



2017 Development Action Plan

City of Lexington, Nebraska

Introduction:

The City of Lexington places high importance on setting and achieving goals for community and economic development issues. Such planning is intended to be done in collaboration with area local governments, development groups, and residents. An annual Development Action Plan and ongoing planning process is employed to increase community participation, strengthen communication between entities, educate local stakeholders, and enhance area partnerships.

When building an action plan, it is essential that it conform to the adopted general development plan of the community. This action plan is designed to follow the guidelines of the Lexington Comprehensive Development Plan; which identifies development goals and action strategies that were developed via input received at public meetings involving the Planning Commission, Plan Steering Committee, development groups, local government subdivisions, City Council, City Staff, and residents. The Comprehensive Development Plan is intended to be reviewed and amended in five year increments.

This action plan incorporates various action strategies identified in ongoing planning efforts (e.g., comprehensive planning, housing studies, business targeting sessions, infrastructure needs assessments, etc.) in a workable one-year “to do list.” This plan identifies general action strategies to be accomplished in 2017 based upon the recommendations of the City Council and local partners. Amendments of these strategies over the course of the year are reasonably anticipated due to unforeseeable circumstances; however, employing an organized effort toward specific goals is intended to lead to orderly community development activities.

Acronyms commonly used in this plan are:

CCC	Central Community College
CDA	Community Development Agency of Lexington, Nebraska
DAD	Dawson Area Development
GLC	Greater Lexington Corporation
LCF	Lexington Community Foundation
LHA	Lexington Housing Authority
LRHC	Lexington Regional Health Center
NDED	Nebraska Department of Economic Development
NDEQ	Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
NPPD	Nebraska Public Power District
RDA	Redevelopment Area



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1. Support the creation of marketable and affordable housing in the community, including owner-occupied, rental, and transitional units.

Recent housing studies indicate that Lexington is currently in need of new and rehabilitated housing opportunities across all population and income classifications, and that the existing housing market will not reasonably support the expansion or relocation of workers and families to the area. The community has an estimated housing vacancy rate less than 3%, compared to a healthy rate of 6 to 7%.

The Comprehensive Development Plan provides conservative population projections of Lexington to be 11,715 by 2030, based upon historic and desired growth rates. To adequately accommodate current demand for housing and forecasted population growth, the community will need to provide for the development of approximately 800 additional housing units by 2030 (50% owner-occupied and 50% rental units). This represents a construction pace of 60 new housing units annually. Based upon historic building data, this annual number of units can be seen as a challenge; however, this community is up to that challenge and will take steps in 2017 to continue to move housing development in a positive direction.

- South/Southwest Housing Development—RDA #5 was established in south Lexington in 2007; the plan for the area included subdivision/infrastructure development for new housing, as well as infill housing through demolition and removal activities in existing neighborhoods. The City has identified a minimum of 50 units of existing housing in this area that are substandard or dilapidated and in need of condemnation and/or demolition. However, 85% of these units are currently occupied pending inspection and corrective action.

The addition of new housing units is necessary prior to, or in concert with, the removal or rehabilitation of substandard or dilapidated units; as housing demand is strong, a decrease in overall available units is counterproductive. In 2017, the City will continue to support the goals of the RDA #5 plan.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Develop new housing projects within RDA #5	City, CDA, DAD, Private Developers and Builders	Jan-Dec	\$20,000+
Remove substandard/dilapidated units in RDA #5	City, CDA	Jan-Dec	\$50,000
Promote infill housing development in RDA #5	City, CDA, LHA	Ongoing	Variable

- Northwest Housing Development—the City, CDA, and GLC together control approximately 75 acres of land suitable for housing in the northwest area of the community; being portions of the Northwest Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Additions, as well as a few vacant lots in Paulsen’s First Addition and Parkview Addition.



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Currently, there are 32 build-ready single family residential lots in the area, and a 34 unit condominium development under construction (The Concord, a 55+ owner occupied project with seven units currently occupied, one unit unoccupied and for sale, and four additional units pending construction).

Infrastructure improvements in the Northwest Fifth Addition will be constructed in 2017 to create an additional 53 build-ready single-family lots, and two 5 acre tracts for high density (townhome/condominium) residential projects. The City will market the available housing lots to developers and builders over the course of the planning period.

Functional design and cost estimates for green spaces and pedestrian trails to accommodate the northwest area will be completed in 2017, with intent to begin phased construction in early 2018.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Support speculative housing construction activities	Private Developers and Builders, GLC, City, CDA	Jan-Dec	Undetermined
Park/green space and trail development planning	City	Jan-Dec	\$25,000

- Improvement Planning**—over the years, the private market has not adequately addressed housing demand in Lexington. Recent development projects have required public assistance in terms of infrastructure and utility extensions to be viable, a trend that is anticipated to continue into the foreseeable future. To proactively stimulate future housing projects, it is advisable for Lexington to improve suitable vacant land to a build-ready state to accommodate low, medium, and high density housing projects.

In 2017, the City will maintain and update an existing inventory of feasible development properties, estimated infrastructure costs per property, and a cost/benefit analysis per property to adequately evaluate investment and growth opportunities. The City will plan and implement infrastructure improvements that are warranted, as resources allow.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Continue to study, plan, and implement land and infrastructure improvements to support housing development.	City	Jan-Dec	Variable

- Housing Rehabilitation**—since 2002, the City has administered several owner-occupied housing rehabilitation programs, which efforts have improved approximately 40 single-family homes over that period. In 2017, the City will continue to administer a current CDBG program to rehabilitate qualifying owner-occupied units to improve existing housing stock and make strides toward improved energy efficiency in the community.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Implement an owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program	City, DAD, Local Partners	Ongoing	Variable



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- Flex Housing—is a concept that involves planned developments of mid-density housing that is cost effective for individuals to access and improve over time. The concept provides for single-family housing units with a minimum finished living space, an unfinished living space for future expansion, paved off-street parking facilities (driveway), minimum landscaping requirements, and a detached garage facility that can be built during initial construction or added over time.

Site and construction plans for the housing units would be pre-approved by the local Building Department, and any construction activities would be held to minimum specifications and design standards. The units could be built directly by individuals or on a speculative basis.

In 2017, the City will take steps to develop functional plans and evaluate the market viability of a pilot flex housing project.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Flex housing project planning and evaluation	City, CDA, Local Partners	Ongoing	Variable

- “Age in Place” Community—this concept involves the development of mid to high-density residential housing units within a senior (55+ years of age) community setting, where general maintenance and area amenities are financially supported by the owner and tenant population. The targeted development area for this concept is 30 acres of unimproved property abutting the Lexington Regional Health Center (LRHC) facilities to the west.

In 2014, LRHC, the City, and a private developer partnered on a first phase development which involved the extension of Liberty Drive from 13th Street to Buffalo Bend and the construction of 10 duplexes (20 housing units) on the east side of the new roadway to accommodate low to moderate income level seniors. This phase was operational and fully occupied in early 2016.

In 2017, the City will cooperate with LRHC, area partners, and private entities to develop and market additional project phases in the area to provide increased housing opportunities for seniors across various income ranges.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Continue project planning, evaluation, marketing and development.	City, CDA, LRHC, Developers	Ongoing	Variable



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2. Promote redevelopment activities in all areas of the community, including infrastructure improvements, land acquisition, and removal of dilapidated structures.

- Commercial Development and Aesthetic Improvements—HWY 283 Corridor—RDA #1 includes the entryway and highway corridor that carries the largest volume of traffic which enters and exits Lexington on a daily basis. This point of entry and route of travel is envisioned as an opportunity to give individuals a positive first impression as they enter Lexington and a pleasant reminder of the community as they depart. This area also provides opportunity for retail and small business development.

The 2017 Action Plan is not intended to provide a definitive plan regarding future beautification, infrastructure, or business development activities; however, it will provide steps to assist in the removal of obstacles that have prevented such activities in the past.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Evaluate and negotiate for the acquisition of property along the Hwy 283 corridor	CDA, City Manager	Jan-Dec	\$5,000
Market CDA property for development	CDA, City, DAD	Ongoing	\$15,000
Plan and develop area aesthetic improvements	CDA, City	Ongoing	\$25,000
Plan access road development	CDA, City	Jan-Dec	Variable

- Adams Street Corridor Improvements—RDA #2 includes the Adams Street corridor (Highway 21) from Highway 30 to 20th Street. The generalized future land use plan indicates desired commercial use along the east side of Adams Street from Highway 30 to 17th Street. Currently, there is a mixture of commercial and residential uses in this area. Steps should be taken to ensure that future redevelopment of property along this corridor is consistent with long range community planning efforts, as contained in the redevelopment plan for the area.

The 2017 Action Plan is not intended to provide a definitive plan regarding future business development activities; rather, it will provide steps to assist in the removal of obstacles that have prevented such activities in the past.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Evaluate and negotiate for the acquisition of property along the Adams Street corridor	CDA, City Manager	Jan-Dec	\$10,000
Market CDA property for development	CDA, City, DAD	Ongoing	Undetermined
Plan area infrastructure and aesthetic improvements	CDA, City	Ongoing	\$15,000



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- UPRR Corridor Redevelopment—over the years, many commercial or industrial uses were conducted on the UPRR right-of-way corridor through the community. When the uses ceased, facilities became underutilized, abandoned, and unmaintained, leading to nuisance conditions.

The City has worked with UPRR on the removal of dilapidated structures and debris along the Hwy 30/UPRR corridor; as well as the potential development of green space and pedestrian trails abutting the highway. The commitment to clean up the area and reach green space use agreements with UPRR will continue in 2017.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Perform necessary clean-up activities	City	Jan-Dec	Variable
Secure agreement with UPRR on green space use, and plan improvements	City, UPRR	Jan-Dec	Undetermined

- DTR—in 2010, Lexington was awarded a grant under the Downtown Revitalization (DTR) Program, administered by NDED, to study and develop a plan to strengthen the downtown business atmosphere, improve and rehabilitate the downtown, and reduce substandard and blight conditions that currently exist. In April 2010, a study that analyzed the condition of the downtown was completed; which contained general and specific recommendations for improvements, and an implementation schedule. Upon City Council acceptance of the study, Lexington entered the second phase of the DTR process and was awarded \$350,000 for downtown improvements related to commercial building rehabilitation, removal of architectural barriers, streets and public facilities.

In 2011, approximately \$138,000 in grant funding and \$328,000 in matching private funds (\$466,000 total) were invested into 17 commercial building rehabilitation projects. Projects included façade improvements, window and door replacement, energy efficiency upgrades (lighting/HVAC), roofing, and second level apartment renovation. In 2012, \$256,000 in public infrastructure improvements was completed.

The City intends to develop a master plan for downtown projects in 2017 and beyond, utilizing community involvement and the 2010 study as a foundation for planning. The projects will involve infrastructure improvements, property redevelopment, building renovation, and aesthetic enhancements. This program will be long-term, and require public and private investment to be successful.

Additional DTR funding may be available to communities that have previously used such grant funding and have substantial needs remaining. Lexington will evaluate and seek additional DTR funding to further the goal of the downtown master plan as appropriate.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Plan and implement 2017-beyond improvements	City, Consultant, Local Partners, Community	Jan-Dec	Undetermined
Seek improvement funding	City, DAD	Jan-Dec	Variable



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3. Improve the public transportation network in the community.

- 1 & 6 Year Street Improvement Plan—the City’s 2017 capital improvement plan for road and street improvements will be considered and approved prior to March 1, 2017. This plan will summarize the road and street improvements the City has prioritized for design and/or construction in 2017 and a list of prioritized projects for future years. Following March 1, 2017, the plan summary may be viewed at:

- <http://info.cityoflex.com/1&6yearplan2017.pdf>

The 2016 plan summary may be viewed any time at:

- <http://info.cityoflex.com/1&6yearplan2016.pdf>

- Rural Viaduct—East Lexington—a viaduct location study in the vicinity of Road 435 and the at-grade crossing of UPRR was completed in 2008; a collaborative effort between the City and Dawson County. Following acceptance of the study recommendations by both City and County, the Dawson County Railroad Transportation Safety District (RTSD) was formed to assist the improvement project into the future. The project was programed through NDOR to receive state and federal funding, with the City of Lexington as the contracting entity. A partnership of engineering firms, Miller & Associates/Parsons Brinkerhoff, was selected for the project preliminary design and environmental review, which is anticipated to conclude in the first half of 2017.

Following the conclusion of the preliminary design and environmental review, the project will move into final design. In 2017 the City will diligently move the project into final design and preparation for bid letting.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Final design activities	City, County, consultants	Jan-beyond	\$800,000

- Dawson County Transit—the public transportation system in the Lexington area is operated by Reach Your Destination Easily (RYDE) Transit, a regional public transportation provider under the Community Action Partnership of Mid-Nebraska, under contract with Dawson County. RYDE is taking steps to make the program more efficient while expanding services to better meet the needs of area residents.

As public transportation is an important component to the Lexington community, continued and expanded service is a concern. In 2013, the City made a commitment to partner and financially support the transit program. Such support is anticipated to continue in 2017 and efforts to improve the public transportation services into the future will be encouraged.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Support the provision of public transportation services	City, Dawson County, RYDE	Jan-Dec	\$20,000



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4. Continue and improve inter-local cooperative programs in the community and county.

- Cooperation—it is important for groups within Dawson County to cooperate on planning, financing, and implementing projects and programs; not only for efficiency, but effectiveness and responsiveness. The following is a general list of local entities that have a collaborative relationship with the City:
 - Dawson Area Development (DAD)
 - Lexington Housing Authority (LHA)
 - Greater Lexington Corporation (GLC)
 - Dawson County
 - Lexington Public Schools
 - Lexington Regional Health Center (LRHC)
 - Lexington Rural Fire District
 - Lexington Community Foundation (LCF)
 - Lexington Area Chamber of Commerce

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Participate in DAD direction, operation and planning	City representatives	Ongoing	\$30,000 annually
Support Local Partner’s activities	City, CDA	Ongoing	Variable
Organize joint meetings	City, Local Partners	Ongoing	Variable
Develop joint projects/programs	City, Local Partners	Ongoing	Variable

5. Improve community education on programs and projects.

- Website/Newsletter/Social Media—the City maintains a general website, as well as publishes an email newsletter called “City Happenings.” The website and newsletter are seen as semi-successful; however, technology advancements and an increase in ways consumers choose to receive information (i.e. text messaging, social media, etc.) allow enhanced opportunity for local governments to communicate with citizens, customers, and visitors.

In 2017, the goal of the City is to use electronic media to improve information sharing, public relations, public participation/input, and interaction with all individuals, businesses, and public entities.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Increase electronic media coverage	City	Ongoing	Undetermined



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- Work Sessions—the City will continue to hold regular Council work sessions with Staff and local partners to evaluate short and long-range planning efforts, as well as local projects and programs. The sessions help strengthen collaborative efforts in the Lexington area.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Continue work sessions	City Council, Staff, Local Partners	Ongoing	N/A

6. Support educational and business support programs in the community.

- Education/Training Center—the ability to provide a capable and educated workforce is a pressing issue across Nebraska, as well as the nation. Learning centers are an accepted and indispensable part of worker training programs and a source for educational systems to reach new groups of non-traditional or disengaged students. Two main factors support the operation of learning centers: the growing need for continual skills upgrading and retraining, and the technological advances that have made it possible to teach more and more subjects away from main campuses.

The Dawson County Opportunity Center is a local effort to provide educational, training, and support services to individuals and businesses in the region in a “one-stop” environment. Local partners with a current presence in the facility include: Central Community College, Nebraska Workforce Development, Dawson Area Development, City of Lexington, Lexington Chamber of Commerce, and Lexington Public Schools.

The City will continue to support existing education, worker training, and business support programs; as well as encourage the implementation of further collaborative initiatives working with our local partners and other viable entities. Renovation is currently in progress on a portion of the remaining 8,000 SF of vacant space in the Opportunity Center to accommodate activities in the areas of entrepreneurial development and business incubation.

In 2017, the City will complete the renovation of approximately 3,000 SF of the Opportunity Center to support entrepreneurial and business development programs. Additionally, the City will complete functional plans for the renovation of the remaining 5,000 SF of the facility.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Support current programs and encourage new and expanded programs	City, DAD, CCC, Local Partners	Jan-Dec	Undetermined
Complete 3,000 SF renovation	City, DAD	Jan-April	\$200,000
Plan 5,000 SF renovation	City, DAD	Jan-Dec	\$15,000



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7. Support economic development efforts in the community.

- Project Opportunities—over the course of a year, there are numerous prospective projects that look at site or building locations in Lexington. These include new or expanding business, as well as existing businesses that need retention assistance. The City is committed to providing technical or funding assistance as projects arise. Projects that are viable and in the best interest of the area will be supported to a level that resources allow.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Support area projects	City, DAD, CDA, Local Partners	Ongoing	Undetermined

- Speculative Building(s)—the availability of industrial and commercial building space in the community is needed into the future. The goal of constructing speculative buildings is to encourage business development or expansion. As is typical of most business decisions today, site and building searches happen quickly. Generally, building availability becomes a key factor in location or expansion decisions; to remain competitive, a community must have both suitable and available space.

In 2017, the City will encourage the development of additional speculative buildings for commercial and industrial development initiatives.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Encourage spec building projects	City, DAD, Developers, CDA	Jan-Dec	Undetermined
Market available buildings	City, DAD	Ongoing	Undetermined

- Creation of a Local Investment Club—as the provision of speculative building space for commercial and industrial uses is seen as a priority for the community, as well as various other economic development initiatives, the expansion of funding mechanisms to support such activities is increasingly important. Local investment clubs have been successful in many communities across the state; which operate to provide equity and forge public/private partnerships for development projects.

In 2017, the City will encourage the formation of a local investment club. The intent is to leverage private investment to augment available public resources to help expand the local economic base, and further develop a culture of collaborative community/economic development activities.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Encourage establishment of local investment club	City, Local Investors	Jan-Dec	Undetermined



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8. Encourage the development of leadership in the Lexington area.

- Leadership Development—the continued growth of leadership in the community is a concern moving into the future. With a diverse cultural make-up, Lexington has an exceptional opportunity to foster a broad based leadership program for future generations. Effort to identify opportunities should be undertaken over the planning period.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Identify opportunities to initiate leadership programs in the area	City, Local Partners	Jan-Dec	Undetermined

9. Upgrade public facilities in the community.

- Park and Trail Development and Rehabilitation—although improvements have been completed incrementally in the last few years, the landscape, equipment, shelters/restrooms, sidewalks, lighting, water systems, and other facilities in the City’s older parks continue to show the effects of age and deferred maintenance. It is important for the City to upgrade and maintain these facilities for the benefit of the citizens.

Additionally, as the community continues to develop onto new lands, it is also important that the City plan for the development of new parks, recreational fields, green spaces, and pedestrian trails. The park and trail component of the 2013 Comprehensive Development Plan has served as a planning guide.

Improvements to the park system will require a substantial investment over a long-term period of time. In 2017, the City will update and prioritize the park and trail capital improvement plan. Moving forward, projects will be implemented as resources allow; funding will be aggressively solicited from a wide range of public and private sources.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Update the park and trail CIP and prioritize 2017 work plan	City	Jan-May	Undetermined
Design and implement viable projects	City, Local Partners	Jul-Dec	Undetermined
Solicit funding and cooperative agreements for priority projects	City, DAD, Consultant, Local Partners	Ongoing	Undetermined
Update the park and trail CIP and prioritize 2018 work plan	City	Sep-Dec	Undetermined



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- Electric System Improvements—as the community continues to develop, the demand for residential, commercial, and industrial electric capacity increases. In 2007, a system distribution study was completed by NPPD. Following review of the study in early 2008, the City Council adopted a 10 year capital improvement plan.

In 2008, the first phase of the capital improvement plan was implemented with success. Additional phases of the capital plan will be implemented in 2017 and beyond as resources allow; accompanied by continued system evaluation by NPPD and City Staff.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Complete system capacity and reliability improvements	City, NPPD	Jan-Dec	\$500,000
System study and evaluation	City, NPPD	ongoing	Variable