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Bennet

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BENNET COMMUNITY
BUILDERS ASSOCIATION



BENNET, NE

Downtown Economic Development Plan

**DECEMBER
2023**

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Bennet Downtown Economic Development Plan

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Acknowledgments

The planning team would like to thank the residents, property owners, elected officials, city staff, and business owners who participated in the development of Bennet's Downtown Economic Development Plan. Assistance from all has been invaluable and has been used to create the vision and recommendations laid out in this Plan. Much appreciation to the American Legion Post 280 of Bennet, Nebraska for their contributions during the public engagement portion of this process.

We also very much appreciate Keith Marvin and Mason Herrman from Marvin Planning Consultants (MPC), the City staff and the Planning Commission team of Bennet who guided the development of this document.

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Abbreviations

ACS – American Community Survey

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act

CCCCFF – Civic and Community Center Financing Fund

CDBG – Community Development Block Grant

DHHS – Department of Health and Human Services

DOT – Department of Transportation

DYTI – Developing Youth Talent Initiative

FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency

LCC – Leadership Certified Community

MPC – Marvin Planning Consultants

MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization

NBDC – Nebraska Business Development District

NPPD- Nebraska Public Power District

NRD – Natural Resources District

SBDC – Small Business Development District

SENDL – Southeast Nebraska Development District

SHPO – State Historic Preservation Office

UNL – University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Executive Summary

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Bennet Downtown Economic Development Plan has been written to help the city of Bennet and its public envision a new future for their growing community. In partnership with Marvin Planning Consultants who were engaged to rewrite Bennet's Comprehensive Plan, this plan is intended to serve as a guide for efforts to create a small-town downtown experience that promotes economic growth and community values.

The plan recommends possible sources of funding for future development efforts and is intended to be referenced and reflected upon once necessary funding is acquired.

SCOPE OF THE PLAN

- Complete a community assessment to understand who lives in Bennet today and its pattern of growth.
- Determine the optimal location for a “downtown” corridor in Bennet.
- Gather and document the wants and needs of community members and their vision for Bennet.
- Generate recommendations to promote economic development in Bennet.

The planning team, which consists of students from the Master of Community and Regional Planning (MCRP) program at University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), has documented its work throughout this plan and updated the City and its stakeholders with its progress through a community open house.

PLANNING PROCESS

1. Faculty from the Community and Regional Planning program at UNL met with city staff and the planning commission team of Bennet during the spring of 2023, to discuss collaborating on a downtown economic development plan.
2. A community survey was distributed during the summer of 2023, which recorded input on the current strengths and opportunities as well as future needs of the community.
3. Stakeholder feedback and suggestions were incorporated into the plan recommendations.
4. Recommendations were shared at a public open house at the Bennet American Legion Hall on October 10, 2023, hosted by Marvin Planning Consultants and the UNL planning team.
5. Additional information gathered from the stakeholder interviews, planning commission meetings, and other communication channels was incorporated into the final plan document delivered by the planning team.

KEY GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the input provided by residents and stakeholders of Bennet, the following goals and key recommendations were identified as priorities for downtown economic development.

1. Improve the Built Environment
2. Promote Economic Development
3. Facilitate Community Placemaking
4. Achieve Well-Planned Growth



Chapter 1: Community Profile

Bennet Circa 1909 – Postcard of Bennet

The City of Bennet, NE

Defining the Area

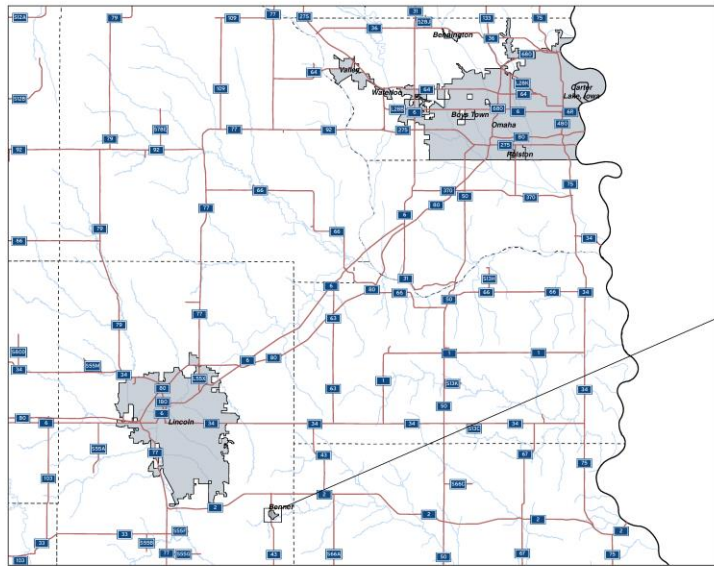
The city of Bennet is located in Lancaster County, Nebraska, approximately 14 miles southeast of the state's capital, Lincoln. Bennet is situated along Nebraska State Highway 43, 2 miles south of Highway 2, around a half-hour drive away from Lincoln. More than doubling its population over the last twenty years, Bennet has a current population of 1,082 and aims to sustain its current average annual rates of growth (between 1.8% and 3.5%).

Bennet is around a half square mile in area—having an approximate density of 2,000 people per square mile—the city's concentration is comparable to that of some urban neighborhoods. Bennet is within the Missouri River Watershed and sits just north of the Little Nemaha River.

The historic core of Bennet has been chosen as the target of this Plan. This zone begins at the western edge of town north of Garden Street, doglegs across Fir Street at Highway 43, and then ends at the eastern end of Bennet Park.

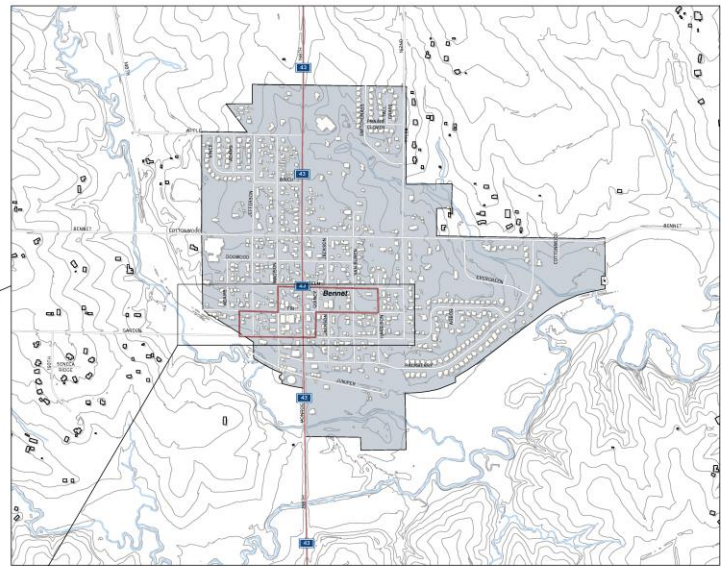


Location Map of Bennet, NE



0 10 20 40 Miles

Regional Map, Southeast Nebraska



0 0.25 0.5 1 Mile
City of Bennet



0 0.13 0.25 0.5 Miles
Downtown Bennet, Proposed Development Area

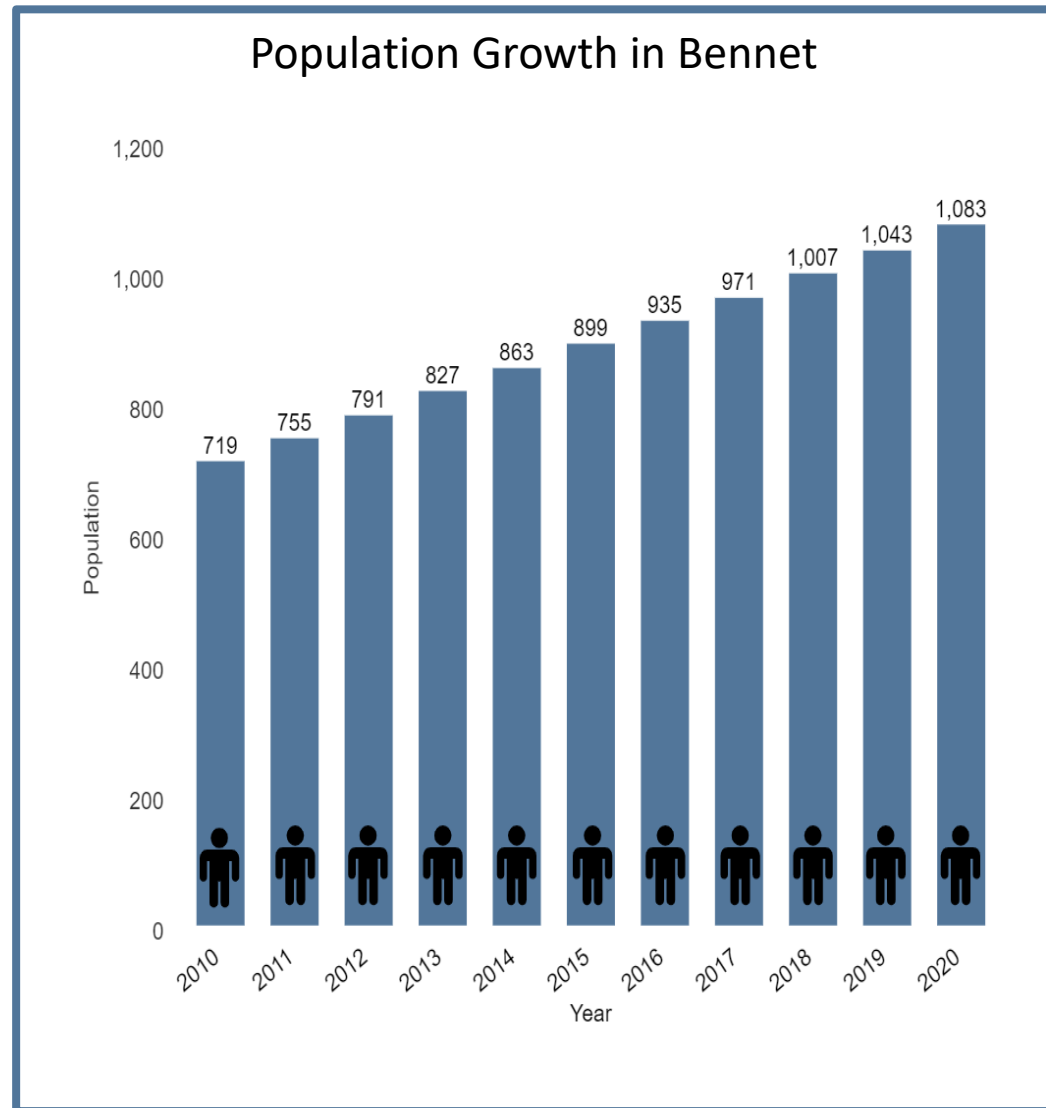


Community Profile:

Population Growth in Bennet

From 2010 to 2020, Bennet underwent a significant demographic transformation, characterized by a consistent increase in population. With a population of 719 in 2010, the numbers steadily rose each year, reaching a population of 1,083 by 2020. The US Census Bureau's 2023 data estimates the community's population to be 1,095.

Population growth drives downtown development by boosting demand for goods and services, creating job opportunities, and increasing the need for housing. The expansion of both the population and the tax base can significantly contribute to the vitality and economic dynamism of downtown areas.



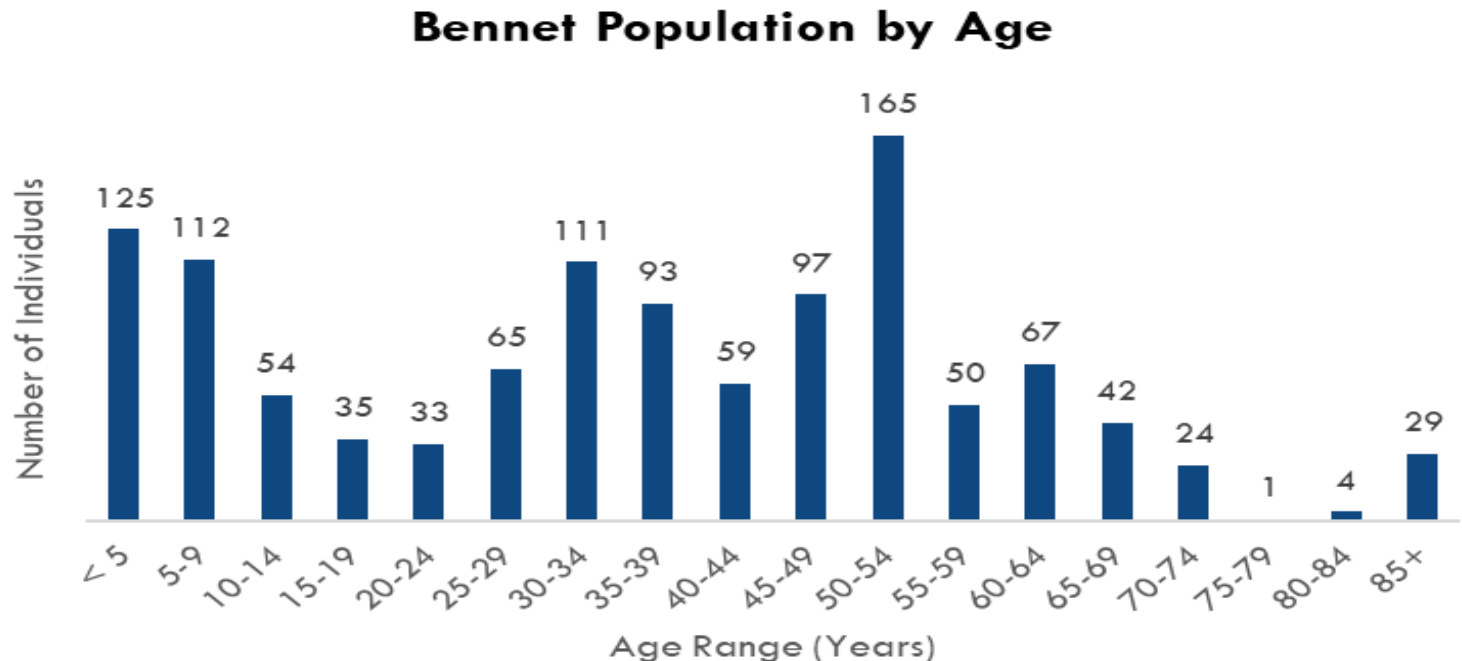
Source: ACS 2021 5-year summary (The American Community Survey is conducted every 5 years to provide data between the decennial census.)

Community Profile

Population by Age

Bennet boasts a population that spans various age groups, with a particularly noteworthy concentration in the 50-54 age range, comprising the largest demographic segment in the community. This prevalence suggests a considerable portion of the population is either currently in or approaching middle age, underscoring the community's well-established and stable nature. Additionally, the substantial presence of individuals in the age categories of 30-34, 35-39, and 45-49 highlights the dynamic mix of working-age residents actively contributing to economic growth.

Notably, there are 125 individuals under the age of 5 and 112 individuals aged 5-9, indicating a pronounced immediate need for daycare services and forecasting a future demand for K-12 education services in the next decade.



Source: ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates

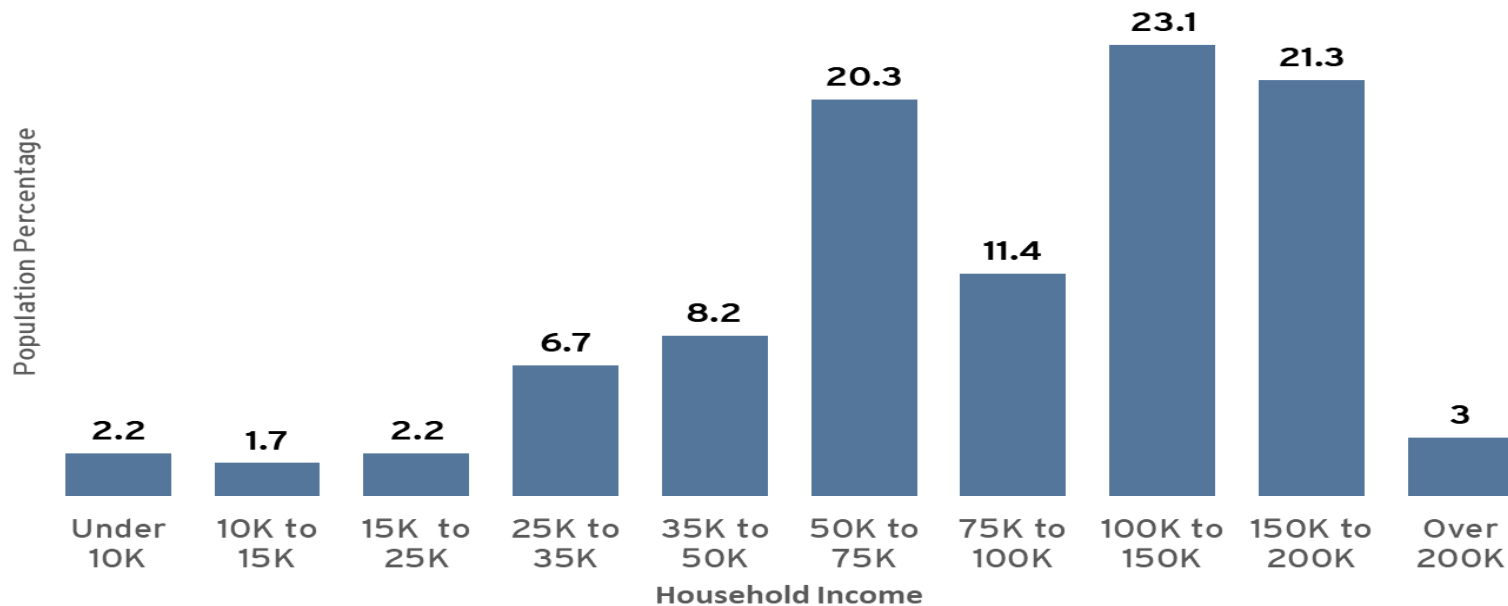
Community Profile:

Household Income

Household income serves as a crucial indicator for gauging consumption potentials within the Bennet downtown area, establishing a pivotal link to economic development planning. In Bennet, as of 2021, over 20.3% of households fall within the income range of \$50,000 to \$75,000, with an additional 11.4% in the \$75,000 to \$100,000 bracket. Furthermore, 23.1% of households have incomes ranging from \$100,000 to \$150,000, and 21.3% fall within the \$150,000 to \$200,000 range.

Understanding the distribution of household incomes is integral to formulating effective strategies for downtown economic development. The concentration of households in various income brackets not only reflects the community's economic diversity but also informs decisions regarding the types of businesses and services that are likely to thrive in the downtown area. This demographic insight is instrumental in tailoring development plans that align with the consumption capacities of the local population, fostering a sustainable and flourishing downtown economy.

Bennet, NE Household Income in 2021



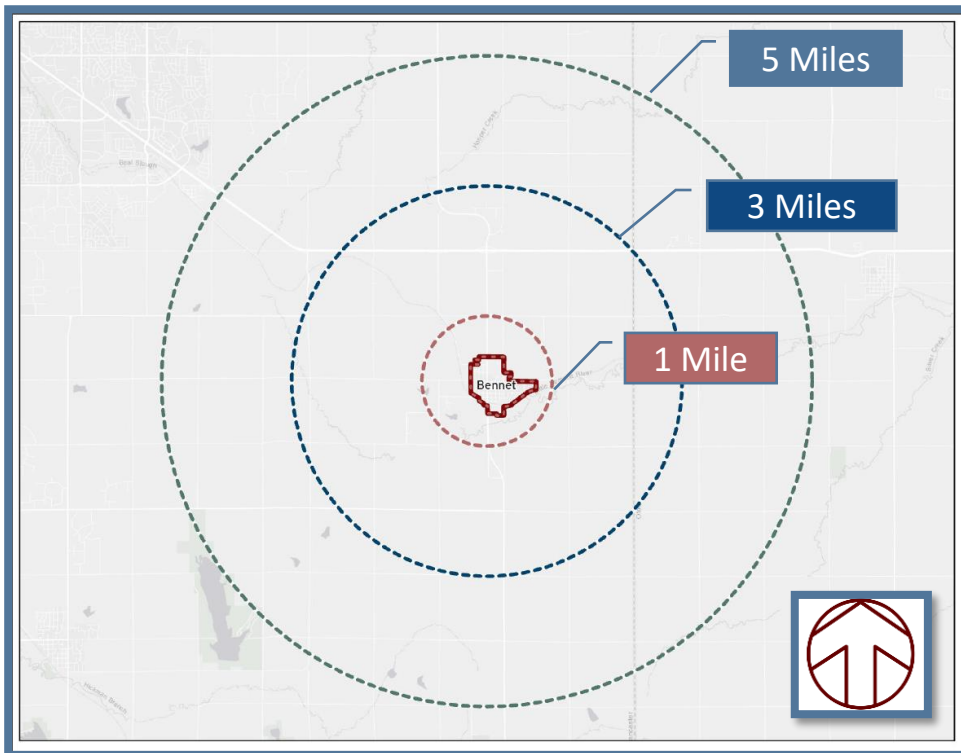
Source: ACS 2021 5-year summary

Community Profile:

Educational Level Snapshot

The percentage of individuals with a high school diploma or higher in this area is 97.9%, a slightly greater figure than that of the Lincoln, NE Metro Area, which stands at 93.4%. Moreover, it exceeds the statewide rate in Nebraska by about 10%, where the corresponding percentage is 91.7%. In terms of individuals holding a bachelor's degree or higher, the local rate is 41.8%, again surpassing both the Lincoln, NE Metro Area (39.6%) and Nebraska's rate (33%) by slight margins, approximately 25% higher. Within the 1-mile buffer area of Bennet, 22.0% of the population holds a bachelor's degree, while this figure increases to 28.6% in the 3-mile buffer area and slightly decreases to 26.5% in the 5-mile buffer area.

2022 Population 25+ by Educational Attainment



| Educational Attainment | % In 0– 1 Mile Radius | % In 1– 3 Mile Radius | % In 3– 5 Mile Radius |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Less than 9th Grade | 0.4 | 3.5 | 2.3 |
| 9th – 12th Grade, No Diploma | 2.4 | 1.4 | 1.9 |
| High School Graduate | 21.1 | 23.2 | 20.2 |
| GED/Alternative Credential | 3.2 | 3.1 | 2.8 |
| Some College, No Degree | 19.0 | 9.6 | 14.3 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 22.0 | 28.6 | 26.5 |
| Graduate/Professional Degree | 10.5 | 17.6 | 17.0 |

Source: ESRI Community Analyst

Community Profile:

Economic Characteristics

Economic Base

The downtown district of Bennet occupies the southern segment of the town, situated along Monroe Street (Nebraska State Highway 43). Within this vicinity, one can find small-scale commercial and industrial facilities, alongside governmental, farming, and other agricultural services. Notably, the city office is centrally located at the northwest corner of Monroe and Garden Streets (685 Monroe St.), serving as a venue for government meetings, public gatherings, and planning commission sessions.

Major employers in and around Bennet include significant entities such as First Nebraska Bank, the Bennet-Palmyra Public School District OR-1, Zermatt Tool, Midwest Farmers Cooperative, and Vasa Construction. These enterprises contribute significantly to the economic landscape of Bennet and its surrounding areas.

Commercial and Industrial Sites in Downtown Bennet



Source: UNL Community and Regional Planning Program, and City of Bennet

Community Profile: Economic Characteristics

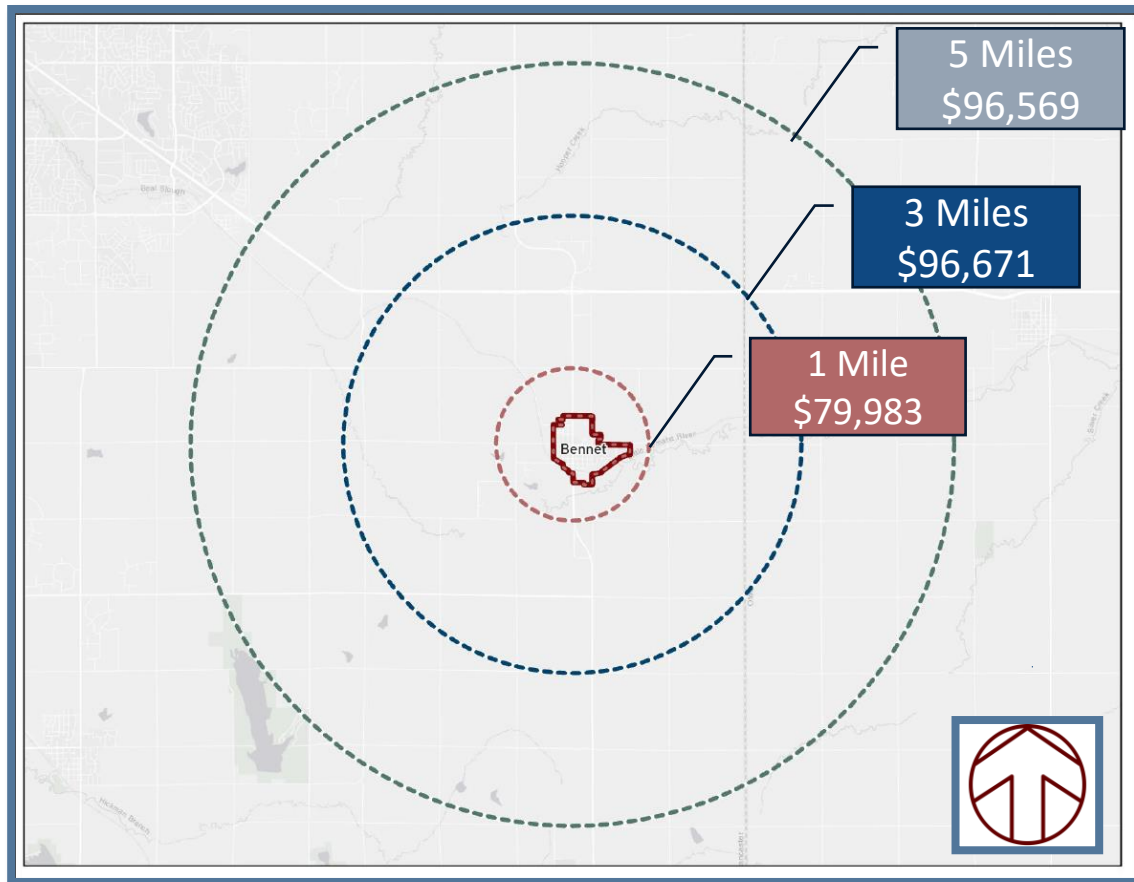
Although Bennet's location close to Lincoln is an advantage for residents, it can deter the establishment of new businesses. During a community planning open house in March 2019, residents identified two strategies for recruiting and retaining new businesses. One was a business incubator program, for which a building would be needed. The other was greater community engagement that could lead to increased community support of business in Bennet.

According to the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, the median household income for Bennet is \$93,500.

The median age in Bennet is 38, compared to the median age of 37 in Nebraska. Approximately 42% of Bennet residents have an education level of a bachelor's degree or higher.

According to a market analysis made using Esri's ArcGIS software and the U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data, the 2022 median household income was \$79,983 for a 0-1 mile radius, \$96,671 for a 1-3 mile radius, and \$96,569 for a 3-5 mile radius around Bennet.

Bennet & Surrounding Area Median Household Incomes in 2022



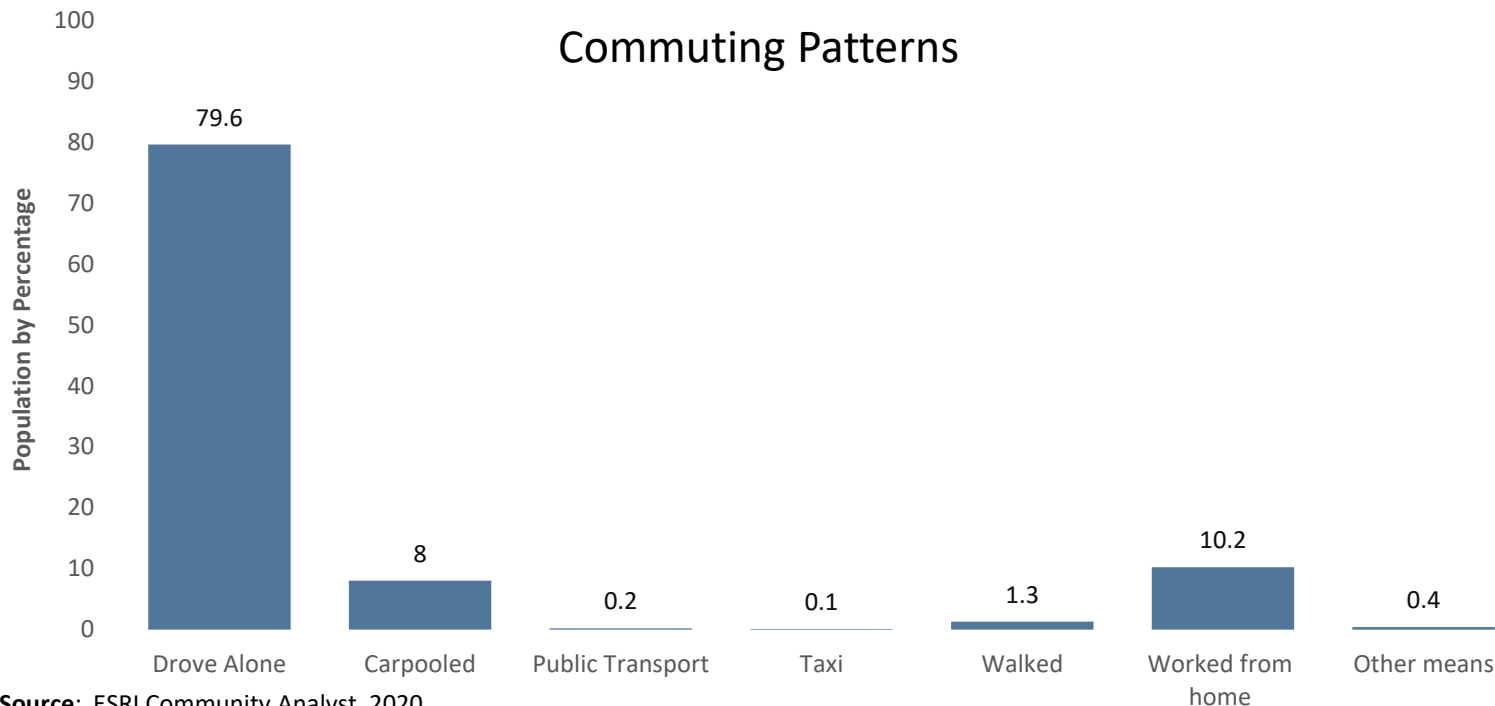
Source: Map created by CRPL 990, Matt Bolander

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Community Profile:

Commuting Patterns

In Bennet, the economic landscape and modes of transportation to work reflect a dynamic and diverse community. The majority of residents, at 79.6%, opt for the independence and convenience of driving alone to work, suggesting a significant level of car ownership and potential economic stability. Additionally, 8% choose to carpool, promoting environmentally friendly practices and a sense of community. Public transport and taxis, at 0.3% combined, indicate potentially underdeveloped transit infrastructure. Some residents, 1.3%, prefer walking to work, reflecting a mix of economic backgrounds. Notably, 10.2% work from home, reflecting a modern trend in telecommuting, and 0.4% use unconventional means, showcasing adaptability. Overall, Bennet's transportation choices highlight a diverse community that tailors modes of commute to economic and lifestyle preferences, with a growing embrace of remote work and alternative transportation options.



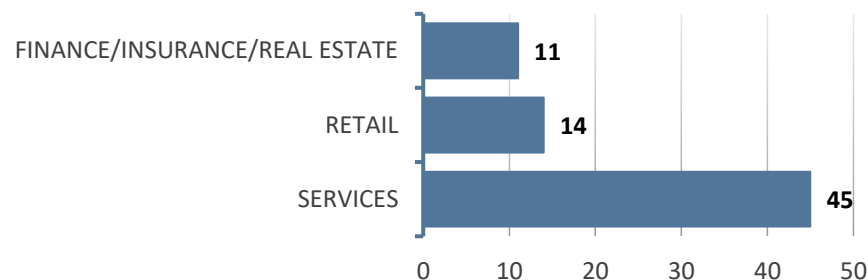
Community Profile:

Economic Characteristics

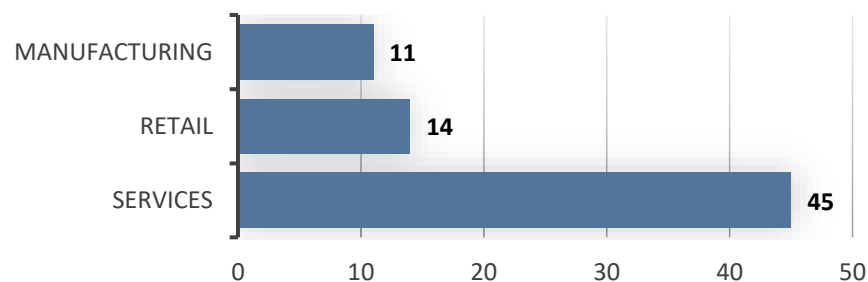
Across all radius sizes around Bennet, the services industry employs the largest segment of the population, accounting for approximately 45%, followed by the retail trade sector at approximately 14%. The third-largest employment sector varies based on radius size. In the 0-1 mile radius, approximately 11% of the population is employed in the finance/insurance/real estate industry. In the 1-3 mile radius, approximately 11% are employed in the manufacturing industry, and in the 3-5 mile radius, approximately 9% work in the construction industry.

Highway 43 serves as the primary route through Bennet, facilitating commuter access from towns like Sterling, Adams, and Panama to connect with Highway 2.

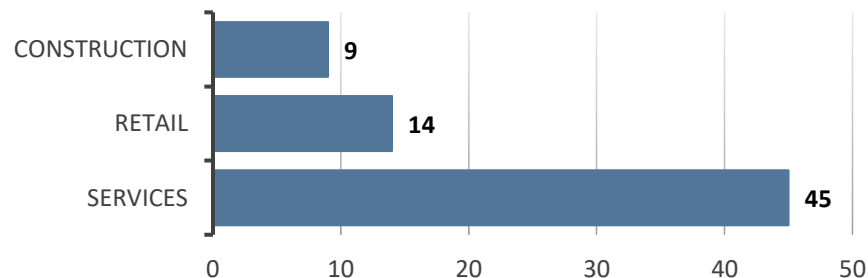
0-1 Mile Radius Population



1-3 Mile Radius Population



3-5 Mile Radius Population



Source: ESRI Community Analyst

Community Profile: Anchor Institutions

The anchor institutions in Bennet are critical to the town's identity and culture. Without these listed and recognized businesses, buildings, infrastructure etc., Bennet would not have the sense of community that it does. These anchor institutions keep the residents and community of Bennet resilient and close knit. The city of Bennet certainly wants to revitalize their downtown scene, and bring in more business for the community. It's safe to say bringing in new business certainly should help Bennet prosper economically, but using these anchor institutions as the foundation of expanding business is key for further developing Bennet while simultaneously keeping it a small town. These anchor institutions serve vital roles in the community that have helped mold Bennet into the community it is today. These institutions are the backbone of Bennet, and have been providing the services and goods necessary for Bennet residents for some time. These institutions are vital for the community moving forward for the economic revitalization plan in the works. These institutions aside from the general community of Bennet, will be the biggest driver for economic growth in the downtown area as the demand for development increases. Sustaining these anchor institutions for future generations to come is critical so that all can enjoy these institutions!



Source: Downtown Bennet, Digital Photograph, Planning Team

Community Profile:

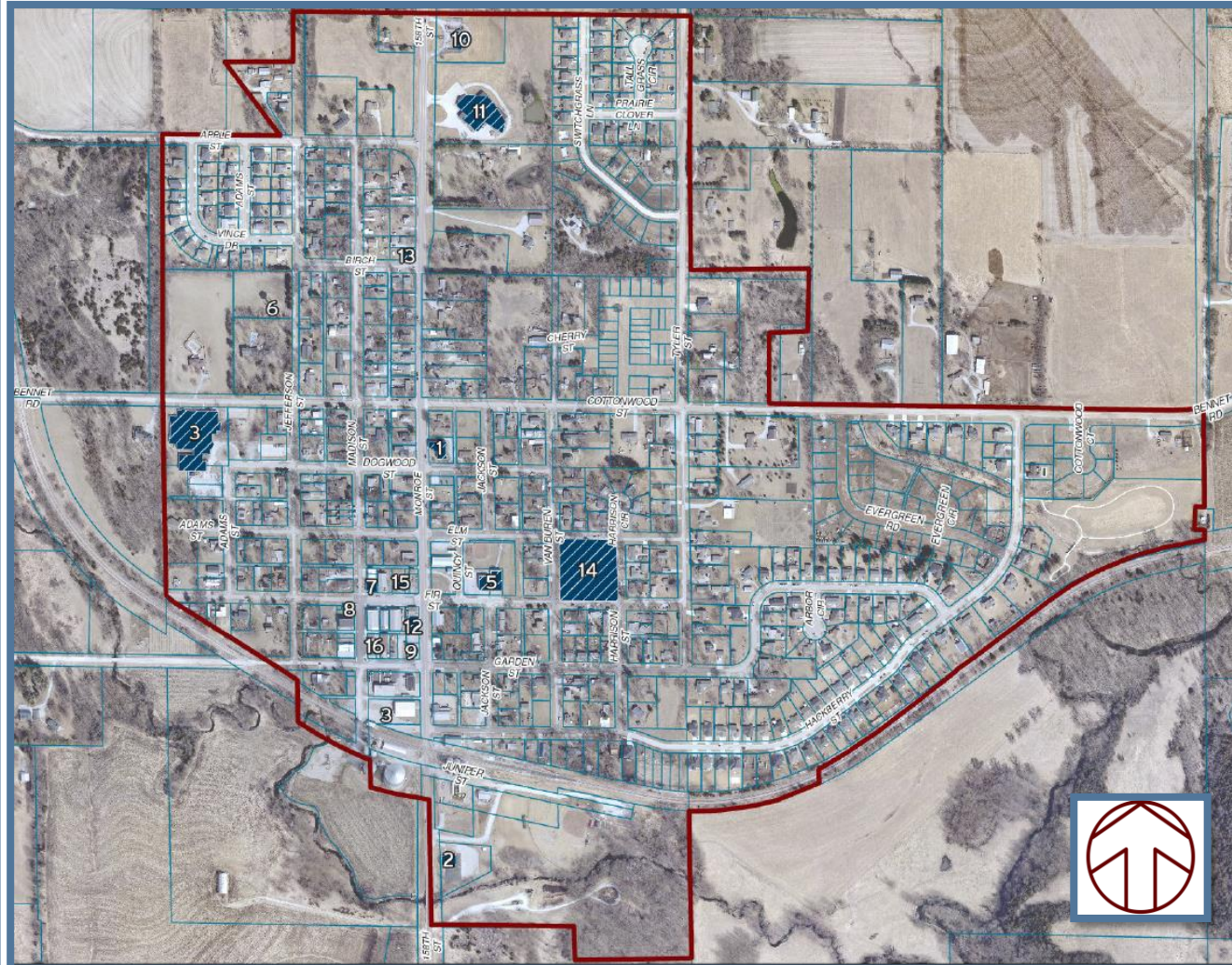
Anchor Institutions and Landmarks

Landmarks and Institutions

1. Bennet Community Church
2. American Legion
3. Frontier Cooperative
4. Bennet Elementary School
5. Bennet Fire Department
6. Bennet Water Tower
7. Lancaster Rural Water District
8. United States Postal Service
9. City of Bennet Municipal Building
10. First Nebraska Bank
11. Zermatt Tools
12. Big Ten Tavern
13. Ed's Garage
14. Bennet Park
15. Tailored Life
16. Tim Norris Home and Farm Insurance

**11-16 Businesses in operation as of Summer 2023*

Anchor Institutions: Bennet, NE



Source: Map created by CRPL 990, Matt Bolander and Tristen Brown

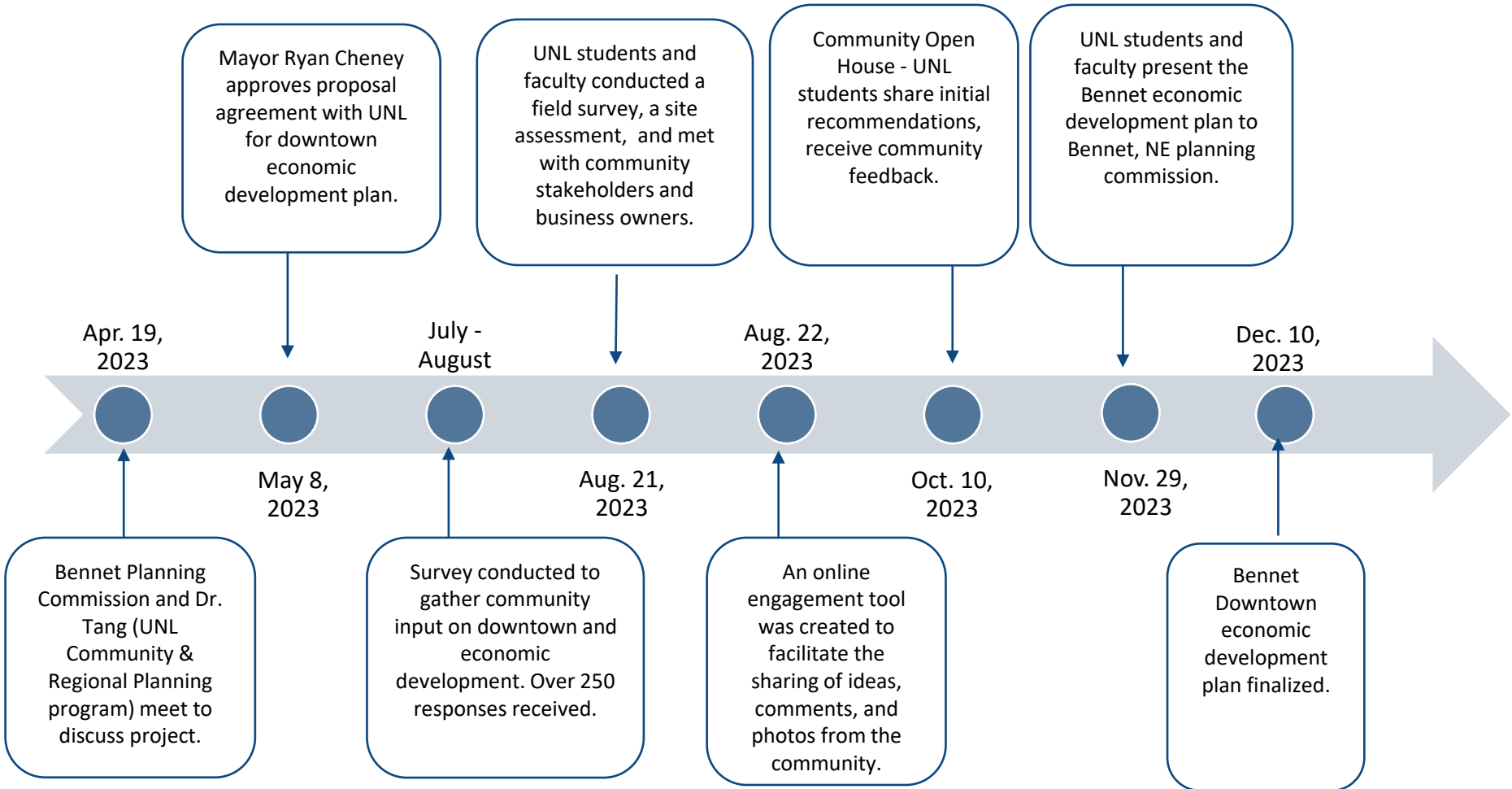


Chapter 2: Planning Process

Bennet Circa 1900s – Madison and Fir Streets

Project Timeline

Downtown Economic Development Plan



Community Survey

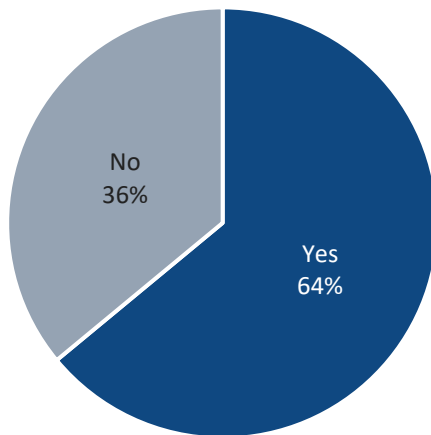
The Bennet Comprehensive Plan Survey was made available for completion between July 15, 2023 and August 15, 2023. During this time, over 250 responses were recorded.

The community survey showed that 49% of residents have been living in Bennet for 10 or fewer years. Of the respondents, 79% indicated that they are employed full-time or self-employed and 16% said that they are retired. Those who completed the survey are generally well educated with 84% having some form of post-secondary education or training.

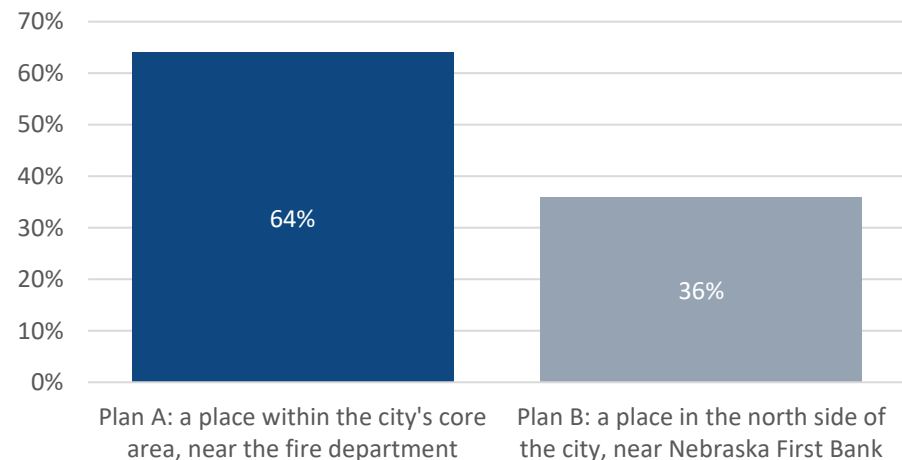
Respondents have a positive view of Bennet: 52% said that Bennet is a quality place to live, 41% said they are indifferent, and only 6% rated it as a low quality place to live. This is reflected in their outlook, with 61% being confident in the future of Bennet.

Regarding a new downtown area, 64% responded that they support the idea of establishing a new downtown area. 64% also indicated a preference towards this new downtown being placed within the city's core area as opposed to the north side of town.

Do you support the idea of establishing a new downtown area in Bennet?



Which area would you prefer to establish a new downtown area in Bennet?

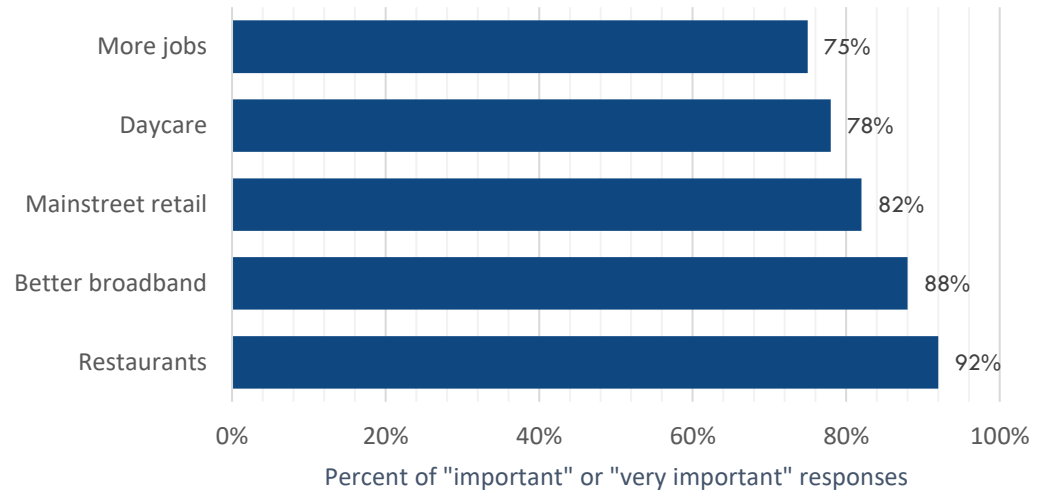


Community Survey

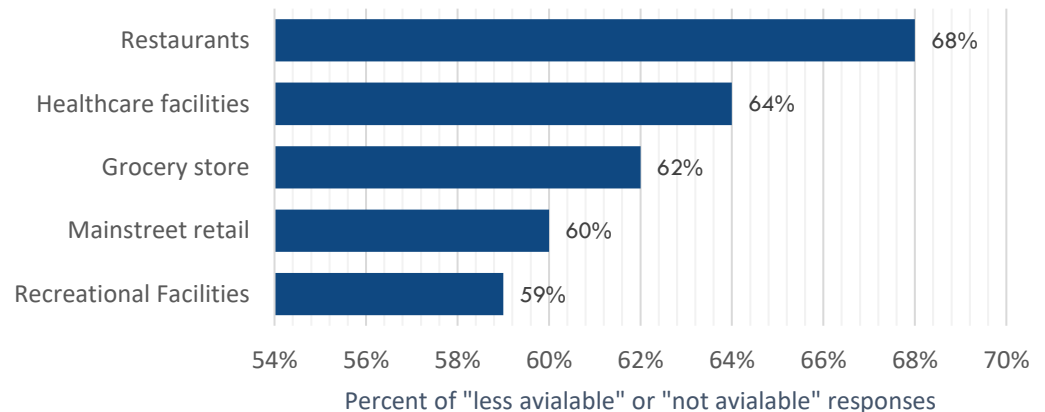
According to respondents, the most important services to focus on for the future economic development of Bennet are better broadband, daycare for children, and restaurants. Each of these services was rated as either important or very important by 94% or more of the respondents. Currently, the least available services were indicated to be restaurants, healthcare, and a grocery store. Each of these were rated to be less available or not available by 61% or more of respondents. The sectors with the highest preference for future economic development are agriculture, retail and wholesale trade, and technology. The sectors with the lowest preference are manufacturing/assembly, energy, and mining.

In general, responses showed a desire for more reasons to visit downtown. Respondents commonly indicated wanting more restaurants/coffee shop, a grocery/general store, and unique retail. Additionally, beautification of the downtown area seems to be a high priority including new sidewalks with planters and an outdoor area that could be used as a gathering space.

Which of the following services and/or businesses should be the focus of economic development activities in the future?



Access to quality goods and services is important. How available are these to you?

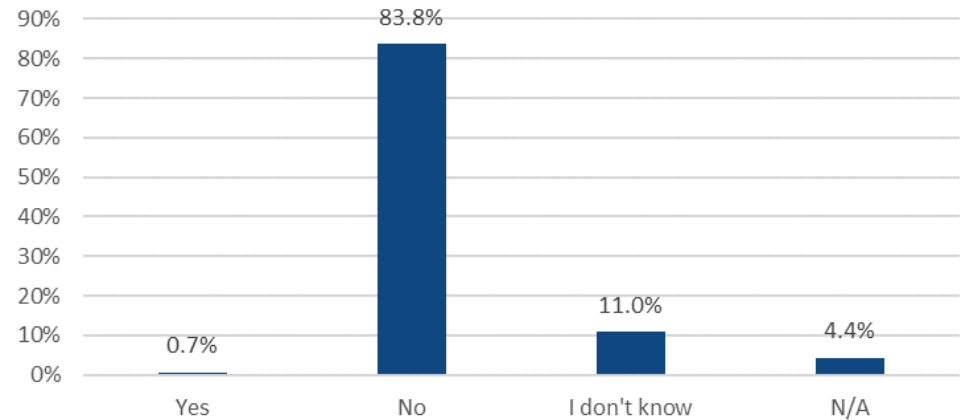


Community Survey

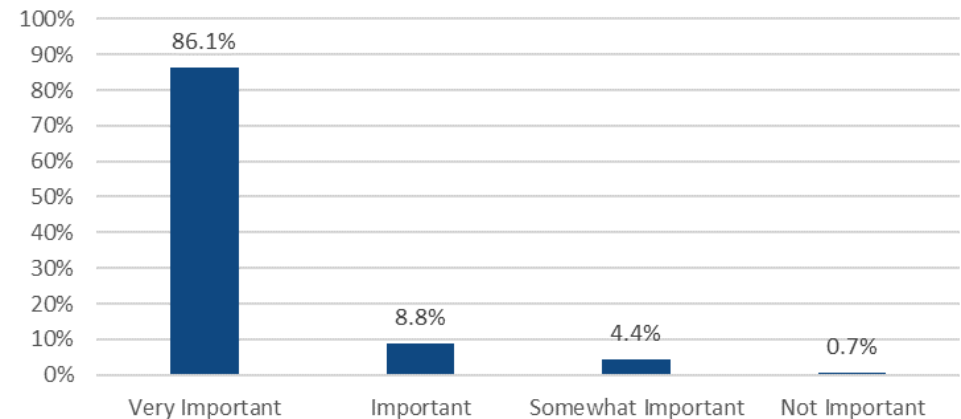
When questioned about childcare options in and around Bennet, an overwhelming 83.8% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, stating that there are insufficient high-quality childcare facilities within a 30-mile radius of the community. Conversely, less than 1% reported being content with the available childcare options within this distance. Given the substantial representation of the 0-5 year and 5-9 year old age groups, there is a clear and growing demand for daycare services and K 0-12 school services in the nearby future in Bennet.

The significance of access to high-quality childcare services to the growth and development of the region is underscored by the responses, with nearly all participants expressing its importance. Specifically, 86.1% deemed it "very important," 8.8% considered it "important", and 4.4% found it "somewhat important". A resounding 86% emphasized that having access to high-quality childcare is of utmost importance. Only a mere 0.7% of respondents indicated that the availability of sufficient, high-quality childcare options is "not important" to the growth and development of the region.

Do you feel that there are enough high-quality childcare options within a 30-mile radius of Bennet (not including Lincoln)?



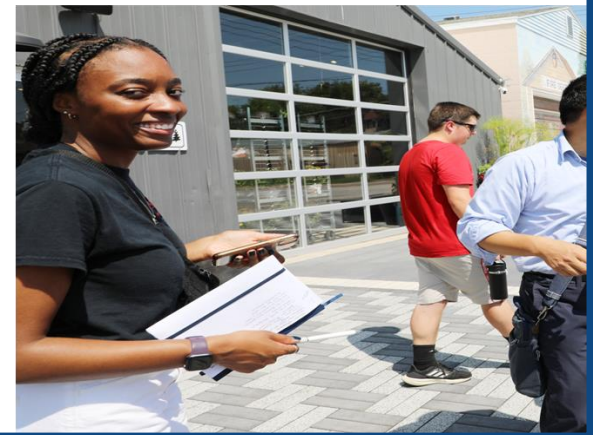
How important do you think having enough high-quality, accessible child care options is for the overall growth and development of the region?



Community Field Assessment

Community survey and meeting with stakeholders – August 21, 2023

On August 21, 2023, the students surveyed sidewalks, housing, public sites, and street infrastructure, aiming to comprehend accessibility and mobility factors. They collected land use data to understand future opportunities for growth and development within the area. Furthermore, the students engaged with local residents to gain deeper insights into community activities and dynamics.



Community Open House

Community Input - October 10, 2023

On October 10, 2023, MPC and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Community and Regional Planning Department hosted an Open House at the Bennet American Legion Hall. The Open House was for residents to view updates on the Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown Economic Development Plan. Over 30 residents signed in for the Community Open House, providing critical feedback used to make appropriate changes to the respective documents.

Comprehensive Plan/Downtown Open House

American Legion Hall, 970 Monroe St

October 10, 2023, 6:00 - 8:00 PM



Join the consulting team and students from UNL on October 10, 2023, from 6 - 8 PM, to talk about the future of the city.

At this meeting you can give us your thoughts on the vision for downtown Bennet and the future of the city overall.

You can also learn about other opportunities to participate during the planning process.

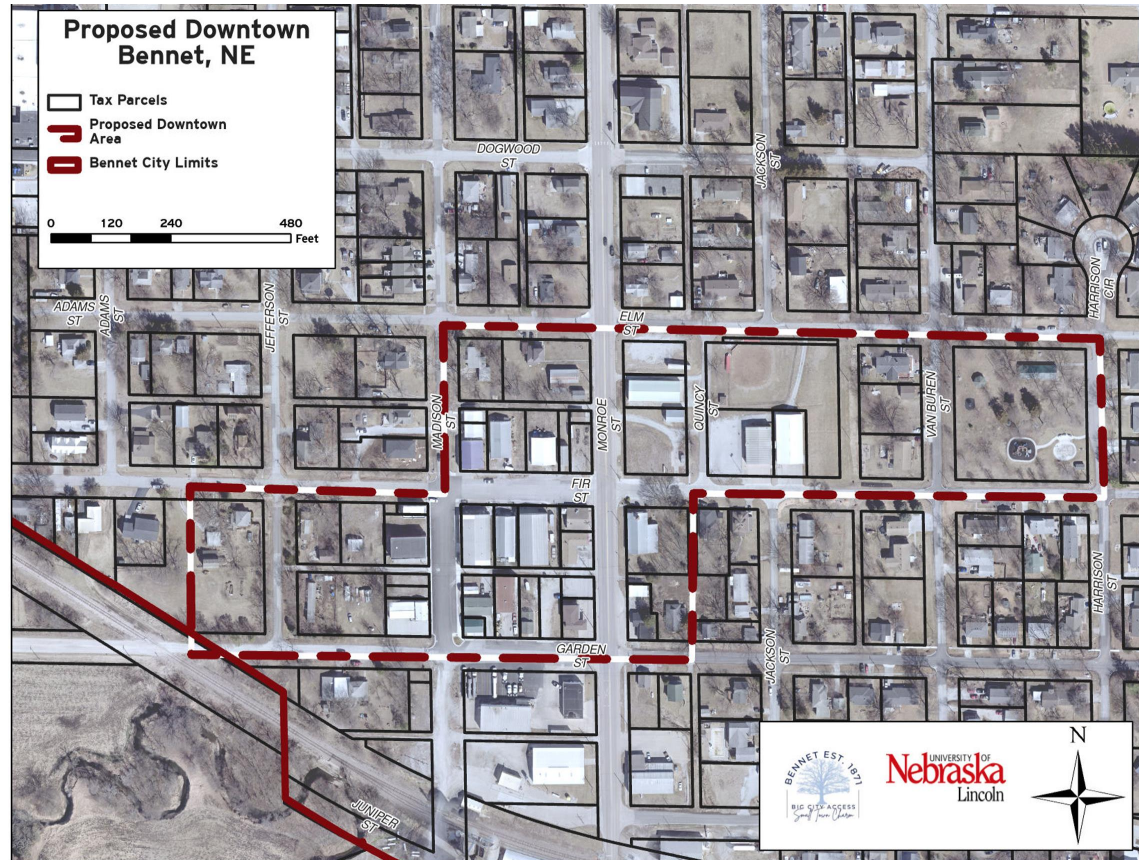


Proposing Downtown Area for Bennet, NE With Community Input and Field Assessment

The proposed Bennet downtown area encompasses sections adjacent to City Hall along both sides of Monroe Street, with the focal point being the intersection of First Street and Monroe Street. Extending to Elm Street on the north, Harrison Street on the east, slightly crossing Jefferson Street on the west, and reaching Garden Street on the south. This delineation reflects comprehensive consideration of the defining process. This process extensively incorporates public input garnered from Bennet residents through community survey responses, stakeholder communications, professional suggestions, field assessments, and open house events.

The strategic goal of the proposed downtown area is to concentrate main activities within Bennet's existing core areas, particularly along Monroe Street, aligning with the primary traffic flows for optimal economic growth. This approach ensures that the development plan not only reflects the community's input but also positions the downtown area as a vibrant and thriving hub for residents and businesses alike.

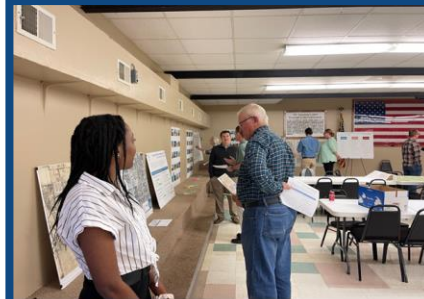
Proposed Downtown Area for Bennet, NE



Community Open House

Community Input -
October 10, 2023

Over 30 residents enthusiastically attended the Community Open House held at the American Legion Hall in Bennet, NE on October 10, 2023. Their active participation and engagement during the event were evident, as they not only contributed valuable comments and feedback on the initial plan, but also fostered a sense of community collaboration.



Planning Commission Meeting Update

November 29, 2023

The students and faculty updated the progress of the planning, highlighted the key recommendations, presented the draft plan, and suggested the implementation steps to the planning commission team.

As part of the Bennet downtown economic development plan, stakeholders have been actively engaged throughout the entire planning process to enhance the local business environment and ensure the quality of life in the community.

This inclusive planning approach ensures that the voices of residents and local businesses are heard, contributing to a comprehensive and people-centric planning effort.




Proposed Downtown-Bennet, NE

Bennet
City Limits
Proposed
Downtown
Area
Tax
Parcels

0 375 750 1,500 Feet




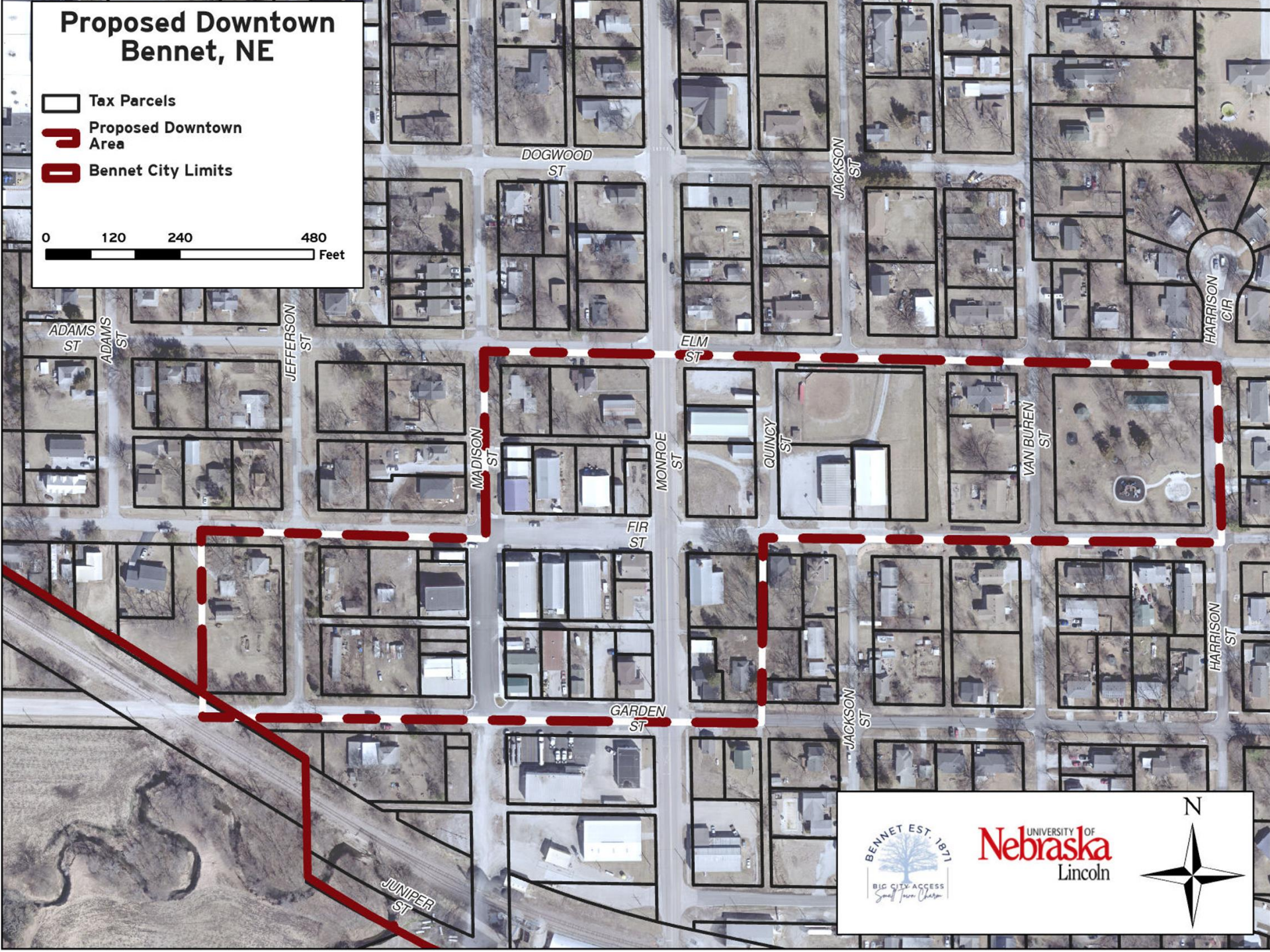
Proposed Downtown Bennet, NE

 Tax Parcels

 Proposed Downtown
Area

 Bennet City Limits

0 120 240 480
 Feet



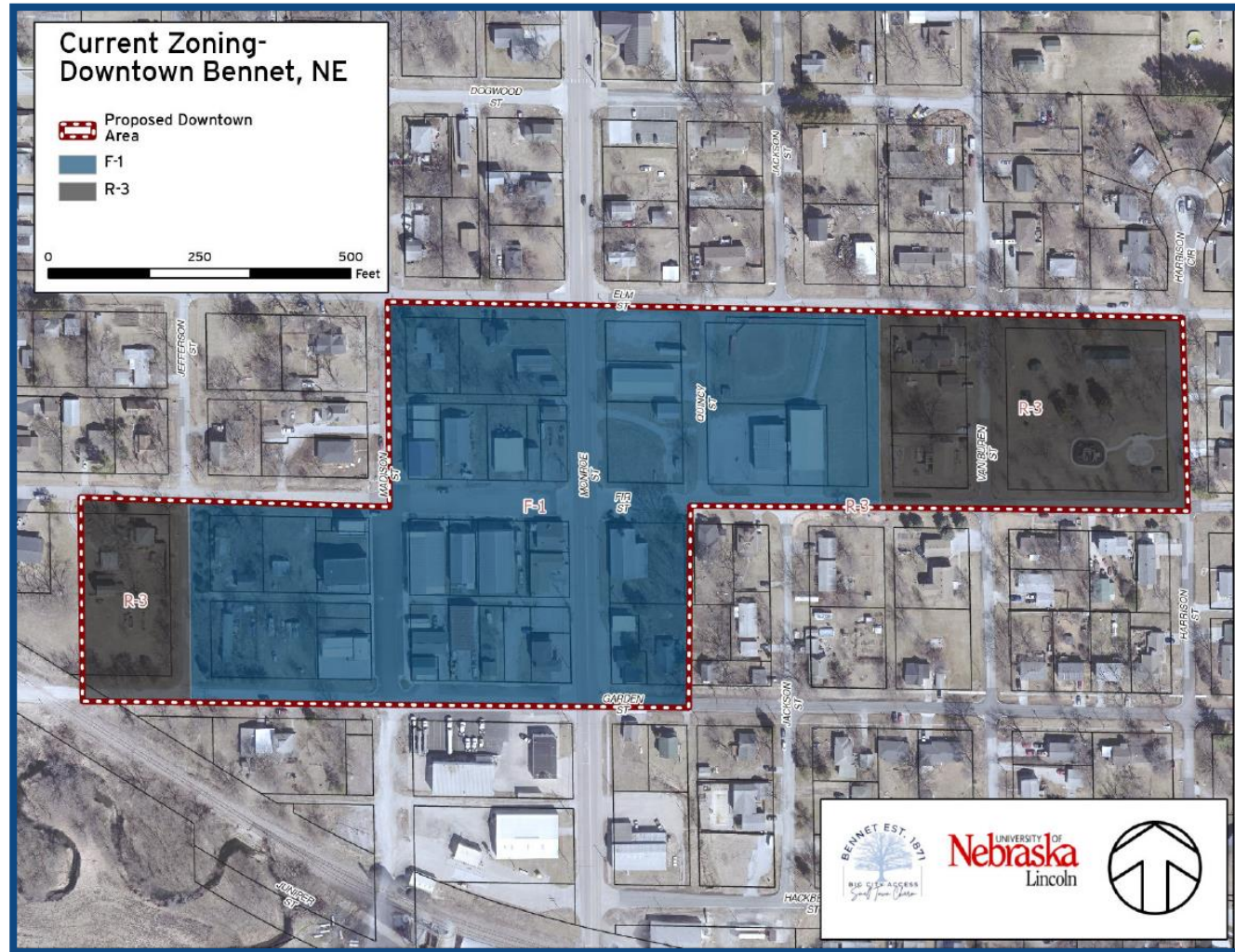
UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln



Zoning in Proposed Downtown Area

The envisioned downtown area encompasses both F-1 and R-3 zoning. Ensuring zoning consistency across this area is crucial for the seamless execution of future plans, particularly in the context of the downtown economic development plan. To achieve this, it is imperative to make appropriate modifications to the zoning ordinance, aligning it with the envisioned future land use and the comprehensive plan. This alignment not only enhances the efficiency of the regulatory framework but also supports the overarching goals of the downtown economic development plan, contributing to a cohesive and strategically planned urban landscape.

Current Zoning within Study Area



Source: Map modified from Marvin Planning Consultants, digitized CRPL 990 Matt Bolander

Chapter 3: Existing Conditions

Mural in Present-Day Bennet

Existing Conditions:

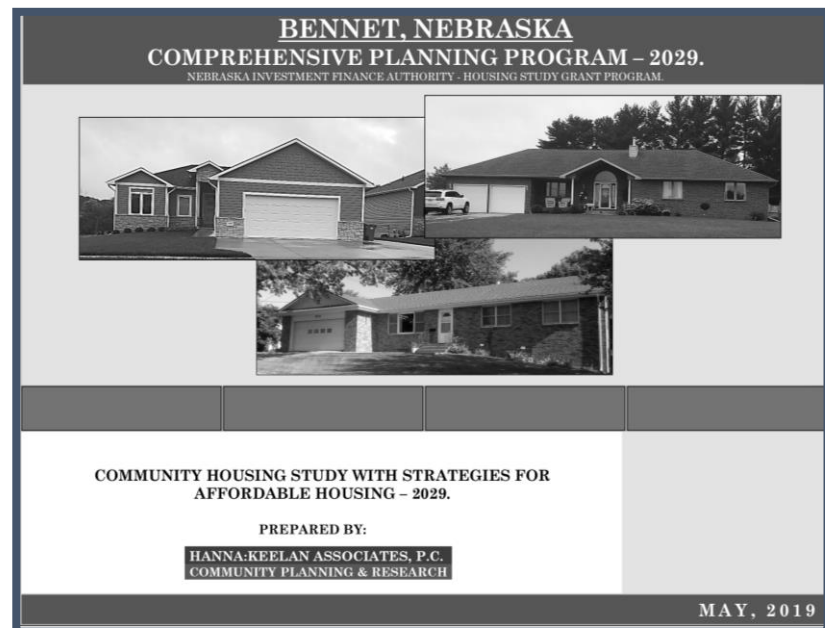
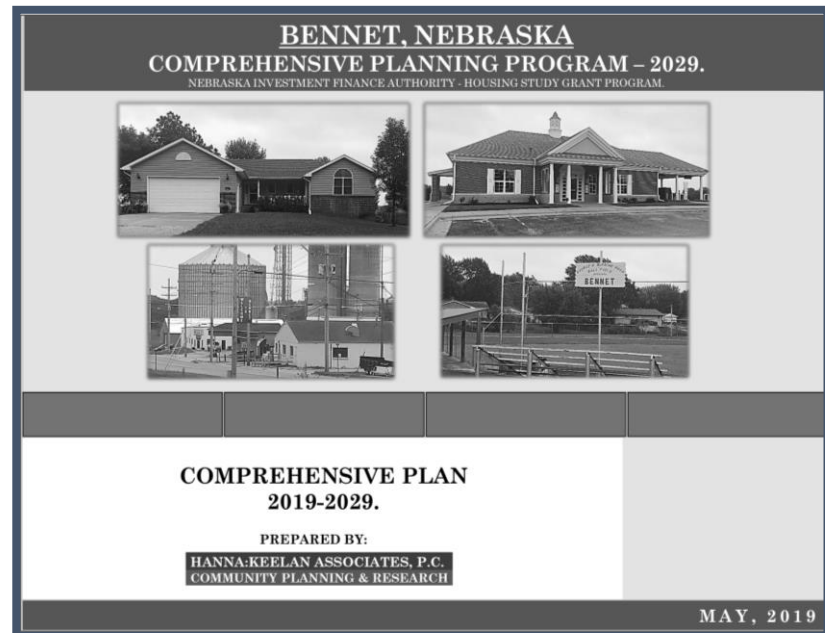
Past Planning Efforts

The current Bennet Comprehensive Plan, developed by Hanna:Keelan Associates, P.C. in collaboration with the Bennet Planning Commission, stands as a pivotal component of the 2019-2029 Bennet Comprehensive Planning Program. Funded through the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority Housing Study Grant Program, with matching contributions from the Village of Bennet, this plan serves as a comprehensive guide for the period 2019-2029.

Envisioned as a roadmap for future growth and development in both the Village of Bennet, Nebraska, and the Village's One-Mile Planning Jurisdiction, the plan addresses a 10-year span. It shares crucial information on the conditions at the time of the document's publication, spanning population, land use, public facilities, utilities, and transportation. Moreover, the Comprehensive Plan integrates a community/economic development profile and plan to tackle issues like business recruitment and retention, housing development, and an energy element to evaluate energy utilization and promote conservation measures.

The 2019-2029 Comprehensive Plan, a successor and update to the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, not only replaces its predecessor but also plays a vital role in shaping and directing the future growth and development in Bennet.

**Plan was adopted prior to becoming the City of Bennet*

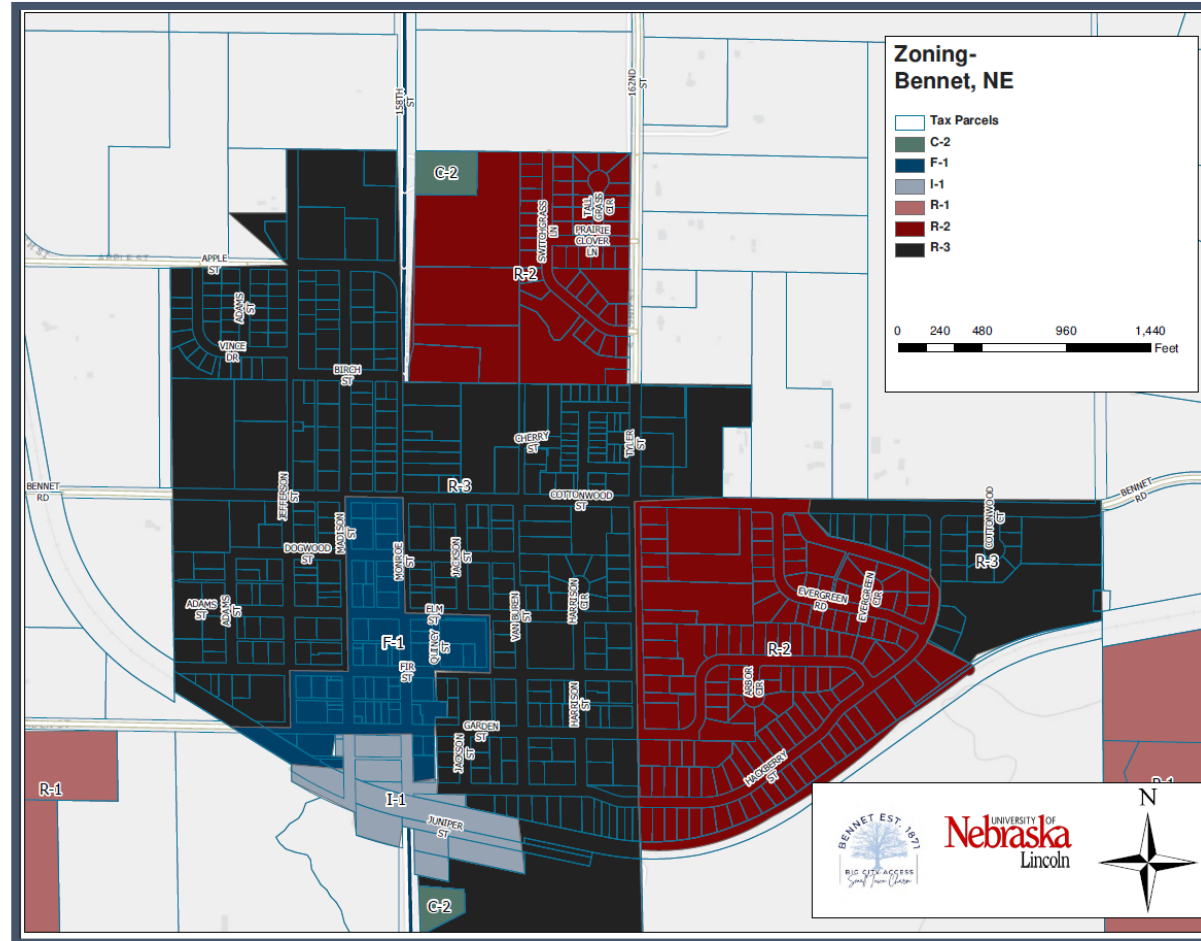


Existing Conditions: Residential Zoning

March 2023 updates to the Bennet Municipal Code created two new residential zoning districts within corporate limits. New residential zoning allows more flexibility in housing types.

- R2 zoning is intended to "provide for medium density residential neighborhoods, characterized by single-family and two-family dwellings, and apartment units, on small to moderately sized lots with supporting community facilities."
- R3 zoning is intended "to provide for higher density residential neighborhoods, characterized by single-family and two-family dwellings, as well as apartment units on small to moderately sized lots with supporting community facilities."

Current Zoning: Bennet, NE



Source: Map modified from Marvin Planning Consultants by Matt Bolander

Existing Conditions: Housing

Overview

Bennet has been experiencing growth due to proximity to Lincoln and a housing market that is more affordable than that of Lincoln.

According to the ACS 2021 5-year estimates, Bennet, NE has 475 total housing units, where 98% of these units are currently occupied and 2% of them are vacant.

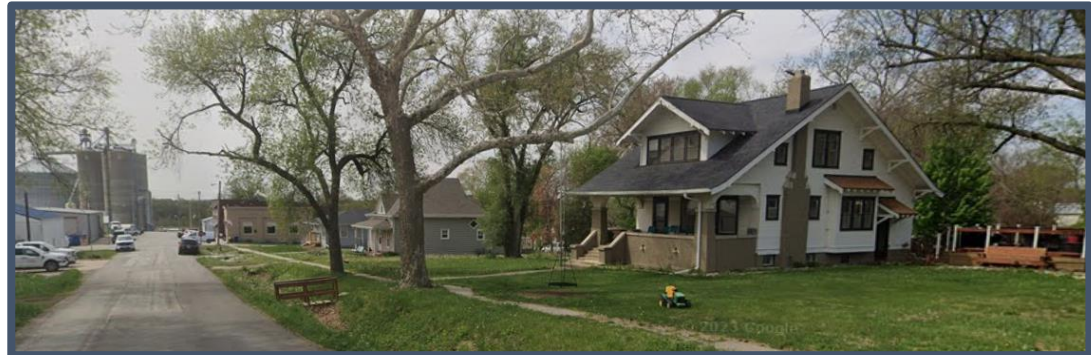
2021 ACS 5-year estimates value the median home in Bennet at \$203,200. 38% of Bennet's homes fall within the range of \$100,000-200,000, while 41% are in the range of \$200,000-300,000.

According to the 2021 ACS 5-year estimates, 91% of homes in Bennet are occupied by owners, while 9% are occupied by renters.

Suburban Style Development



Traditional Style Development



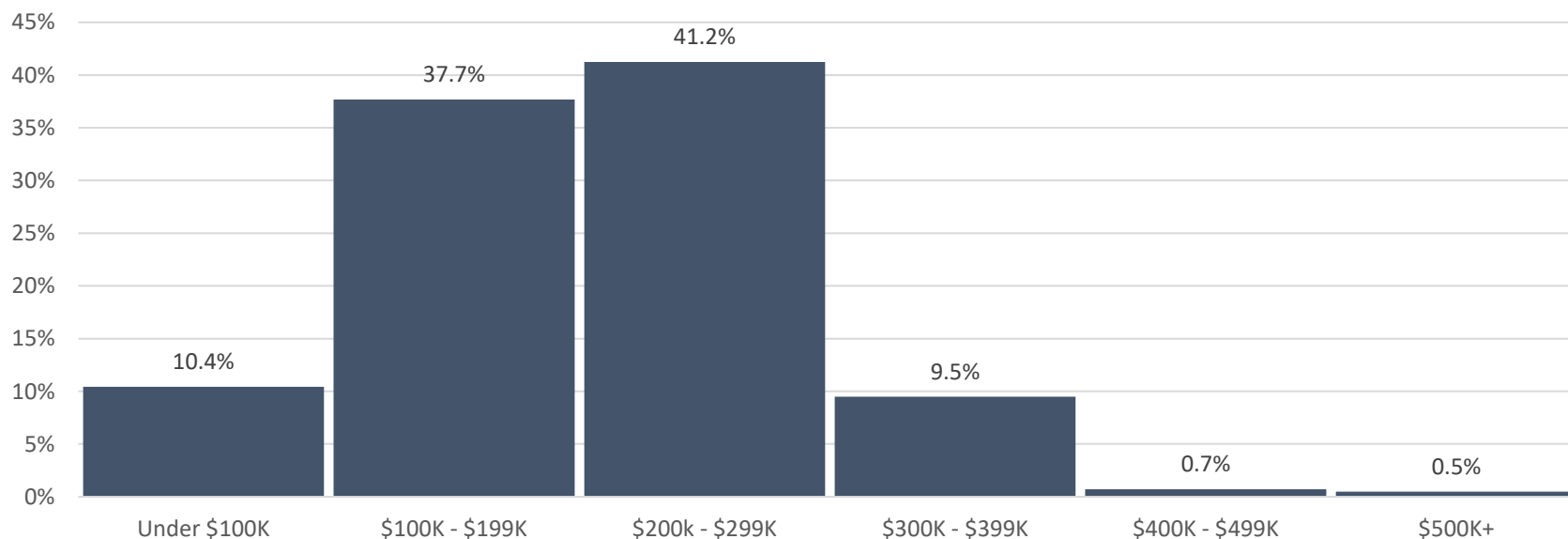
Source: UNL Community & Regional Planning Program; bottom is from Google Maps

Existing Conditions:

Median Home Values

With the greatest proportion of home values, namely 41.2%, falling in the range of \$200,000 to \$299,000, Bennet offers a variety of reasonable options for middle-class families. The second-largest category of home values, representing 37.7% of the total, is in the range of \$100,000 to \$199,000. This housing category offers a significant option for budget-conscious or budget-restrained families. Remaining categories of housing with lower values, as well as higher values, make up a smaller proportion of the total housing stock, while still offering choices for less expensive, as well as for higher-end options.

Median Home Value of Owner-Occupied Units in Bennet, NE



Source: ESRI Community Analyst, 2020

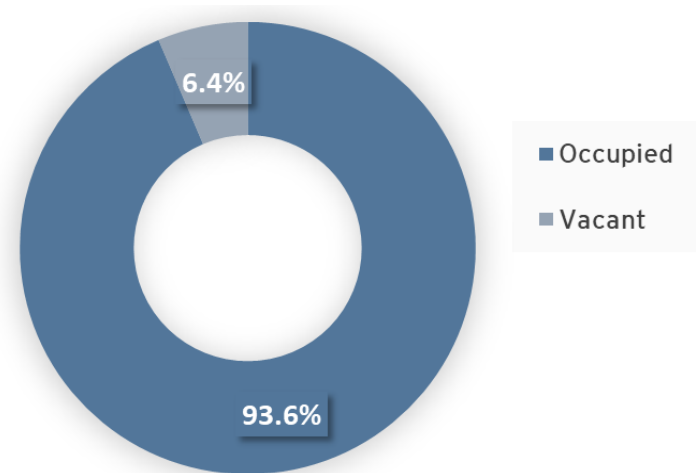
Existing Conditions: Housing

In Bennet, housing occupancy paints a picture of a thriving and predominantly homeowner-oriented community. As of the latest available data, 93.6% of the housing units are currently occupied, while 6.4% remain vacant, suggesting a stable and well-utilized housing market.

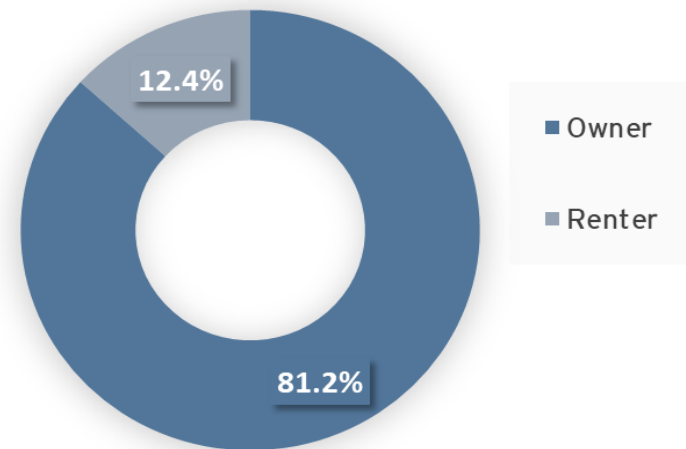
Most residents in Bennet take pride in homeownership, with 81.2% of the occupied housing units being owner-occupied. This reflects a strong sense of commitment and investment in the community, as homeowners often contribute to the neighborhood's stability and long-term well-being.

On the other hand, 12.4% of the housing units are occupied by renters, indicating a minority of residents who prefer the flexibility and lower commitment associated with renting. This diversity in housing options caters to a wide range of individuals, creating a balanced and inclusive living environment in Bennet.

Occupied vs. Vacant Units in Bennet in 2020



Ownership of Occupied Units in Bennet in 2020



Source: ESRI Community Analyst, 2020

Existing Conditions: Types of Housing

Bennet has 475 housing structures. Of these, 95% are categorized as single-family structures, which means that they are detached single-family homes.

5% of homes within the city of Bennet are not single-family, meaning they are either multi-family or manufactured homes.



Source: UNL Community and Regional Planning Program; bottom is from Google Maps

Existing Conditions: Housing Types

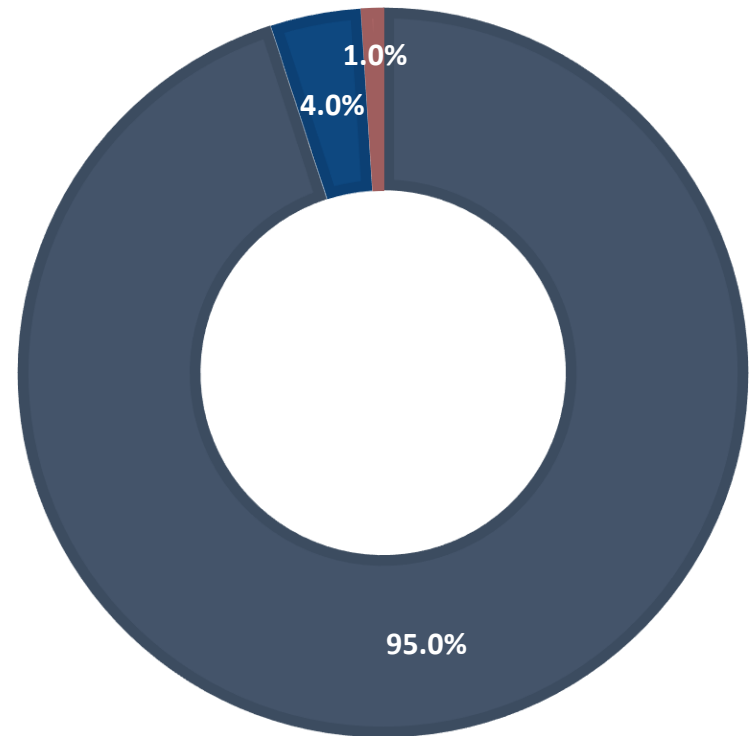
In Bennet, the housing landscape is predominantly characterized by single-family residences, constituting 95.0% of the housing stock. Multifamily units make up 4.0%, while 1.0% comprises mobile homes. This distribution reflects a residential structure that may influence downtown economic development planning.

While the prevalence of single-family units speaks to the quality of life in the Bennet area, the existence of multifamily units suggests potential opportunities for mixed-use, affordable housing developments. These developments can address diverse housing needs, fostering a more dynamic and inclusive downtown environment. It is imperative to comprehend these housing dynamics for the formulation of well-informed and customized economic development strategies tailored to Bennet's downtown area.

Throughout the community survey, open house event, and stakeholder meetings, the necessity for senior housing has been highlighted as a specific requirement for certain residents of Bennet.

Housing Types - Bennet, NE

■ Single Family ■ Multifamily ■ Mobile Home



Source: 2021 Census ACS Data

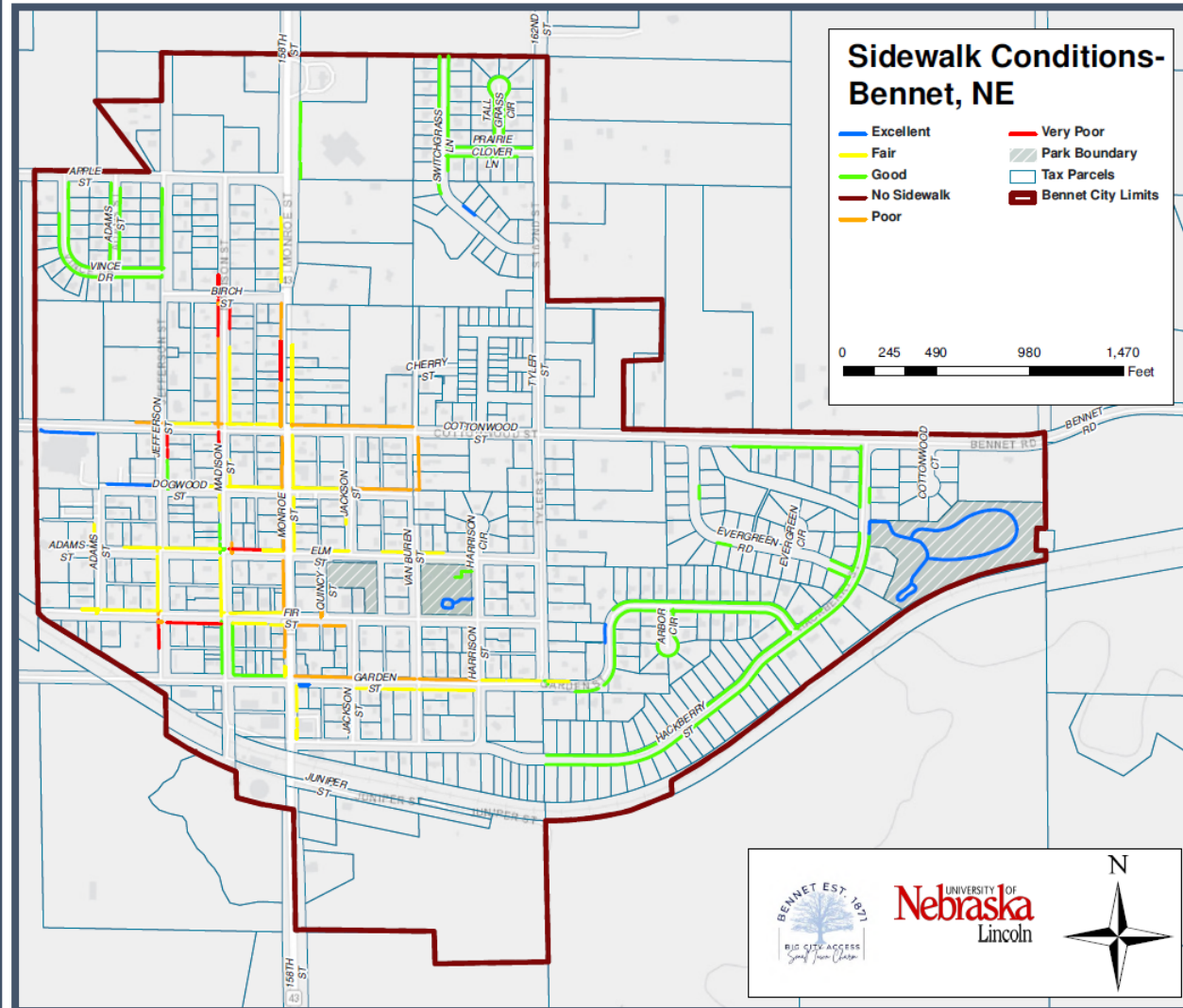
Existing Conditions: Sidewalk Conditions

Conditions of sidewalks in Bennet vary from very poor to excellent with nearly 35% of sidewalks found to be in good condition.

- The existing sidewalk network in Bennet is 8.31 miles in total length.
- Bennet's current network is built with concrete which generally provides a durable building material for sidewalks. However, in many cases the concrete appears to be past its service life.
- Sidewalks were rated solely on the condition of the pavement. More information on the rating system can be found on the following page.

**As of September 2023*

Sidewalk Conditions: Bennet, NE



Source: Map created by Matt Bolander

Existing Conditions:

Sidewalk Conditions

Excellent

In this category, the sidewalk is more than likely built within the last 4-5 years and is in great condition, with little segment separation and up to ADA code compliance.

Good

Sidewalk is in good shape but may have some segment separation issues and may not be in full compliance with ADA.

Fair

Sidewalk has some repair issues and may be slightly overgrown but, in general, still serves its function as a sidewalk. ADA compliance is functional but likely not ideal.

Poor

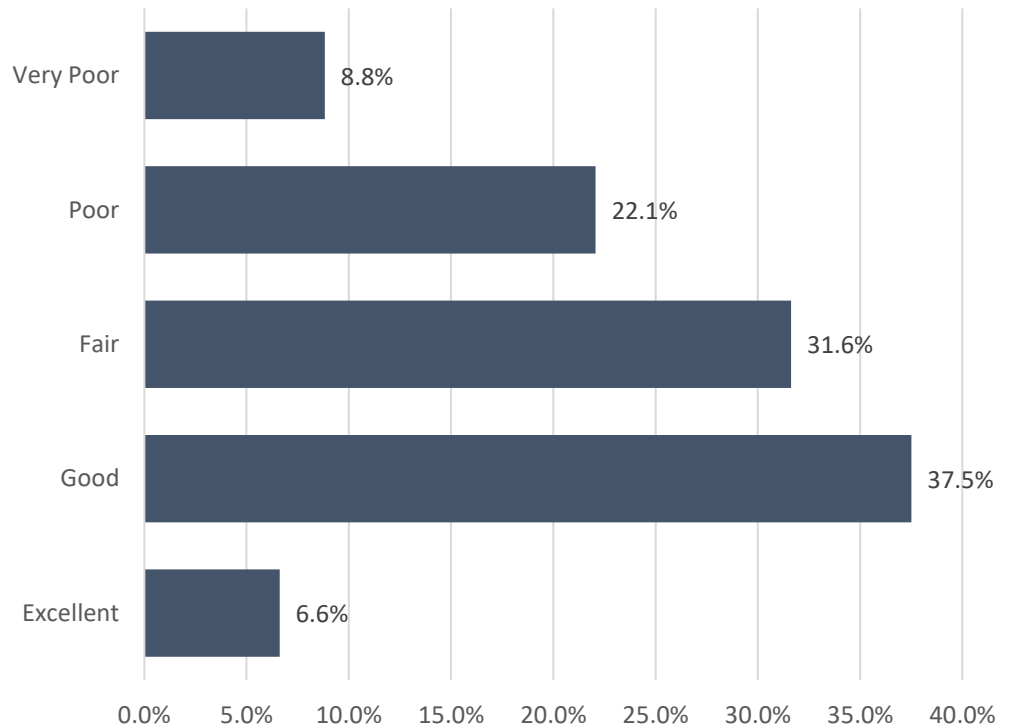
Sidewalk is in disrepair and is not even. There is a good amount of overgrowth and sidewalk is not in compliance with ADA.

Very Poor

Sidewalk is barely visible due to overgrowth, ADA compliance is non-existent, and the sidewalk is in disrepair.

**As of September 2023*

Existing Sidewalk Conditions in Bennet, NE



Source: City of Lincoln Aerial Imagery and University of Nebraska-Lincoln Student Surveys

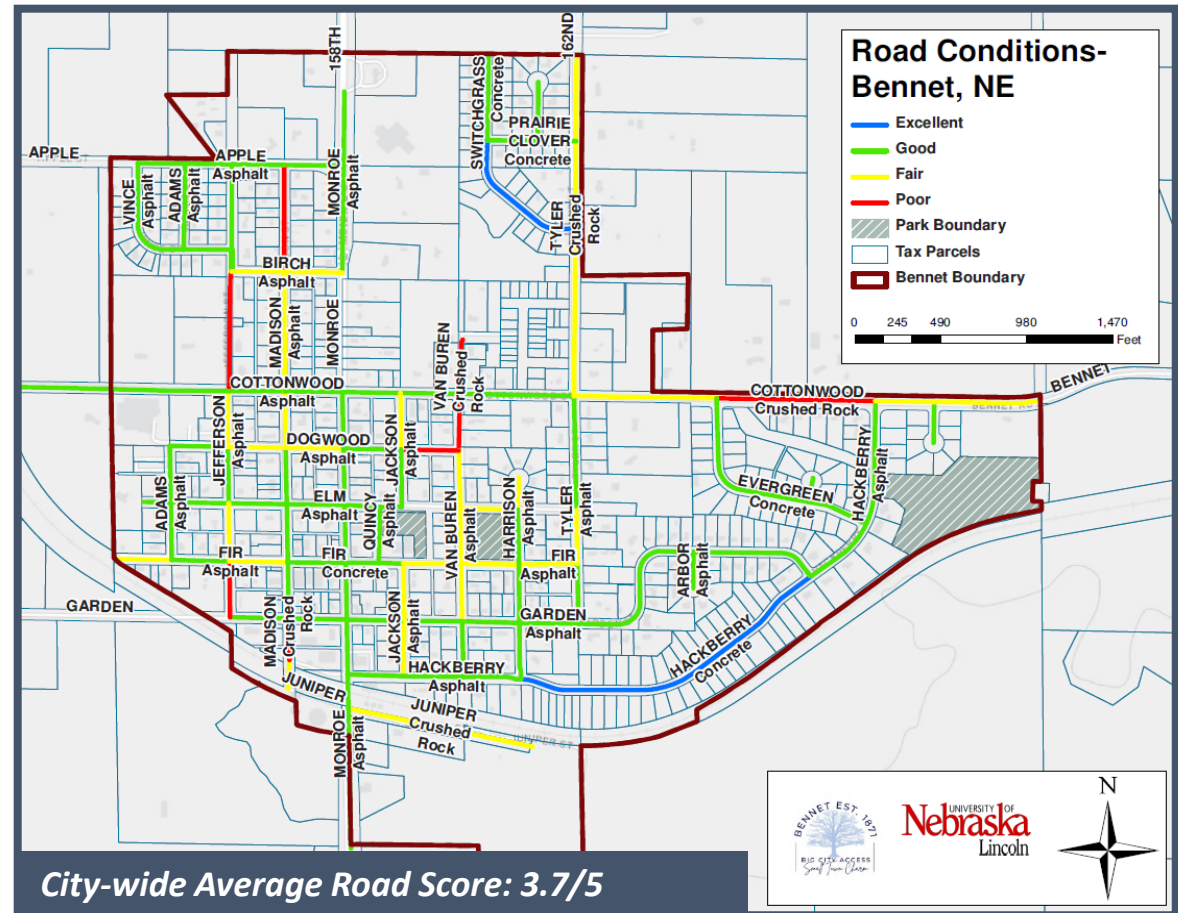
Existing Conditions: Road Conditions

Conditions of roads in Bennet vary from poor to excellent with none determined to be “very poor.”

- Roads were scored on a 1-5 scale and were given a condition score based on street name. (See Road Condition Score)
- There are three surface materials currently for roads in Bennet : crushed rock/gravel, concrete, and asphalt. (See Road Surface Materials)
- Monroe St. is also Nebraska State Highway 43 and runs through the center of Bennet.

**As of September 2023*

Road Conditions: Bennet, NE



Source: Map created by CRPL 990, Matt Bolander

Existing Conditions: Road Condition Classification

Excellent

The road is either recently paved, new construction and has little or no visible damage.

Good

The road is in good condition with little to no visible damage

Fair

Road acceptable but some visible signs of cracking/damage to pavement with visible wear and tear.

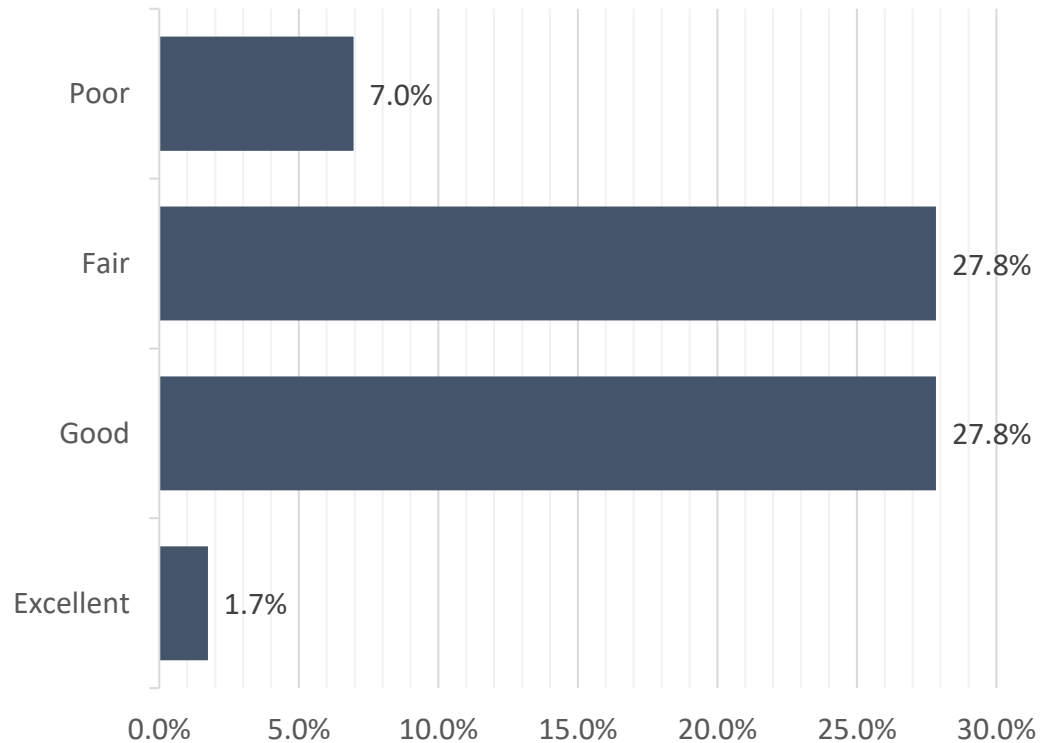
Poor

Road in poor condition with lots of cracking and has not been resurfaced for several years.

**As of September 2023*

***No crushed rock roads were scored higher than fair.*

Existing Road Conditions in Bennet, NE



Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Student Surveys

Existing Conditions:

Walkability

Excellent

This sidewalk has great tree canopy coverage, full compliance with ADA, crosswalks, and is extremely safe for all users of the sidewalk.

Good

This sidewalk has a decent amount of tree coverage and follows ADA compliance requirements.

Fair

The sidewalk is well-connected, has a limited tree canopy coverage, and some compliance with ADA. Safety issues may persist, but to a lesser degree.

Poor

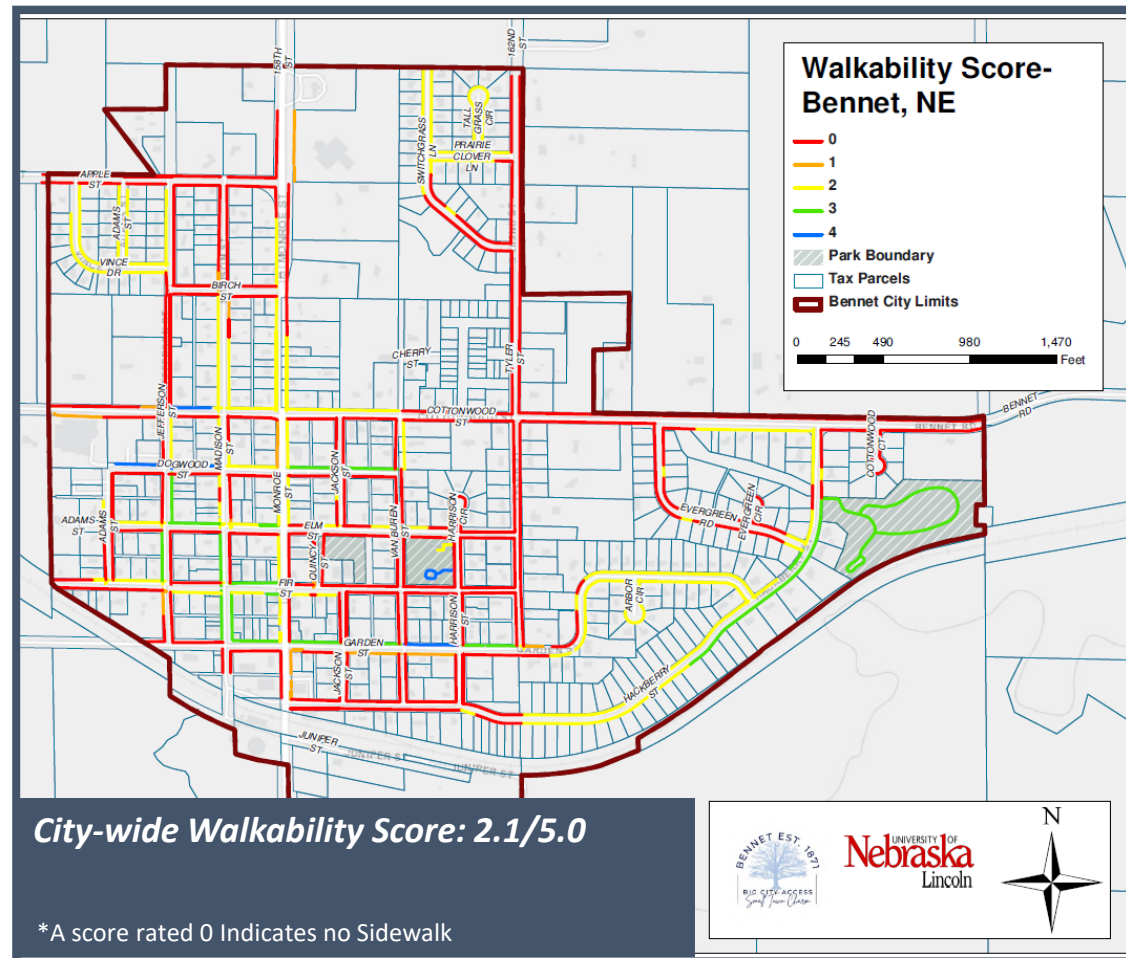
Similar to very poor except there may be less issues with disrepair. The sidewalk is disconnected to the rest of the network. Safety is an issue and limited tree canopy coverage. ADA compliance is lacking.

Very Poor

The sidewalk has limited tree cover, poor ADA compliance, and is in disrepair, while also not being connected to the rest of Bennet's sidewalk network. The sidewalk does not appear to be safe for pedestrians.

**As of September 2023*

Walkability in Bennet, NE



Source: Map created by CRPL 990, Matt Bolander

Existing Conditions: Physical Conditions

Buildings

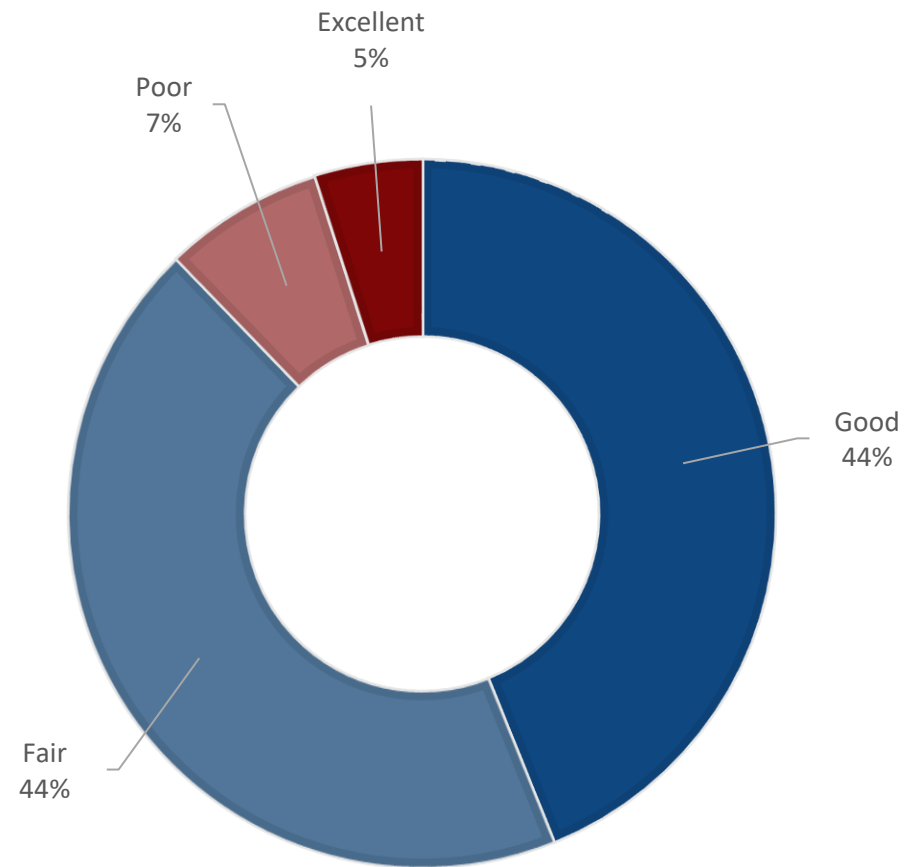
Conditions of buildings were rated based on 5 categories: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Very Poor.

Ratings were based on objective standards that include factors such as regular wear and tear and age of structure.

Only buildings within the Proposed Downtown area were included in the building conditions survey (See Building Conditions Report).

**As of September 2023*

Figure 3.3: Condition Of Buildings In
Downtown Bennet



Source: Analysis by CRPL 990, Matt Bolander

Existing Conditions

Parks Introduction

Platted in 1871, Bennet was sited as a condition for the sale of a right-of-way to a railroad company running track along the little Nemaha River and was officially incorporated ten years later. A flourishing agricultural town, by 1900 Bennet had a population of 500 residents and supported a local economy comprised of a variety of businesses: general and hardware stores, construction supply stores, pharmacies, banks, hotels, pool halls, a railroad station, and an opera house. In 1910 the centrally located Bennet Park received a gazebo—hosting band performances and wedding ceremonies over the next hundred years. The gazebo remains a focal point of the park to this day. After experiencing a decline in its population and number of available institutions in the middle of the 20th century, Bennet is now looking to reestablish its vital downtown zone.

The existing core of Bennet is home to a number of locally owned commercial operations, including enterprises from retail and food service to manufacturing and light industry. All of these existing purposes are seen as assets, and planned improvements look to support and further promote these uses. Large employers in and near Bennet also include “...First Nebraska Bank, Bennet-Palmyra Public Schools District OR-1, Zermatt Tool, Midwest Farmers Cooperative and Vasa Construction.” As will be discussed further in the following sections on suggested improvements to the built environment, continued emphasis should be put on agriculture and industry as economic and aesthetic touchstones.

Historic photo of Bennet in 1916



Source: Bennet in 1916, archival photograph, History Nebraska

Existing Conditions:

Bennet Parks

Bennet has two parks: Bennet Park and Whispering Pines Park.

Currently there are no sidewalk connections on any sides of Bennet Park.

There are sidewalks along Whispering Pines Park, but they do not connect to the rest of Bennet very easily and have limited tree coverage.

The splash pad at Bennet Park is an excellent feature that attracts many people to the community.

Bennet has many trees located within the public right-of-way and parks. Many of these trees are showing signs of disease and have been improperly pruned with a method known as topping (typically done for utility clearances).



Source: Bennet Park, City of Bennet

Existing Conditions: Cultural and Social

During a community planning open house in March 2019, the main business and service needs identified were a coffee shop, a convenience store, as well as a childcare facility. Similar needs were expressed at a subsequent event in October 2023.

Residents also expressed a need for more public facilities and recreational opportunities. Examples of desired public spaces and opportunities include a senior/retirement community center; a new location for the Bennet Area Historical Society that would include a library, museum and genealogy space; greater use of existing elementary school facility infrastructure; a public walking trail that would connect parks, facilities, schools, neighborhoods and the downtown area; and a swimming pool.

Current park facilities include two public parks, ballfields and a splash pad. However, the splash pad has a design issue that has frequently prevented access.

Although Bennet does not have a public library, there is a library in nearby Palmyra, where a new city library is currently being built. In addition, the Lincoln City Libraries' Lied Bookmobile Program provides service to Bennet and can process requests for items not usually carried. Service is provided twice per month at the Community Church.



Source: Mobile Library, Lincoln City Libraries

Existing Conditions: Bennet Parks

| Park Unit | Number of Trees | Total Acreage | Park Amenities |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------|--|
| Whispering Pines Park | 23 | 7.4 | Disc Golf Course, Walking Loop |
| Bennet Park | 35 | 1.6 | Gazebo, Shelter, Playground, Splashpad |

Source: City of Lincoln Aerial Imagery and University of Nebraska-Lincoln Student Surveys



Existing Conditions: Cultural and Social

A local business currently sponsors a fall festival, Fallidays. However, it is challenging for a small business to be the sole sponsor of, and completely responsible for, this event. Other community events have included a car show during 4th of July celebrations, as well as Clean Up Day and Shredding Day.

The American Legion Hall (970 Monroe Street) serves as the polling location for the City of Bennet, as well as the Bennet Senior Center. Programming includes educational programs, music programs, games, cards, social opportunities, as well as occasional trips to Lincoln and the surrounding areas to attend cultural and other events. The American Legion building is also used for other events and activities throughout the year, and offers community space for public meetings and large gatherings.

Bennet will possibly become an associate member of the Heritage, Nebraska Main Street program. This program helps with creating a more attractive and sustainable downtown, as well as preserving historically significant structures and sites. Bennet may also seek designation as a certified local government through the Nebraska State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) to preserve its historical resources. Of special significance is a mural on a building at 380 Fir Street that depicts the history of and various elements of Bennet.



Source: Top is from the American Legion Post 280 Facebook page; bottom is from Planning Team

Existing Conditions

Cultural and Social

Bennet residents have the “best of both worlds” in that they can easily access the employment, shopping, recreation and entertainment options that Lincoln offers while enjoying the advantages of living in a small, quiet town.

Bennet residents would like new and expanded commercial and entertainment facilities in the downtown area, as well as along the Highway 2 and 43 corridors, north and south of the corporate limits.

Other priorities include pedestrian safety (e.g., updated crosswalk infrastructure or school crossing guard), property clean-up and nuisance abatement, and housing (51% of Citizen Survey participants indicated that the northern portions of Bennet would be the preferred location for future residential development). Some aesthetic improvements residents would like to see include building façade improvements, especially downtown, housing rehabilitation, junk vehicle removal, as well as benches, street trees, street lighting, curb cuts and other features along the Highway 43 corridor.



Above: Examples of potential businesses in Bennet



Source: Top three are royalty-free images from Pixabay; bottom is from City of Bennet

A sepia-toned photograph of a large, two-story industrial building, likely a mill, with a prominent chimney and a large wooden structure in the foreground. The building has a gabled roof and several windows. A tall, narrow chimney is visible on the right side. In the foreground, there is a large wooden structure, possibly a conveyor or part of the mill's machinery. The overall scene is industrial and historical.

Chapter 4: Downtown Vision and Goals

Bennet Circa 1880 – Altamaha Mills ca.

Vision Statement Creation: Bennet Downtown Economic Development Plan

The vision statement was shaped by extensive input from community members, and in-depth analysis by the planning team. The vision statement is rooted in the collective aspirations of the Bennet community.

The Downtown Economic Development Plan envisions cultivating a downtown space that preserves and enhances Bennet's unique, small-town atmosphere. The efforts can focus on fostering a community where people respect and care for one another, creating a vibrant business community that supports well-planned growth.

The plan is dedicated to elevating the quality of life for residents by prioritizing infrastructure improvements and providing diverse recreational opportunities. Throughout this process, we remain committed to safeguarding the natural beauty of the environment, ensuring a harmonious blend of progress and preservation.

As we envision the future of downtown Bennet, we are dedicated to promoting quality education and upholding multigenerational family values. By weaving these elements into the fabric of our development plan, we strive to create a downtown that not only meets the economic needs of the community but also enhances its social fabric, contributing to a flourishing and interconnected town.

Bennet Residents Participate in Community Open House Event



Source: UNL Planning Team

Vision Statement

The City of Bennet's Vision Statement

Protect and build on our unique, small-town atmosphere through people who respect and care for one another. **Support** well-planned growth and a vibrant business community. **Seek to enhance** quality of life by improving infrastructure and creating a variety of recreational opportunities, while maintaining the natural beauty of our environment. **Promote** quality education and multigenerational family values.

Vision Statement for Bennet Downtown Economic Development

Aligned with Bennet's vision, this Downtown Economic Development Plan aspires to uphold small-town charm, nurturing a community where respect and care take root. *We envision a **dynamic business hub** that fosters **well-planned growth** while elevating the quality of life through **enhanced infrastructure** and a range of recreational opportunities. Our commitment extends to preserving the natural beauty of the environment, advocating for **community placemaking**, quality education, and embracing multigenerational family values.* This vision charts the course for a downtown that addresses economic needs, enriches social fabric, and contributes to a flourishing community.



Source: UNL Planning Team

How the community of Bennet envisions its future.



Vision

What the community would like to accomplish together. Goals are broad statements which tend to be long-term in nature.



Goals

How to accomplish Bennet's goals. The actions represent specific activities that can be applied, some achievable in the near-term and some may require more time and planning.



Recommended
Actions



Bennet Downtown Economic Development Plan

Vision, Goals, and Recommendations

Aligned with Bennet's vision, this Downtown Economic Development Plan aspires to uphold small-town charm, nurturing a community where respect and care take root. *We envision a **dynamic business hub** that fosters **well-planned growth** while elevating the quality of life through **enhanced infrastructure** and a range of recreational opportunities. Our commitment extends to preserving the natural beauty of the environment, advocating for **community placemaking**, quality education, and embracing multigenerational family values.* This vision charts the course for a downtown that addresses economic needs, enriches social fabric, and contributes to a flourishing community.

The following goals and actions were crafted to establish a downtown corridor and promote economic development in Bennet. Input provided by community survey participants and stakeholders involved in the planning process helped to formulate these goals.

1 Improve the Built Environment

- 1.1 Beautification
- 1.2 Connectivity
- 1.3 Infrastructure

2 Promote Economic Development

- 2.1 Promote local business and revenue
- 2.2 Expand services offered
- 2.3 Develop education & workforce programs

3 Facilitate Community Placemaking

- 3.1 Enhance civic engagement
- 3.2 Activate indoor and outdoor open spaces
- 3.3 Promote downtown activities

4 Achieve Well-Planned Growth

- 4.1 Integrate with Comprehensive Plan
- 4.2 Adopt city-wide planning guidelines
- 4.3 Coordinate with Regional Plan

Goal #1: Improve the Built Environment

Recommended Actions

| 1.1 Beautification | 1.2 Connectivity | 1.3 Infrastructure |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Streetscaping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perennials, annuals Shrubs Lighting Traffic signs Curb changes Crosswalks <p>Increase tree canopy coverage</p> <p>Incorporate benches and seating</p> | <p>Walkability and safety</p> <p>ADA compliant crossings</p> <p>Wayfinding signage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrance to Bennet Downtown/Business District Parks Trails Local business amenities | <p>Improve sidewalk conditions</p> <p>Water, broadband and utilities</p> <p>Street lighting</p> <p>Eliminate safety hazards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow traffic along Highway 43 Traffic calming devices Crosswalks Crossing signals |

Goal #2: Promote Economic Development

Recommended Actions

| 2.1 Promote Local Business | 2.2 Expand Services Offered | 2.3 Develop Education & Workforce Programs |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Become a Leadership Certified Community (LCC) - NE Dept. of Economic Development</p> <p>Establish Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Develop branding, strategic advertising</p> <p>Collaborate with Nebraska Business Development Center</p> <p>Enhance gateways</p> | <p>Daycare</p> <p>Restaurant</p> <p>Bookstore/print shop</p> <p>Art gallery/workshop</p> <p>Coffee shop, bakery</p> <p>Grocery store</p> <p>Versatile/multi-purpose</p> <p>Capture through-traffic business potential</p> | <p>Local workforce training and education</p> <p>Digital access</p> <p>Trades</p> <p>Internships</p> <p>"Developing Youth Talent Initiative" (DYTI) - NE Dept. of Economic Development</p> |

Goal #3: Facilitate Community Placemaking

Recommended Actions

3.1 Enhance Civic Engagement

Multi-generational amenities

Expanded senior programs

Volunteer groups

Community center

Develop event space

Leverage community-building potential of businesses

3.2 Activate Indoor and Outdoor Open Spaces

Improve park amenities

Establish trails connecting parks

Tree planting

Interpretive signage

Mobile/Innovative businesses that contribute to placemaking

3.3 Promote Downtown Activities

Business events

Car show

Fall festival

Farmers' market

Seasonal activities

Celebration of Bennet's founding day (July 29)

Goal #4: Achieve Well-Planned Growth

Recommended Actions

4.1 Integrate with City Comprehensive Plan

Integrate downtown economic development plan into overall comprehensive plan

Review growth plan and infrastructure needs

Merge capital improvements projects (roads, sidewalks) with broadband service expansion in right-of-way

4.2 Adopt and Implement City-Wide Design Guidelines

Building facades

Sidewalk standards in front of businesses

Signage and lighting for businesses

Pedestrian lighting along corridor

Review peer cities' standards and guidelines

4.3 Coordinate with Regional Plan

Lancaster County

City/County comprehensive plan

Long-range transportation plan

Southeast Nebraska Economic Development District (SEND)D

Lower Platte South NRD


Hazard Mitigation Plan

Trails

Watershed/Stormwater Plan

Nebraska Department of Transportation (DOT)

Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)



Chapter 5: Key Recommendations

Bennet, NE – Citizen's Bank Building

Recommendation 1: Improve the Built Environment

Introduction

The Development of Public Spaces and the Expansion of Social Horizons

This plan serves to develop a vibrant downtown area, emphasizing the importance of community activity. The planned enhancements to Bennet's public spaces are understood as investments in not just infrastructure, but in civic life as well. The broad design intent of the following improvements is to provide support for a sincere and lively downtown space. As previously noted, the historic core of Bennet has been chosen as the target of these improvements: this zone begins at the western edge of town north of Garden Street, doglegs across Fir Street at Highway 43, and then ends at the eastern end of Bennet Park. This area has been selected for its central geography as well as its existing buildings and institutions.



Source: Bennet, digital photographs, Mason Herrman

Recommendation 1.1: Improve the Built Environment

Beautification of Streetscapes

The designers have recommended the addition of an entry archway to Bennet's streetscape. An archway would serve as a welcoming visible cue—communicating a change of place that would naturally slow incoming traffic.

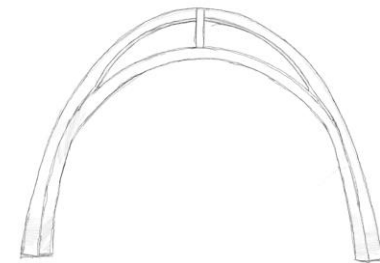
At the open house with the stakeholders of Bennet, two entryway-arch concepts performed well, the former being particularly well received. A third concept design of a more abstract arch—pared down, and without any writing—performed poorly. The design for the arch was based on the light-industrial character of downtown Bennet that the designers and authors of this document are looking to retain. The arches are conceived as being built from bent, welded, and bolted I beams that could be painted, left to patina, or a combination of both. The third arch mentioned earlier was proposed as being made of Corten steel (a steel that achieves a rust-colored patina but then stabilizes), but it was interpreted that this design performed poorly for reasons other than its proposed building material or finish.



Source: Potential archway no. 1, computer-assisted concept art, MC Raterman



Source: Potential archway no. 2, computer-assisted concept art, MC Raterman



Source: Potential archway no. 3, digital sketch, MC Raterman

Recommendation 1.1: Improve the Built Environment

Beautification of Streetscapes

Along with the form of the arch itself, the font for the attached signage was chosen to convey Bennet's industrial personality. Grain silos and corrugated metal buildings govern the aesthetic, and within this plan's proposed downtown area are welding shops and a trucking firm. The font matches the signage for the trucking firm pictured, Nebraska Bulk Transports, but also has a built-in technical look to it.

Though worded signage appeared to perform well at the community open house, the designers do not see it as an absolute necessity in the case of the arch. General signage for the purpose of navigation should be developed, along with improved transportation signage. The lettering of these signs could easily be made to coordinate with the industrial, technical, and 'machine-lettered' look that has been proposed during the open house event.



Source: Nebraska Bulk Transports, photograph, MC Raterman

NEBRASKA
BULK
TRANSPORTS, INC

Source: Nebraska Bulk Transports Signage, digital recreation

Recommendation 1.1: Improve the Built Environment

Beautification of Streetscapes

These industrial characteristics are the foundation of the designers' aesthetic choices, and it is highly recommended that this style be retained in Bennet. This design direction was not chosen simply as 'a look'—the authors of the document recommend the continued cooperation with light industry in the Downtown area and recommend against attempts to push these facilities out of the core of town. Retaining this light industry will set Bennet apart from Lincoln's suburbs and bedroom communities and provide visual interest through the industries' unique structures and activities, and maintain an economic base regardless of the proposed downtown area's success as a retail or service based commercial zone.



Source: Fictional 'Bennet Welding Supply', suggested aesthetic direction, manipulated photograph, MC Raterman



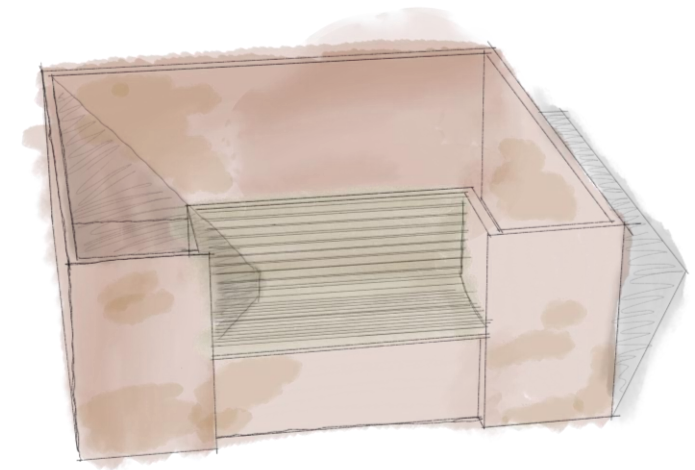
Source: Frontier Co-Op, suggested aesthetic direction, manipulated photograph, Mason Herrman and MC Raterman

Recommendation 1.1: Improve the Built Environment

Streetscape Furniture

The designers recommend the use of Corten steel in conjunction with wood boards to construct or otherwise source streetscape amenities and furniture. The use and combination of these materials was initially inspired by Bennet’s resident welding shops and wood-working shops. These material choices not only complement an industrial look—through the steel’s naturally occurring rust-colored patina—but also serve as an appropriate transition into the naturalistic look that the recommended native plant materials will hold. Outdoor furniture, by virtue of the utilization of these materials, will be durable and straight-forward to maintain.

The following pages demonstrate a number of additional possibilities for the use of Corten steel in planters, laser cut decorative motifs, a fire pit, and so on.



Source: Corten steel planter with built-in bench, digital sketch, MC Raterman



Source: Corten steel seating and surface item, manipulated photograph, MC Raterman

Recommendation 1.2: Improve the Built Environment Connectivity

Roads

Well-maintained roads are important for providing economic links to Bennet. The new Lincoln South Beltway will bring traffic past Bennet and can also help to improve mobility to the city. The highway will also bring growth around the interchanges that has potential to impact Bennet in the coming years.

Building streets on a traditional grid pattern (composed of through streets and intersections) rather than on a contemporary curvilinear street pattern (composed of winding roads, branches and cul-de-sacs) promotes more compact and walkable development that can help to build a sense of community. The authors of the document recommend that the community of Bennet emphasize infill development in the parts of town already laid out in a grid pattern, and new street construction far more connected than 'winding' or 'meandering.'

Traditional Grid Street Network



Meandering Street Network



Source: ESRI Imagery Basemap, Top Maryville, MO and Bottom Ozark, MO

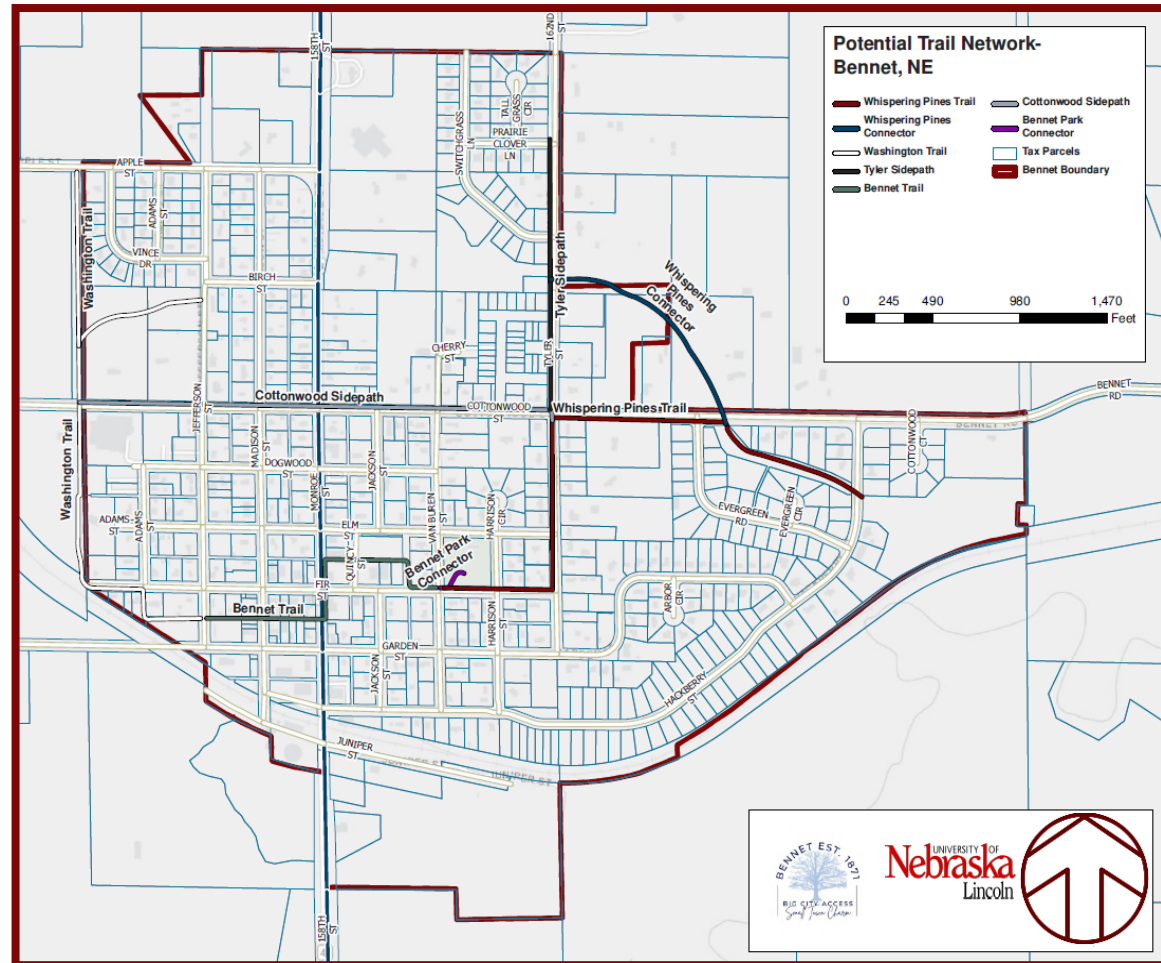
Recommendation 1.2: Improve the Built Environment Connectivity

Potential Trail Network

Trails have an important link to quality of life. The presence of trails in a community can provide improvements in mental, physical, and the social health of residents. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has identified that a goal for recreation should be to connect existing amenities with trails. Trails are an attractive amenity for visitors and residents alike, and can help create a marketable asset for the City of Bennet.

Citizens of Bennet have indicated that trails are an important connecting feature for the city. According to J.J. Yost, of the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department, "At least recently, construction costs to purchasing the land, to pour the concrete, we see that as just a little over \$300,000 a mile in total."

Potential Trail Network: Bennet, NE



Source: Map created by CRPL 990, Matt Bolander

Case Study: Trails in West Point, NE



Source: City of West Point, NE

West Point, NE has a population of around 4,000 residents and has created a system of trails across their community. Partnerships with business and land-owners were made, and there was an exhaustive public engagement campaign. Almost all trails were constructed with private funds donated to the city. Bennet can implement a Bennet Trails Partnership to help raise awareness of the importance of trails and to help oversee their construction and maintenance. The Lower Platte South NRD, Lancaster County, and Lincoln Parks and Recreation should be priority partners.

Recommendation 1.2: Improve the Built Environment Connectivity

Wayfinding and Signage

Wayfinding is defined as the "the process or activity of learning one's position and planning and following a route." Typically, in a city, this means trails will have signs and maps that are marked by color codes known as blazes to indicate route location (i.e., Great Plains Trail Network).

Well-designed and well-built entrances, as well as park signs, can help give visitors and residents a good first impression of Bennet. The City of Bennet logo should be incorporated into sign design.



Source: Wayfinding Example, Parvin-Clauss Sign Co

Recommendation 1.3: Improve the Built Environment Infrastructure

Water, Broadband, and Utilities

Utilities were a main concern cited at the community open house. The need for improved broadband internet was expressed, and significantly, water supply and quality was the major concern.

Drinking water in the City of Bennet is provided by Lancaster County Rural Water District No. 1 through their managed wells and pumps. According to Hanna:Keelan Associates, in their 2019 Comprehensive Plan, streams and surface drainage only account “...for a small percentage of the water resources in...” Bennet’s planning jurisdiction and the city relies heavily on Rural Water “...to supply municipal water to the Community”.

Stormwater runoff drains south and southeast of Bennet, into (among other drainageways) the Little Nemaha River. Runoff drains primarily directly off the city’s impervious coverage, but stormwater drains exist in areas of new development.

Though current flood protection is limited, Bennet’s downtown has been designated accordingly and avoids potential floodways. Whispering Pines Park is home to one of Bennet’s creeks, and water swells through open tracts of the park during flood events.



Source: Google Maps, City of Bennet

Recommendation 1.3: Improve the Built Environment Infrastructure

Streetscaping and Traffic

Many community members expressed a desire to create safe crossings across the highway, to encourage school children's safety. This goal could be achieved with improved intersection geometry, traffic calming, signalization, or grade-separated crossings

The community appears to be in agreement about finding ways to minimize Highway 43 as a barrier. Improvements that received positive reactions included signalization at Fir or Garden Streets, reduced crossing widths via pedestrian bump outs, or even a pedestrian overpass, while traffic circles (roundabouts) were expressly rejected. Finding ways to connect the downtown area effectively with the rest of Bennet remains a priority.

In addition to addressing Highway 43, the desire for intersection improvements at Jefferson and Cottonwood Street were expressed; these improvements would create safer access between the school and the potential water tower park (Cottonwood Park). Overall, there is a strong sentiment for the improvement and expansion of sidewalks.



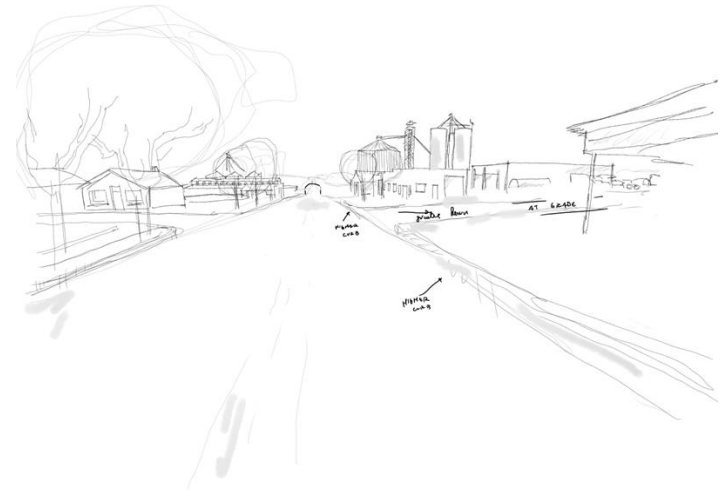
Source: Photos by Kyle McLaughlin

Recommendation 1.3: Improve the Built Environment Infrastructure

Streetscaping and Traffic

The developed streetscaping plan has two primary ambitions: one, to signal a change in spatial organization; and two, to organically slow traffic moving along Nebraska State Highway 43 (Monroe Street.) Increased pedestrian safety and an improvement in subjective walking experiences are anticipated to follow naturally from these ambitions. Special care has been taken to consider the Nebraska Department of Transportation's recommendations and guidelines for the proper treatment of highways.

The strategic addition of at-grade sidewalks in certain areas of downtown could achieve a number of positive results. At-grade sidewalks remove the need for curb cuts and can allow easy entry for trucks into designated yards, while at the same time, slowing local automobile traffic in the interior downtown circuit.



Source: Early streetscaping concepts, digital sketch, MC Raterman



Source: Early streetscaping concepts, digital sketch, MC Raterman

Recommendation 1.3: Improve the Built Environment Infrastructure - Streetscapes

Streetscaping is the combination of natural elements such as perennials, annuals, trees, and shrubs with hardscape features such as traffic signs, lighting, curb changes, crosswalks, and other amenities such as benches. The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and the Nebraska Forest Service are great resources for developing and designing community green spaces. They have a combined team of professionals who know how to identify the best fit for your maintenance staff and help create spaces fit for your community. The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum offers a variety of guides on their website at plantnebraska.org. Grant programs and other services they provide can also be found there.

Street Trees



Why Plant Trees Along the Street?

Trees provide a multitude of environmental, social and economic benefits that encourage the long term success of a community. Trees are low-cost infrastructure that help create a sense of space and create shelter in neighborhoods and business districts.

Trees improve public safety by contributing to the perception of quality of life and community investment. Many street trees stand between pedestrians and moving traffic, providing real and perceived safety from vehicles.

Trees improve the efficiency and lifespan of built infrastructure by providing shelter from the wind and sun. Shade from street trees can lower heating and cooling costs by 20-50% (USDA Forest Service). The concrete and asphalt on a shaded street has an average life span 60% longer than those left exposed to UV rays (WALC Institute).

Planning for Street Trees

Trees come in all shapes and sizes, fitting the right species with the right planting sight is critical in creating sustainable, functional streetscapes. There are many wonderful tree species that have a place in our towns but not every species will work in every situation. We want trees to reach their mature size to provide the maximum benefits. If a site is too limiting for a large shade tree, then we should consider a medium size tree. Limiting factors such as soil volume, utility lines, lights, building signage, and awnings are important to consider when selecting the right tree.

What is a Street Tree

A street tree is any tree that stands within 15 to 20 feet of the edge of a road or parking lot, the space where public and private use blend. These trees provide many benefits to the street, streetside parking, sidewalk, and improve the aesthetics of the lane. Not all street trees sit in the right-of-way between sidewalk and road.

Source: Nebraska Statewide Arboretum

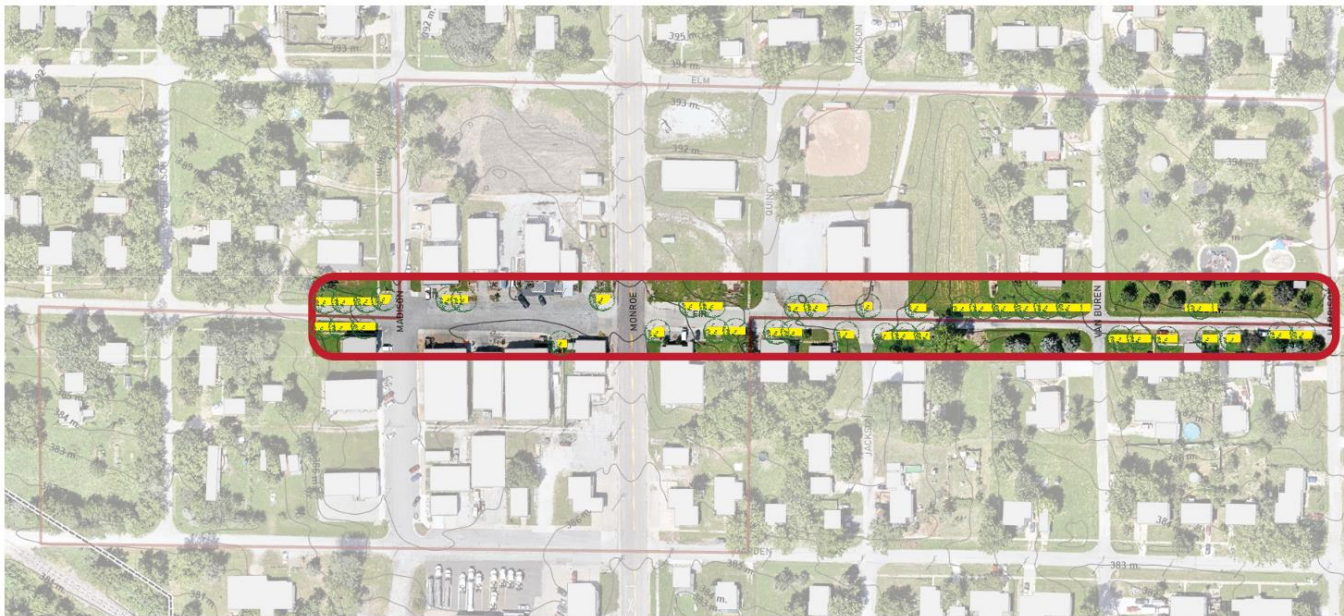
Recommendation 1.3: Improve the Built Environment

Infrastructure - Streetscapes

Looking at Fir Street to the right, the red outlined area is the section of road that connects the park to the Fire Hall to the west end of businesses. Rather than going with the highway, this option crosses over the highway. This allows for more flexibility in what is allowed along the streets.

The yellow highlighted areas identify spaces that could potentially incorporate streetscaping with trees, perennials, lighting, signage, safe walkways, and possibly benches.

Lining a street, across multiple blocks, with similar characteristics creates a visual connection and a sense of unity. It is important to use the same planting style, especially on the intersections between blocks to show the connectivity and continuity in the area. If there is an opportunity to incorporate plantings mid-block, then that would strengthen the visual connectivity.



Recommendation 1.3: Improve the Built Environment

Infrastructure - Streetscapes

Change to the built environment provides the opportunity to incorporate trees into the plan from the beginning. Many times, trees are viewed as the icing on the cake and are thought of last. Trees offer the same value as other infrastructure such as lighting and signage. It is best to work trees into the design during the beginning stages to ensure that trees are given the proper amount of soil volume and are placed appropriately where they will not interfere with the built environment. Selecting the right tree for the location is just as important, and your community forestry team with the Nebraska Forest Service can help.

Streetscaping does not have to be elaborate; many Nebraska Communities have been able to incorporate small-scale projects where tired concrete has been removed creating an opportunity to place some natural green textures to soften the surrounding hardscape. People are more likely to pause and wander under a tree canopy than they are in an open concrete lot. Also, people prefer to park in the shade, or potentially arrive early to sit in the shade for a parade or car show. Even if it is one or two trees per block, a few trees are better than none; however, more tree canopy coverage is preferred. Green, vibrant life also reflects a town's vitality. One of the first things noticed as one enters a community is if there are many dead trees and a thinning canopy, indicating the infrastructure is not well cared for, versus a robust green canopy indicating people care about the environment around them and invest in their community.

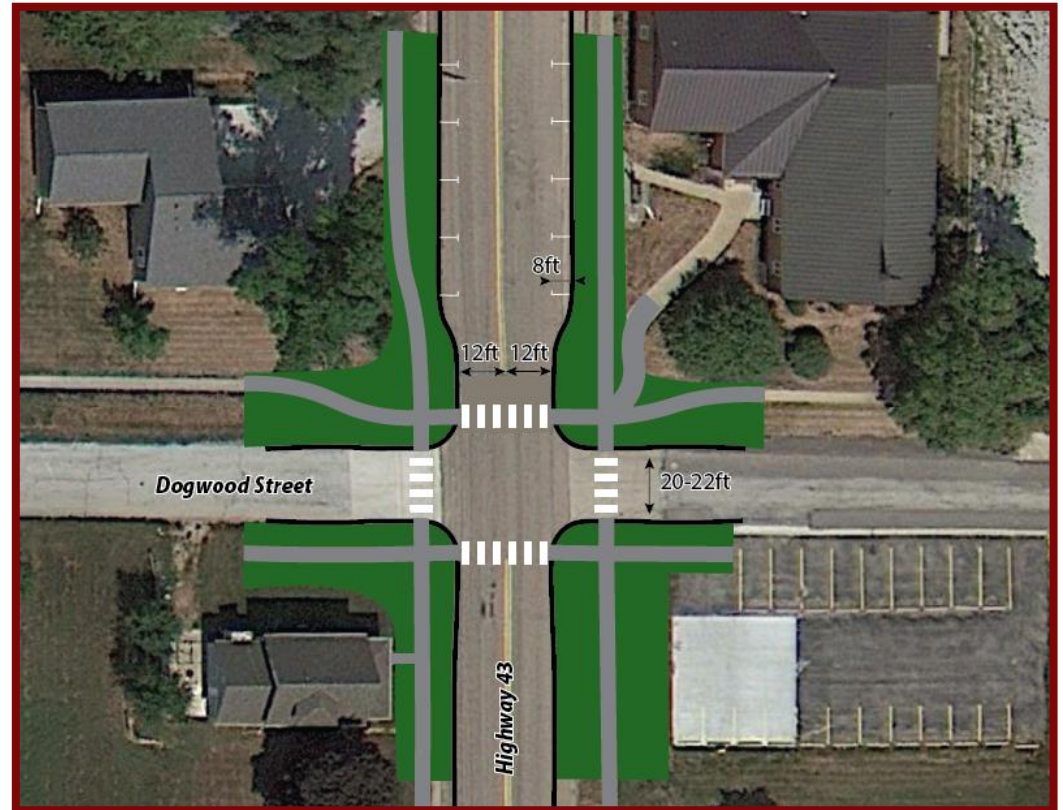


Source: Scottsbluff NE, digital photographs, Chrissy Land

Recommendation 1.3: Improve the Built Environment Infrastructure - Streetscapes

Many intersections around the city could benefit from crosswalk improvements. In particular, many intersections along Highway 43 can be considered top candidates for redesign and reconstruction to link downtown on the east and west sides of Highway 43. Currently, no parking is allowed south of Dogwood Street, and there is limited streetscaping, both of which encourage faster speeds. The concept image suggests curb bump outs with marked parking stalls and designated crosswalk stripes. The bump outs also reduce the road width of the intersection. These design changes would reduce crossing length for pedestrians, slow down traffic, improve pedestrian visibility, and increase the usability of the downtown space.

Recommended Intersection Improvements at Highway 43 And Dogwood Street



Source: Computer-generated image by Kyle McLaughlin

Case Study: Scottsbluff, NE Downtown Streetscaping



The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum's work in Scottsbluff, NE serves as a good example of what is possible for the City of Bennet.

The top option shows downtown Scottsbluff, NE where larger bump outs were installed at the end of the parking lanes. These bump outs have enough room to support large shade trees at their mature height and width. The bottom image displays ways to incorporate individual tree planters, typically a space with a minimum 8' width X 8' length to support large trees. Concrete can be removed and dead soil can be replaced with living soil, to support trees in their long-term mature stages. Trees should reach their full potential when they are providing the most area of shade. If the trees do not have enough room to begin with, they are unlikely to last after 30-40 years, when their growth begins to conflict with the hardscape around them.

Recommendation 1.3: Improve the Built Environment

Infrastructure - Streetscapes

Incorporating planters at the corners of intersections has proved to be a successful approach in Scottsbluff, Valentine and Chappell, NE. The above and below images demonstrate plantings incorporated as elements of the pedestrian right-of-way. Using low-input native perennial plants and grasses can break up the monotony of the concrete curb lines and can also invite pedestrians to occupy the sidewalk for pleasure. The bottom image performed particularly well at the open house event, signaling interest in streetscaping being paired with public amenities such as benches and trash receptacles.

This landscape design can surely bring a cozy and attractive downtown feel to Bennet. The interest shown in beautifying downtown with similar planters in Bennet did receive favor, and if executed properly, would bring great pride to the community. The more people feel proud of their downtown area, the more they will frequent it. Additionally, if Bennet were to incorporate unique plants, it would attract out of town enthusiasts.

Overall, it is important to create environments that encourage people to pause and wander. With a natural feel, buffers and resting places can draw people into the downtown area and encourage them to stay long enough to look at the surrounding businesses and become more familiar with available services. Keeping a cohesive appearance from one intersection to the next clearly communicates the connectivity of spaces throughout the downtown area.



Source: Scottsbluff NE, digital photographs, Chrissy Land

Recommendation 1.3: Improve the Built Environment

Infrastructure: Street Lighting

The concept of adding lighting to Bennet’s downtown—including pedestrian-focused lighting—performed well in the open house.

Lighting is essential for extending the vibrancy of a public space into the early mornings and evenings, especially in winter months. Not only does lighting make a place feel safer and more welcoming, lighting also contributes greatly to the navigability and mood (perhaps best described as the ‘wayfinding’) of a public space.

Lighting design concepts are aimed at retaining the industrial feel of downtown, resembling classic interior lighting fixtures of factories. These concepts were all designed with the intent of minimizing light pollution. Though the hooded design of these fixtures will produce some glare, they will also hopefully create an attractive pool of light below them; the light-bulbs themselves should be warm-toned and dimmer than other traditional street fixtures.

The authors recommend styling these fixtures as sconces or pendants as well.



Source: Potential streetlamps, computer-assisted concept art, MC Raterman



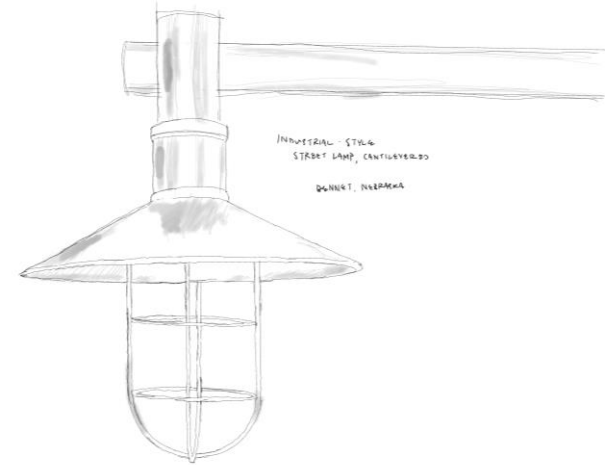
Source: Potential streetlamp look, digital photograph

Recommendation 1.3: Improve the Built Environment

Infrastructure: Park Lighting

The authors of the document suggest that creating park spaces that are vital day and night will contribute to a lively downtown in Bennet; ensuring that Bennet's public spaces are welcoming around the clock creates an atmosphere of safety and community participation. Establishing this atmosphere in Bennet's public spaces supports a positive experience for residents and visitors alike.

Numerous works of concept art depicting parks at sunset and night were displayed at the community open house; images were met with a neutral or positive response, and the image displayed on the right performed particularly well. The authors interpret this to mean that communal spaces in Bennet would benefit from plentiful but warm evening lighting; this lighting would be especially welcome if it centered around a nexus with landscaping and public amenities.



Source: Hooded light, digital sketch, MC Raterman



Source: Park lighting, computer-assisted concept art, DALL-E 3 and MC Raterman

Recommendation 2.1: Promote Economic Development

Promote Local Business and Revenue

Assistance from SENDD may be available for taking steps towards establishing a successful chamber of commerce, as well as from the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) for economic development in general. The Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) has offices throughout Nebraska, including Lincoln, and offers various services that support businesses and help them grow. The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is one such resource, specifically aimed at starting and growing small businesses in Nebraska. It offers confidential consulting with credentialed business advisers, among other services, at no or low cost.

Ideally, with the arrival of fiber optic internet service in the near future, business growth will be facilitated.



Source: Nebraska Business Development Center

Recommendation 2.1: Promote Economic Development

Promote Local Business and Revenue

Establishing a Chamber of Commerce

Forming a chamber of commerce can be an important first step in increasing the involvement of businesses in the community, as well as community engagement with businesses. At an October 10, 2023, open house event held at the American Legion Hall, stakeholders expressed interest in establishing a chamber of commerce. Chambers of commerce can help create a sense of community among their members, and provide benefits for them, resulting in both business and community improvement. Businesses, organizations, and even individuals can all join a chamber of commerce. It is essential to create a mission statement before even recruiting members, in order to establish clarity in setting goals and how to achieve them. A mission statement explains what the chamber will focus on, who it will serve, and what its goals will be.



Source: Heimwerker Haus Facebook page

Recommendation 2.1: Promote Economic Development

Promote Local Business and Revenue

There are advantages to joining a smaller chamber of commerce, such as affordability; the opportunity to get to know other members better, especially through Ambassador committees who work to make new members feel welcome; convenience; and visibility. In order to be successful, a chamber of commerce must hold events that are beneficial for its members and enable relationship building.

A good example of a business association website in a small town is that of Ogden Legacy, located in Ogden, Iowa.



Source: Top is from MembershipWorks; bottom is from Generations Photography and Specialty Gift Shoppe, Beaver, PA

Case Study: Ogden, IA Business Association

2021 Priorities:

1. Create opportunities for housing along with programs focused on the visual attractiveness of residential areas.
2. Encourage new business, existing business expansion, and the improvement of the downtown area.
3. Increase quality of life through recreational and community activities.
4. Promotion, marketing, planning, and development of our committees and programs.

What we've done:

- Since 2010, we granted \$25,725 toward revitalization of downtown buildings through the Store Front Fix Up Grant.
- Since 2010, we granted \$80,924 to help families with home improvements through the Annual Housing Fix Up Grant offered to homeowners.
- Raised funds to build a clinic in downtown Ogden that is now owned by Boone County Family Medicine.
- Created a revolving loan with Ogden Municipal Utilities to help fund those wanting to begin business and create jobs in Ogden
- Purchased new "Ogden" signs, welcoming those driving into town

Committees:

- Signage Committee
 - Contact: Lori Anderson (andy5@netins.net)
- Housing Committee
 - Contact: Matt Van Sickle (mattyjvs@yahoo.com)
- Promotions and Marketing Committee
 - Contact: Mary Bergstrom (BergstromMaryA@johndeere.com)

Ogden Legacy

Vision: "Promoting economic, industrial, professional, and community welfare for Ogden."

Mission: "Ogden will be a destination to live, work, and play, resulting in population growth, balanced economic growth, and increased quality of life for its residents."

How to get involved:

If you would like to get involved with Ogden Legacy and/or any of its committees, please contact Craig Christensen (craiger@netins.net).

Follow Ogden Legacy on Facebook!

Business Assistance/Storefront Grant

The purpose of the Ogden Legacy Business Assistance/Storefront Grant program is to improve/expand existing businesses, attract new businesses, increase building values, and improve the general appearance of the downtown district.

Eligible projects include renovation or construction of an awning or a sign, construction, renovation, or improvement of a building storefront, demolition or cleanup of an existing building in the Ogden Business District.

The Ogden Legacy Business Assistance/Storefront Grant program will pay seventy-five percent (75%) of the total qualifying project costs up to a maximum of \$2,500 per project.
Ogden Legacy Business Assistance Storefront Grant

Recommendation 2.1: Promote Economic Development

Promote Local Business and Revenue

Businesses can be used as activity areas for kids and others who want to learn how to garden, providing an opportunity to learn how to grow food. This would attract folks from the overall region who want a small town feel that is close by. Light shows can be projected onto buildings and houses during the holiday season. This would attract tourism from residents, locals, and regional towns. Advertising for local events should be sought out. A classic car show would bring revenue and tourism to the city, which could also promote local businesses, generating more revenue while also bringing in out-of-towners.

Welding workshops could be used for school programs, to offer welding classes and training. Local eating or drinking establishments could promote contests and offer prizes. Local farmers could open a more formal storefront, in addition to the existing farmers' market, to serve as a type of grocery store. Tractor pulling events, as well as pin-the-ribbon-on-the-cow type events can promote local businesses. Rodeo events may also involve local farmers and be part of a potential Bennet Agricultural Days event. These local business recommendations can aid in developing the local economy and further improve community offerings.



Source: Top is from the *Columbia Missourian*; bottom is from *USA Today*

Recommendation 2.1: Promote Economic Development

Promote Local Business and Revenue

Branding

Businesses/a chamber of commerce could promote “Bennet Bucks” (electronic or paper/reloadable card versions - for example, as stocking stuffer gifts) that could be accepted at all Bennet businesses.

A customizable logo should be created, that can be adjusted seasonally. The ideas here are meant to provide a possible starting point. The goal would be to create an association of this logo with fun events and establish Bennet’s reputation as a destination, especially for residents of nearby towns. The logo could be used in advertising materials, placed on t-shirts, as well as on items used as prizes (e.g., scavenger hunts), and on “Bennet Bucks”.

Since many residents expressed an appreciation for Bennet as a good community for raising children, events that are family-oriented would likely be the most successful. This concept could be incorporated in the branding, and help establish Bennet as a fun, family-friendly, small-town destination.

Potential Branding Options:

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BeNnet

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Recommendation 2.1: Promote Economic Development

Promote Local Business and Revenue

Advertising

Advertising Bennet events in the region can create awareness, increase attendance, and build a local culture.

The annual Apple Jack event in Nebraska City draws many visitors and may provide opportunities to reach people driving from the Lincoln area. Flyers could be distributed at convenience stores, perhaps within a 50-mile radius, as well as at various Apple Jack events and locations hosting events or visitors (e.g., Lied Lodge). The Apple Jack parade may be an opportunity to distribute coupons, “Bennet Bucks” of a small value, or advertising flyers offering “FREE” items or services.

Popular places in the area, such as Glacial Till Vineyard & Winery in Palmyra, The Lewis and Clark Center in Nebraska City, as well as travel stops such as Sapp Bros Travel Center in Percival, Iowa (people may stop there on the way back to Lincoln from Kansas City) could be good advertising targets.

Waverly is a growing community only 20 minutes or so north of Bennet. Although it is close to Lincoln, it is much smaller and likely attracts residents for similar reasons as Bennet. It is fairly close to Ashland but may be a good advertising target since Bennet will offer a different experience than what is found in Ashland. Other towns where advertising may be successful, where residents may value what Bennet residents do, include Adams, Sterling, Firth, Douglas, Palmyra, Unadilla, and Eagle.



Source: Top is from KOLN; bottom is from Glacial Till Vineyard & Winery, Palmyra, NE

Recommendation 2.1: Promote Economic Development

Promote Local Business and Revenue

Welcoming Gateways to Town

Since the majority of survey respondents, as well as some participants at the open house event held on October 10, 2023, indicated that they do not find the entrances to town in Bennet attractive, or that they would like to enhance gateways to town, this identifies an opportunity to improve the experience of visitors. Welcome signs should incorporate the town motto and/or logo, and ideally, there could be some landscaping elements and highlight on something unique to the town. This example from Ogden, Iowa shows an inviting welcome sign area, with landscaping and elements of town pride and values.



Display at entrance point to Ogden, IA.

From Google Maps: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/7huehWfHY1U65BLH8>

Recommendation 2.2: Promote Economic Development

Expand Services Offered

Although Bennet offers ample park space, there may be an opportunity to provide indoor play space for children year-round. An example of an innovative business is Chirpy's Play Café in Papillion, Nebraska. This space provides opportunities for children to engage in creative play and socialize, while parents eat, drink coffee, work or meet up with friends.

Another option for this business model could be to offer cooking classes for adults during children's play sessions. Families with young children are often busy and may struggle with healthy meal preparation. There may be opportunities to provide classes similar to Hy-Vee's "Freezer Meal" classes, where participants prepare five nutritious meals for four, to bring home and freeze for future use. If a small grocery store were to open in Bennet, as residents have expressed interest in having, such cooking classes may become popular and even attract visitors from neighboring communities.

As expressed by stakeholders during the community open house event on October 10, 2023, there is a need in Bennet for daycare services. Such a service may also benefit those commuting through Bennet on their way to work and may spur other businesses, as people who previously drove through town would now have more of a reason to stop.

Indoor Play Space Example



Source: Top is from International Kids Concepts; bottom is from Churchill Manor, Napa, CA

Recommendation 2.2: Promote Economic Development

Expand Services Offered

The proposed downtown area holds immense potential to boost economic development by offering critical community services. Strategically placed, a restaurant and bookstore would become cultural hubs.

An art gallery/workshop would add a creative dimension, attracting both locals and visitors. Such an artistic space could serve multiple functions in the community, in addition to stimulating business growth. Art classes could be offered for both adults and children, special guest speaker or artist visits can be scheduled, and the facility can serve as a venue for events and gatherings.

A coffee shop and bakery, with versatile spaces, could also serve as a community meeting point.



Recommendation 2.2: Promote Economic Development

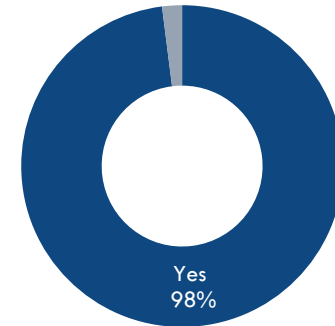
Expand Services Offered

Daycare is a critical service that Bennet residents have brought up in community surveys. Providing daycare services in the downtown area can be a potential solution to address the community's need, while contributing to economic development.

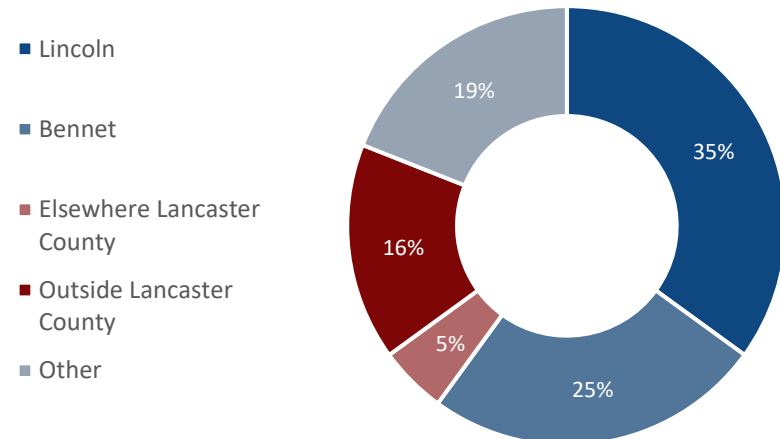
Results from the 2023 Bennet regional childcare survey:

- 137 people responded to the survey
- 84% said there are not enough high-quality childcare options within a 30-mile radius of Bennet, not including Lincoln
- 98% responded it is difficult to find a program locally
- 86% responded it is very important to have enough high-quality, accessible childcare options, for the overall growth and development of the region
- 84% responded yes to supporting an early childhood center-based program being developed in the region
- 77% have children aged birth through 12 years, or plan to have children in the next five years
- 25% currently use childcare services in Bennet, 35% currently use childcare services in Lincoln

It is Difficult to Find a Daycare Program Locally



Location of Childcare Services Used



Source: Bennet Regional Childcare Survey in November 2023

Recommendation 2.3: Promote Economic Development

Develop Education & Workforce Programs

Education and workforce development plays a vital role in economic growth. An educated workforce attracts industries, fostering innovation and productivity. Digital access ensures participation in the digital economy, while investing in trades addresses labor market gaps. Internships bridge education and practical application, enhancing employability.

The "Developing Youth Talent Initiative" (DYTI) by the NE Dept. of Economic Development strategically cultivates talent from a young age, ensuring a skilled and competitive workforce for sustained economic growth.



Source: *Herold Times Reporter*, photo by Gary C. Klein

Recommendation 3.1: Facilitate Community Placemaking

Enhance Civic Engagement

Constructing a Community Pavilion

At the community open house, the recommendation of a community center was by far one of the most popular reaction points and was met with an overwhelmingly positive response. The authors, therefore, strongly recommend the establishment of a new and intentional community space for the city of Bennet.

Developing a central community space sits at the intersection of improvements to the built environment and the encouragement of civic engagement. The vision for this space is a public indoor-outdoor zone that can support a variety of activities throughout the year. This zone need not necessarily be (or start out as) a large climate-controlled facility; instead, it could begin as limited but intentional improvements to create a community space.



Sources: Computer-generated concept art, DALL-E 3

Recommendation 3.1: Facilitate Community Placemaking Enhance Civic Engagement

Constructing a Community Pavilion

- The Designation of Public and Community Space
- Establishing an official and protected designation for the space
- Establishing an attitude of community ownership of the space.
- Establishing visible ‘beginnings’ and ‘ends’ to the community space

The Construction of a Physical Environment that Supports Public Gathering

- Creating a navigable space that can hold numerous people at once
- Providing amenities that allow the space to be collectively occupied for a meaningful period of time
- Providing an atmosphere that makes it desirable and pleasant to be in the space

Community Pavilion Example



Sources: City of Lincoln, Parks and Recreation Department

Recommendation 3.1: Facilitate Community Placemaking

Enhance Civic Engagement

Constructing a Community Pavilion

The required elements for a successful community space could be provided by a large and permanent air-conditioned interior space; they could also be provided using a paved plaza and outdoor shelter amenities; they could be provided using temporary construction, community cooperation, and an assemblage of facilities.

So long as the fundamental criteria that allow people to gather comfortably are met, an appropriate space for civic engagement and community activities can be had.

The authors of the document have drafted the following designs as a demonstration of where a community space could be, and what it could include.



Sources: Computer-generated concept art, DALL-E 3

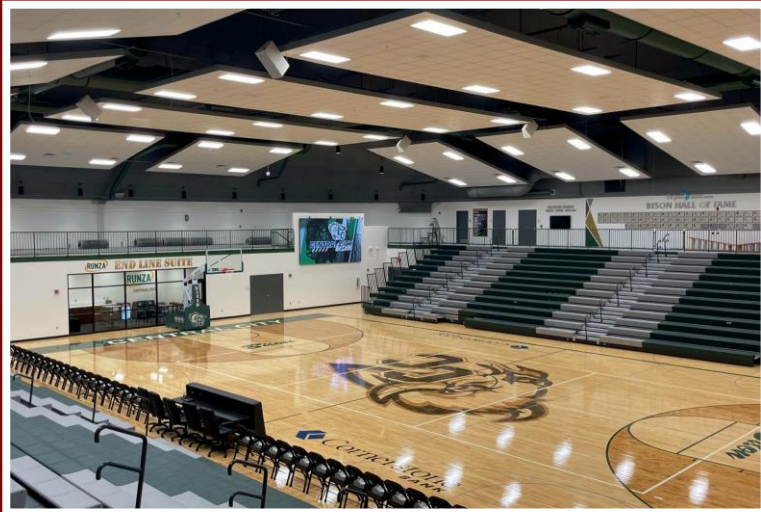
Case Study: Central City, NE Facilitate Community Placemaking



The construction of a new community facility can be expensive for small towns to fund on their own. A case study that could serve as an example for Bennet is the construction of the Monolithic Dome in Central City, NE which now serves as a home for local and district sporting events and can also be used as a storm shelter to protect students and the community during a tornado or other weather event.

Central City, a town of 3,000 people, needed facility updates for its school buildings but was unable to secure support from voters who rejected the large price tag being funded with bonds.

Central City Public Schools district shifted its approach and applied for a FEMA grant to construct a dome structure that would qualify as a FEMA Safe Room (the first of its kind in Nebraska). FEMA awarded \$4 million for the construction of the dome. The district was able to pass a bond for the remaining \$3 million to pay for their portion of the facility's construction, along with another \$700,000 which was raised privately to help with equipment expenses not covered by FEMA.



Source: Main entrance to the Bison Activity Dome in Central City, Nebraska

Recommendation 3.1: Facilitate Community Placemaking

Enhance Civic Engagement

Business to Strengthen Community

Ideally, businesses will have built-in opportunities for strengthening a sense of community. There are already Bennet businesses setting an excellent example in this regard. A potential restaurant and coffee shop, that residents have specifically expressed support for, could also be great contributors to community building. A microbrewery is another possible future business in Bennet that can serve a similar purpose and host events.

Another possibility would be a dance studio. Such a business may be a popular destination for families with young children, and could also provide opportunities for events, and community building through dance recitals, open houses, and free trials.

For example, American Midwest Ballet School organizes an annual Day of Dance celebration that provides free classes to the public. This event not only introduces both children and adults to available classes, but also creates an awareness of cultural offerings and organizations in Council Bluffs. During this free day, participants can win free tickets to a professional ballet performance, as well as sign up for fall classes without paying a registration fee. Support for business events to promote downtown activities was expressed during the open house held on October 10, 2023.

Another new business in Bennet with built-in community building potential is the hair salon, especially with services for all segments of the population, e.g., men's cuts, children's cuts, and senior-friendly services, if not already offered.



Source: Top is from Nebraska Dance; bottom is from Kid's Castle Cuts, Portland, OR

Recommendation 3.2: Facilitate Community Placemaking

Activate Indoor and Outdoor Open Spaces

There may be potential in Bennet for a specialty business such as a pet supply and pet grooming shop. This type of business could also include an area for self-serve dog washing and grooming, and perhaps offer pet boarding at a separate location with more space. In addition, having a dog park in Bennet can create many opportunities for community interaction and even events. The desire for a dog park in Bennet was expressed during the open house held at the American Legion Hall on October 10, 2023.

Businesses that address multiple needs in innovative ways have the potential to enhance community building and placemaking more efficiently, while also positioning Bennet as a regional destination. In addition, community building can occur when residents do not need to leave Bennet in order to access services such as dental offices, physical therapy, or chiropractic care. Such services may even attract clients from outside the community if operation costs are lower, i.e., with proximity to Lincoln, there may be an incentive to convince professionals to move their practice to Bennet.

At the open house event, residents expressed strong support for the promotion of local businesses.



Source: Top is from The Paw Pad Dog Grooming Company; bottom is from Orthopaedic Associates of Central Maryland

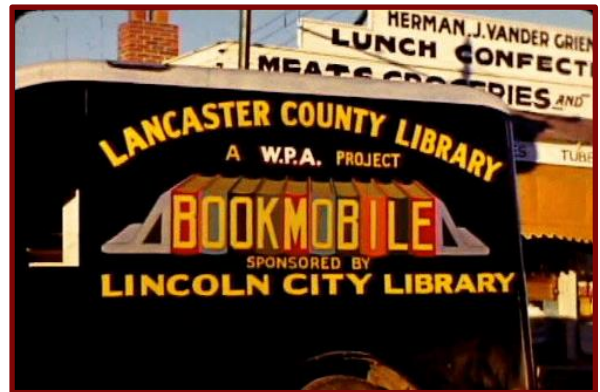
Recommendation 3.2: Facilitate Community Placemaking

Activate Indoor and Outdoor Open Spaces

In the 1940s, the Lincoln City Library's (name at the time) Bookmobile had a different look. A mobile business could be modeled after this vehicle. This design would contribute to the historical character of the downtown area. Some possible ideas for a mobile business using this type of vehicle are:

- Convenience store/lunch items, e.g., sandwiches that people driving through town may appreciate during a quick stop
- Dog grooming that goes to the dog owner's house
- House cleaning
- Car detailing and other automotive services
- Ideally, this type of vehicle could be incorporated into community events, e.g., ice cream truck

An antique type of vehicle could be used for more than one type of business, each having a unique model.



Source: Lincoln City Libraries

Recommendation 3.2: Facilitate Community Placemaking

Activate Indoor and Outdoor Open Spaces

Parks

Bennet currently has two parks, Bennet Park and Whispering Pines Park with one possible new public park located at the city water tower.

Citizens of Bennet have consistently asked for improvements to parks and recreational spaces in their community. As Bennet grows, exploring the creation of a stand-alone parks department should be considered.



Source: City of Bennet

Recommendation 3.2: Facilitate Community Placemaking

Activate Indoor and Outdoor Open Spaces

Description

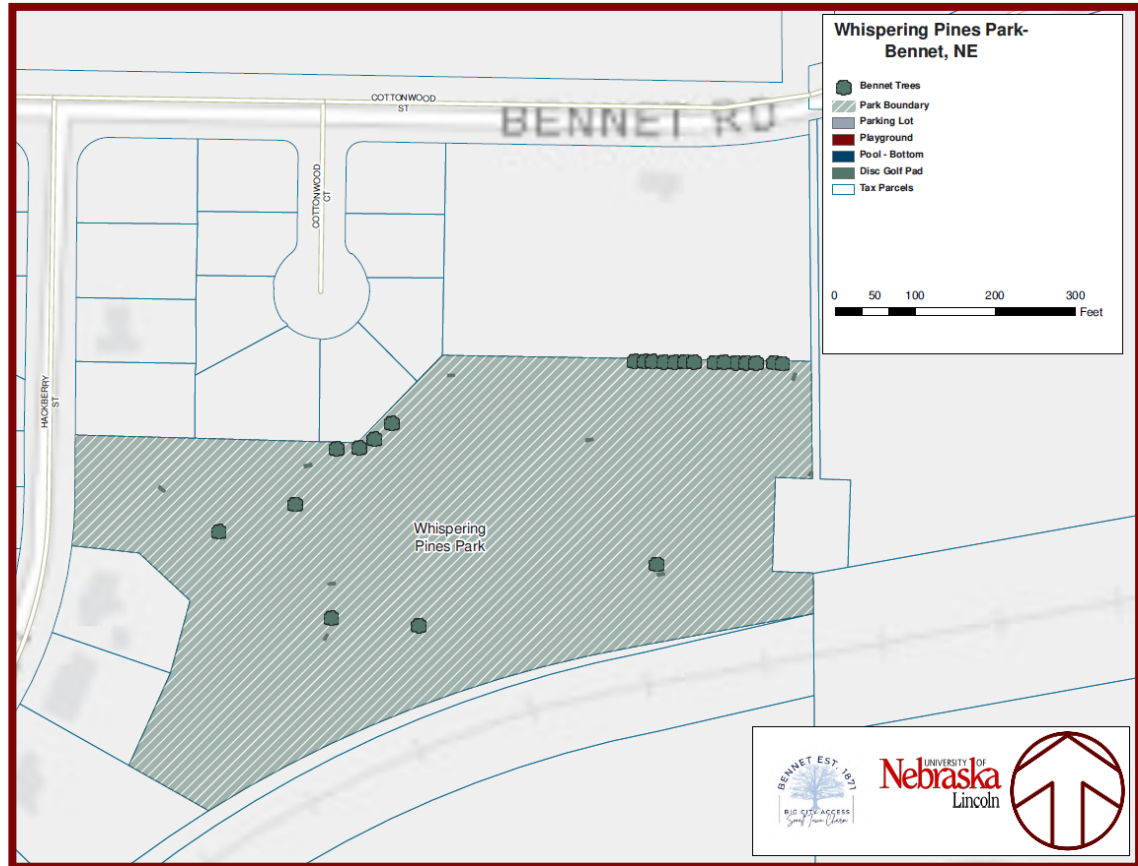
Located on the eastern edge of Bennet this park currently has amenities such as a walking loop and disc golf course.

Action Items

Whispering Pines has the potential to become the hub of trail connections within the city of Bennet. Constructing a trailhead should be considered on the eastern edge of the park.

Future eastern expansion of the park should consider pickleball courts or other trendy sports and recreational opportunities that will attract visitors, per the Bennet Survey results.

Whispering Pines Park



Source: Map created by CRPL 990, Matt Bolander

Recommendation 3.2: Facilitate Community Placemaking

Activate Indoor and Outdoor Open Spaces

Description

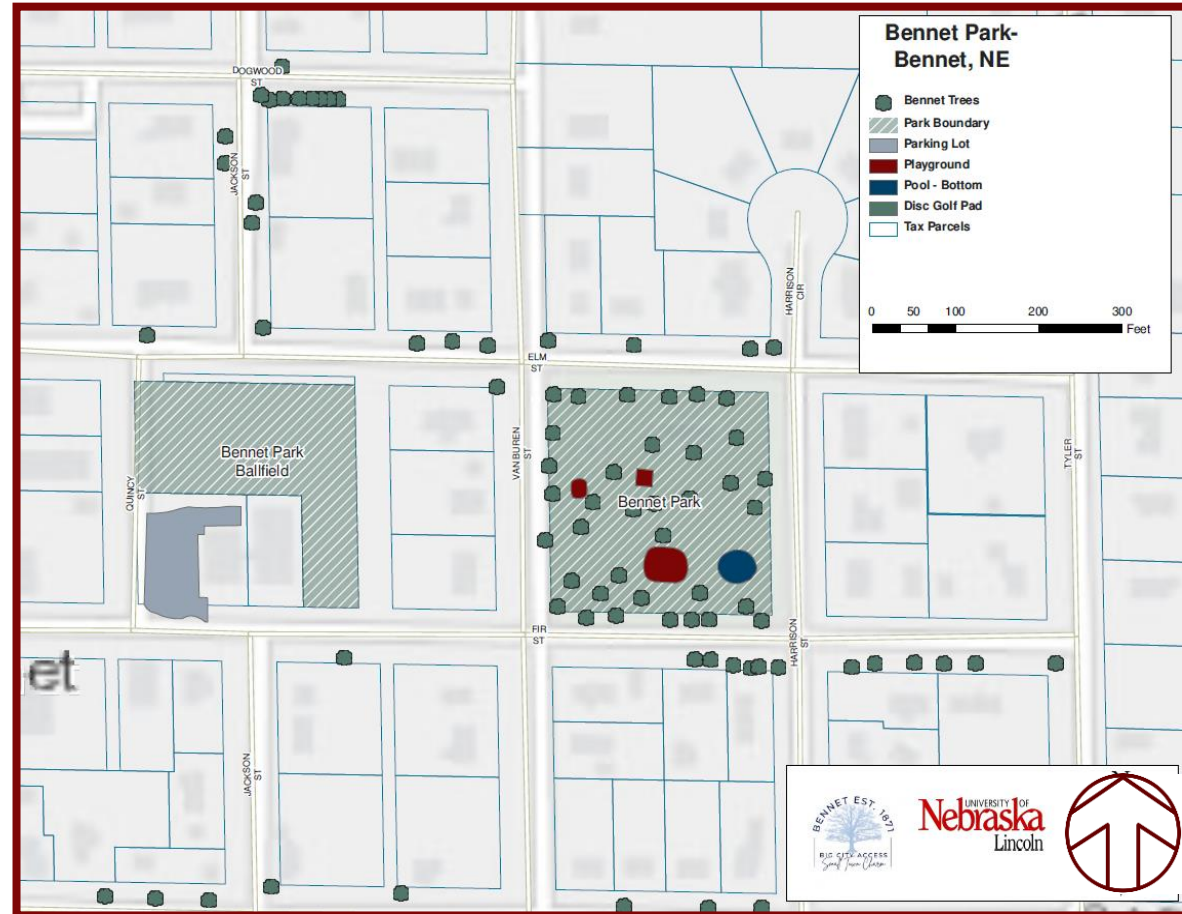
Bennet Park is centrally located and is the oldest park in the city. A historical gazebo, constructed in 1910, is located within the park.

Bennet Park has amenities such as a ballfield, splash pad, and playground, along with a shelter structure that is available for rent.

Action Item

Development should include constructing sidewalks and side path/trail connections to the park from Whispering Pines, and within the park, a new gateway entrance and signage explaining the history of Bennet should be considered, as per the Bennet Survey results.

Bennet Park



Source: Map created by CRPL 990, Matt Bolander

Recommendation 3.2: Facilitate Community Placemaking

Activate Indoor and Outdoor Open Spaces

2018 Nebraska Outdoor Recreation Survey Responses

73.5% of respondents in Bennet's region (which includes Omaha and Lincoln) indicated that trails are important to have in their local parks.

Bennet should seek to capitalize on proximity to Lincoln by installing adventure areas, which 71.3% of Nebraska's college students indicated they want to see in their local parks. Most often these are associated with ziplining, high ropes courses, or mountain biking. This could involve a partnership or collaboration with Lower Platte South NRD, as well as seeking grants at the state or federal levels.



Source: Top, City of Lincoln Antelope Park, Lincoln, NE; bottom Georgetown Parks & Recreation, Georgetown, TX

Recommendation 3.2: Facilitate Community Placemaking

Activate Indoor and Outdoor Open Spaces

Park Trees

Trees should be planted in Bennet's parks to provide shade and help with other environmental factors. The 10-20-30 rule is a forestry practice that indicates that no more than 10% of a single species should be planted, 20% of a genus, and 30% of a family. Maple trees and Ash trees ***should be avoided*** due to the presence of pests currently affecting these trees. Trees are an important mitigation strategy for preventing storm water runoff. They also serve as habitat for many species of animals within Bennet and provide beautification as an attraction for Bennet's parks.



Source: Google Maps

Recommendation 3.3: Facilitate Community Placemaking

Promote Downtown Activities

An important consideration in planning events in Bennet is to avoid competing with larger, more established events in the surrounding area.

Incorporating seasonal themes, and historical events, e.g., July 29 to celebrate the founding of the town, can help establish a cadence that becomes well-known in the area. Seasonal themes can also help with the planning of activities. For example, during a possible winter carnival, there could be a snowman building competition for children, or there could be Valentine's Day type events with a scavenger hunt, with prizes. One scavenger hunt idea could be to find the missing "t" (from the city's name), with cut-outs of the letter "t" being "hidden" at various locations.

The mural downtown would provide a great backdrop for a central location where July 29 festivities could take place. There could be a post-harvest celebration, in keeping with the agricultural nature of the area. Examples of activities and entertainment, such as those included in a family-oriented Cherry Hill, New Jersey harvest festival, include a pumpkin patch, pony rides, a petting zoo, balloon artists, a dance party bubble station, a strolling magician, a juggling stilt walker, and a DJ.



Source: Top The Farmers' Museum, Cooperstown, NY; bottom *The Sun Newspapers*, Haddonfield, NJ

Recommendation 3.3: Facilitate Community Placemaking

Promote Downtown Activities

Based on resident comments, there is interest in holiday activities, such as a tree lighting ceremony. This type of event could include a holiday market, carriage rides, live reindeer, fire rings for roasting marshmallows and making s'mores, as well as a location for pictures with Santa. For example, if a pet supply and/or dog grooming and washing business were to open in Bennet, there could be opportunities for pictures of pets with Santa. Winter Wonderland is a successful event held in Papillion every year, on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. A smaller scale adaptation of such an event could be perfect for Bennet and would likely attract visitors from outside of town.

Based on feedback received during an open house event held on October 10, 2023, at the American Legion Hall, residents support community placemaking efforts such as civic engagement and the promotion of downtown activities. Specifically, a former pitch tournament was mentioned, as were music artists and concerts. These types of activities could be incorporated into seasonal events such as a possible July 29 celebration, harvest festival or farmers' markets.

Images of the Winter Wonderland Event in Papillion, NE



Source: Joe Shearer, *Papillion Times*

Recommendation 4.1: Achieve Well-Planned Growth

Integration with Comprehensive Plan

This Downtown Economic Development Plan is being developed in collaboration with the City of Bennet's comprehensive plan update, a process led by MPC Consulting. This synergy ensures seamless alignment and integration of strategic initiatives, allowing for a cohesive and well-coordinated approach to urban development that considers both the specific objectives of the downtown economic plan and the broader vision outlined in the comprehensive plan. Through this concerted effort, stakeholders can harness collective expertise and insights, maximizing the impact of both plans on the overall growth and vitality of the city.

The integration of senior housing development into the Comprehensive Plan underscores a commitment to fostering an age-friendly community in Bennet. By specifically addressing the needs of senior residents, the plan significantly enhances the overall well-being and livability of the town.



Recommendation 4.2: Achieve Well-Planned Growth

City-Wide Design Guidelines

The implementation of city-wide planning guidelines offers the ability to create a cohesive experience throughout the community. Ensuring that the built environment is consistent allows for greater community buy-in, enhancing and strengthening the community's identity.

Additionally, putting guidelines into place can have a positive effect on the likelihood of non-residents visiting the community because of a perceived overall attractiveness.

Finally, guidelines would provide an avenue for the justification of historic preservation efforts both in downtown and greater Bennet, allowing for current residents to be proud of and show off their community's past.

Features to consider within these guidelines may include:

- Benches
- Planters and landscaping
- Building facades and signs



Source: Top is from City of Hickman, Community Center Hickman, NE; bottom is from downtown Ashland, NE

Recommendation 4.3: Achieve Well-Planned Growth

Regional Plan Coordination

Support for the downtown revitalization plan for Bennet and its economy is derived from valuable information contained within Lancaster County's City/County Comprehensive Plan and the Long-Range Transportation Plan. Key partners collaborating on Bennet's plan include the Southeast Nebraska Economic Development District (SENDDD), the Lower Platte South NRD Hazard Mitigation Plan, Trails Watershed/Stormwater Plan, the Nebraska Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

The coordination with these regional plans holds the promise of potential opportunities for Bennet, encompassing economic development, funding availability, plan implementation, and policy coordination. This collaborative effort aims to leverage synergies between local and regional initiatives to enhance the overall economic landscape and sustainable growth of Bennet.



LOWER PLATTE SOUTH
natural resources district





Chapter 6: Implementation

Implementation

Funding Opportunities

State:

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

- Website: <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/programs/community/cdbg/>
- Administered by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, CDBG is one of the longest running federal programs aimed at supporting community projects in many areas such as housing and infrastructure development.
- Municipalities must submit applications that fund projects within the administrative boundary of the town. Priority funding is given to projects that meet the national objective, which is to benefit low- and middle-income people. The definition of low and middle-income persons is dependent on current Census data and is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- CDBG-Downtown Revitalization provides funds for projects within the downtown business district of a community including:
 - Street, sewer, and water systems improvements
 - Historic restoration
 - Removal of architectural barriers
 - Loans to businesses for façade improvements

Implementation

Funding Opportunities

State:

Nebraska Department of Health and Service (DHHS)

- Website: http://dhhs.ne.gov/pages;grants_loans.aspx
- DHHS has many opportunities for loans and grants to help communities create a better quality of life for their residents. Some of these loans and grants provide financial assistance to new or existing childcare providers, student loans to help keep medical students in small communities, and services to low-income and disabled residents.

Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act (LB840)

- Website: <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/programs/community/lb-840/>
- The Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act (LB840, 1991) authorized incorporated cities and villages — if approved by local voters — to collect and appropriate local tax dollars, including sales and/or property tax, for economic development purposes. Any project or program that provides direct or indirect financial assistance to a qualifying business is an eligible activity for local funds to be collected for the economic development program, or for any payment of related costs and expenses.

Implementation

Funding Opportunities

State:

Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCFF)

- Website: <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/programs/community/cccff/>
- What the program does: Through the Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCFF), the State of Nebraska awards funding to municipalities and tribal governments to support an array of project types that promote economic opportunity and a higher quality of life. Administered by the Department of Economic Development, CCCFF grants are awarded annually to eligible entities on a competitive basis for the planning and construction of civic, community, and recreation centers.
- How the funds can be used: CCCFF Capital Construction grants can be used to build and/or improve community facilities such as libraries, recreation and wellness centers, gathering spaces, convention centers, town squares, and cultural centers. Projects may include the conversion, rehabilitation, or reuse of historic buildings. CCCFF Planning grants can be used for preliminary planning efforts related to the development or rehabilitation of eligible projects.
- CCCFF eligible projects must be open to the public and located within the official boundaries of the applicant community. Successful applications demonstrate substantial community support, as well as a project that enhances local quality of life. Projects are owned by the eligible entity, with some limited provisions for shared ownership by a municipality and eligible political subdivision.
- A CCCFF grant cannot account for more than 50% of a project's total costs. Minimum local cost-share is 1:1.
- Grant period: The CCCFF program operates on an annual cycle. Contract term is for two years.
- Eligible for: Nebraska municipalities, including rural cities and villages, and tribal governments may apply for CCCFF grants.

Implementation

Funding Opportunities

State:

Developing Youth Talent Initiative (DYTI)

- Website:
<https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/programs/business/dyti/>
- What the program does:
- The Nebraska Developing Youth Talent Initiative (DYTI) creates collaboration between Nebraska businesses and public schools, connecting young Nebraskans to learning opportunities in the workforce that can play an important role in their decision to build their careers in our state.
- The intent of DYTI is to support an industry-defined approach to develop a youth talent pipeline for our state's emerging STEM workforce, especially in Manufacturing, IT, Healthcare and Engineering occupations. Grant recipients will partner with schools to engage 7th and 8th-grade students in participation in hands-on career exploration and relevant workplace learning opportunities. Exposing this next generation of leaders to the advanced skills and knowledge required for STEM occupations encourages an expanding workforce to help Grow Nebraska.

Eligible Projects:

- Developing new classroom curriculum
- Purchasing equipment for a classroom or lab
- Creating virtual engagement opportunities
- Implementing a mobile trailer
- Mentoring
- Planning new events
- Training teachers and company staff
- Conducting industry tours
- Creating a maker space
- Providing project competitions and awards
- Bringing in guest speakers

Implementation

Funding Opportunities

Federal:

Rural Community Development Initiative Grants

- Website:

https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fact-sheet/508_RD_FS_RHS_RuralCommunityDevInitiatives.pdf

- What the program does: This program provides funding to help non-profit housing and community development organizations support housing, community facilities, and community and economic development projects in rural areas.
- How the funds can be used: To improve housing, community facilities, and community and economic development projects in rural areas.
- Eligible for: Rural and rural area-Any area other than (i) a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants; and (ii) the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to such city or town.
- Amounts:
 - Minimum grant award is \$50,000; maximum grant award is \$500,000. Grant funds are limited and are awarded through a competitive process.

Implementation

Funding Opportunities

Non-profit:

Nebraska Community Development Resources

- Website: <https://cdr-nebraska.org/>
- Community Development Resources (CDR) is a Non-profit 501(c)3 organization whose mission is to provide capital, technical assistance, and training opportunities for small business in the State of Nebraska and lends to start-up and existing businesses that have a viable business plan to create or maintain businesses. CDR is a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) certified under the U.S. Treasury Department's Community Development Financial institution Fund, dedicated to, and whose core purpose is, providing financial products and services to people and communities underserved by traditional financial markets.
- Community Development Resources is also a Community Development Corporation (CDC) which furthers its mission by serving as a critical role in addressing issues of poverty and access to credit in economically disadvantaged communities by providing development services or technical assistance along with the loans and investments they make for community and economic projects.
- Programs:
 - SBA 504 Loans
 - SBA Micro Loans
 - Business Consulting
 - Development Resources

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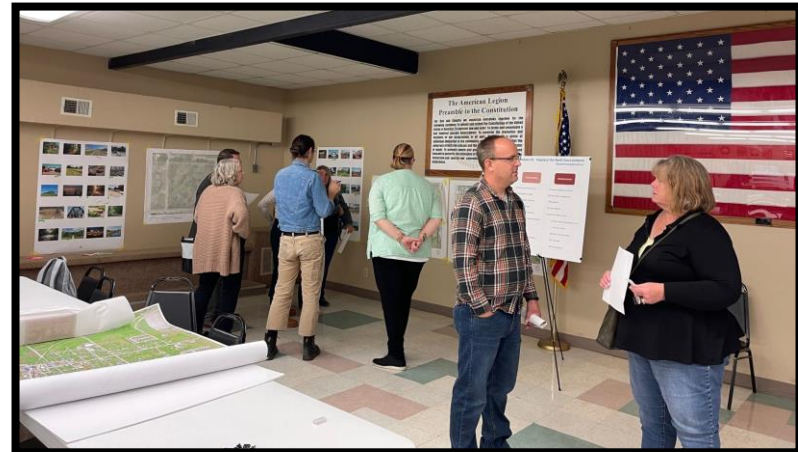
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Glossary of Key Words

- American Community Survey (ACS): an ongoing survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau that provides information every year about the nation and its people.
- Anchor Institutions: local organizations or entities that use their economic abilities to lift up their community.
- Bump outs (also known as curb extensions): added space sometimes at road intersections to narrow roadways, accommodate pedestrian safety, and incorporate more streetscaping.
- Comprehensive Plan: an official document adopted by a municipality that sets forth goals, policies, and guidelines to direct the present and future physical, social, and economic conditions within the municipality's jurisdiction.
- Dwelling (*for housing*): a building or part of a building that contains, living, sleeping, housekeeping accommodations, and sanitary facilities for occupancy by one or more families.
- Economic Development: change in a community that enables greater production, increased employment, and a better distribution of goods and services.
- Right of way: generally, a strip of land reserved for trails, water lines, sanitary sewer, and/or any other public utilities.
- Streetscape: an area that may either be next to or within a public or private street right of way that may contain sidewalks, street furniture, landscaping or trees, and similar features.
- Wayfinding: the process or activity of learning one's position and planning and following a certain route

Appendix A: Open House Responses



Overview of Downtown Bennet Vision, Goals, and Recommendations



Bennet Downtown Establishment Plan Vision, Goals, and Recommendations

VISION: **Protect and build** on our unique, small-town atmosphere through people who respect and care for one another. **Support** well-planned growth and a vibrant business community. **Seek to enhance** quality of life by improving infrastructure and creating a variety of recreational opportunities, while maintaining the natural beauty of our environment. **Promote** quality education and multigenerational family values.

The following goals and actions were crafted to establish a downtown corridor and promote economic development in Bennet. Input provided by community survey participants and stakeholders involved in the planning process helped to craft the goals.

1 Improve the Built Environment

- ☐ Beautification ●●●●●●●●●●
- ☐ Connectivity ●●●
- ☐ Infrastructure ●●●●●●●●●●

2 Community Placemaking

- ☐ Civic engagement ●●●
- ☐ Activate open spaces ●
- ☐ Promote downtown activities ●●●●●

3 Economic Development

- ☐ Promote local business ●●●●●●●●●●
- ☐ Increase tax revenue ●●●
- ☐ Education & workforce development ●●

4 Achieve Well-Planned Growth

- ☐ Integrate with Comprehensive plan ●●●
- ☐ Adopt city-wide planning standards ●●●●
- ☐ Regional Plan Coordination ●

Schematic design Charette #1



PEDSRIAN
BRIDGE
DOWNTOWN



GRASS



DO YOU
WANT
TRAIL OR
PATH?



PAVEMENT



OPEN +
SUNNY
PATH?
WOULD +
PLANT



HAPPY, NEBRASKA



Schematic design Charette #2



OPEN SPACE ARCH



CHATTANOGA, TN



PICKMAN, NE



Schematic
design
Charette #3



CHAPPEL, NE

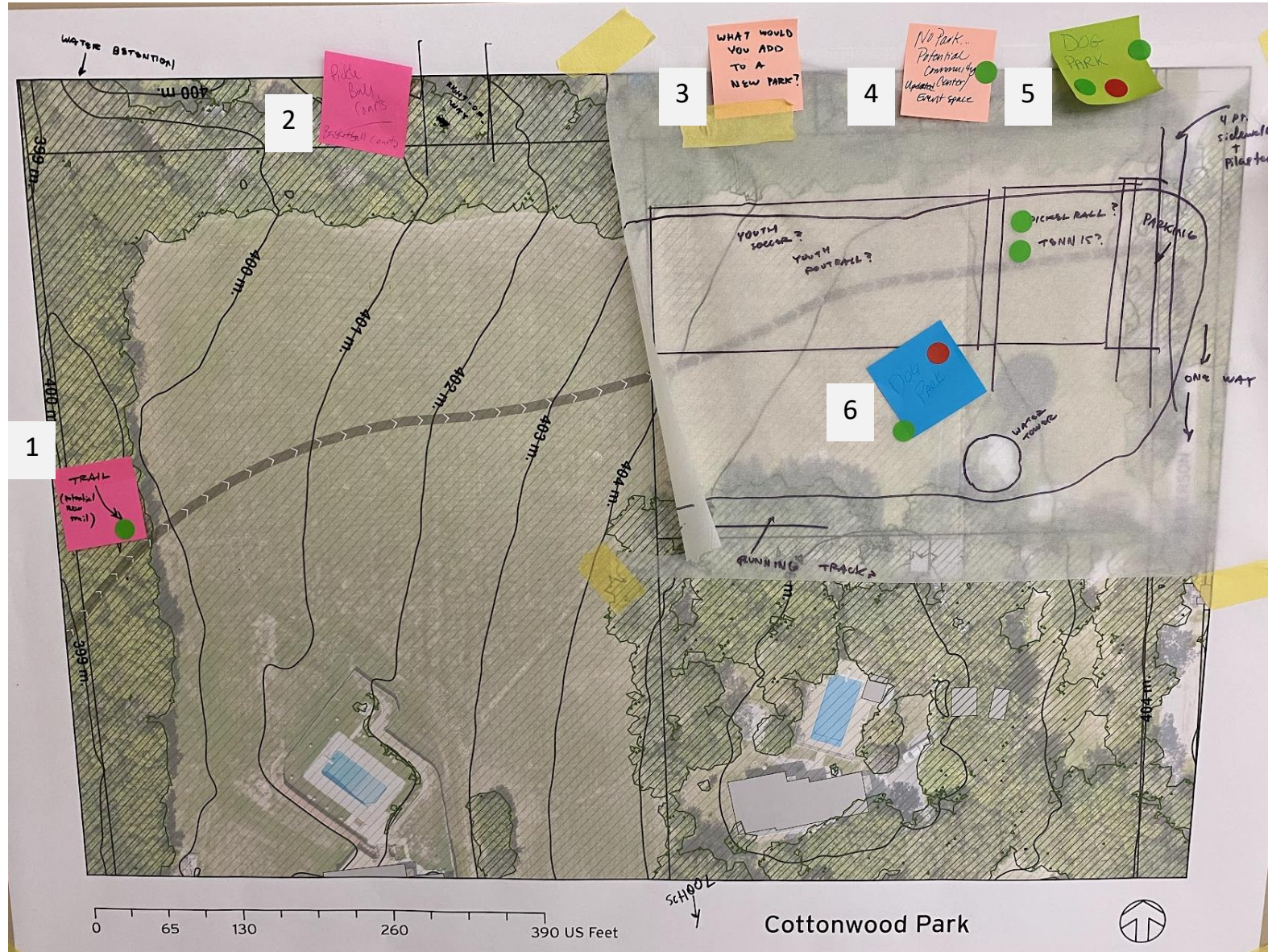


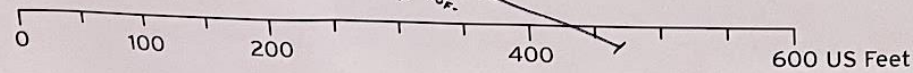
WILLOW, IL



Post-It Notes

1. Trail (potential new trail)
2. Pickleball courts, basketball courts
3. What would you add to a new park?
4. No park...potential community center/updated event space
5. Dog Park
6. Dog park





Whispering Pines Park



Recommendation #1: Improve the Built Environment

Recommended Actions



Post-It Notes

1. Downtown cannot have industrial buildings
2. The houses coming into town are some of the worst in town. And that's what people see.
3. Wider roads and sidewalks everywhere
4. Crossing the train tracks needs improvement

Beautification

☐ Streetscaping

- ☐ Perennials, annuals ●●●
- ☐ Shrubs ●
- ☐ Lighting ●
- ☐ Traffic signs ●
- ☐ Curb changes ●
- ☐ Crosswalks ●●
- ☐ Increase tree canopy ●
- ☐ Incorporate benches and seating ●

1

Downtown cannot have industrial buildings

The houses coming into town are some of the worst in town and that's what people see.

2

3

Wider roads and sidewalks everywhere

Connectivity

- ☐ Trail system through town ●●●●●
- ☐ Walkability and safety ●●
- ☐ ADA compliant crossings ●
- ☐ Wayfinding signage ●

4

Crossing the train tracks needs improvement

- ☐ Entrance to Bennet ●●●
- ☐ Downtown/Business District ●●
- ☐ Parks ●
- ☐ Trails ●●●●●
- ☐ Local business amenities ●●

Infrastructure

- ☐ Wooden Poles on W side of highway - too many houses ●●●●●
- ☐ Improve sidewalk conditions ●●●●●
- ☐ Stormwater management ●
- ☐ Broadband ●●●●●
- ☐ Street lighting ●
- ☐ Eliminate safety hazards
- ☐ Slow traffic along highway into and out of town ●●
- ☐ Traffic calming devices ●
- ☐ Crosswalks
- ☐ Crossing signals ●●

Recommendation #2: Economic Development

Recommended Actions



Post-It Notes:

1. Housing for senior citizens; transportation system
2. Dollar General b/c of variety and decent prices
3. Better broadband needed for small business
4. Community college classes in this building.
5. Maker space

Promote Local Business

- ☐ Become a Leadership Certified Community (LCC) - NE Dept. of Economic Development
- ☐ Establish Chamber of Commerce
- ☐ Offer free trials
- ☐ Collaborate with Nebraska Business Development Center
- ☐ Enhance gateways

Expand Offerings

- ☐ Daycare
- ☐ Restaurant
- ☐ Bookstore/Print Shop
- ☐ Art Gallery/Workshop
- ☐ Coffee Shop
- ☐ Bakery
- ☐ Versatile/multi-purpose
- ☐ Grocery store

Education & Workforce Development

- ☐ Educated workforce
- ☐ Digital access
- ☐ Trades
- ☐ Internships
- ☐ Enhanced curriculum
- ☐ "Developing Youth Talent Initiative" (DYTI) - NE Dept. of Economic Development

1

- Housing for senior citizens
- Transportation system

2

Dollar General b/c of variety and decent prices

3

Better broadband needed for small business

4

Community college classes in this building.

5

maker space

Recommendation #3: Community Placemaking

Recommended Actions



Civic Engagement

- ☐ Multi-generational amenities ●
- ☐ Expanded senior programs ●●
- ☐ Volunteer groups ●●
- ☐ Community center ●●●●●●●●●●
- ☐ Event space ●●●●

Activate Open Spaces

- ☐ Improve park amenities ●●●●
- ☐ Establish trails connecting parks ●●●●●●●●
- ☐ Tree planting ●●●●
- ☐ Interpretive signage
- ☐ Mobile business visitors ●

Promote Downtown Activities

- ☐ Business events ●●●●●●●●
- ☐ Car show ●●
- ☐ Fall festival ●●●●
- ☐ Farmer's market ●●●●●●●●
- ☐ Seasonal activities ●●●●●

1

Community events
i.e. music artists, pitch
tournament, concerts, etc.

Post-It Notes:

1. Community events
 - I.e. music artists, pitch tournament, concert s, etc.

Recommendation #4: Achieve Well-Planned Growth

Recommended Actions



City Comprehensive Plan

- ☒ Integrate downtown establishment plans into overall comprehensive plan
- ☒ Review growth plan and infrastructure needs
- ☐ Merge capital improvements projects (roads, sidewalks) with broadband service expansion in right of ways

Adopt and Implement City-Wide Standards

- ☐ Building facades
- ☐ Sidewalk standards in front of businesses
- ☒ Signage and lighting for businesses
- ☒ Pedestrian lighting along corridor
- ☐ Review peer cities' standards and guidelines

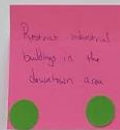
Regional Plan Coordination

- ☐ Lancaster County
 - ☒ City/County Comp. plan
 - ☐ Long-range transportation plan
- ☐ Southeast Nebraska Economic Development District (SEND D)
- ☐ Lower Platte South NRD
 - ☐ Hazard Mitigation Plan
 - ☐ Trails
 - ☐ Watershed/Stormwater Plan
- ☐ Nebraska Department of Transportation (DOT)
- ☐ Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

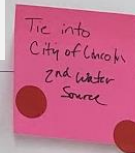
Post-It Notes:

1. Restrict industrial buildings in the downtown area
2. Tie into City of Lincoln, 2nd water source

1



2



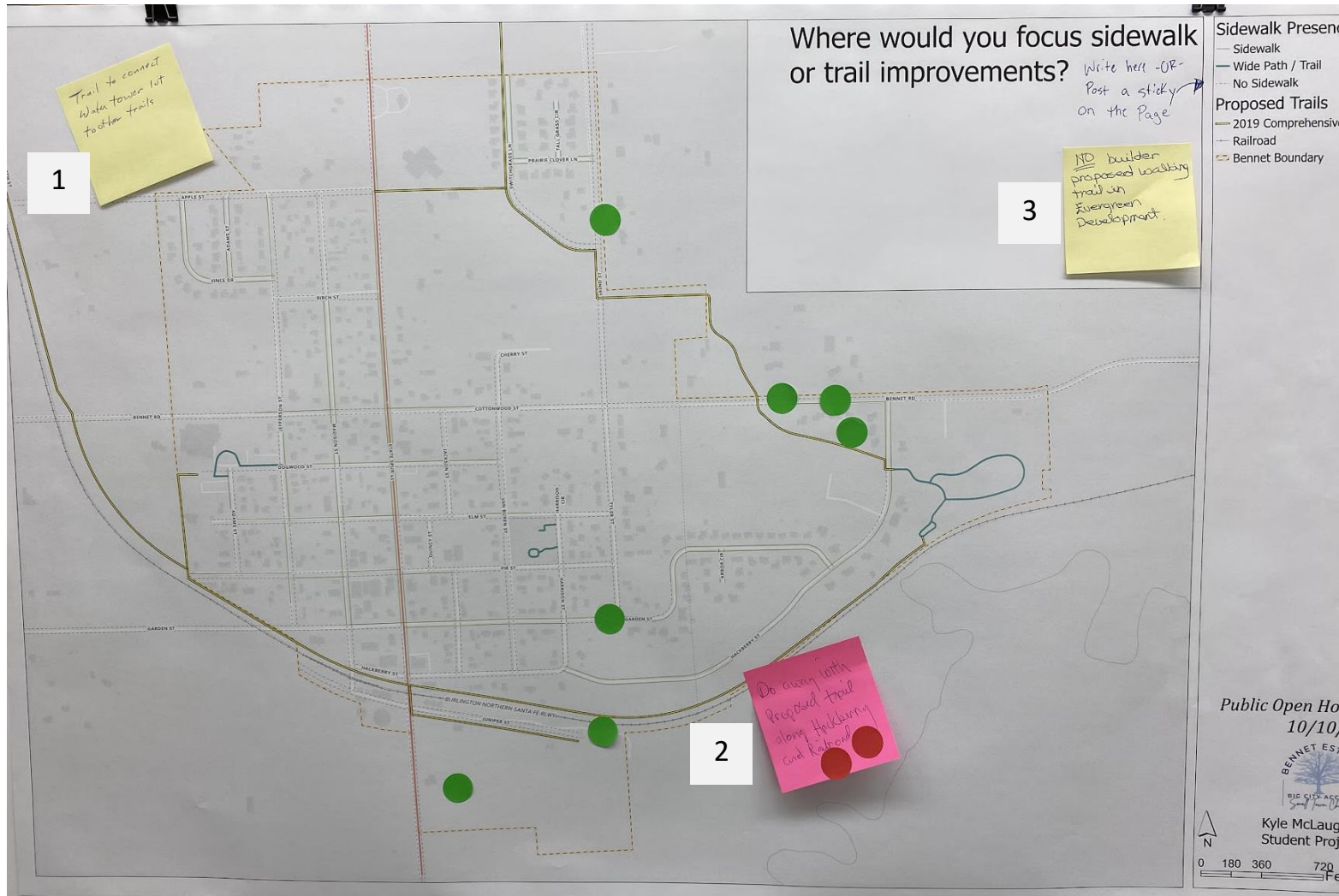
Post-It Notes:

1. No sidewalks needed
2. Pickle Ball courts, basket court
3. Adopt a tree



Post-It Notes:

1. Trail to connect water tower lot to other trails
2. Do away with proposed trail along Hackberry and railroad
3. NO builder proposed walking trail in Evergreen Development.



Where are your safety concerns?

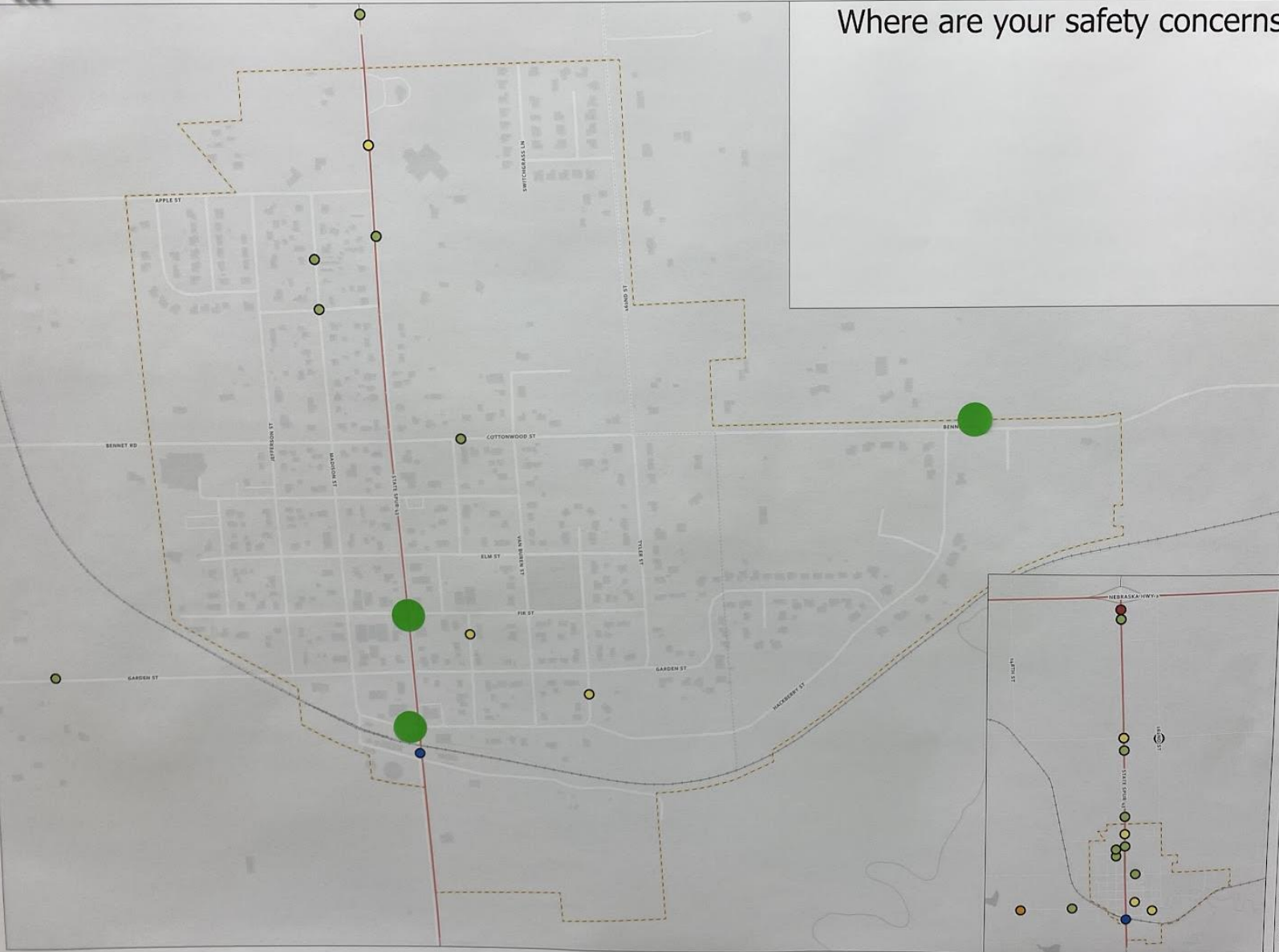
Street Network Functional Class

- Highway
- Local
- Railroad
- Bennet Boundary

Crash History (2016-2020)

Severity

- Non-Reportable
- Property Damage Only
- Possible Injury
- Suspected Serious Injury
- Visible Injury



Public Open House
10/10/23



Kyle McLaughlin
Student Project



0 180 360 720 Feet

Post-It Notes:

1. School crossing on highway.
2. Speeding on Cottonwood St (East)
3. Need a safe way to bridge the Business Districts/Flex districts
4. NO TRAFFIC CIRCLES

POST-IT COMMENTS

SAFETY

1 School Crossing on highway.

2 Speeding on Cottonwood St (East)

3 Need a Safe way to bridge the Business Districts/Flex districts

4 NO TRAFFIC CIRCLES

BENNET EST. 1871
BIG CITY ACCESS
Small Town Charm

NEEDS **POST-IT COMMENTS**

BENNET EST. 1871
BIG CITY ACCESS
Small Town Charm

POST-IT COMMENTS



1

NO
ROUND-ABOUTS
TRAFFIC CIRCLES
PLEASE!

2

Sidewalks at
businesses

3

More sidewalks
in and around
School - safer
walking across
high for kids

Post-It Notes:

1. NO ROUND-ABOUTS TRAFFIC CIRCLES PLEASE!
2. Sidewalks at businesses
3. More sidewalks in and around school – safer walking across high for kids

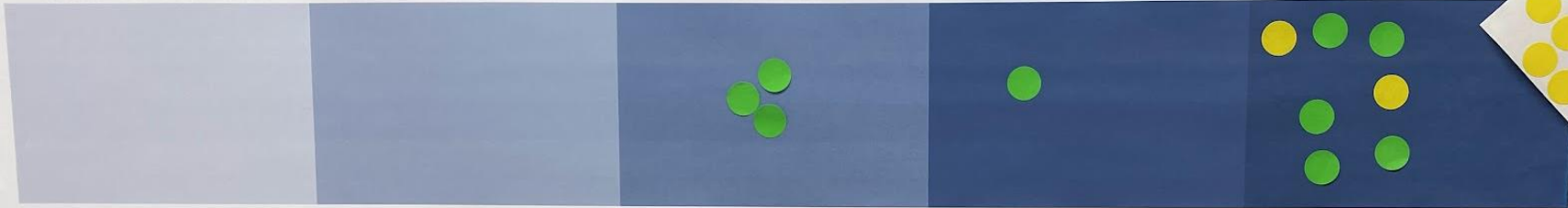
COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

How Well Do These Needs Align with You?



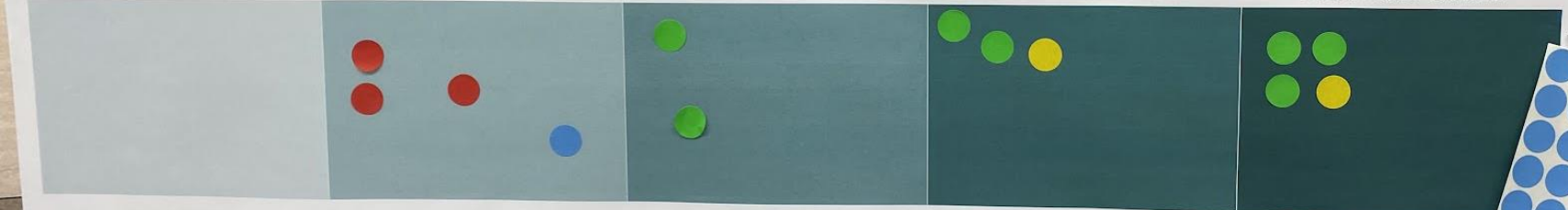
1. Bennet needs to provide sidewalks along both sides of all roadways.

.....STRONGLY DISAGREE.....SOMEWHAT DISAGREE.....NEUTRAL.....SOMEWHAT AGREE.....STRONGLY AGREE.....



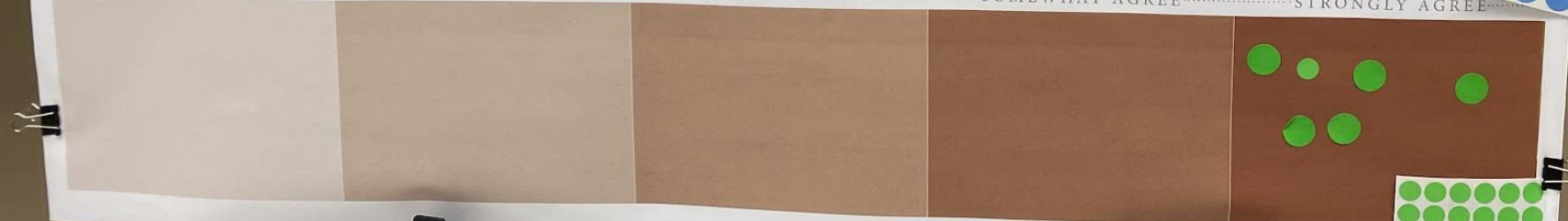
2. Bennet needs to reduce industrial and truck traffic near downtown.

.....STRONGLY DISAGREE.....SOMEWHAT DISAGREE.....NEUTRAL.....SOMEWHAT AGREE.....STRONGLY AGREE.....



3. Bennet transportation investments need to support economic development and growth.

.....STRONGLY DISAGREE.....SOMEWHAT DISAGREE.....NEUTRAL.....SOMEWHAT AGREE.....STRONGLY AGREE.....



What do you love about Bennet?

I love the history that I have with Bennet - the memories of going to school here.

The quiet, and the sky

The small town vibe & the community members. New & Old.

Comments

- I love the history that I have with Bennet – the memories of going to school here
- The quiet and the sky
- The small town vibe and the community members. New and old.



What are the biggest challenges Bennet has right now?

★
● WATER SUPPLY - ditto ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

● Streets - Cottonwood + Tyler - surface ●

child care accessibility ●

Infrastructure! ●

● ADDRESS HWY 43 DIVIDING COMM.

● INDUSTRY IN DWTW. ● ●

Fast!! internet!!

Comments

- WATER SUPPLY - ditto
- Streets - Cottonwood and Tyler - surface
- Child care accessibility
- Infrastructure!
- ADDRESS HWY 43 DIVIDING COMM.
- INDUSTRY IN DWTW.
- Fast!! internet!!

Why do you choose to live or have a business in Bennet?

Small town Atmosphere!

'GROWTH POTENTIAL'

- With internet, we can live and work anywhere.

Comments:

- Small town atmosphere!
- GROWTH POTENTIAL
- With internet, we can live and work anywhere.

What are the biggest opportunities Bennet has for the future?

Promote Growth (well planned) Business Opportunities caring Community
Promote Excellent Education.

Comments:

- Promote Growth (well planned). Business Opportunities, caring community, Promote Excellent Education.

How would you describe the ideal Bennet 20 years from now?

More Business - Rentals/apartments - Paved streets - safe places to walk - water improvements

Businesses, rentals, young families continuing to come live here. Clean community, water.


Quaint, Homey ~ Inviting.

Comments:

- More business –
Rental apartments
– Paved streets –
safe places to
walk – water
improvements
- Businesses,
rentals, young
families
continuing to
come live here.
Clean community.
Water.
- Quaint, Homey
and Inviting.

Appendix B: Supplemental Data

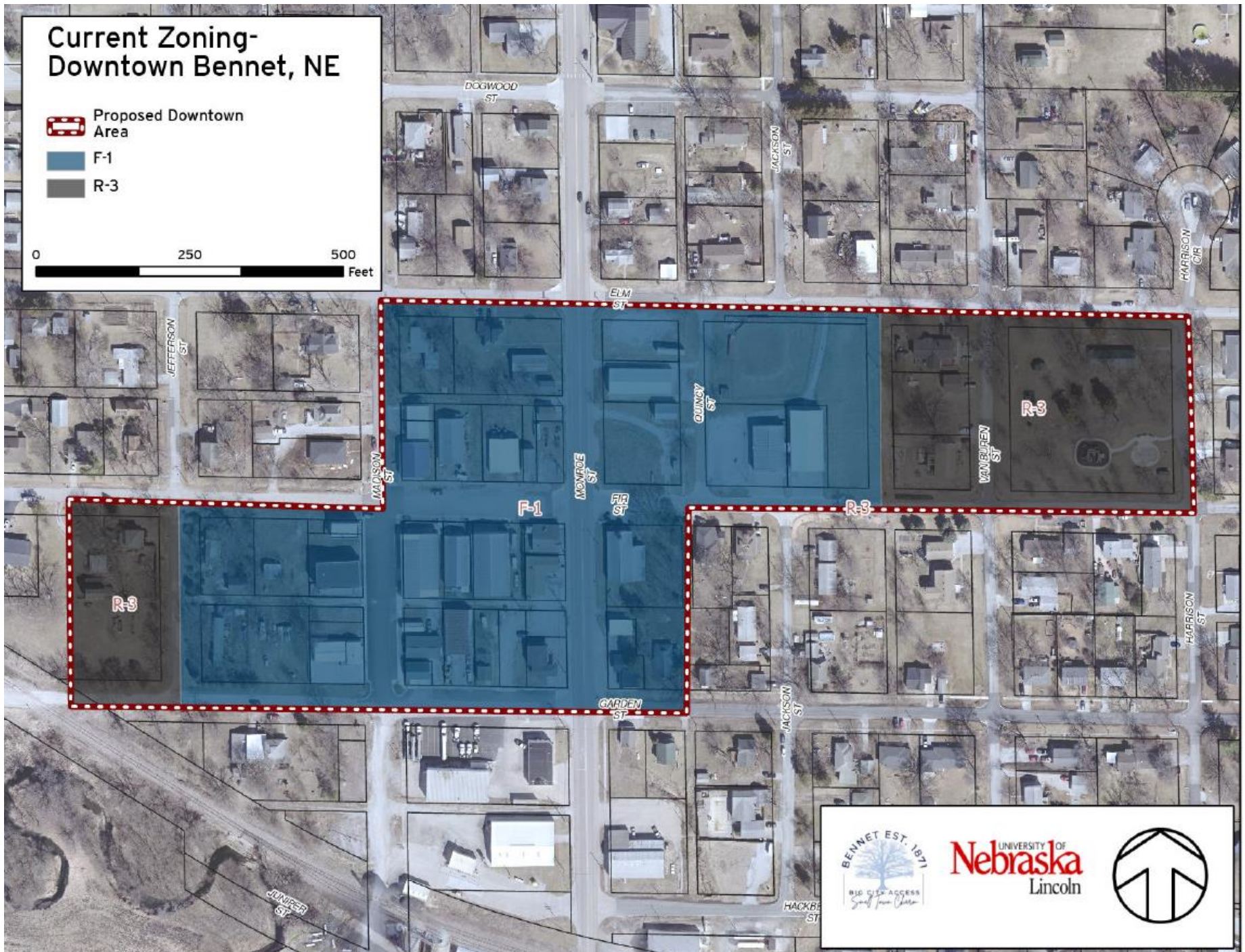
Current Zoning Downtown Bennet, NE

 Proposed Downtown Area

 F-1

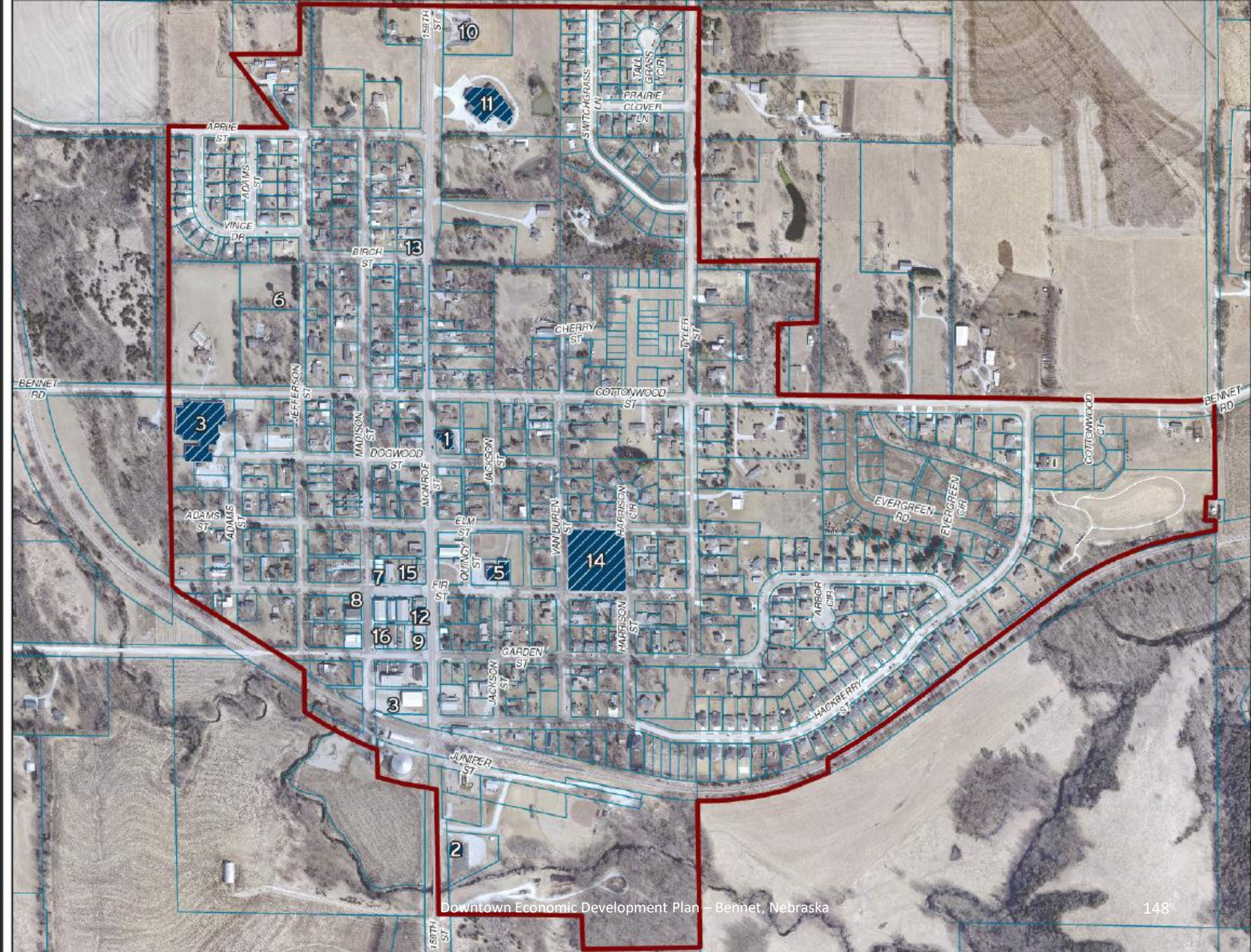
 R-3

0 250 500 Feet



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Proposed Downtown-Bennet, NE

Bennet
City Limits
Proposed
Downtown
Area
Tax
Parcels

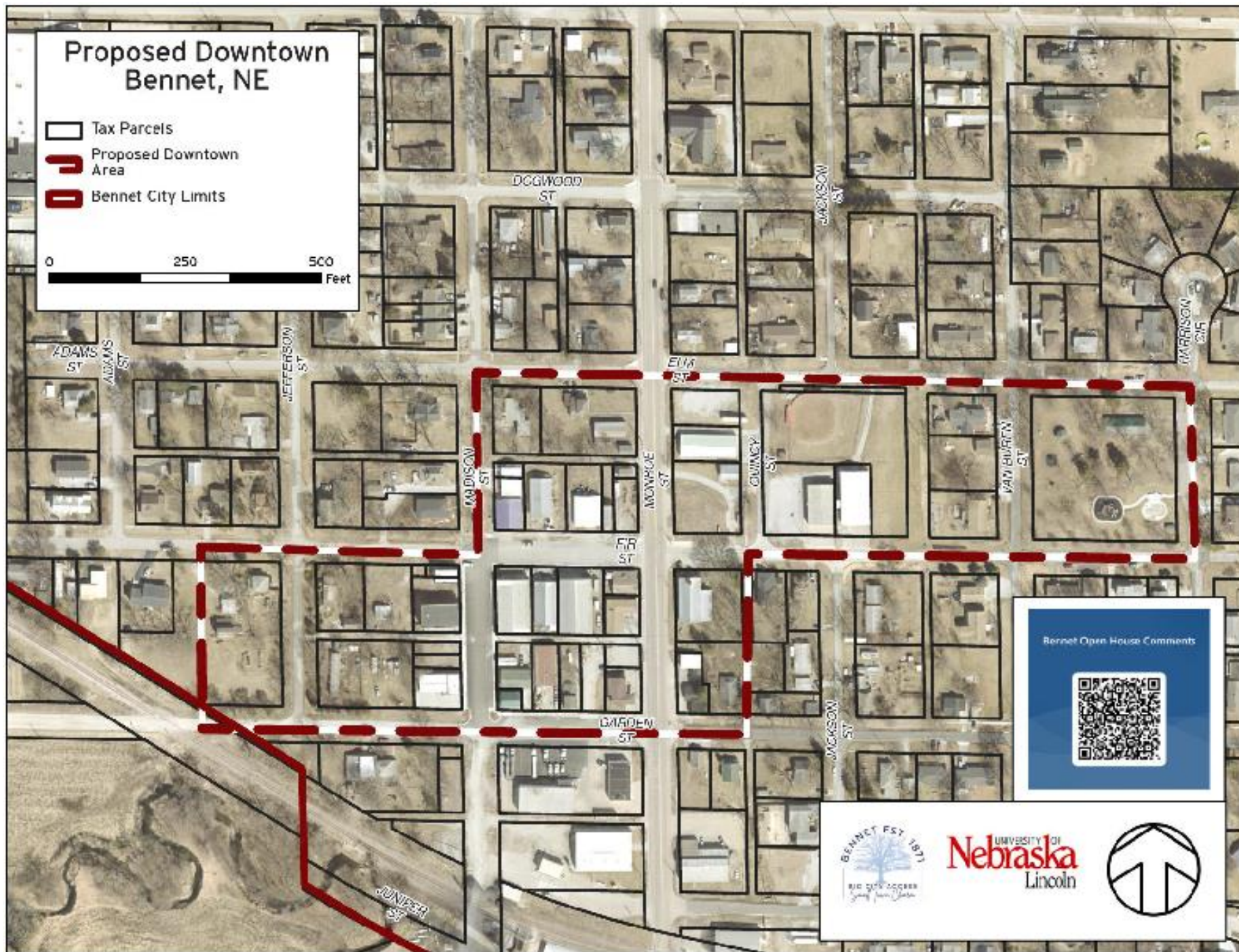
0 375 750 1,500 Feet



Proposed Downtown Bennet, NE

-  Tax Parcels
-  Proposed Downtown Area
-  Bennet City Limits

0 250 500 Feet

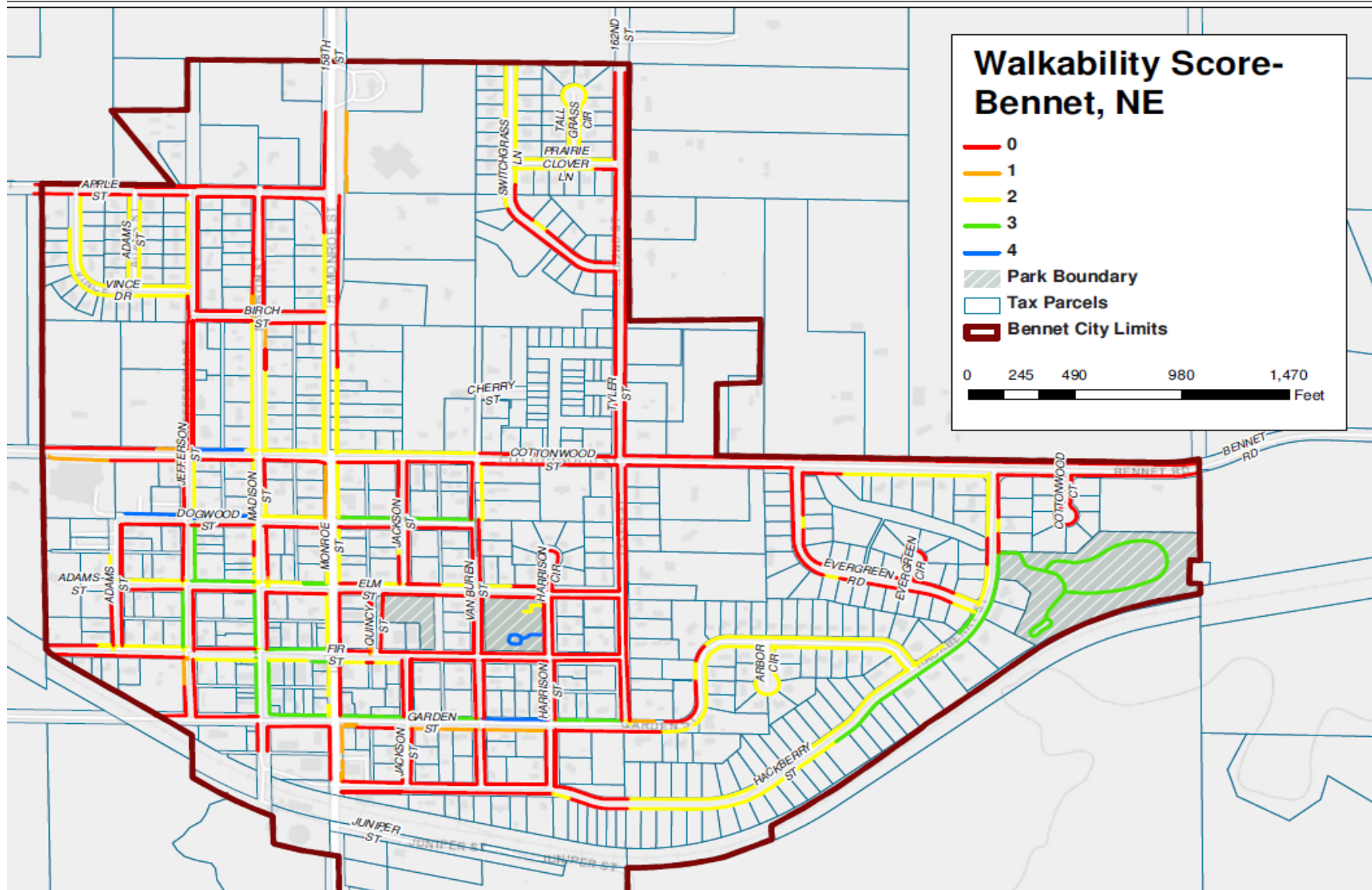


Bennet Open House Comments



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City-wide Walkability Score: 2.1/5.0

*A score rated 0 Indicates no Sidewalk



Zoning- Bennet, NE

□ Tax Parcels

■ C-2

■ F-1

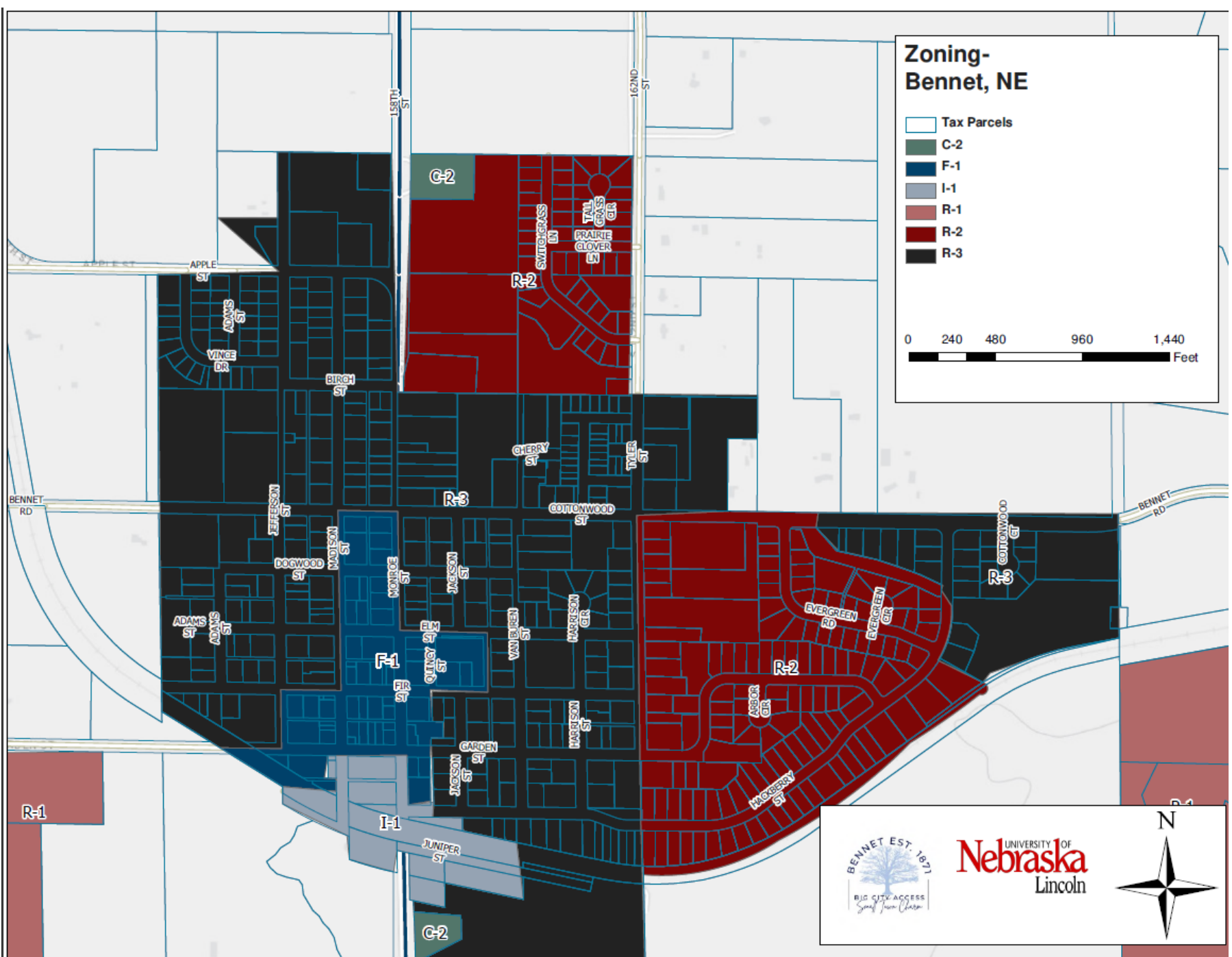
■ I-1

■ R-1

■ R-2

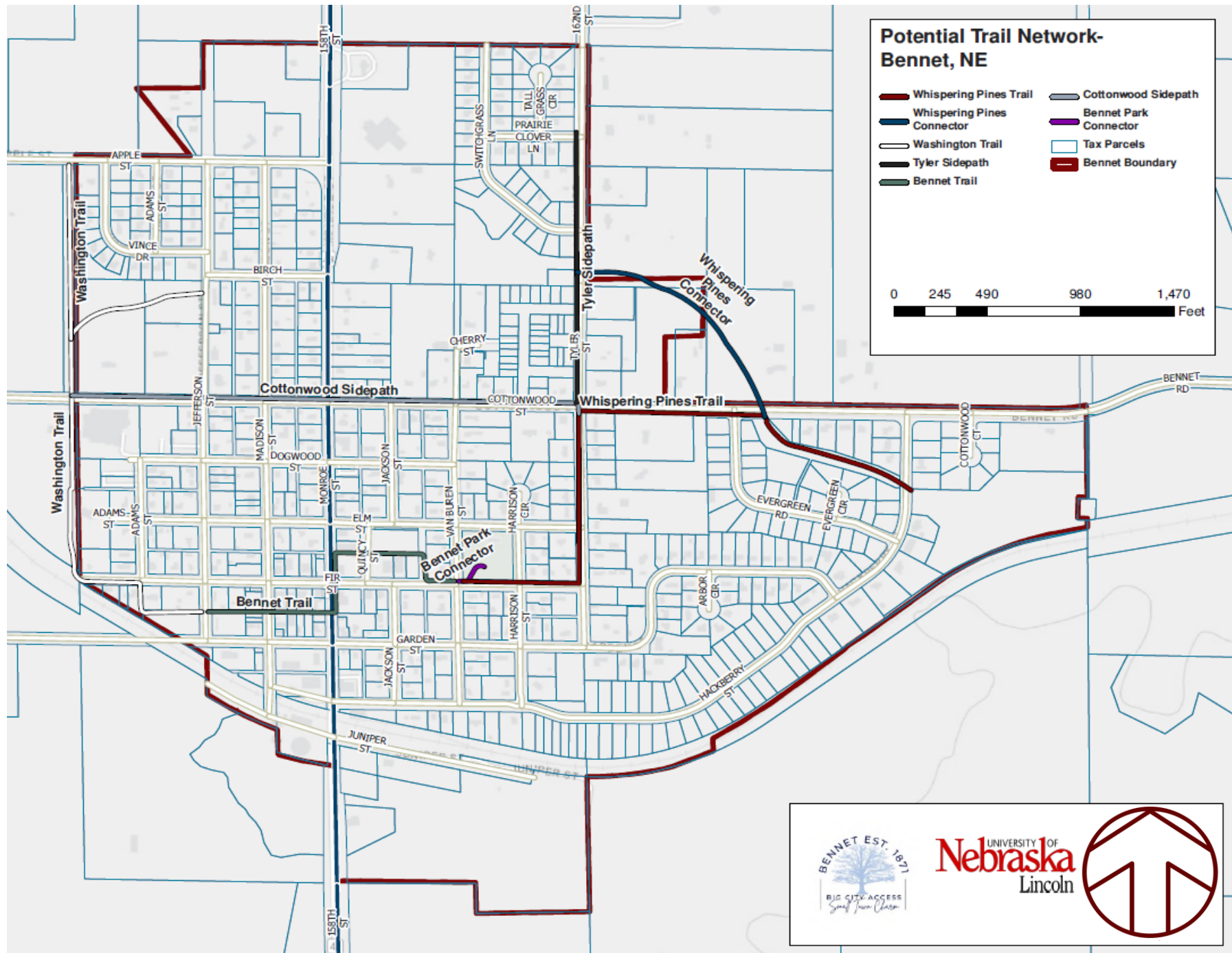
■ R-3

0 240 480 960 1,440
Feet

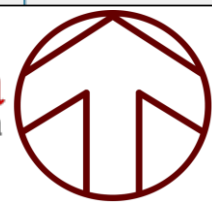


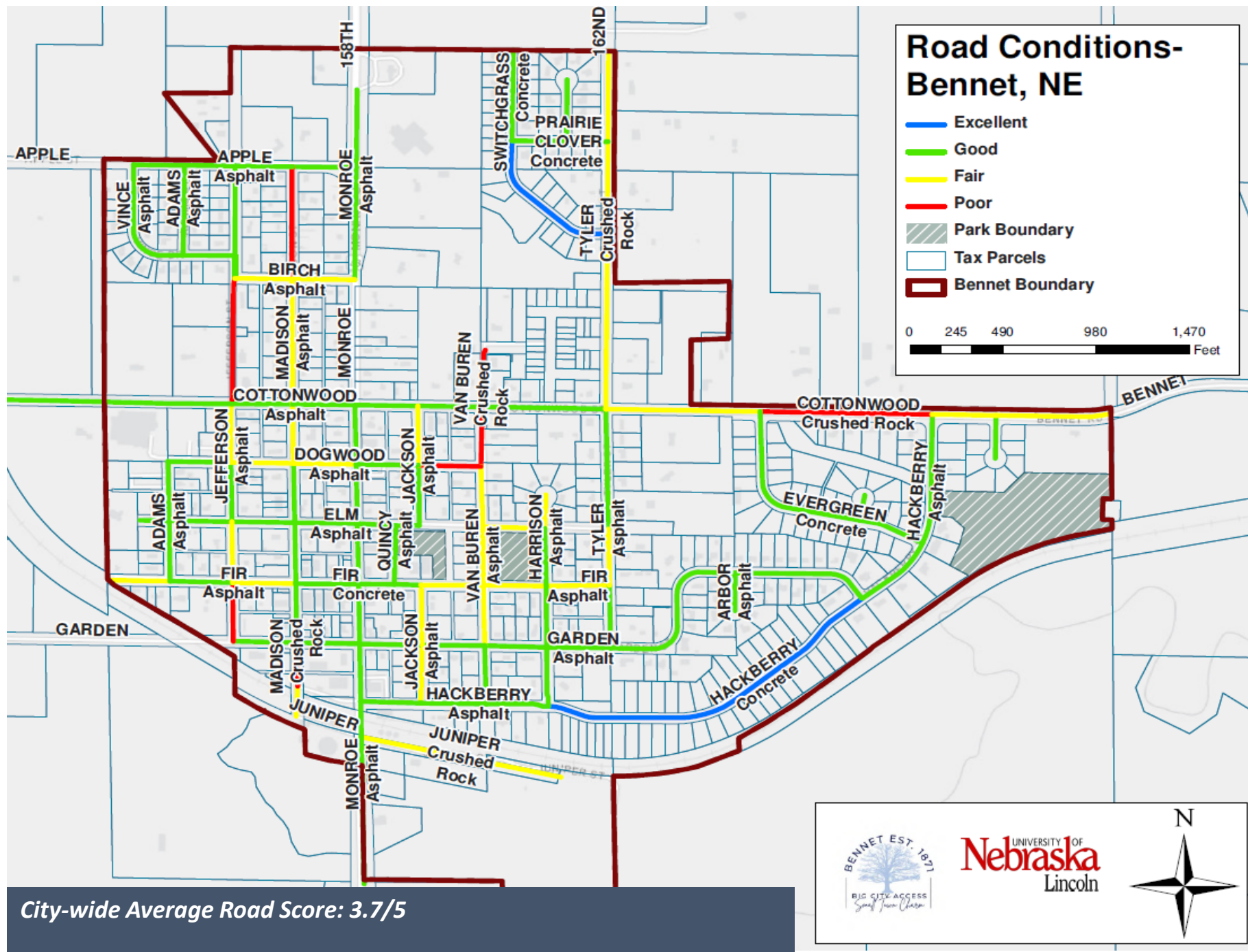
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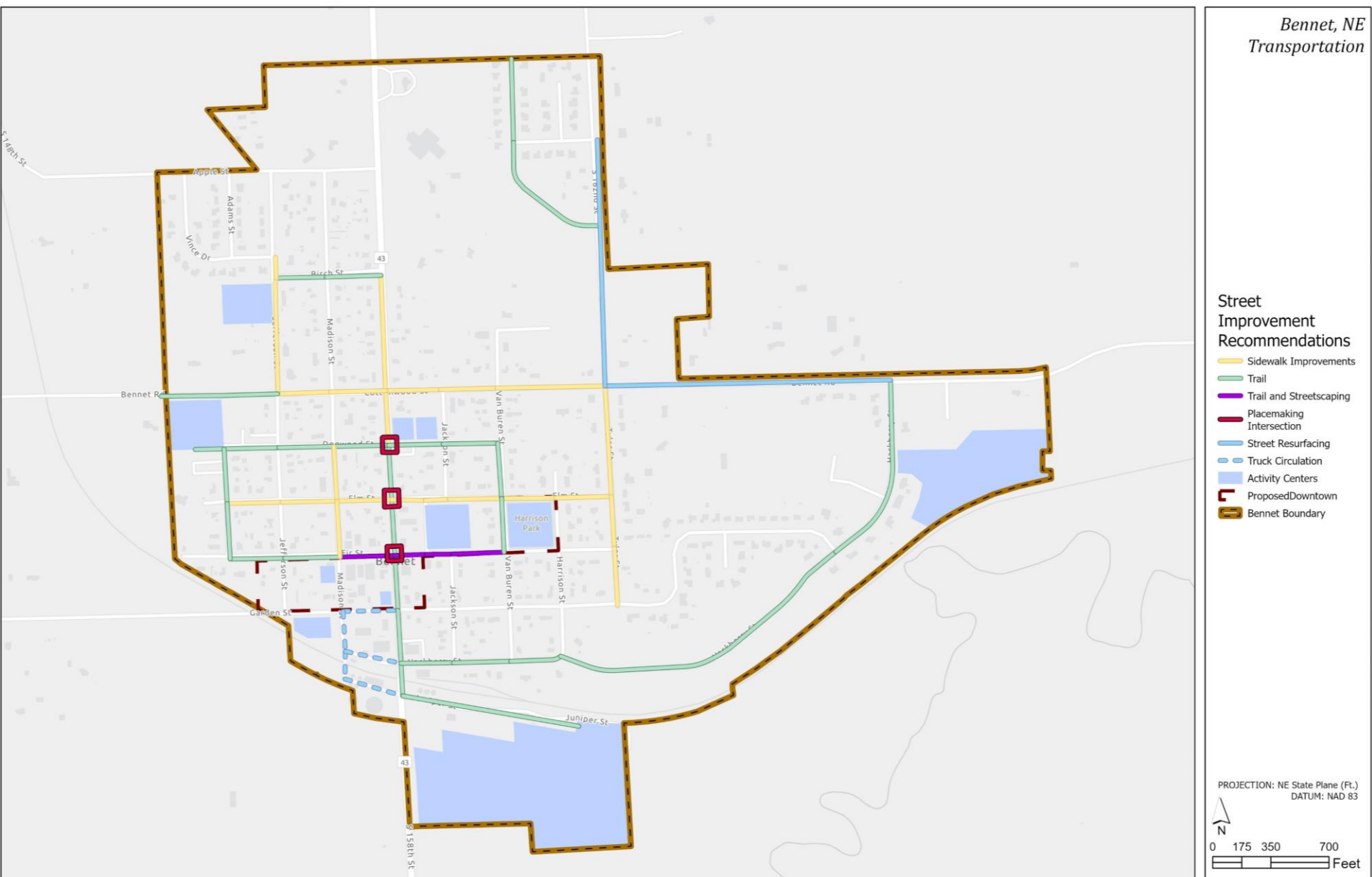


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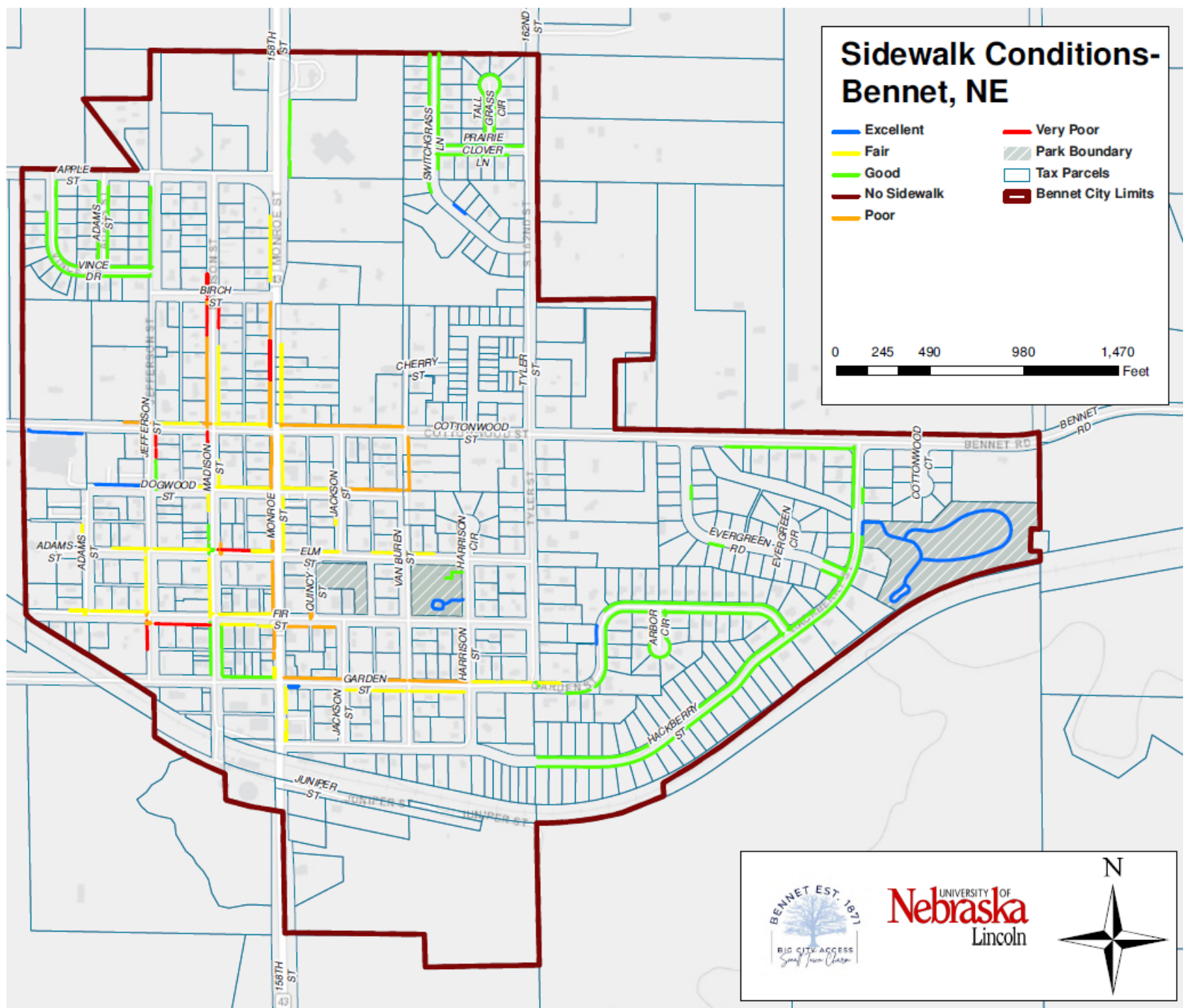
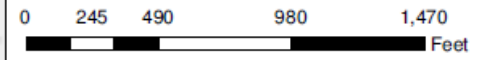


Transportation Strategies and Policies



Sidewalk Conditions- Bennet, NE

- | | |
|--|--|
| — Excellent | — Very Poor |
| — Fair | Park Boundary |
| — Good | Tax Parcels |
| — No Sidewalk | Bennet City Limits |
| — Poor | |

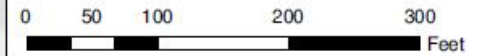


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Bennet Park- Bennet, NE

- Bennet Trees
- Park Boundary
- Parking Lot
- Playground
- Pool - Bottom
- Disc Golf Pad
- Tax Parcels



QUINCY ST

Bennet Park
Ballfield

JACKSON ST

DOGWOOD ST
JACKSON ST

VANBUREN ST

ELM ST

FIR ST

Bennet Park

HARRISON CIR

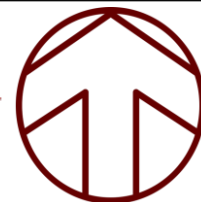
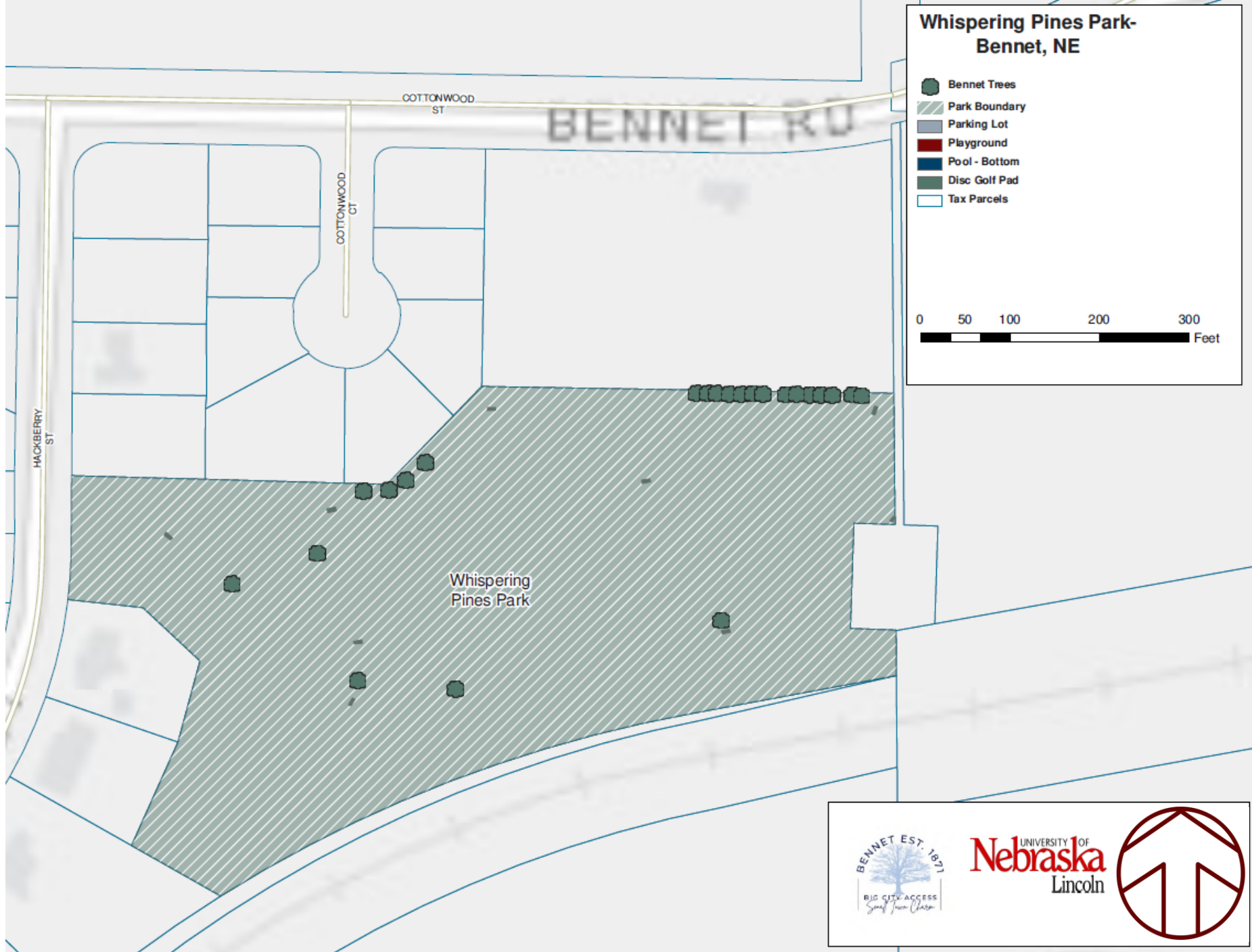
HARRISON ST

TYLER ST



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BENNET, NE

Downtown Economic Development Plan

**DECEMBER
2023**

