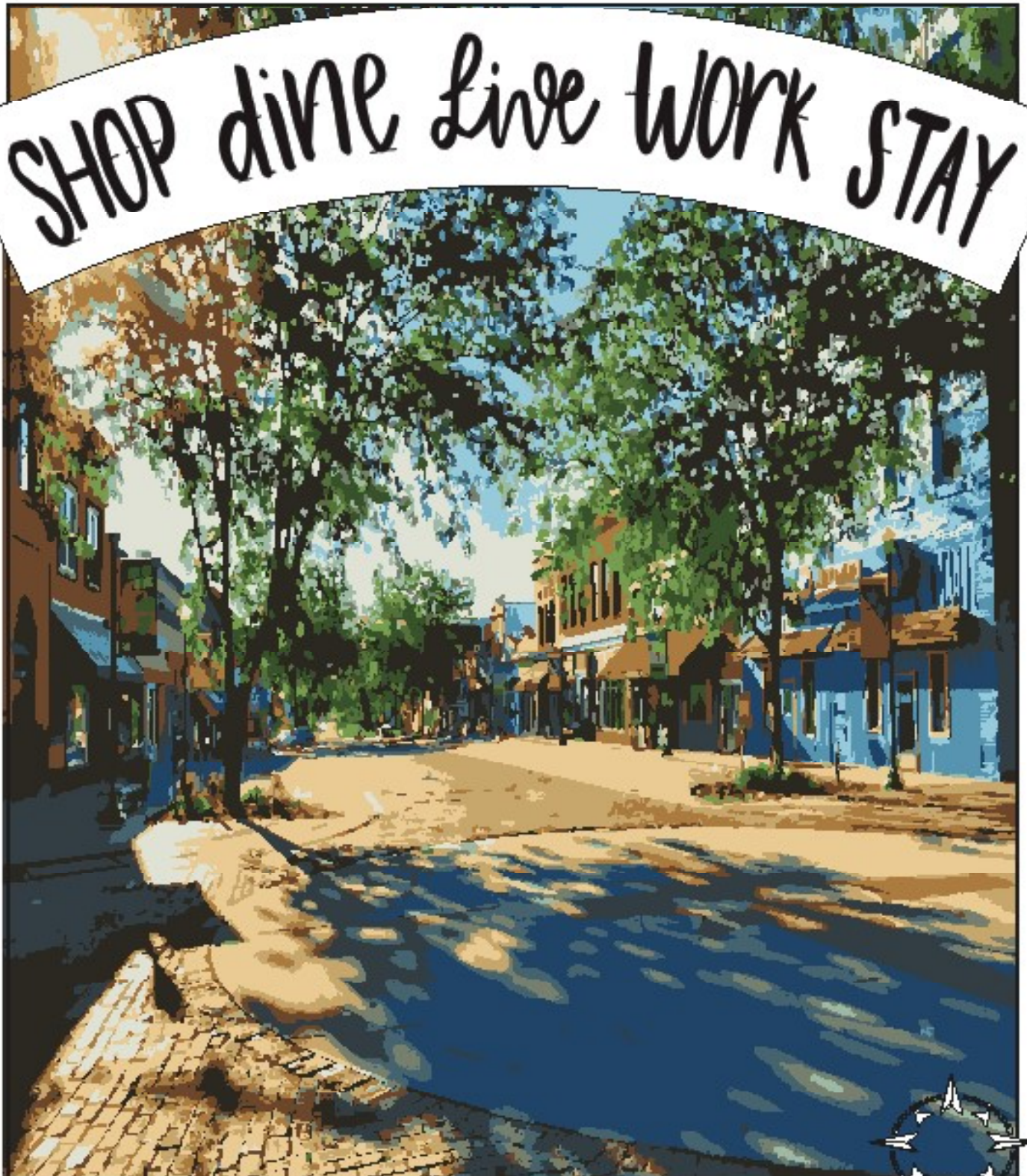


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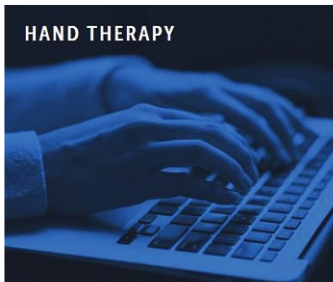
MEMBER FDIC

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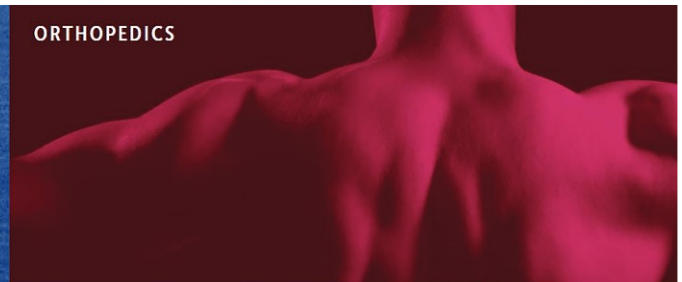
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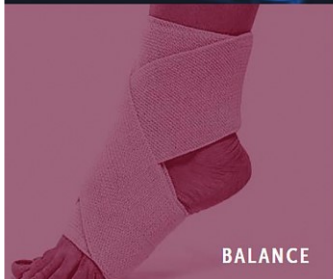
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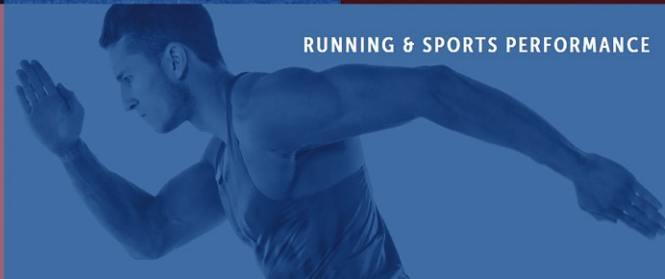
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About Ashland

Zip Code: 68003
Elevation: 1,089 feet
Land Area: 1.06 square miles
Median Household Income in 2021:
 \$55,712
Median Resident Age: 39 years
Population in 2023: 3,370
Source: nebraska-demographics.com

visitashland.org

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The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce Magazine is published once a year for Chamber members, the Ashland area community and visitors to the area. The Ashland Gazette is pleased to partner with the Chamber on this publication.

For more information, contact the Chamber at:
 Ashland Chamber of Commerce
 PO Box 5, Ashland, NE 68003

The Ashland Gazette

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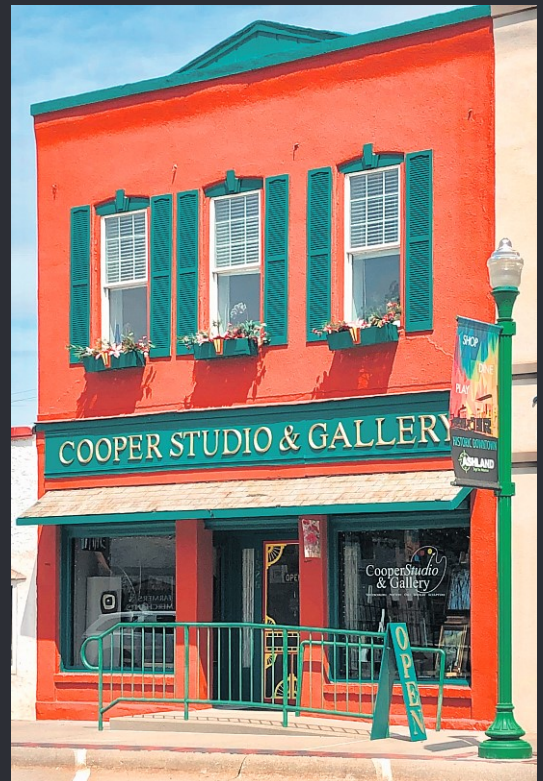
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Welcome to ASHLAND

On behalf of the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, I would like to welcome you to our community! I've been a volunteer with the Chamber since 2012, and have served as president since 2014.

I'd like to present our Chamber's first annual Guide and Directory magazine. It is being distributed to all households in the 68003 zip code, as well as area attractions and organizations.

It was published in collaboration with the Chamber, The Ashland Gazette, and Ashland-Greenwood High School's Future Business Leaders of America chapter. They did an amazing job. The publication features everything that makes our community special, from area attractions and our unique local businesses, to important organizations such as our schools, churches and city.

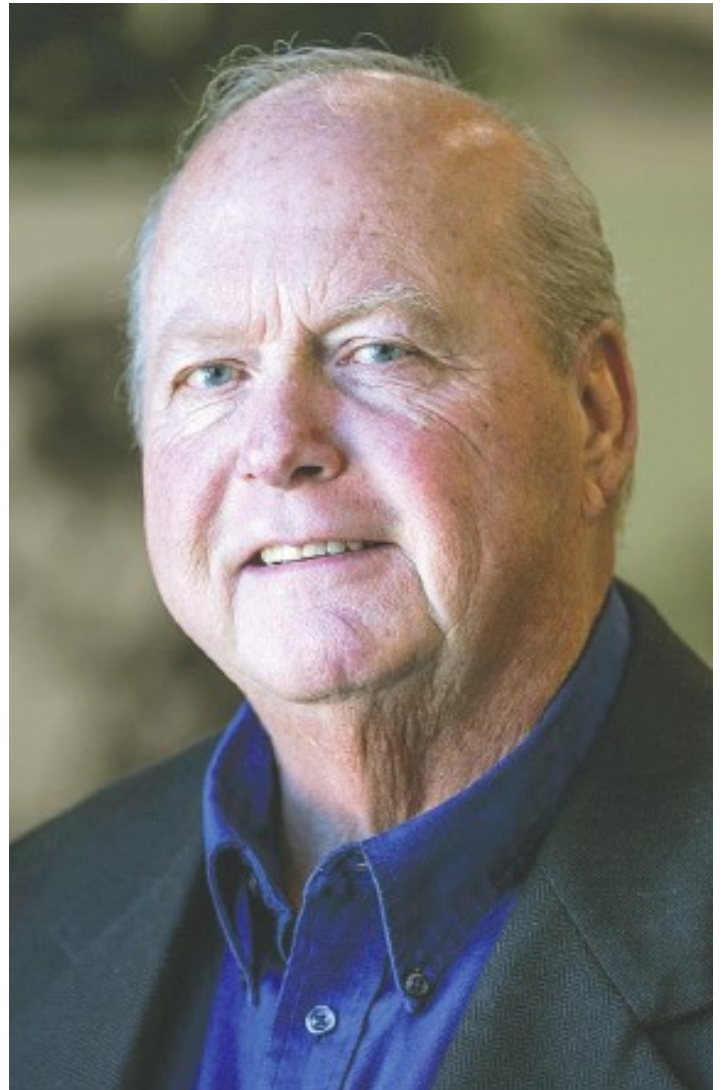
The publication highlights more than 110 member businesses and organizations who serve our community. It also features stories by Gazette editor Suzi Nelson focus on our community's growth, as well as the important and historic relationship with the Nebraska National Guard's Camp Ashland.

Our magazine's cover artwork and some of the pages were designed by Ashland-Greenwood FBLA teacher Amber Dutcher's class, as well.

The magazine is just one of the many ways your Chamber and its volunteers are working hard to engage and serve our business community and visitors in new and innovative ways. In the coming weeks and months, we'll be unveiling many other initiatives that will help promote our community and engage visitors.

It's also a good time to remind everyone of the importance of "shopping local." Doing so truly makes a difference. By shopping locally your money stays local. Local businesses and organizations like us reinvest those dollars to sponsor events and more, including Stir-Up Days and a Hometown Christmas, new equipment for First Responders, the new Performing Arts Center, as well as clubs like the 4-H. This level of involvement is not something online or big box retailers do for our community.

Finally, a tip-of-the-hat to our Chamber members. We couldn't have the success we've had as an organization without their countless volunteer hours and behind-the-scenes hard work. I would encourage you to engage with us and experience the value we



have to offer. Volunteer in Chamber activities, or on a committee. Support our members with your business.

Here's to a very successful 2023 and beyond!

Brad Pfeiffer
President,
Ashland Chamber of Commerce



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May 29

Memorial Day Parade

July 4

Fireworks Celebration

July 14-16

Stir-Up Days

July 16

Ashland Car Show



August 26

Fall Art Walk

September 10

Silver Street Flea Market

October 28

Halloween Costume Parade
on Silver



November 10-11

Winter Downtown Open
House

November 18

Holiday Art Walk

November 24

Small Business Saturday

December 9

Hometown Christmas



Become a Member

Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce Membership Benefits

The Ashland Chamber of Commerce is focused on developing, promoting, and protecting the Ashland business community and helping our local economy to flourish. Our goal is to help businesses, like yours, to grow and prosper through a combination of initiatives, including:

- Providing educational opportunities, free or discounted, to Chamber members
- Encouraging Ashland-area residents to buy locally
- Increasing revenue from tourism (e.g., attracting group tours, working closer with surrounding tourist attractions, keeping our brochures current)
- Advertising in magazines, newspapers, radio and other venues
- Marketing at regional events and through our website
- Promoting positive feature stories from news media
- Applying for grants to fund development and tourism activities
- Ensuring the Chamber membership is better informed

We believe the Chamber is one of the most important local organizations your business can join. Benefits for your business include:

- Listing on the printed "Business Directory," distributed throughout Ashland and surrounding areas
- Visibility on the Chamber website at www.ashland-ne.com
- Business referrals from inquiries to the Chamber phone number and website
- Joint advertising and marketing opportunities
- Networking with other business owners and leaders
- Keeping you informed of local issues that may affect your business
- Ability to accept "Chamber Bucks" at your business
- Sponsorship of Ashland Community Events (e.g., Stir-Up, Fall Festival, Hometown Christmas, Teacher Appreciation)

2023 MEMBERSHIP DUES STRUCTURE

Businesses and Non-Profits with Employees:

1-4 Person Business	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$95
5-9 Person Business	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$135
10-14 Person Business	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$235
15-25 Full Time Employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$285
26+ Full Time Employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$335

*2 Part Time employees = 1 full time employee

Other:

Full-time business with no employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$75
Part-time business (less than 20 hrs/wk)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$55
Non-profit organization with no employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$35
Individual (no business connection)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$25

BUSINESS / ORGANIZATION

CONTACT PERSON

ADDRESS

CITY | STATE | ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

WEBSITE

Check payable to Ashland Chamber of Commerce

Credit Card (Mail this form | Call | Visit Chamber Office)

Card Number: ____|____|____|____ Exp ____ CVV ____

Billing Zip Code _____

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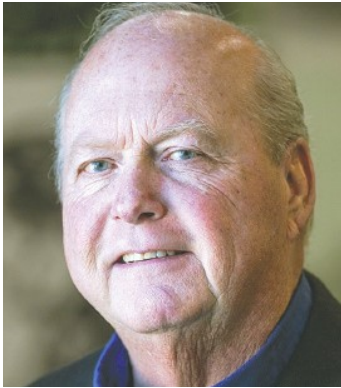
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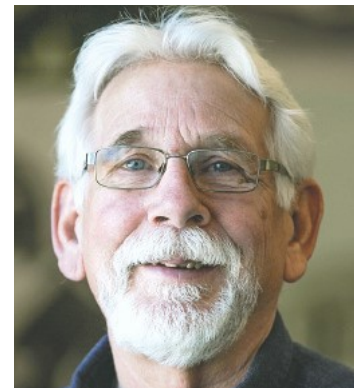
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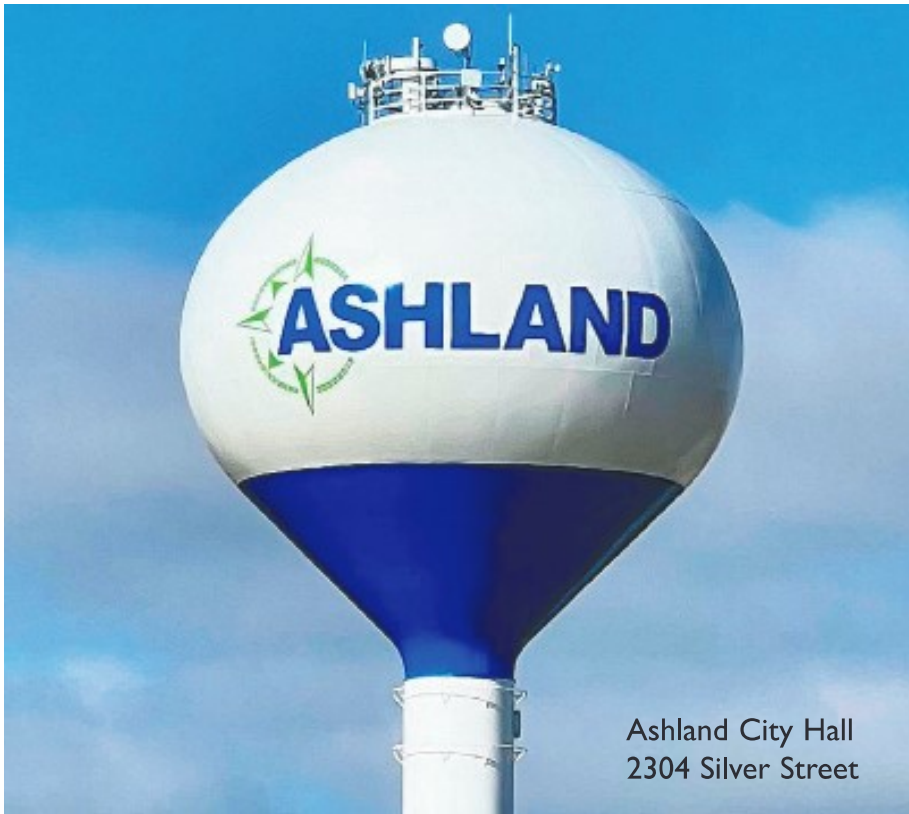
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Elected Officials

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Jim Anderson

City Council Ward I

Chuck Niemeyer,
Council President
Jerry Lofberg

Ward II

Jake Crnkovich
Michelle Libal

City Officials

City Administrator

Jessica Quady

City Clerk/Treasurer/Cemetery

Sexton
Kathleen Sliva

Utilities Superintendent

Greg Leuck

Public Works Director

Shane Larsen

Building/Zoning

Bill Krejci

City Attorney

Mark Fahleson
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City Engineer

Julie Ogden,
JEO Consulting Group

Ashland Police Department

2304 Silver Street

Police Chief

Ryan Brady

Ashland Fire and Rescue

2402 Silver Street

Fire Chief

Stan Smith

Rescue Captain

Tiffany Alcorn

Ashland Public Library/ Community Resource

Center

1324 Silver Street

Library Director

Tanya McVay

City Facilities

Playgrounds:

Wiggenhorn Park

25th and Clay streets

Euclid Street Park

21st and Euclid streets

East Side Park

Sixth and Birch streets

Kiddy Korner Park

12th and Euclid streets

Saline Ford Park

10th and Silver streets

Sports:

Jack Anderson Ball Park

10th and Clay streets

Frisbee Golf Course

10th and Silver streets

Tennis Courts

Wiggenhorn Park

Volleyball Courts

Ninth and Ash streets

Saline Ford Hiking/Biking Trail

12th and Silver streets

Oxbow Trail System (*mountain biking*)

12th and Silver streets

Other:

Swimming Pool

25th and Clay streets

Splash Pad

25th and Clay streets

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Ninth and Ash streets

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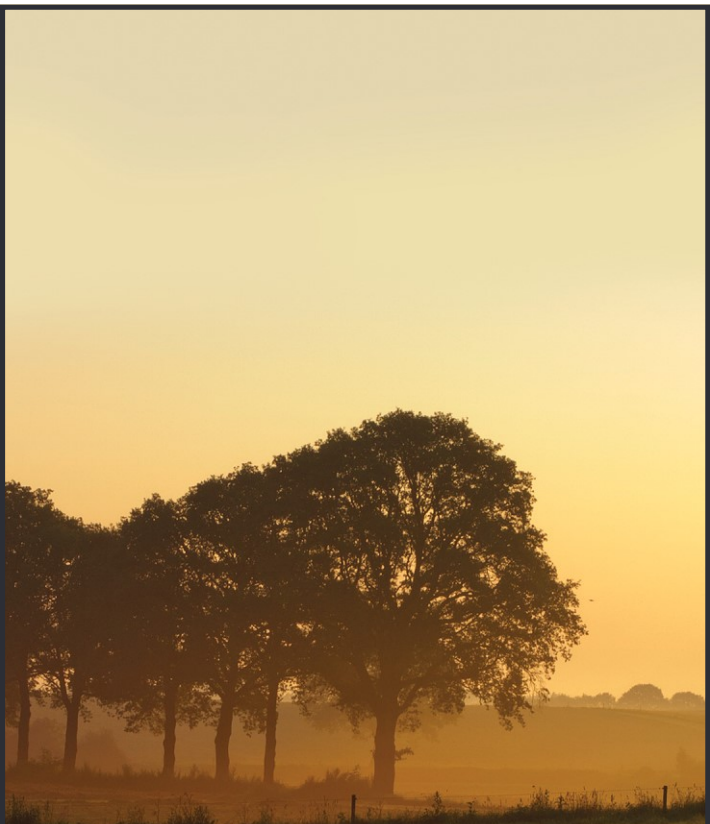
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Camp Ashland continues connection to Ashland Community

By Suzi Nelson

The relationship between Ashland and the National Guard training facility that bears its name goes back a century.

“They are very important to our community,” said Ashland Mayor Jim Anderson during the Ashland City Council meeting on April 20.

When the Nebraska National Guard established its first permanent camp site near Ashland in 1923 and called it Camp Ashland, the connection between the military establishment and the community was immediate.

In the early decades, the Guard would purchase supplies from Ashland merchants. During the various construction projects at the facility over the years, workers from the contracted companies would come into Ashland to dine and make purchases. Local residents were often employed for projects as well.

The presence of Camp Ashland has helped stimulate Ashland’s economy during the last 100 years, said Chamber President Brad Pfeiffer.

Today, uniformed service members are regularly seen in Ashland at local businesses and restaurants. Among them are employees of Camp Ashland and soldiers who are there attending training sessions. The camp has had more than 2 million people in the past four years attending the Basic Leader Course, which instructs soldiers to become non-commissioned officers (NCOs), officer and warrant officer training and truck driving school.

The facility’s leaders do a good job of promoting local businesses, Pfeiffer said.

Pfeiffer said the Chamber is grateful for the presence of Camp Ashland soldiers in the community. He and his colleagues will often pay for the soldiers’ meals to thank them for their service, he said.

In recent years, officials at Camp Ashland have reached out to the Chamber to strengthen the relationship between the military facility and its neighbors.

“They are very important to our community,” ~ Jim Anderson, Ashland Mayor

Pfeiffer said in 2018 Camp Ashland representatives attended the Chamber's annual banquet. At that time, the leadership had been very interested in having an expanded role in the Chamber and the community. However, the 2019 flood that tore through the military facility and the COVID-19 pandemic put the relationship on hold the next year. The facility housed 57 Americans who were quarantined after being evacuated from China, where the virus originated.

In January 2023, military leaders picked up where they left off, and reestablished ties with the community. Camp Ashland sent a trio to receive a city flag during the April 20 Ashland City Council meeting.

Among the members of the 209th Regimental Training Institute attending the council meeting were Col. Andrew Collins.

"We really appreciate the support of Ashland and the community here," Collins at the meeting.

Camp Ashland has made its presence known in Ashland over the years in many different ways. Guard members have volunteered their time for projects like coat drives. In 2010, a group of soldiers painted benches and street lights in downtown Ashland.

"They're always asking what events they can be involved with," said Pfeiffer.

The 209th RTI is also a regular participant in local parades, in particular the Stir-Up Grand Parade, which falls on Saturday morning of the three-day annual community festival. This year, the Stir-Up will be held on July 14-16, with the parade on July 15.

Camp Ashland's involvement in Ashland shows their gratitude to everything the community has done for the military facility over the last century, when the military facility was established.

Before World War I, the National Guard had been meeting for its annual summer Camp of Instruction at temporary sites across the state. The location could be an individual's ranch or a public campground.

Officials realized it was more feasible to establish a primary training site for the state and chose an area along the Platte River near Ashland that had been purchased to use as a rifle range 10 years earlier.

The property had been part of the farm owned by Mrs. M.J. Rose. She leased the area to the Guard in 1908 and again the following year for the National Guard encampment. The State of Nebraska purchased 800 acres from Rose and two other land owners in 1916 after obtaining funds from the federal War Department.

It was another seven years before the Na-



tional Guard began using the location as it permanent facility. This was a cause of concern for Ashland citizens, particularly the business owners who relied on Guard members as customers during their time off from training.

The Ashland Gazette wrote in 1923: "The city wants the grounds improved, she wants the troops assembled here, and what is more, she wants all the army officers to feel at home when they enter our city..."

In 1923, local citizens spearheaded a drive to assist the state in transforming Camp Ashland from a neglected rifle range to a sprawling military post.

The Ashland Chamber of Commerce purchased additional land and donated it to the state for Camp Ashland.

The local citizens of Ashland and other surrounding communities also helped the Guard strengthen the levee along the river to prevent flooding, which plagued Camp Ashland for many years.

For the first few years of Camp Ashland, the site was little more than a rifle range. In the late 1920s, the Post Headquarters building and 21 identical wooden structures were built, along with a wooden boxing ring and guest house.

One of the most beautiful buildings at Camp Ashland was constructed in 1929 with donated funds. The Enlisted Men of the Guard gave their company funds to build Memorial Hall in memory of their Nebraska comrades who had died during World War I. It has been used for social events, movies and dances ever since. After World War II, however, it also became the primary administration building on Camp Ashland.

In the 1930s, construction of more than 50

buildings at the site was completed as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project. The WPA, which was later known as the Works Projects Administration, was a national effort to provide paid jobs for the unemployed during the Great Depression.

It was during this time period that a concrete octagon boxing stadium was built to replace the wooden arena. The stadium seated 3,000. Although it is no longer used, it continues to be a popular site for visitors to Camp Ashland.

During the 1950s, the National Guard experienced an aggressive building period from which Camp Ashland benefitted. Improvements included the construction of an aviation hangar, 36-target rifle range and vehicle concentration site. The former mess halls were converted to classrooms and sleeping quarters and Memorial Hall was remodeled for office space and classrooms.

These improvements were directly linked to the establishment of the Nebraska National Guard Military Academy at Camp Ashland in 1957. This included the Officer Candidate School (OCS), which prepared Guard members to become commissioned officers. Non-commissioned officer (NCO) courses for the Guard were added in the late 1970s and in 1984 the Region IV Non-Commissioned Officer academy was established to expand the training to Army Reserve NCOs.

The Regional Training Institute (RTI) replaced Region IV Academy in 1997. It consolidated the officer and NCO training missions.

Camp Ashland saw another large building project during that time. New billets, classrooms and administration building were built,

"We really appreciate the support of Ashland and the community here,"

~ Col. Andrew Collins

and existing buildings were upgraded.

In 2005, a \$600,000 project restored Memorial Hall to look more like it did when it was first built. The porch was restored and the drop ceiling in the drill hall removed. The former offices on the second floor were converted to conference rooms. Also in the mid-2000s, the camp's original mess hall was restored.

Another round of construction is currently underway to repair damage caused when the Platte River breached the levee and flooded the

facility in 2019.

"The flood tore through Camp Ashland pretty hard," Collins told the Ashland City Council on April 20.

In the four years since the flood wiped out 28 buildings – including old World War II style barracks – a major effort to rebuild has been underway. In March 2023, a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrated the completion of the \$62.3 million rebuilding project.

The project reinforced and extended the le-

vee and rebuilt headquarters buildings, training facilities, barracks and other structures, along with roads and infrastructure. New construction included a gym and maintenance building.

Flooding has long been an issue at the riverside facility. But state officials said the Guard did not consider relocating after the 2019 flood, despite the damage.

"This is the right place for us," said Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, the Guard's Adjutant general the ceremony. "This is historic."

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Ashland-Greenwood

PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Ashland-Greenwood Public Schools is a PreK-12th grade school district defined by a strong, family-oriented culture. The school is committed to its mission of cooperatively promoting life-long learning to awaken, develop, and enhance each individual student's potential. The district will soon consist of four different buildings including the new PreK-second grade Primary School and a new Middle School opening January of 2024. The previous elementary school has been repurposed as an Intermediate School holding 3rd-5th graders, and the high school building still stands holding 9th-12th grade students.

Ashland-Greenwood is dedicated to both student and teacher opportunity and growth which can be recognized in its #RaisetheBar mantra. In the 2022-23 school year, the high school boys varsity basketball team won the Class C-I State Championship for the second year in a row. The Future Business Leaders of America organization sent 50 students to the State Leadership Conference where 19 qualified for nationals by placing in the top three. The district has recently developed what is called "The Bluejay Way" at the elementary schools and the RISE Matrix at the high school. Both are meant to encourage and support students to be safe, responsible, respectful, and engaged.

Although the district is growing, it is still very much attached to its agricultural roots. Just this past year, a long-time teacher at AG, Ms. Diane Starns, was awarded the Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher of the Year by the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation. Even the district's community partnerships are raising the bar as the PTO is an active participant in creating opportunities for students. The community recognized this commitment to excellence as well as the growing needs of the school district in 2020 when a \$60 million School Bond Issue passed to build both a Primary School and Middle School. In addition to the two new buildings, a new performing arts center will provide great opportunities for students and community members in the future.

The AshlandGreenwood Community Performing Arts Center will serve as a social activity hub for live events, allowing outside visitors to attend performances. The facility will accommodate for over 700 guests, with seating, lighting, and acoustics that are designed for the best possible experience. The center will be available for public programming as well.

School Information:
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 402-944-2128

Primary School (PK-2)
 Principal: Amanda Moon
 1010 N. 17th Ave.
 402-944-7083

Intermediate School (3-5)
 Principal: Megan Poell
 1200 Boyd St.
 402-944-7083

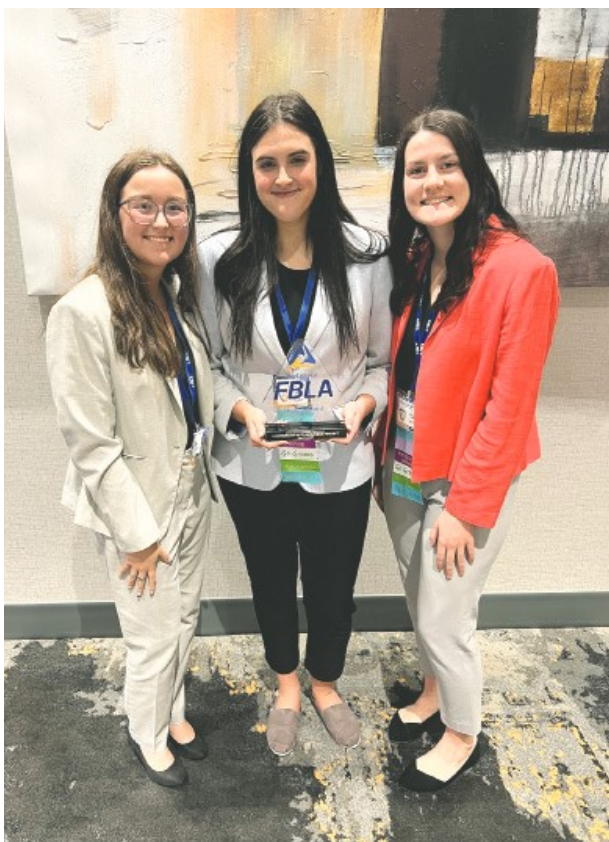
Middle School (6-8)
 Principal: Matt Flynn
 1842 Furnas Street
 402-944-2114

High School (9-12)
 Principal: Brad Jacobsen
 1842 Furnas St.
 402-944-2114

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Ashland-Greenwood

FBLA



Ashland-Greenwood FBLA members Holly Campbell, Katelyn Clark and Emma Keith worked on the Partnership with Business Team for the Ashland Chamber Magazine.

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce has worked diligently in the last few years to develop a relationship with the Ashland-Greenwood High School Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) chapter.

FBLA Advisor Amber Dutcher is a member of the Chamber's Board of Directors, serving as secretary.

The 2022-2023 FBLA Chapter worked in partnership with the Chamber and The Ashland Gazette to develop the inaugural Ashland Chamber Magazine. Students designed the magazine's cover and numerous pages inside the magazine.

The following students worked on the 2023 magazine.

Partnership with Business Team

Holly Campbell
Emma Keith
Katelyn Clark

Design Committee

Isaac Carson
Alivia Pike
Olivia Craig
Lauren Gerdes
Jadah Laughlin
Jaycee Fangmeyer
Ty Carey

Cover Design

Joselyn Sargent

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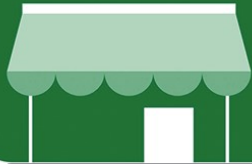
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ATTRACTIONS

Ashland History Museum

205 North 15th Street, Ashland

Hours: By appointment

402-944-7227

Located in the former Carnegie Library, the Ashland Historical Society has amassed a large amount of artifacts and memorabilia from the history of Ashland and the surrounding area.



Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum

28210 West Park Highway, Ashland

Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week

402-944-3100 or 1-800-358-5029; sacmuseum.org

Preserves history of U.S. aircraft, missiles, space travel and military history with 30-plus aircraft on permanent display and traveling exhibits. Director of Ashland native/retired astronaut Clayton Anderson.

ATTRACTIONS



Lee G. Simmons Conservation Park and Wildlife Safari

16406 North 292nd Street, Ashland

Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week

402-944-9453, wildlifesafaripark.com

Four-mile drive brings visitors face-to-face with dozens of North American animals and birds. Walk-up exhibits feature animals and birds in natural habitats.

Hightshoe Big Game Collection

1431 Silver Street, Ashland

Hours: Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.

402-944-3613

Located inside the Willow Point Gallery on Silver Street, the Archie Hightshoe Big Game Collection features more than 30 big game, including an Alaskan polar bear. The gallery also showcases originals and prints of Roncka's award winning paintings.



ATTRACTIONS

Mahoney State Park

28500 West Park Highway,
Ashland
402-944-2523,
www.outdoornebraska.gov/location/eugene-t-mahoney
Nebraska's most popular state park. Features include Peter Kiewit Lodge and restaurant, cabins, modern campsites, tent camping, Denman and Mary Mallory Kountze Memorial Theater, Go Ape zip line and tree top adventure course, Family Aquatic Center, Activity Center, horseback riding, Water Scott Jr. Observation Tower, James Family Observatory, iris garden, paddle boats, fishing lake, convenience store, picnic shelters.



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402-401-4231, ashlandrvcampground.com
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ATTRACTIONS



Ashland City Pool & Splash Pad

Wiggenhorn Park

404 N. 24th Street, Ashland

402-944-7230

Pool Hours: Please call as they are subject to change

Splash Pad Hours: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.



Oxbow Trail System

The Trail starts at the city parking lot at 13th and Silver Streets

Tucked in the terrain along Salt Creek it is a four-mile loop with over 70 features that appeals to riders of all ages and abilities.

Saline Ford Trail

Trail is designed to link the city's parks, schools and other community buildings

The first leg of the trail was completed in late 1992 and the third phase in 2003. Future phases have yet to be built to complete the loop.





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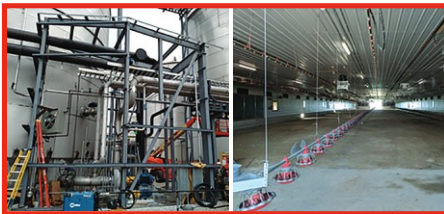
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Architectural renderings of the Oxbow Crossing project (lower right), including the planned medical clinic (at top), show one of the many developments in the works in Ashland in 2023. (Renderings provided by Schemmer)

COMING SOON

Ashland is exploding with new homes and businesses

By Suzi Nelson

Ashland may be considered a “hidden gem,” but this jewel is quickly being discovered by new businesses and inhabitants – as can be seen with the recent uptick in residential and commercial developments.

The population of Ashland exploded from 2,453 in 2010 to 3,086 as reported in the 2020 Census. A housing study sponsored by the Ashland Area Economic Development Corporation (AAEDC) predicts there could be nearly 3,500 people living in Ashland by 2027.

Location, location, location

One reason Ashland is growing is the old adage – location, location, location.

Located halfway between Nebraska’s two major cities, Omaha and Lincoln, Ashland appeals to new residents who have family members working on both cities.

The city’s proximity to these areas is also a factor for shopping and entertainment.

“Ashland has everything and everything you want within 10 minutes distance,” said Chamber President Brad Pfeiffer.

Being located near these metropolitan areas used to create a “bed-room community” atmosphere in Ashland, with people who lived here but worked elsewhere. But these days, that is not the case.

“Now it’s becoming a place for great business and job opportunities,” said Pfeiffer.

Why now?

Ashland was the ninth fastest growing city in the state in 2021, according to 2020 US Census information. The population grew 12.7% between 2010 and 2020, going from 2,453 residents to 2,764. Since 2020, Ashland has been experiencing a 2.22% annual growth rate.

The cause of Ashland’s current growth spurt can’t be tied to a singular reason, but Pfeiffer thinks he knows why.

“It’s the ‘Groundhog Day’” effect,” he said.

The 1993 movie stars Bill Murray as a TV weatherman who gets caught in a time loop and has to relive Groundhog Day over and over again. The predicament allows him to become a better person, and in the end, he looks at his producer/girlfriend and says he wants to stay in Punxsatawney.

People who visit Ashland for the first time often have the same feeling, Pfeiffer said.

“When Hometown Christmas started in Ashland, people would come to it and then say, ‘Why don’t we live here?’” he said.

Along with charming festivities like Hometown Christmas and Stir-Up Days to draw visitors to Ashland, its small town charm is also a magnet for many.

“It’s a place where everybody knows everybody and everybody helps each other,” Pfeiffer said.



The Ashland-Greenwood Primary School opened to students in January 2023. The school is one of two being built with proceeds from a \$60 million bond issue. The project also includes a new middle school with competition gymnasium and a performing arts center. These new school facilities are attracting many new families to the Ashland area. (Photo by Suzi Nelson)

Vibrant school system

The local school system is also bringing new residents to Ashland.

"I think that's one of the key identities that Ashland has is its school system," said Pfeiffer.

Ashland-Greenwood Public Schools has been experiencing increased growth in recent years and the community supported the effort to accommodate that growth with a \$60 million bond issue in November 2021 that includes two new school buildings and a performing arts center.

After experiencing delays in the project due to the pandemic-induced supply chain issues and materials shortages, the new Ashland-Greenwood Primary School opened in January. Students and faculty in pre-kindergarten to second grade now have a brand new bright, spacious, airy facility to learn and grow. This summer, playground equipment will be installed and landscaping around the building completed.

A mid-year move-in date is also planned for the new middle school. The two-story building will have a linear skylight running through the center of the building bring brightness to this structure, like the primary building.

The design also includes an academic wing, career/technology education wing, commons area, competition gymnasium and a performing arts center connected to the music rooms.

The performing arts center is being financed separately from the bond issue. It will serve as the focal point for the arts in Ashland, hosting community cultural activities as well as school events.

Pfeiffer said the growth in enrollment shows that families are drawn to Ashland.

"It's just a proven fact that it's a great place to raise a family," he said.

Residential growth

The Chamber recognizes that new businesses will mean more jobs, which will attract even more families to Ashland. But where will they live?

New houses being built in existing developments saw an increase in growth in the 2010s. From 2010 to 2022, the Iron Horse subdivision added 173 homes, and there are still buildable lots for sale in this area.

Sabre Heights, on the other hand, sold its last lot in 2020 and by 2022 had 157 homes built.

The first homes broke ground in Sabre Heights began in 2001. Construction was steady in the first few years, but slowed considerably when

the recession hit in 2008-2009. Things picked up as the housing market began a post-recession resurgence in the mid-2010s.

Sabre Heights, on the other hand, sold its last lot in 2020 and by 2022 had 157 homes built.

The Whitetail Estates neighborhood has grown quickly since the residential phase of the development began in 2019. The second phase was opened in 2021 and this year the third residential phase was approved by the city for development. When the last nail has been driven, there will be 146 new homes in this neighborhood. A commercial phase will debut in 2024 and will be anchored by Ashland Brewing Co., which is being developed by Tim and Frank Uryasz.

In the past three years, Ashland has averaged 31 new single-family homes per year, according to Bill Krejci, Ashland's city building official. However, these numbers look to increase as more residential developments spring up in the community.

In January 2022, a groundbreaking ceremony was held for Ice House Ridge, a residential/commercial development in the northern part of the city. This development will have 170 residential lots that will be built in three phases and will include a variety of housing types. The project also includes commercial development along Furnas Street.

Just outside of city of limits, Broken Wheel Subdivision will have six, six-acre lots on Ashland Road and County Road 6.

Multi-family residential units are also being built in Ashland. A development that will cater to the 55-and-over market has been approved by city officials. The Oxbow Crossing multi-use development on Highway 6 will include two apartment buildings, with one specifically for vacation rentals.

Also under construction is a senior housing project on the west side of Ashland with 20 total units. Only four units will be market rate, with the rest geared towards "affordable" housing.

While the Chamber is focused on economic development, residential growth in Ashland is tied to business growth as well. Pfeiffer said the Chamber encourages residential and commercial developers to use Ashland businesses to supply labor, goods and materials, thus bolstering existing businesses and adding jobs to the local economy.

"When somebody new comes in to build a business or housing development, we want them to be networking with existing Ashland businesses," said Pfeiffer.

Growing business community

Ashland is also seeing an increase in new businesses that will cater to the influx of residents. In 2023, five new restaurants were either being built or in the planning stages.

The lynchpin of the Oxbow Crossing project will be a Ruhlman's Steakhouse, a huge restaurant/meat market/event center, according to Phil Ruhlman of Ruhlman Development Company. The retail and multi-family housing development on the east side of Highway 6 will also include the Bryan Health Physicians Network care center, the first doctor's office in Ashland in several years. A drive-thru Runza is also planned for this project.

Jesus and Chuy Zaragoza of Wahoo are expanding their restaurant empire into Ashland with the opening of two restaurants in 2023. On Highway 6 they are opening Luna Azul, which will have a Mexican menu similar to their popular restaurant, Acapulco Mexican Grill, in Wahoo. The brother/son team also are planning a restaurant in a downtown location which is still in the remodeling stages as of summer 2023. The name and menu have not been determined.

Ashland Brewing Co., which will be the first business constructed in the commercial phase of the Whitetail Estates development, will have indoor/outdoor pickleball courts and other recreational activities to entertain visitors, along with food and drink.

Restaurants aren't the only new businesses opening in Ashland in the next year or two. Denise Craft is launching Flutterby Finds in downtown Ashland this year. This unique business venture will include selling gently used "excessive treasures" at her downtown storefront.

Goodman Classic Construction to discuss the project, which include renovating two buildings on the site into a retail space, warehouse space and a vacation rental unit.

Goodman Classic Construction owner Jeff Goodman is planning to renovate an old concrete plant into an agricultural construction service and supply store with warehouse space to store items for the retail business. The project also includes a vacation rental unit that will be used for short-term rentals

In 2023, the Chamber welcomed a number of new businesses to the community, including Blend Ashland, Lighthouse Boutique and Storage Ninjas. The previous year also saw the addition of ALLO to the community, along with Ashland Wine and Spirits. Farmers and Merchants Bank, the longest operating business in Ashland, celebrated a major renovation of their historic downtown building in 2022 as well.

Businesses that are already in Ashland have also benefitted from the influx of new residents.

"Existing businesses have shown an amazing amount of growth over the last several years," Pfeiffer said.

Downtown Ashland

Ashland's downtown area draws many visitors to the community. With its brick streets, historic buildings and unique atmosphere, businesses are eager to location in this quaint area.

"I got two phone calls this week from people wanting a place in downtown Ashland," Pfeiffer said in June.

But real estate in downtown Ashland is at a premium.

Ashland's downtown district has been a bustling place for decades. City leaders initiated a downtown improvement plan in the early 1990s, earmarking part of the city's new sales tax for the project. New sidewalks and curbs made the downtown area easier to access for drivers and pedestrians.

To keep the historic charm of the downtown area, local business and community leaders successfully fought to have bricks from the original streets incorporated into the project. Coupled with new landscaping, the downtown area became a showcase for the city.

"Since we redid the downtown area close to 30 years ago, our spaces have been well used and are in high demand," said Pfeiffer.



The future site of the Ashland Brewing Company on Highway 6 and 66 will anchor the commercial phase of the Whitetail Estates development. Tim and Frank Uryasz of A&F Real Estate will open the brewery/restaurant, which will include recreational activities like indoor and outdoor pickleball courts, in 2024. (Photos by Suzi Nelson)



Two new Mexican restaurants by the same area entrepreneurs are also coming to Ashland. Jesus and Chuy Zaragoza, who operate multiple restaurants in Wahoo and Fremont, are opening an as-yet-unnamed eatery in downtown Ashland (above), as well as a restaurant on Highway 6 called Luna Azul. Both will feature Mexican fare, but with different menus, according to the Zaragozas.



Farmers and Merchants Bank President Robert Fricke Jr. and his son, Bob Fricke, vice president of operations, show off a mural in the conference room of the bank's newly renovated interior in 2021. Major renovations like this to existing businesses, along with the influx of new businesses, is part of Ashland's current economic boom. (Photo by Suzi Nelson)

The downtown area is included in the boundaries of the Flora District, which is an area designated as a "Creative District" by the State of Nebraska.

The Creative District designation was developed by the Nebraska Arts Council (NAC) with the approval of the Nebraska Legislature in 2021. The program identifies and certifies creative districts in communities across the state to enhance the arts and strengthen economic development.

The program was opened up to communities across the state in 2022. Ashland was the first community in Nebraska to receive the Creative District designation, securing the honor in June of last year. Ashland's creative district was named the Flora District in honor of the city's past.

The Flora District committee applied for and received over \$250,000 in grants from the NAC. One of the first projects will be to complete the Towers of History monument originated by the late Gene Roncka, an artist and owner of Willow Point Gallery, an active member of the Chamber. In June, the Creative District was awarded another \$45,000 grant to use for programming and beautification.

Recreation opportunities

Ashland is the only community in the state that can boast it is within a few miles of some of the state's most popular tourist attractions – Mahoney State Park, Wildlife Safari Park and Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum.

But the residents also want to find activities within city limits. The Chamber was invited to be a part of a committee exploring development of a multi-purpose facility that would provide recreational opportunities for the community. Still in the early stages, the committee is gather-

ing input from the public on the activities and programs they'd like to see in the facility.

Hosting statewide events

Ashland has also been chosen by state and national organizations to host public or invitation-only events.

BRAN (Bike Ride Across Nebraska) 41 concluded in Ashland in June. A local Boy Scout sold concessions as the riders came into town, making over \$1,000 in just four hours. This annual bicycle trek across the state has regularly chosen Ashland as a stopping point on its route over the years.

The organizers of the Salt Creek Song Festival chose Ashland in 2022 primarily because of its location between Omaha and Lincoln. But the support of local residents and organizations touched the hearts of the organizers, and they have made Ashland the permanent home for the event.

Ashland hosted the Nebraska Chautauqua in 2021. The theme was the 1950s, and included breakout sessions covering topics like civil rights, the Cold War and rock and roll, and a fashion show.

This summer, Country Drive Golf Course just north of Ashland hosted a two-day music festival that brought thousands to the area.

Lake plans

State leaders have their eyes on Ashland as an area that is ripe for opportunity. In 2022, the state unveiled plans proposed by the Statewide Tourism and Recreational Water Access and Resource Sustainability (STAR WARS) committee that include the possibility of a 4,000-acre lake somewhere in the lower Platte River corridor. One of the proposed sites – which is still in the running – is just miles from Ashland.

The lake could be located near Ashland, ac-

ording to state and local officials.

"It's going to be a huge positive for Ashland," said Pfeiffer.

This is not the first time a large recreational lake has been proposed in the Ashland area. There have been numerous attempts for nearly a century to dam the Platte River near Ashland and create a large lake. In nearly every scenario, these plans included covering parts or all of Ashland with water. But this time Ashland leaders were included in the dialogue and promises were made not to build a dam or wipe out Ashland.

National attention

Even national media has discovered Ashland. In 2021, Travel + Leisure magazine named Ashland one of the Top 10 Small Towns in the Midwest. The list included towns in the region with populations of less than 15,000 residents.

Despite the national attention, Ashland's quaint atmosphere is something its residents – and the Chamber – want to preserve. One way to do that is with controlled growth, according to Pfeiffer.

Economic growth is being handled in a purposeful manner in Ashland, Pfeiffer said, to avoid some of the pitfalls that other Nebraska communities have experienced as they grew quickly.

"We want to keep Ashland as a small, unique town, but still have growth that's not overwhelming," he said. "We don't want to lose our identity."

The Chamber is encouraging the growth of new and existing businesses in a controlled manner to keep that small town identity intact, Pfeiffer said, because that's what makes Ashland such a great place to live.

"Both of my kids live here in Ashland and I want my grandkids to live in Ashland," he said.

Dene Boncha

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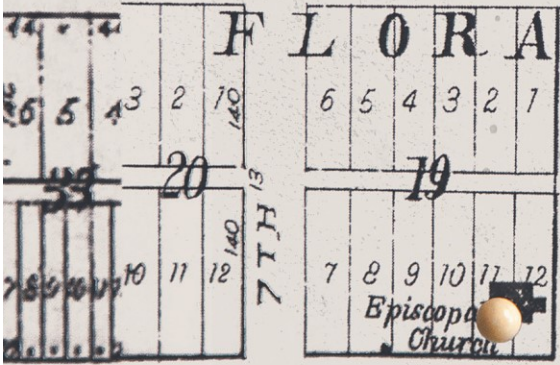
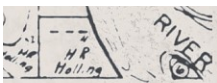
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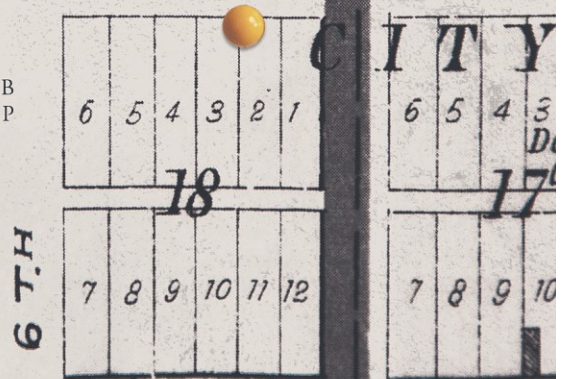
THE FIRST OFFICIAL CREATIVE DISTRICT IN THE STATE OF NEBRASKA, The Flora District will be a hub for arts and culture in the Ashland area. With the assistance of grant money from the state, we will soon begin construction on Gene Roncka's Towers of History sculpture garden, creating an arts-infused city park right in our downtown. We plan to install hanging baskets throughout our district, plant more perennials, and fund ample programming, from supporting new events at the Ashland-Greenwood Community Performing Arts Center to boosting existing arts-based programs planned by various groups in town.

The Flora District takes its name from "Flora City," one of the historic plats that merged together to become the town of Ashland. As a place where the arts can take root, flourish, and blossom, The Flora District seemed to be the perfect name for what we hope this Creative District will foster: healthy growth, beauty, vibrancy, diversity, and nourishment for the whole community.

More information coming soon to www.floradistrict.com.

THE FLORA DISTRICT COMMITTEE

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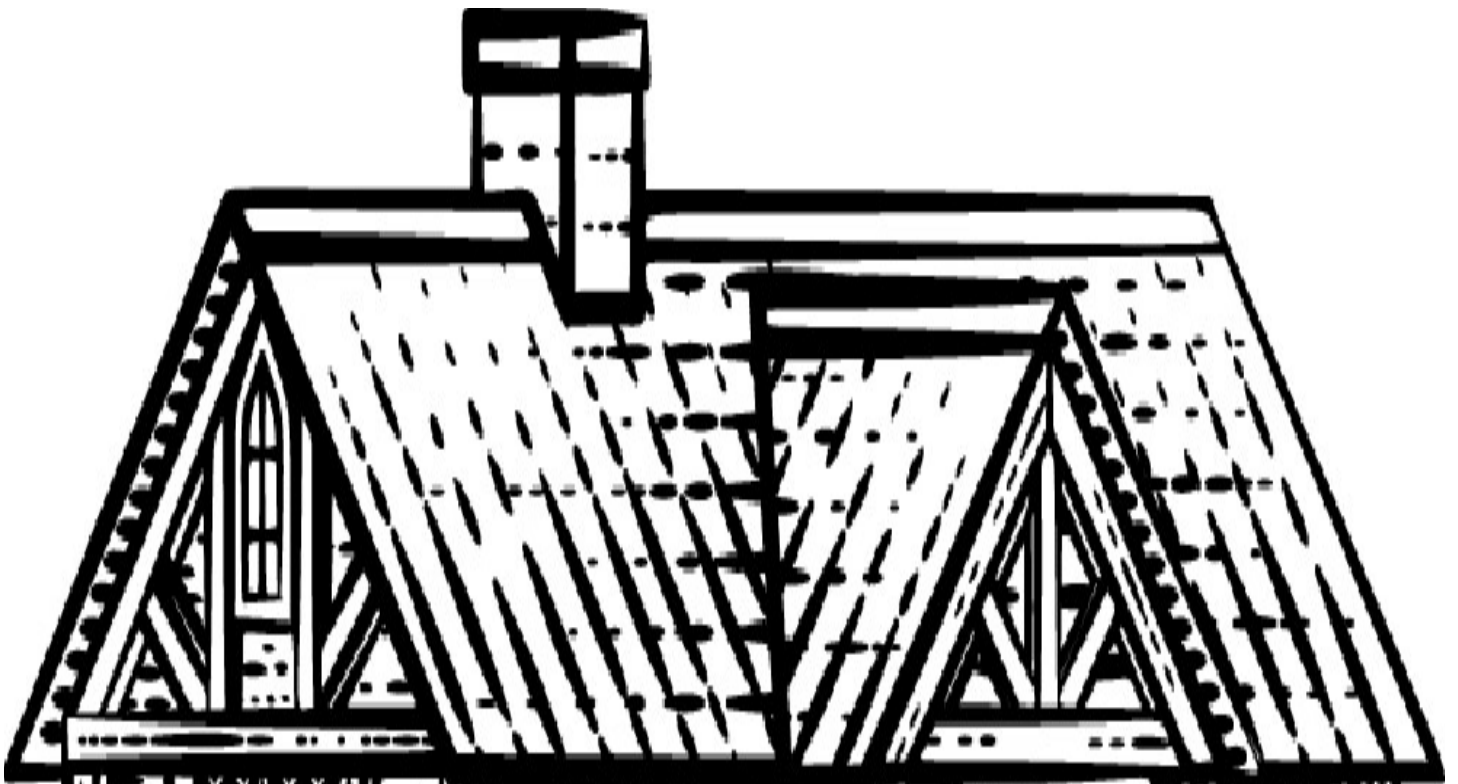
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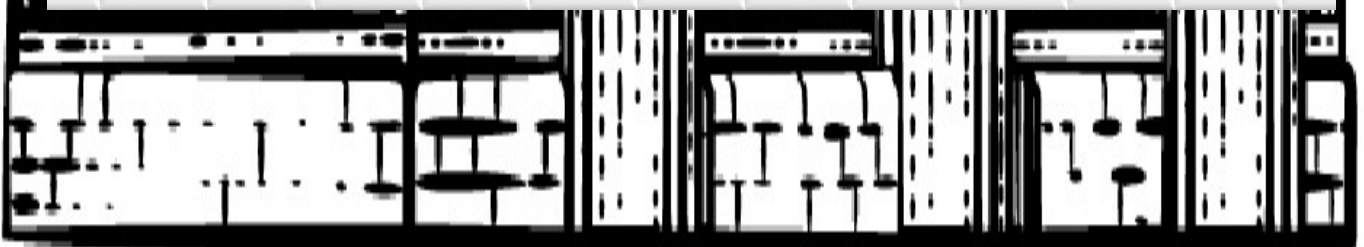
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