City including the study area.</i>
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Concerns/Needs:

- Parking in commercial areas is sometimes a problem for patrons.
- Need to create more housing opportunities.
- Still have a lot of old buildings in the downtown that need improvements.
- The study area needs more high-end businesses and current buildings seem underutilized.
- There is a need for acquisition, demolition and redevelopment in the Highway 30 and Lincoln area.
- Old motels along Highway 30 are being used for apartments and in need of redevelopment.

Objective #1: To examine the economic profile of the study area.

- Action Step #1:* Hold focus group session with local leaders to identify a five-year trend in the Lexington business community (business failures, expansions or relocations).
- Action Step #2:* Review economic indicators (housing starts, employment, unemployment, per capita income, net taxable sales, and existing business make-up).
- Action Step #3:* Survey of the business community to gather information on product/service, number of employees, salary ranges, fringe benefits, plans for the future, and strengths/barriers to economic development within the study area.
- Action Step #4:* Survey of the community to gather information on pertinent demographics, income, commuting patterns, purchasing characteristics and community economic development needs.

Timeline: 2014.

Objective #2: To evaluate exogenous influences that may influence future development efforts.

- Action Step #1:* Consider opportunities and threats associated with Highway 30.
- Action Step #2:* Consider the opportunities and threats of new economic expansion within the immediate area, especially throughout Dawson County.
- Action Step #3:* Consider the opportunities and threats associated with economic leakages.
- Action Step #4:* Consider economic niches for the Lexington Downtown Area.
- Action Step #5:* Consider the availability of housing within the community.
- Action Step #6:* Consider the availability of labor in and around the community.
- Action Step #7:* Consider the availability of “site ready” sites within Lexington and its extraterritorial jurisdiction.

Timeline: 2014-2015.

Objective #3: To examine the strengths and barriers to local economic development.

- Action Step #1:* Examine the characteristics of the local economy. Consider the economic composition of the City of Lexington to determine its susceptibility to business cycles, comparative advantages, potential value-added business prospects, and other economic factors that will lead to community sustainability.
- Action Step #2:* Consider the capacity of existing public infrastructure/utilities to support future economic development.

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- Action Step #3:* Consider the capacity of public safety (fire protection, law enforcement) to support further economic development.
 - Action Step #4:* Analyze the existing housing situation in Lexington. (This is currently underway.)
 - Action Step #5:* Review the City's Land Use Plan/Zoning Ordinance to ensure adequate/appropriate space for business expansion/recruitment. (This has been completed.)
 - Action Step #6:* Inventory available business space within the existing downtown area.

Timeline: 2015-2017.

Objective #4: To quantify and qualify the economic potential of Lexington, Nebraska.

- Action Step #1:* Establish an Economic Development Vision for the city and study area.
- Action Step #2:* Establish clear public policy as it relates to dedicating resources for economic development activities. (This has been completed.)
- Action Step #3:* Establish economic development goals, objectives, action steps and timelines.

Timeline: 2017.

Objective #5: To develop strategies for promoting/fostering economic development in the study area.

- Action Step #1:* Develop strategies to promote the success of existing businesses.
- Action Step #2:* Identify businesses that have enormous growth potential within the local economic environment including businesses that slow economic leakages, value-added businesses, new businesses and diversification of existing businesses.
- Action Step #3:* Outline intervention strategies that respond to specific barriers and opportunities of economic development, including job training, housing affordability/availability, labor market skills, new marketing strategies, public infrastructure, and economic development resources.
- Action Step #4:* Identify growth areas within the community which are suitable for economic development.
- Action Step #5:* Identify partners for economic development, including financial assistance partners, technical, educational and job training assistance partners, improve communication among business and government leaders, and foster cooperation among industry coalitions, and local residents.
- Action Step #6:* Review activities that may enhance the economic impact of annual community events. Actively promote any of the civic and cultural celebration on a regional basis.
- Action Step #7:* Maintain the City's Economic Development Certified Designation.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Objective #6: To support small business development and entrepreneurial training.

- Action Step #1:* Survey the residents of Lexington to determine community economic development leakages, patronage potential and interest in and concerns about starting a small business within the study area.
- Action Step #2:* Tabulate and analyze survey results.
- Action Step #3:* Consider the feasibility/possibility of addressing the concerns of potential small business concerns.
- Action Step #4:* Offer ongoing training and education to small business and entrepreneurs about accessing capital, preparing business plans, effectuating niche markets, expanding market share, fostering economic clusters, or developing effective marketing strategies.
- Action Step #5:* Implement the findings of the survey.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsibly Groups/Agencies

Lexington City Council, Lexington Planning Commission, Lexington Area Chamber of Commerce, Lexington residents, Local Lending Institutions, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Nebraska Department of Labor, Greater Lexington Corporation, Council for Economic Development, and Dawson Area Development.

Potential Resources

Local Funds, Local Lending Institutions, Private Monies, Tax Increment Financing, Local Option Sales and Use Tax, U.S.D.A. Rural Development Programs, Utility Providers, Nebraska Investment Finance Authority Programs, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Nebraska Department of Roads, Federal Home Loan Bank, U.S. Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration, and the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Measurable Outputs

Community and government leaders across the country have, for the past 15 to 20 years, come to the realization that they not only can, but must initiate programs to enhance their local economies. Governments have sometimes provided enormous subsidies to try to entice large businesses to build manufacturing plants within their communities; while others have started small loan funds to encourage "micro-enterprise" businesses, or created "incubators" that provide office space and services to a variety of small businesses. Results of these rural economic development efforts have been mixed.

"Smokestack chasing" has lost favor with many rural economic development practitioners because of the unintended impact it has had on community systems and local fiscal restraints. In these difficult environments, the City of Lexington must have a clearly focused and structured economic development strategy that is consistent with the vision statement and values contained within the Lexington Comprehensive Plan. This guide is an important first step in attaining the City's long-term commitment of job creation, increased pedestrian traffic within the downtown area, filling vacant store fronts, sales tax revenues, promotion of Lexington as an attractive place to visit, live, work, and invest.

Most often, successful organizations are achieving their goals as a result of having community support for a well-conceived "plan of action" that serves as a blueprint for an economic development program. The Economic Development Plan for Lexington is a powerful yet focused guide for the community in formulating intervention strategies that will allow Lexington to achieve economic prosperity. Likewise, the Plan emphasize the importance of preserving the high quality of life enjoyed by local residents and support community values such as environmental preservation, small town atmosphere, recreational facilities, and human resources.

In the extremely competitive field of economic development, those with the highest degree of readiness are most likely to succeed. The City of Lexington is an Economic Development Certified Community Program through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. This program accommodates new business prospect inquiries and support expansions. By going through the application process, the City of Lexington has learned about the importance of "site-readiness" and what impact that might have on luring business expansion opportunities.

Promoting economic development within the City of Lexington, including the study area, is a short-term and long-term priority of the community.

Goal #5:	<i>Improve the physical condition and viability of the Lexington Downtown Area.</i>
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Concerns/Needs:

- Some façade improvements have been completed as a part of the Downtown Revitalization Program, but more needed.
- A number of buildings need improvement.
- Sufficient parking is an issue.
- Possible living space above businesses.
- Several buildings downtown date back to 1880s but very few are on National Register.
- Recent grant money went to downtown façade improvements and to energy improvements. There is still a need for additional façade improvements.
- It is estimated that there are 15% of the buildings vacant. Figures two years ago showed 7% vacant.

Objective #1: To revisit the Downtown Revitalization Master Plan for the City of Lexington.

- Action Step #1:* Reconvene the Lexington Downtown Revitalization Committee to examine the goals and recommendations contained within the Downtown Revitalization Master Plan.
- Action Step #2:* Identify initiatives undertaken as a part of the CDBG-funded Downtown Revitalization Program and identify any unmet needs of the Program.
- Action Step #3:* Identify accomplishments achieved as a part of the project.
- Action Step #4:* Hold a meeting with downtown stakeholders to determine the effectiveness of the Downtown Revitalization Project.
- Action Step #5:* Evaluate downtown stakeholders desire to continue central business district improvements.
- Action Step #6:* Revise the Downtown Revitalization Plan as necessary to ensure that it reflects the current of needs of the Lexington downtown area.
- Action Step #7:* Review the Achieve Lexington Section of the recently adopted Comprehensive Development Plan.
- Action Step #8:* Prioritize the current needs of the Lexington downtown area.
- Action Step #9:* Present the revised Downtown Revitalization Master Plan to the Lexington City Council for their review and approval.

Timeline: 2014.

Objective #2: To determine the community's fiscal capacity for long-term capital improvements within the downtown area.

- Action Step #1:* Consider downtown stakeholder's willingness and financial capacity to support continued implementation of the Downtown Revitalization Master Plan.
- Action Step #2:* Prioritize the unmet needs of the downtown area.
- Action Step #3:* Determine the bonding debt capacity of City to address public infrastructure improvements.
- Action Step #4:* Consider the availability of Sales Tax, and use of Tax Increment Financing, to provide flexibility in cost-sharing the unmet needs of the downtown area.

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- Action Step #5:* Consider using Phase II CDBG CIS funds to meet some of the remaining needs of the downtown area.
 - Action Step #6:* Identify local, regional, state and federal resources for downtown improvements.
 - Action Step #7:* Maximize the impact of downtown revitalization efforts by leveraging local monies with “outside” resources.
 - Action Step #8:* Package all necessary financial resources.

Timeline: 2015.

Objective #3: To implement long-term downtown improvements.

- Action Step #1:* Establish and implement programs aimed at meeting the physical and aesthetic needs of the downtown area.
- Action Step #2:* Hold regular meetings with downtown stakeholders to monitor the need, progress, and effectiveness of long-term downtown improvements.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Objective #6: To promote activities that will complement downtown revitalization efforts.

- Action Step #1:* Create a marketing plan for the downtown area.
- Action Step #2:* Recruit businesses that are consistent with the downtown marketing plan.
- Action Step #3:* Incentivize local business owners to improve the physical condition, appearance and energy-efficiency of their buildings by capitalizing a Downtown Building Renovation Fund Program.
- Action Step #4:* Encourage downtown property owners to work with City officials to remove dilapidated structures in the downtown area.
- Action Step #5:* Consider the feasibility of using these open spaces for additional parking for people that work or live in the downtown area.
- Action Step #6:* Incentivize preservation of historic structures in the downtown area.
- Action Step #7:* Encourage downtown business owners to renovate upper floors into commercial or rental housing uses. Leasing this space will not only provide a monthly revenue stream for the business owners, but it will bring an element of vibrancy to the downtown after storefronts and office spaces close for the evening.
- Action Step #8:* Invest in “way-finding” signage and aesthetic improvements along streets that ushers traffic from Highway 30 to the heart of the downtown area and other arterial streets in the community.
- Action Step #9:* Meet with downtown business owners to discuss interest in establishing a Business Improvement District. A BID can be used for snow removal, maintain landscaping features, planning, parking, clean streets and sidewalks, purchase and hang banners, promote the downtown, enhance security, and maintenance activities.
- Action Step #10:* Encourage civic and cultural events/programs within the downtown area.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

Lexington City Council, City Staff, Lexington Planning Commission, Lexington Community Redevelopment Agency, Lexington Area Chamber of Commerce, Lexington Downtown Revitalization Committee, Business Owners, Residents, Nebraska State Historical Society, Dawson Area Development, and Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

Potential Resources

City Funds, General Obligation Bonds, Revolving Loan Funds from the Downtown Revitalization Program that have been paid back, Special Assessment Districts, Local Option Sales Tax, Nebraska Department of Economic Development Programs, Tax Increment Financing, Special Assessments, Private Monies, Business Improvement District, Private Foundations, Nebraska State Historical Society Programs, Nebraska Arts Council, Nebraska Energy Office, Nebraska Enhancing, Developing and Growing Entrepreneurs (EDGE), GROW Nebraska™, Rural Enterprise Assistance Act (REAP), Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), Community Development Assistance Act, Federal Home Loan Bank – Joint Opportunities for Building Success, Small Business Administration and USDA Rural Development.

Measurable Outputs

Lexington residents recognize that the downtown area is the literal and symbolic heart of the community, and as such, it enjoys the distinction of being the center of the public arena. It is the place that defines the larger community - culturally, and economically. The physical setting of the downtown reveals the values and underpinnings of the local society (the opportunities and constraints therein) and serves as a measure of civic health and vitality.

Despite its importance - and high visibility - the Lexington downtown area is in need of repair. Items that remain after implementation of the Lexington Downtown Revitalization Program in 2012 include: storefront facades, dilapidated structures, street conditions, and surface drainage. Not only do these conditions pose a real public health and safety concern, they impair sound community growth and constitute an economic liability for the City, in terms of maintenance and funding of public infrastructure repairs. It also precludes economic growth opportunities for the residents of the community. This is an untenable situation for a City that prides itself on advocating a positive community image.

It is through ongoing implementation of downtown revitalization efforts that residents can expect to witness economic and civic progress. A thriving downtown builds a positive self-image for the community; creates job opportunities; attracts new industry and strengthens service and retail job markets; symbolizes a community's confidence, vitality and long-term viability; saves tax dollars; stabilizes and improves the area's tax base; protects the investments already made in downtown infrastructure, while attracts new private investments; preserves the community's historic resources; and enables property owners to maintain commercial buildings and preserve a critical component of the community.

Lexington should consider a wide array of initiatives aimed at improving the physical appearance and long-term viability of the downtown area. Such activities should include:

- Reconstruction of downtown infrastructure systems (streets, sidewalks, lighting, surface drainage, etc.).
- Create a Marketing Plan resulting in the downtown becoming a visitor's destination.
- Foster niche markets that will lead to lasting economic activity.
- Recruit businesses that are consistent with the Downtown Marketing Plan

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- Establish a loan pool to incentivize local business-owners to improve the physical condition, appearance and energy-efficiency of their downtown buildings.
 - Encourage downtown property-owners to work with city officials to remove structures that cannot be cost-effectively rehabilitated.
 - Invest in aesthetic improvements. Such investments may include: signage, large-scale art sculptures, landscaping, & lighting.
 - Sponsor civic events/programs within the downtown area. Such events/programs may include: street dances, cultural celebrations, performing arts, concerts series, soap box derbies, bed-races, etc. These events/programs not only promote economic activity, they re-establish the downtown as the center of civic life, fostering a sense of celebration and exploration.

Improving the physical condition and vibrancy of the downtown area is a short-term and long-term priority of the City.

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Goal #6:	<i>Improve parks and open space opportunities within the study area.</i>
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Concerns/Needs:

- There has been some discussion of a small dog park in the community.
- Possible park location in downtown plan on a vacant lot between 4th and 5th on Lincoln.
- Facility for indoor tennis needed in the community.

Objective #1: To evaluate the outdoor recreational needs of the study area.

- Action Step #1:* Gather planning initiatives aimed at improving park opportunities within Lexington. These initiatives include the Lexington Comprehensive Plan, Trails Master Plan and the Lexington Parks Master Plan.
- Action Step #2:* Review current facilities that are offered in Lexington, whether publically- or privately-sponsored.
- Action Step #3:* Examine the needs of existing parks, new parks, future trails, and open space.
- Action Step #4:* Identify potential opportunities and threats to the long-term sustainability of those current facilities.
- Action Step #5:* Survey the residents of Lexington to identify new facilities demanded by local residents.
- Action Step #6:* Summarize the findings and publicize the results.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Objective #2: To develop a long-term Park and Recreation Plan for the study area.

- Action Step #1:* Identify and prioritize park amenities for the study area that will encourage maximum usage for civic, social and family, and general affairs.
- Action Step #2:* Review the Comprehensive Development Plan to consider location of various amenities and their relationship to one another.
- Action Step #3:* Consider measures to integrate recreational opportunities via any existing or proposed trails.
- Action Step #4:* Identify the appropriate public agencies and/or civic organizations that will be responsible for the ongoing organization and oversight of programs.
- Action Step #5:* Prepare cost opinions for long-term park improvements.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Objective #3: To package the financial resources necessary to implement priority facilities/programs outlined in the Park and Recreation Plan.

- Action Step #1:* Consider the most appropriate resource (human and financial) to purchase, operate and/or maintain prioritized programs/facilities.
- Action Step #2:* Consider using Phase II CDBG CIS funds to develop a new neighborhood park within the study area.
- Action Step #3:* Conduct local fund-raising activities.
- Action Step #4:* Pursue public/private monies to offset the construction cost of the project.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Objective #4: To implement priority and cost-effective park open space improvements/programs.

Action Step #1: Implement feasible/viable programs and facilities demanded by local residents.

Action Step #2: Develop and support programs which encourage activities where parents can be participants with their children, hone athletic skills, exercise, or run domesticate animals.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

City of Lexington, City Staff, Lexington Park and Recreation Board, Residents, Lexington Public Schools, Civic Organizations, Local Businesses and Recreational Enthusiasts.

Potential Resources

Local Monies, Private Donations, Private Foundations, Volunteer Efforts, Fee for Use, Community Development Assistance Act (CDAA), Nebraska Recreational Trails Program, Community Development Block Grant Program, and Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Measurable Outputs

It is clear that a high quality of life, in general, tops the list of attributes communities must strive for, in their efforts to survive and prosper. The availability of quality housing, education and commerce must be in place to keep current residents from relocating and to entice new families into a community. Parks and recreational amenities are no less important in satisfying a stable and growing population.

In an era where municipal budgets leave little room for non-essential services, facilities, or programs, it is vital that local residents outline their recreational priorities to provide direct guidance to local decision-makers. These efforts will ensure that limited local resources are supporting only those programs/amenities that are demanded by residents.

As a part of the Lexington Comprehensive Development Plan Update (2013), community input has shown that Lexington residents are somewhat satisfied with the amount and quality of the existing facilities, programs, and activities available, but there is room for improvement and expansion. Recommendations are provided for existing and proposed parks, and additional recreation opportunities such as improvements to the lakes, expanded trails, and adding an indoor recreational facility.

It is the responsibility of the City to determine which facilities, amenities, and services are or are not feasible in existing and proposed parks. The required facilities are recommended for existing parks, but due to physical limitations and space constraints they may not be added. In proposed parks, future demand for certain facilities, amenities, and services and the recreational preferences of users may change over time. Therefore, the City should continue to monitor the needs of Lexington residents. Each park will be looked at individually to determine the physical capacity of providing basic requirements and to determine needs and wants of residents served by that park. Each park is different and these differences will be considered when determining which facilities will be included in each park. The City shall strive to provide the basic requirements in all of its parks and careful consideration shall be given to each proposed park and trail through the City's approval of such facility.

Even though the list of facilities, amenities, and services is extensive, it is likely other items not listed will be requested to be included in the park and recreation system. Each new facility and service requested shall be analyzed according to public demand, site/location criteria, operating implications, and other relevant criteria.

New park and open space facilities to be considered for the study area include a possible dog park south of U.S. Highway 30 between Washington and Madison Avenues, an urban park in the downtown between 4th and 5th Street on Lincoln Avenue, and an indoor tennis court facility. These new facilities should be developed in accordance with the long-term planning initiatives of the City and other locations in the community may be identified and better suited for them during the process.

Improving the park and open space opportunities community-wide, in particular within the study area, is a long-term priority of the City.

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Goal #7:	Improve sidewalk and curb ramp conditions throughout the study area.
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Concerns/Needs:

- Several issues include curbing and ADA compliance.
- Problem is due to age of sidewalks.
- Some problems/issues have been addressed through Federal Aid projects road projects.
- Need to conduct an inventory study.
- Improvements to sidewalks will involve property owners.
- Need to build on areas already accessible and connect to areas that have been improved.
- Annual budget is \$25,000-\$50,000 for such improvements

Objective #1: To evaluate sidewalk conditions throughout the study area.

Action Step #1: Inventory sidewalk/curb ramp conditions throughout the study area.

Action Step #2: Establish criteria for rating sidewalk/curb ramp conditions.

Action Step #3: Conduct field investigation to identify availability and physical condition of sidewalks and curb ramps throughout the study area and community.

Action Step #4: Map the availability and physical condition of sidewalks/curb ramps throughout the community.

Timeline: 2014

Objective #2: To prioritize sidewalks/curb ramps which, if reconstructed, would provide maximum public benefit to study area residents.

Action Step #1: Gather public input on the Evaluation.

Action Step #2: Consider walking habits/routes of local pedestrians.

Action Step #3: Identify community assets (including those in the study area) that should be linked via sidewalks.

Action Step #4: Provide a framework (i.e., phasing plan) to ensure that long-term sidewalk/curb ramps can be identified, prioritized and implemented with maximum public benefit.

Action Step #5: Map priorities to ensure proper phasing of sidewalk/curb ramp improvements.

Timeline: 2014-2015

Objective #3: Determine the City's ability to finance priority sidewalks/curb ramp improvements.

Action Step #1: Evaluate the community's budget and effectiveness of local maintenance expenditures on sidewalks/curb ramps.

Action Step #2: Ensure a proper balance between sidewalk/curb ramp construction and maintenance.

Action Step #3: Determine the City's debt capacity.

Action Step #4: Gauge the public's willingness to be assessed a portion of the total project cost.

Action Step #5: Identify local, regional, state and federal resources for street improvements.

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- Action Step #6:* Consider using Phase II CDBG CIS funds to replace or install sidewalks/curb cuts throughout the study area. This may be undertaken as a part of a larger Street/Storm Drainage Improvement Project.
- Action Step #6:* Maximize project impact by leveraging local funds with outside resources.
- Action Step #7:* Package all financial resources for maximum public benefit.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Objective #4: Undertake long-term, priority sidewalk/curb ramp improvements, as funds permit.

- Action Step #1:* Cause to have prepared plans and specifications for long-term sidewalk/curb ramp improvements.
- Action Step #2:* Conduct necessary engineering services to prepare bid documents.
- Action Step #3:* Bid phase to include advertising, letting and contract award to the lowest responsible/responsive bidder.
- Action Step #4:* Undertake construction-related activities in a planned systematic manner.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

Lexington City Council, City Staff, School District, Residents, and City Engineer.

Potential Resources

Lexington General Street Fund, General Obligation Bond, Local Option Sales Tax, Community Development Block Grant, Surface Transportation Program Funds, and Special Assessment Districts.

Measurable Outputs

Sidewalks form the backbone of the pedestrian transportation network within the City of Lexington. The City's policies respect the importance of sidewalks as part of a balanced, multi-modal approach to transportation planning. In fact, Lexington's recently adopted Comprehensive Plan contains policies to ensure safe and convenient pedestrian movement.

Some of Lexington's residents cannot drive because of disability, age or income level. Others might wish to avoid the many risks of driving an automobile, or for environmental reasons. For these reasons, there is wide demand for a pedestrian route network within the city.

Sidewalks are used extensively by young children, students, seniors, disabled persons and recreational users. They are an essential part of the community infrastructure that individuals use to gain access to the goods, services, and social contacts that support their day-to-day existence and quality of life. People with disabilities or mobility issues are better able to participate in the community if sidewalks and curb ramps are accessible because it is easier for them to reach their desired destinations. Their absence compromises safety and encourages people to walk on lawns and private property, or on busy streets.

Generally speaking, the sidewalks in the study area are in fairly decent condition; however, there are several areas in which the sidewalks are cracked, crumbled, uneven, or even missing. These deteriorated sidewalk conditions make pedestrian movement difficult.

Curb ramps in the study area have been randomly installed. A curb ramp is the section of concrete, typically on a slope, that connects the sidewalk to the roadway and provides pedestrians a location to cross the street. It was observed that some of these curb ramps were installed incorrectly and do not meet the provisions of the Americans with Disability Act, which the City is obligated to follow. Some of these requirements include maximum slopes on the ramps and the level landings (i.e. the “top” of the ramp), as well as the need to install detectable warning surfaces (the “dots” or “domes” installed at the bottom of the ramp) that act as a cue for visually impaired pedestrians.

The City of Lexington should continue to evaluate sidewalk and curb ramp conditions throughout the community (including the study area) to determine their physical condition and compliance with ADA standards. City staff should establish criteria for rating system to ensure uniformity in evaluating the sidewalk/curb ramp conditions. Special consideration should be given to walking habits/routes of local pedestrians, and from the perspective of people with physical and visual disabilities.

Due to the mammoth commitment and economic challenge of replacing sidewalks/curb ramps, the City recognizes that a period of consistent policy, planning and action is required to make progress toward this end. The City should work closely with local decision-makers and advisors to maintain an aggressive Transition Plan to ensure compliance with ADA provisions and that capital expenditures follow a prioritized plan to remove barriers that are readily achievable and alternative methods for providing access to areas where barriers are not able to be readily mitigated.

Each year, the City of Lexington invests \$25,000 - \$50,000 to improve sidewalk and curb ramp conditions throughout the community. Although progress has been noticeable, the City still has a significant amount of sidewalks/curb ramps to replace, particularly within the study area. This study area includes community features and amenities most frequented by local residents, including the downtown area, City Hall, County Courthouse, Grand Generation Center, residences, and churches.

To ensure maximum impact (proper grade and economies of scale), the City should continue to replace sidewalks and curb ramps along streets that are being reconstructed.

Improving pedestrian facilities throughout the study area is an ongoing priority of the City.

Strategic Issue:	<i>Provide safe, cost-effective, and structured environment for the youth of Lexington.</i>
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Concerns/Needs:

- New YMCA outside of census tract will help provide for activities
- Club 180 provides activities for middle-high school students after school (such as crafts and other indoor activities). The Lexington Berean Church currently owns the building; however, they would like to find a larger, more energy efficient space to accommodate the 35 students that visit the facility on a daily basis. Club 180 ran by volunteers and a part-time director.
- Youth gardens downtown.
- The theatre was initially a youth sponsored project.

Note/Explanation:

Although this item has been identified as a strategic issue and ranked as a priority, this study has not recognized it as a viable project in the census tract at this time. The City of Lexington provides no public monies towards the operation of the Club 180 organization; therefore no objectives or action steps have been developed.

Strategic Issue:	<i>Improve the storm/sanitary sewer system in the southeast corner of the study area.</i>
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Concerns/Needs:

- Occasional problems have been noted in Southeast corner of City/district
- System is full at times and will back up
- Outfall is an issue

Note/Explanation:

Although this item has been identified as a strategic issue and ranked as a priority, this study has not recognized it as a viable project in the census tract at this time. Occasional backups in the area are not being caused by small diameter piping, but instead by large objects finding their way into the sewer pipe. The City has no intention of increasing the diameter of these pipes, therefore no objectives or action steps have been developed.

City Council Meeting discussion

Specific Projects

The following list of specific projects was identified and prioritized for the Comprehensive Investment & Stabilization implementation (Phase II). Projects are delineated on Figure 3, Investment Strategy Map. General projects such as sidewalk construction and ADA Accessible ramps should be incorporated into on-going City projects.

First Year Projects:

1. The reconstruction of the storm drainage system in the area bound by W 8th Street, N Madison Street, W Pacific Ave (Hwy 30), and N Taylor Street.
2. Acquisition, site preparation and start construction of 28 new rental units.
3. In corporation with the Union Pacific Railroad, continue to remove antiquated and or dilapidated structures and replace them with open landscaped green space with a trail in the Railroad ROW adjacent to W. Pacific Ave (Hwy 30).

Second Year Projects:

1. Rehabilitation of the intersection of W 5th Street and N Lincoln St., including sidewalks and ADA accessible ramps.
2. Acquisition and demolition of blighted and substandard residential and commercial properties throughout the target area for resale to builder/developer.
3. ADA accessible ramps throughout the target area.

Third Year Projects:

1. Reconstruction of W 6th Street from N. Harrison Street to N Lincoln Street.
2. Acquire, rehabilitate and rent residential units in a partnership with the Lexington housing Authority or other not for profit agency.
3. Develop a housing rehabilitation program to be utilized throughout the target area.
4. Create an outdoor community gather space or plaza near the area of W 5th Street and N Lincoln Street.

City of Lexington Investment Strategy Map

Legend

Target Area

- A - Stormsewer
- B - New Rental Housing
- C - Green Space
- D - Intersection Reconstruction
- E - Reconstruction Street
- F - Plaza Space
- Downtown District
- Census Tract Boundary



Created By: J. Sather
 Date: July 2012
 Revised: Jan 2014
 Software: ArcGIS 10.2
 File: 130978.00

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