



# 2021 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 2021 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.

Housing studies continue to indicate that Lexington is 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 approximately 7%.

The 2013 Comprehensive Development Plan provides conservative population projections of Lexington to be 11,715 by 2030, based upon historic and desired growth rates. In 2013, the existing housing demand and forecasted growth called for the provision of 900 new housing units by 2030 to accommodate the anticipated/desired growth. The City of Lexington committed to the 900-unit goal.

Substantial progress has been made to address the housing need since 2013; the City has made strategic investments in land and infrastructure to support housing development. To date, approximately 300 of the 900-unit goal has been realized. Moving forward, the community will need to provide for the development of approximately 600 new housing units by 2030 (50% owner-occupied and 50% rental units). This represents an average construction pace of 60 housing units annually.

Steps will be taken in 2021 to continue to move housing development in a positive direction.

- South/Southwest Housing Development—Redevelopment Area #5 was established in south Lexington with a plan for subdivision/infrastructure development for new housing, as well as providing infill housing opportunity through demolition/removal or rehabilitation activities in existing neighborhoods.

In 2017, two housing projects in the Southwest First Addition were initiated which are intended to provide up to 320 new housing units phased over several years. To date, 106 housing units have developed within the project area, being a combination of single-family, duplex, and multi-family units; including 20 LIHTC units.

In 2021, the City will continue to support the goals of the RDA #5 plan, and current projects.

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



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- Northwest Housing Development—the City, CDA, and Lexington School District together control approximately 75 acres of residential property in the northwest area of the community; being portions of the Northwest Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Additions, as well as vacant lots in Paulsen’s First Addition and Parkview Addition.

With the completion of infrastructure improvements in the Northwest Fifth and Sixth Additions in 2017, approximately 74 build-ready single-family residential lots are available, as well as 13 acres of land intended for medium-density (townhome/condominium) residential projects. The City will market the available housing lots over the course of the planning period.

Additionally, a 24-unit condominium development is under construction in the Northwest Fourth Addition. The Concord, a 55+ owner-occupied project, currently has 16 units completed, with 4 additional units pending construction in early 2021.

Green spaces and pedestrian trails to augment the northwest area will be planned and constructed in 2021.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Support private and speculative housing construction activities	Private Developers and Builders, GLC, City, CDA	Jan-Dec	Variable
Park/green space and trail development planning and construction	City	Jan-Dec	\$300,000

- Northeast Housing Development—the City controls approximately 15 acres of property suitable for residential housing development in the northeast area of the community; being portions of the O’Donnell Addition, O’Donnell Second Addition, O’Donnell Third Addition, and un-platted lands.

In late 2020, the City re-platted a portion of this property to create 15 housing lots along N. Fillmore and E. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, being O’Donnell Fourth Addition. In 2021, the City intends to extend the existing paving and utilities in the area to serve all 15 lots and make them available for development. The City will prepare a conceptual development plan for the remaining property into the future.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Develop 15 single-family lots	City, CDA	Apr-Aug	Variable
Market single-family lots	City, CDA	Apr-Dec	Variable
Support private and speculative housing construction activities	Private Developers and Builders, City, CDA, Local Partners	Jan-Dec	Variable



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- **East Housing Development**—in 2020, the City collaborated with St. Ann’s Catholic Church to develop approximately 48 acres of St. Ann’s property along the east side of N. Taft Street from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to 7<sup>th</sup> Street for workforce housing purposes; platted as St. Ann’s Second Addition.

In late 2020, the City began construction of infrastructure to support the development of the area. The Phase 1 infrastructure will support an initiated 50-unit housing project, 40 additional single/two-family housing lots, and a 6-acre parcel earmarked for multi-family residential projects.

The first phase of this development has the potential to accommodate up to 170 housing units, based upon average density considerations, providing opportunity to private developers and the Lexington Housing Authority. In 2021, the City will complete the Phase 1 infrastructure improvements and promote housing development for the area.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Complete infrastructure improvements	City	Jan-Jun	Variable
Support private and speculative housing construction activities	Private Developers and Builders, City, CDA, LHA, Local Partners	Jan-Dec	Variable

- **Improvement Planning**—as the private market has historically been slow to adequately address 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 2021, 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
Study, plan, and implement land and infrastructure improvements to support housing development.	City	Jan-Dec	Variable

- **Flex Housing**—a concept that involves planned developments of medium-density housing that is cost effective for individuals to access and improve over time. The concept provides for single-family 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.



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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 specification and design standards. The units could be built directly by individuals or on a speculative basis.

In 2021, 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**—a concept that involves the development of medium 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 20 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 2021, the City will cooperate with 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, Local Partners, Developers	Ongoing	Variable

## 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 daily. 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.



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The 2021 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 implement area aesthetic improvements	CDA, City	Ongoing	\$25,000-\$50,000
Plan and implement infrastructure projects	CDA, City	Jan-Dec	Variable

- 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 2021.

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

- Downtown Revitalization—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. The City Council accepted the findings of the study and has been taking deliberate steps to implement improvements.

The City intends to continue the development of an overall master plan for downtown projects in 2021 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 will 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.



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As the downtown area is included in RDA #3, the City will also employ available redevelopment assistance to support viable redevelopment projects.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Plan and implement 2020-beyond improvements	City, CDA, Local Partners,	Jan-Dec	Undetermined
Seek improvement funding	City, DAD, CDA	Jan-Dec	Variable
Assist viable redevelopment projects	City, CDA	Jan-Dec	Variable

- **Micro-TIF**—a statutory change was made by the Nebraska Legislature in 2020 which allows “Expediated Reviews of Redevelopment Plans (Micro-TIF)”. This gives cities the authority to pass a resolution to allow expediated reviews of redevelopment plans that meet certain requirements, as follows:
  1. The redevelopment plan includes only 1 redevelopment project;
  2. The redevelopment project involves the repair, rehabilitation, or replacement of an existing structure located within a substandard and blighted area;
  3. The redevelopment project is located in a county with a population of less than 100,000 inhabitants;
  4. The existing structure is at least 60 years old; and
  5. The assessed value of the property within the redevelopment project area when the project is complete is estimated to be no more than: (i) \$250,000 for a single-family residential structure; (ii) \$1,000,000 for a multifamily residential structure or commercial structure; or (iii) \$10,000,000 for the revitalization of a structure included in the National Register of Historic Places.

The process consists of the following steps:

1. A redeveloper prepares the redevelopment plan using a state standardized form.
2. The redeveloper submits the plan to the city with any building (or other necessary) permits, along with an application fee not to exceed \$50.
3. The City Council would consider approval of the plan within 30 days.

Following Council approval of such a plan, the CDA would need to issue a promissory note for the project, the County Assessor would certify the project, and TIF created by the project can be captured for up to 10 years.

In early 2021, the City Council passed a resolution authorizing the use of Micro-TIF, this mechanism will be made available for redevelopment opportunity within redevelopment areas in the community.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Market and administer Micro-TIF process	City	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 2021 capital improvement plan for road and street improvements will be considered and approved prior to October 1, 2021. This plan will summarize the road and street improvements the City has prioritized for design and/or construction in 2021 and a list of prioritized projects for future years. Following October 1, 2021, the plan summary may be viewed at:

- <http://info.cityoflex.com/1&6yearplan2021.pdf>

The 2020 plan summary may be viewed any time at:

- <http://info.cityoflex.com/1&6yearplan2020.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 funding the improvement project into the future. The project was programed through the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) to receive state and federal funding, with the City of Lexington as the contracting entity.

In 2021, the City will work with NDOT to move the project through final design and preparation for bid letting by the end of 2021. Construction of the grade separation is anticipated to begin in 2022.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Final design, bidding and letting	City, County, NDOT, consultants	Jan-Dec	\$400,000

- 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 2021 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	\$25,000-\$30,000





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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 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 2021, 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. These 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.

In 2021, the City will continue to support education, workforce training, business retention, entrepreneurial development, and business development programs; as well as encourage the implementation of further collaborative initiatives.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Support current programs and encourage new and expanded programs	City, DAD, CCC, Local Partners	Jan-Dec	Undetermined

## 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



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- **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 and/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 2021, 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, CDA, Developers	Jan-Dec	Undetermined
Market available buildings	City, CDA	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 2021, 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

## 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



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## 9. Upgrade public facilities and programs in the community.

- Park and Trail Development and Rehabilitation—although improvements have been completed incrementally over the last several 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 serves as a planning guide.

Improvements to the park system will require a substantial investment over a long-term period. In 2021, 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.

Three notable park facility projects that are in the conceptual phase of development are the “Veterans Pavilion at Kirkpatrick Memorial Park”, the “Lexington Indoor Recreation Center”, and the “Oak Park Splash Pad”. The Veterans Pavilion is a proposed open-air amphitheater to be in the central portion of Kirkpatrick Memorial Park which is intended to (1) provide recognition for military veterans, (2) educate the public about the role of the military in society, and (3) provide a venue for community events.

The Lexington Indoor Recreation Center is a proposed 25,000+ square foot facility that would provide a climate-controlled environment for youth, adult, and senior activities on a year-round basis, primarily based around racquet sports. The facility is intended to increase recreational programming and community participation rates. The preliminary site proposed for the facility is in the southwest portion of Plum Creek Park and would involve the redevelopment of the two outdated baseball/softball fields in that area. It is the intent of the City to complete a feasibility study on such a facility in 2021.

The Oak Park Splash Pad is a proposed outdoor water playground to be in Oak Park. The project is intended to be the centerpiece of overall renovation efforts for the park and provide improved outdoor recreation facilities for that portion of the community.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Update the park and trail CIP and prioritize a 2021 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, Consultant, Local Partners	Ongoing	Undetermined
Update the park and trail CIP and prioritize a 2022 work plan	City	Oct-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 long-range 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 2021 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	\$1,500,000
System study and evaluation	City, NPPD	ongoing	Variable

- Green Activities—as technologies continue to advance, more and more options become available to incorporate environmentally friendly solutions to the delivery of public services. It is important that communities across the nation strive to conserve resources and minimize pollution. Common practices employed are in the areas of energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, solid waste reduction, recycling, storm-water management, infrastructure, and water conservation, to name a few.

The City has long been active in many of these areas; however, improvements can be made to foster a greater impact and reduce our ecological footprint. In 2021, the City will evaluate opportunities to increase green activities in the community.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Study and evaluate opportunities	City	Jan-Dec	Variable

- WWTP—over the last decade, the City has made several improvements to the wastewater treatment plant to meet increasingly stricter effluent discharge regulations, replace aging and/or failing facilities, and provide capacity for residential and business growth. At this time, it has become critical to construct new headworks and primary clarification processes to meet operational demands into the future.

In 2021, the City will complete project planning for a new headworks and primary clarification processes and move towards bidding and constructing the needed improvements.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost
Finalize project plans and specifications; bid and contract project improvements	City, consultants	Jan-Apr	\$125,000
Construct plant improvements	City, consultants	August-ongoing	\$8,000,000 to \$10,000,000