

Comprehensive Plan

Neola, Iowa

July 2006

Prepared by:



Metropolitan Area Planning Agency
Omaha, Nebraska

INTRODUCTION

The 2006 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Neola is designed to act as a guide for growth and community development and to be the basis for establishing land use policies and regulations. The Plan will analyze existing conditions within the City of Neola relating to population and demographics, land use, housing, and public facilities and infrastructure including transportation and parks and open space. Through interpretation of the data collected during the analysis phase and through community involvement and public participation, the Plan will also establish goals and objectives which will enable elected officials and citizens to make informed and educated decisions about the future of the community. Finally, the Plan makes recommendations regarding policies that will allow Neola to implement the goals and objectives contained herein.

This plan was prepared with guidance provided by the Neola Planning and Zoning Board and the Neola City Council. The planning time period for this plan including achieving goals and objectives is 20 years.

This section of the Comprehensive Plan for Neola will discuss basic introductory information regarding the purpose of comprehensive plans and the process for developing them.

PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process began with Neola's realization that growth in the region is occurring at a rapid pace and that significant groundwork must be laid before the City could be prepared for expansion. The first step in this process was the establishment of a Planning and Zoning Board to oversee the development of a comprehensive plan. With this decision came the willingness to commit time, energy and money to the process. The next phase involved the gathering of data and analyses of current conditions in the community. As part of this phase, input was sought from local stakeholders, city staff and the general public regarding problems within the community that need to be addressed, as well as things the community regards as assets that could be capitalized upon and improved. Upon analysis of the data and with respect to identified community needs, the next phase was to develop goals to address the problems and also suggest policy solutions designed to implement the goals and mitigate the perceived problems.

The comprehensive plan was prepared in conjunction with the Neola Planning and Zoning Board. The Neola City Council, local citizens and City staff also provided assistance. Public participation in the planning process is vital to the

successful development of a comprehensive plan and will be equally important to the plan's implementation.

The Comprehensive Plan for Neola consists of the following elements:

- Part I: Community Profile: includes historical information, environmental features, population and demographic data, as well as land use analysis and a Community Growth Plan.
- Part II: Infrastructure: consisting of analysis of transportation, housing, public facilities and utilities, and parks and open space.
- Part III: Implementing the Plan: details plan maintenance and update procedures; a capital improvement program; and suggests policies regarding economic development and zoning and subdivision regulations.

And

- Part IV: Final Report: characterizes the planning process and providing conclusions summarizing the plans objectives. The Final Report is a separate document from the Plan, and is included as an addendum. The report is titled "Planning Handbook for Implementation and Citizen's Guide to Understanding the Plan."

Parts I and II consist of an analysis of past and current conditions, identification of goals, and a list of policy recommendations to implement the goals. Parts III and IV consist of implementation strategies and policy suggestions, and to some extent, a discussion of current activities relating to capital improvements and economic development.

AUTHORITY TO PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan for Neola is prepared under the authority of Section 414 of the Code of Iowa, 2005, as amended.

PLANNING JURISDICTION

The planning and zoning jurisdiction for the City of Neola includes the area within the city limits of the City of Neola.

PART I: COMMUNITY PROFILE

► HISTORY

Neola's official history begins with the construction of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad line through the Mosquito Creek Valley in 1869. The City of Neola was platted in anticipation of the railroad and was intended to serve as an agricultural service center.

The town became an incorporated municipality in 1882. The period between 1868 and 1910 saw the most growth and the construction of many prominent landmarks and homes in town. Due to the sharp rise of the Loess Hills along the Missouri River Valley, Mosquito Creek became the natural point of entry for westbound travel into the Council Bluffs-Omaha metropolitan area. Neola grew largely as a consequence of its location along this important route.

Eventually, Interstate 80 would be routed along this corridor as well. When the Interstate 680 by-pass was constructed just north of Neola it created another important transportation link to Interstate 29. Being at the crux of major transportation corridors makes Neola a "gateway" to the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro and presents an outstanding opportunity for continued residential growth as well as commercial and industrial expansion.

Largely a rural community for much of its history, Neola has become more and more a part of the Omaha metro area. However, Neola still maintains a rural character and the presence of good agricultural lands, a railroad and a grain elevator all add to this lifestyle and help Neola stay close to its roots. A good school district, recreational opportunities, a medical clinic and heritage of stately homes and tree-lined streets also add significant elements to the quality of life.

► ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

CLIMATE

The climate of the area is continental with relatively warm summers and cold, dry winters. The area is situated between two distinctive climatic zones, the humid east and the dry west; therefore it experiences climactic fluctuations. The fluctuations between the two zones produce weather conditions for periods that are characteristic of either zone, or a combination of both. Low-pressure systems commonly affect the weather of the area by causing periodic and rapid changes, especially during the winter months. Most rain falls during the evening as sharp showers or thunderstorms, which occur mostly during the growing season of April to September. About 75 percent of the total precipitation falls during that period. Although winters are relatively cold, precipitation is light, with

only 10 percent of the total annual precipitation. Sunshine is plentiful, from around 50 percent of the possible in the winter to 75 percent in the summer.

WATERSHEDS AND FLOODPLAINS

Neola is wholly included in the Mosquito Creek Watershed. Mosquito Creek is the most dominant hydrologic feature in the area and provides all of the surface water drainage for the town and surrounding areas. Several smaller creeks and streams drain into Mosquito Creek near Neola, particularly, Neola Creek, which roughly follows Neola's western edge.

The floodplain of Mosquito Creek and its tributaries are quite extensive. The soils in the region are very well drained, lending to increased incidences of flash flooding in the event of heavy rains and partially explaining the wide extent of the floodplain. The Big Papillion-Mosquito Creek Watershed consists of 5,412.2 acres. The watershed also includes 112 lakes and 14 rivers and streams.

SOILS AND TOPOGRAPHY

Neola's topography is dominated by the Mosquito Creek Valley. Situated on the western bank of the valley, most of Neola lies outside of the 100 and 500-year floodplains. The topographic high point lies at the cemetery which sits at about 1240 feet above sea level. A benchmark located at the City's wastewater treatment plant represents the City's low point at 1089 feet above sea level. The total elevation change is about 151 feet. Neola is situated on a ridge which divides Mosquito Creek from Neola Creek. The town extends further down into the floodplain of both watercourses.

The soils in Neola are relatively well suited to urban expansion, as well as being exceptional agricultural resources. Elevated ridges in Neola, running approximately from the cemetery south towards St. Patrick's Church, consist of moderately eroded Monona silt loam having 5 to 9 percent slopes. Soils of this type have moderate limitations in regards to use as building sites, particularly with streets and concrete flatwork, where frost action can affect the road surface. Hillsides and slopes in Neola are primarily severely eroded Ida silt loam with 9 to 14 percent slopes. Limitations associated with this soil type include susceptibility to frost action and slope. Drainages, in between 2nd and 3rd Streets and along 1st Street and encompassing the entire downtown, consist of Napier silt loam (12B) of 2 to 5 percent slopes. Frost action is an issue with this soil type, but otherwise it is suitable for building construction. Slopes immediately adjacent to Mosquito Creek and Neola Creek are Ida silt loam (1E3) and are severely eroded banks with 14 to 20 percent slopes. This soil type has severe limitations in regards to urban suitability, particularly because of the slope. Areas south of the railroad, along Second Street consist of Monona silt loam (510B and 510C2). Described as benches, these areas are slightly elevated from the surrounding floodplain and consist of moderately eroded slopes of anywhere from 2 to 9 percent slope. As with other soils in the area, it is susceptible to the shrinking and swelling

associated with frost action and subsequent thawing, however, it is generally well suited for urban development. Areas adjacent to Second Street, south of the railroad tracks, consist of Colo silty clay loam (133). This area is gently sloping and lies within the Mosquito Creek floodplain. This soil type is susceptible to flooding and is not well drained. The remainder of the Mosquito Floodplain, typically areas within a few hundred feet of the riverbed, consists of Nodaway silt loam (220). This soil type is moderately well drained and gentling sloping or flat, however, due to floodplain limitations, suitability for urban development is low.

*Information derived from Soil Survey of Pottawattamie County, Iowa, issued by the United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service in September 1989.

► **POPULATION**

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan discusses historical demographic patterns, analyses current population trends and identifies needs that may arise as a result of demographic change.

Population History

In 1882 Neola had 286 residents. By 1890, the population had grown to 917 and peaked in 1930 at 944. The 1930's and 40's saw a decline in population to a low of 839 in 1950. The post WWII era saw a bolstering of the population. The population reached an all-time high of 968 residents according to the 1970 census. Since that time Neola's population and built environment have remained fairly stable, with the occasional addition of new buildings and homes. There has been a gradual decline in population since 1970. The city has experienced some residential growth on the north side in recent decades and some infill development has taken place, however, Neola's population has remained fairly stable, despite small population losses.

• **Table 1-1: Census Data for Pottawattamie County Cities – 1880-2000**

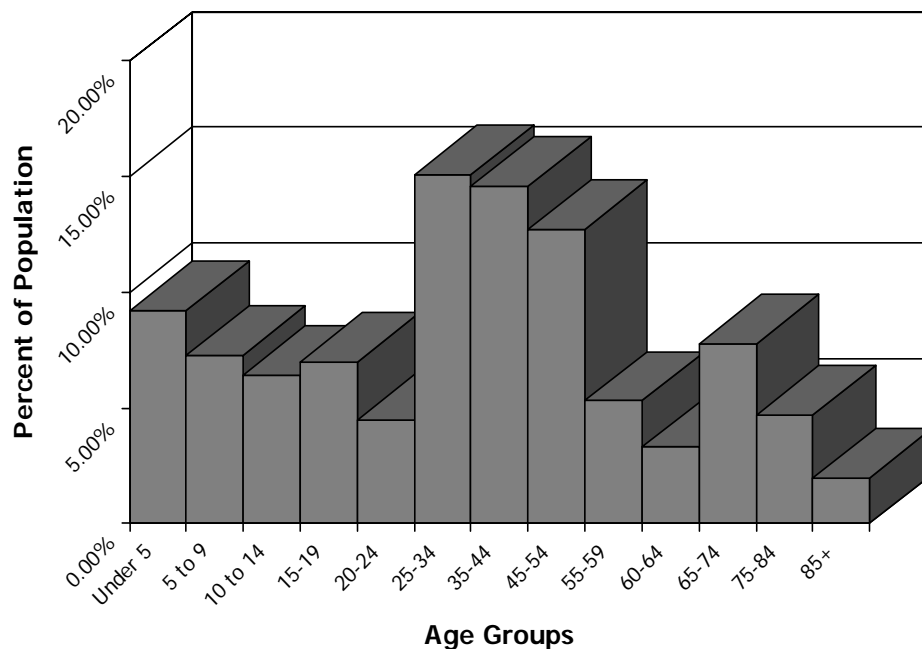
Area	2000	1990	1980	1970	1960	1950	1940	1930	1920	1910	1900	1890	1880
Avoca	1,610	1,497	1,650	1,535	1,540	1,595	1,598	1,673	1,482	1,520	1,627	---	1,600
Carson	668	705	716	756	583	596	613	617	692	640	632	391	---
Crescent	537	469	547	284	296	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Hancock	207	201	254	228	252	264	256	312	276	250	276	167	---
Macedonia	325	262	279	330	290	298	329	314	352	357	295	---	---
McClelland	129	139	177	146	150	159	165	161	142	134	---	---	---
Minden	564	539	483	433	355	328	310	377	381	423	328	287	---
Neola	845	909	839	968	870	839	841	944	896	926	921	917	286
Oakland	1,487	1,496	1,552	1,603	1,340	1,296	1,317	1,181	1,188	1,105	913	686	---
Treynor	950	897	981	472	368	247	219	232	204	122	---	---	---
Underwood	688	515	448	424	337	278	251	261	260	271	---	---	---
Walnut	877	857	897	870	777	888	902	935	1,072	950	878	811	733
Council Bluffs	58,268	54,315	56,449	60,348	55,641	45,429	41,439	42,048	36,162	29,292	25,802	21,474	18,063

Population Characteristics

- General Demographics

According to the 2000 Census Neola had a population of 845. There were 339 households with an average of 2.5 persons per household. The median age of the population was 35.3 years in 2000, the Iowa median age was 36.6 and the national median was 35.3 years. Over 15% of the population is aged 25-34 years. This is a significant figure, as many small rural communities in Iowa have much greater percentages of residents over 65 years of age, Neola also has a greater percentage of children under age 5 than the state average. Over 37% of the households are families with school-age children. However, the large percentage of residents in the 45-54 and 55-59 age groups indicates a need for more retirement housing in Neola in the future as well as other programs to assist an aging population. The large percentage of the population under 19 years of age (26.9%) also indicates a need for more affordable housing choices as those demographic groups age. Neola's demographic breakdown resembles that of a growing bedroom community despite the gradual decline in population over the past two decades.

- Chart 1-1: Neola Demographics by Age



Source: United States Census Bureau

- Income

The median household income is relatively high when compared to state and national figures. The median household income in Neola was \$47,500 compared to \$39,469 for the State of Iowa and \$41,994 for the nation as a whole. However, the per capita income of \$17,737 falls below the state figure of \$19,674 and the national figure of \$21,587. This can be indicative of a

number of population dynamics, but most likely indicates the presence of dual-income households. Although per household income is higher than the state and national average, the per capita figures are down, suggesting that wage levels are not commensurate with national averages. This appears to indicate a need for higher paying jobs in the region. Only 4.3% of the families in Neola are considered to be living under the poverty level, compared to 6% for the state and 9.2% for the nation.

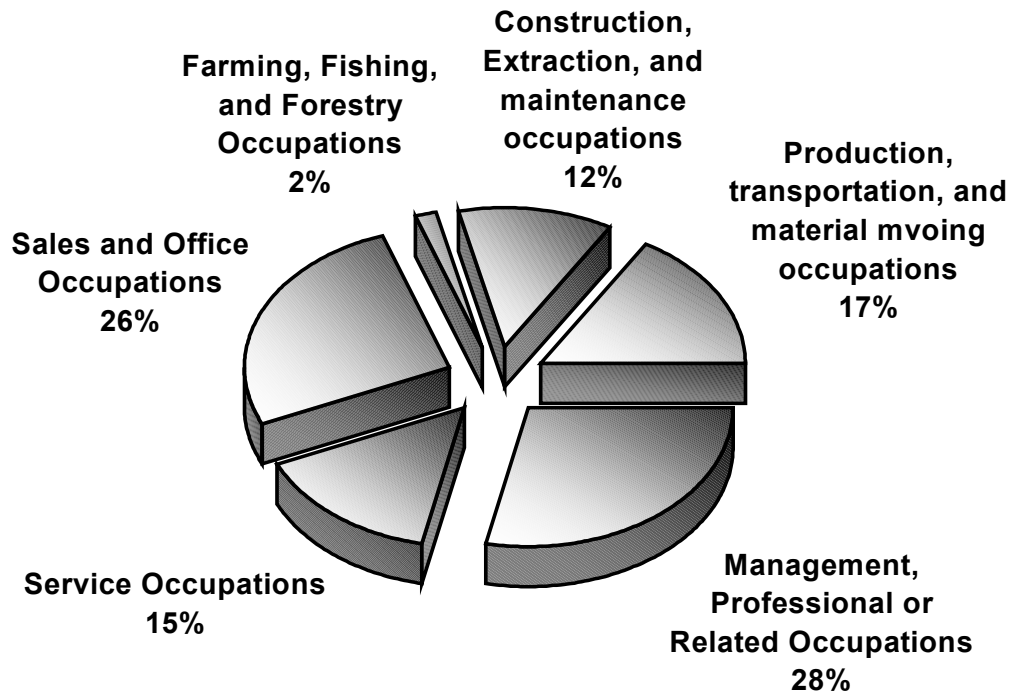
- Education

Neola is a fairly educated community with 93.2% of the population having obtained a high school diploma, 8.1% have an associate's degree and 13.2% a bachelor's degree or higher. This is roughly the same as the State of Iowa figures of 86.1%, 7.4%, and 14.7% respectively. Neola is part of a consolidated school district serving portions of north-central Pottawattamie County, southern Harrison County and a small portion of western Shelby County, including the towns of Neola, Persia, Beebeetown and Minden. The higher than average numbers for diploma attainment are attributable to a quality school district. Neola is also fortunate to have a premier community college in Iowa Western, featuring excellent specialized trade programs within a few minutes drive. This may explain slightly higher numbers for associate's degree attainment. At any rate, having such a quality community college within such short distance bodes well for economic development, as employers look for pools of well-trained, educated individuals.

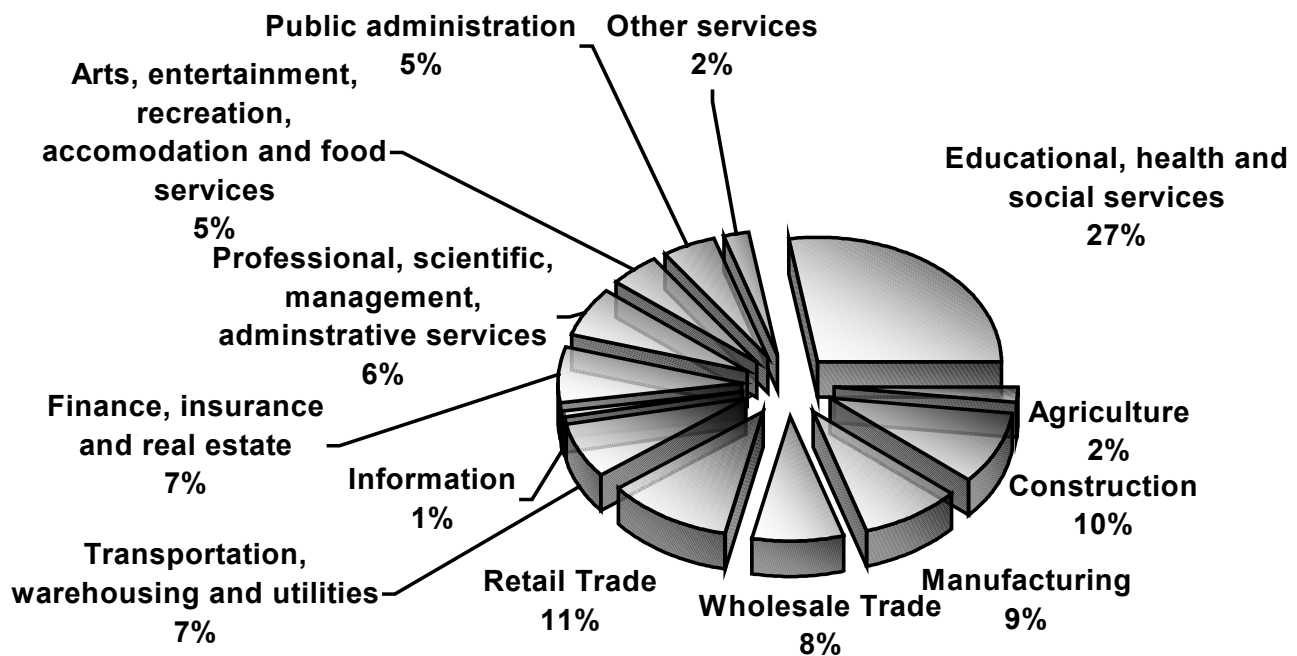
- Employment

As mentioned previously, individuals in Neola earn less on average than the State of Iowa and national averages, despite household income being higher. Neola has no large employers, which can explain this shortfall. Most of the labor force is engaged locally in service industry jobs or work in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro. Of residents aged 16 and over 69% were engaged in the labor force, above the national average of 63.9% and the state average of 68.2%. In families with children under 6 years of age, 73.2% had both parents engaged in the labor force. Of those residents aged 16 and over engaged in the labor force, 82.9% commute to work out side of Neola. The breakdown of occupation types suggests a bedroom community demographic trend; the largest employment sector is management, professional and related occupations at 28.2%, with sales and office occupations accounting for the next greatest percentage at 26.4%. Production, transportation and material moving employ 16.5% of the work force. Service occupations make up 15% of the labor force and construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations account for 12.2% of the labor force. Only 1.6% of the labor force is employed in the agricultural sector. These figures, more than any other, elucidate the role that Neola plays in the region. The vast majority of the work force is employed in jobs that are not found within Neola, and very few are employed in traditional industries like farming. Production, transportation and materials moving is the third largest occupational group, which is a traditional employment sector within Neola. New job creation in Neola will likely be focused on this employment sector, as Neola offers many benefits for that industry.

- Chart 1-2: Neola Employment by Occupation Type



- Chart 1-3: Neola Employment by Industry Sector



- **Taxable Retail Sales**

About 11% of Neola's workforce is employed in retail trade. However, Neola's pull factor, a figure used to determine the relative strength of retail trade within a city, is very low, below 0.5 consistently. A pull factor of greater than 1 shows that a city draws consumers from other areas, a pull factor of less than 1 shows that people are traveling outside of a city to shop. A great deal of retail sales are lost to Council Bluffs and Omaha. Underwood and Avoca both had pull factors of greater than 1, both have successful retail located on interstate exits. The average number of per capita sales in Neola was \$4,504 in 2003, compared with a state average of \$9,708. Likewise sales per firm was about 1/3 of the state average. Neola could position itself for capturing more retail sales, not only from residents, but from other surrounding towns with higher retail sales leakage numbers.

- **Table 1-2: Taxable Retail Sales for Pottawattamie County Municipalities**

City	2003 Population Estimate*	Retail Sales (\$mil)	Retail Firms	Sales Per Firm	Per Capita Sales	Pull Factor
Council Bluffs	58,940	\$796.71	1,224	\$650,910	\$13,587	1.40
Avoca	1,588	\$16.27	68	\$238,322	\$10,243	1.06
Oakland	1,461	\$11.19	66	\$169,504	\$7,657	.79
Carter Lake	3,288	\$11.13	61	\$183,904	\$3,384	.35
Underwood	719	\$7.48	42	\$180,137	\$10,397	1.07
Walnut	859	\$6.24	55	\$112,931	\$7,264	.75
Neola	823	\$3.71	33	\$111,481	\$4,504	.46
Crescent	532	\$3.49	31	\$113,607	\$6,567	.68
Treynor	934	\$3.05	25	\$124,397	\$3,263	.34
Carson	657	\$2.09	33	\$63,874	\$3,184	.33
Minden	563	\$1.58	24	\$66,523	\$2,806	.29
Hancock	204	\$0.98	14	\$68,961	\$4,817	.50

Source: Iowa State University Extension/Office of Social and Economic Trend Analysis

*Note: Population estimate figure is for 2003; US Census Bureau 2004 estimates are used elsewhere in this document.

Population Projections

The United States Census Bureau estimated the 2004 population of Neola to be 834. The 2000 decennial census showed a population of 845. The previous census in 1990 showed a population of 894. This appears to suggest that population is on a steady decline. Out-migration occurs as jobs are lost and more housing choices become available within the larger metro area. This has been the case in Neola. However, there is another dynamic in place that is hard to see when looking at net population figures. As low and moderate-income folks migrate out of the town to find more affordable housing choices closer to employment centers in urban areas, high and middle-income residents seek out

areas like Neola for commuter homes. While the net effect of these two processes has so far resulted in a general slow decline in population in Neola, the continued growth in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro could lead to an increase in housing development in Neola, which could change the tide from gradual decline, to gradual increase. The construction of a manufacturing and distribution center in Shelby as well as other smaller economic development projects in central and eastern Pottawattamie County will create a larger demand for affordable housing and could result in a population increase for Neola. The trend of demographic change from rural, agricultural community, to bedroom community will undoubtedly continue. Many of the smaller cities in the area had gained population between 1990 and 2000. Some have experienced small declines between 2000 and 2004 projections. The gain between 1990 and 2000 in most cities is largely due to new housing development. The decline in Neola, and other cities, during that period can be explained by the lack of any significant new housing development.

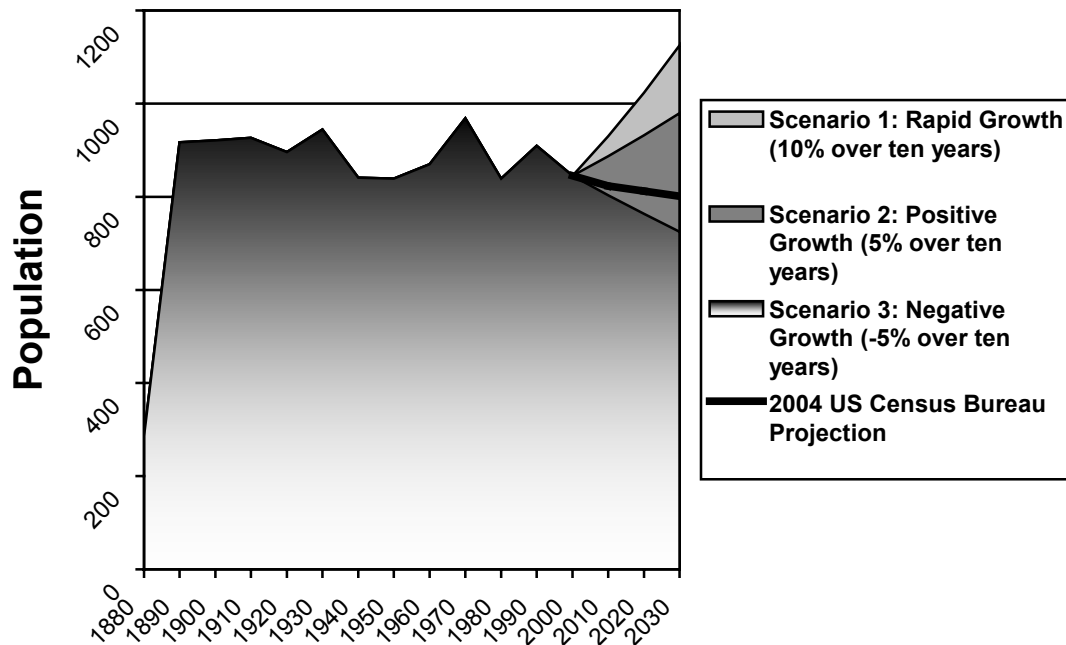
• Table 1-3: Population Projections for Surrounding Communities

Municipality	1990	2000	% Change (+/-)*	2004 Projection	% Change (+/-)
Neola	894	845	-5.5	834	-1.3
Minden	498	564	+13.25	569	+0.8
Underwood	515	688	+33.6	759	+10.3
Persia	312	363	+16.3	351	-3.3
Shelby	637	696	+9.2	681	-2.1
Avoca	1,497	1,610	+7.5	1,572	-2.3
Oakland	1,496	1,487	-0.6	1,459	-1.8
Walnut	857	778	-9.2	856	+10.0
Treynor	897	950	+5.9	904	-4.8
Missouri Valley	2,888	2,992	+3.6	2,909	-2.7
Council Bluffs	54,315	58,268	+7.2	59,347	+1.8
Pottawattamie	82,628	87,704	+6.1	89,208	+1.7
County Total					
Omaha	335,795	390,007	+16.1	409,416	+4.9

Source: United States Census Bureau

Neola's 2004 projection does mark a continued downward trend, however, many of the towns in Pottawattamie County were projected to see slight decreases as well. A residential development in the planning phase at the time of publication of this plan will likely create a slight increase for Neola, and the trend of net population loss may be at an end. The annual growth rate during the 1990's was -0.55%, or one tenth of the -5.5% decline during that decade. The following chart shows Neola's population curve over time. The curve predicts what Neola's population would be in 2010, 2020 and 2030 assuming three different population growth scenarios: a -5% growth rate following the trend established in the 1990's, a 5% growth ten-year growth rate indicating modest growth, and a 10% ten-year growth rate representing relatively rapid expansion. The curve also indicates the United States Census Bureau population projection made in 2004.

- Table 1-4: Hypothetical Population Projections for Neola



Many small cities within Pottawattamie County have seen large population increases commensurate with new housing development. Given the regional growth trends and a strong desire by the community to grow, it is likely that one percent annual growth will occur (10% over ten years). Under this assumption, Neola could reach the 1,000 residents threshold by as early as 2020. In order to realize this growth, changes in land use policy will need to be made to make space for this growth.

► **LAND USE**

Land use classifies land according to the way an area is utilized – residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural or civic. Establishing suitable areas of town in which certain types of land use are acceptable is one of the foundation principles of planning and also is primary to the development of efficient, safe and economically sound cities. This section of the Plan analyzes current land use patterns and existing regional development trends. From this information and information obtained from members of the community, city officials and staff, this section also presents a Community Growth Plan, which is intended to guide land use decisions and become the basis for land use regulation in Neola.

Existing Land Use

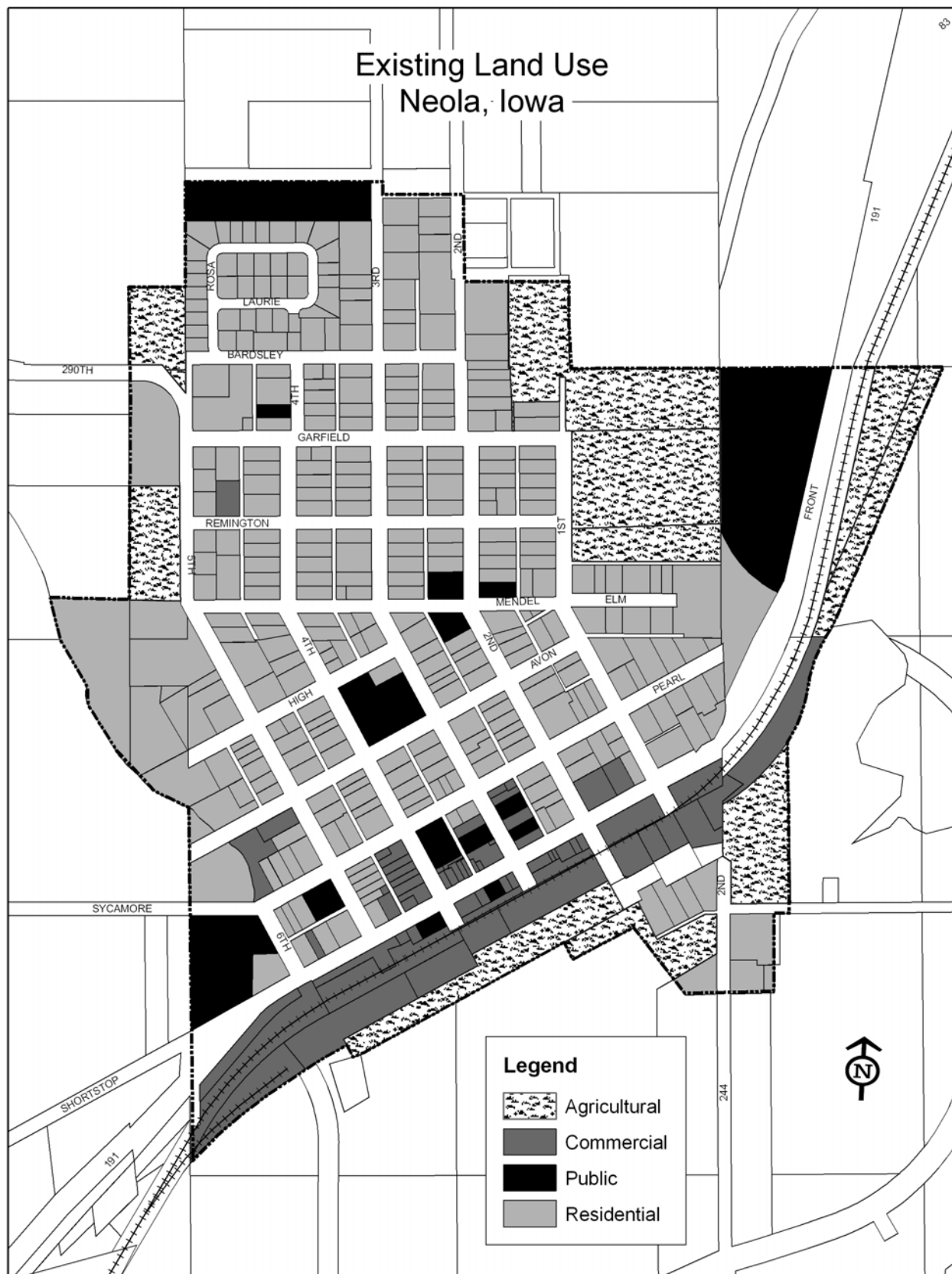
Planning for future uses can be completed only after the existing land use patterns have been determined. The predominant land use in Neola is residential with commercial and agriculture uses accounting for the remainder of non-civic land uses in the city. Neola is surrounded by a predominantly agricultural landscape. Rolling hills interspersed with small perennial streams and intermittent creeks characterize the land around Neola. The floodplain of Mosquito Creek is the most significant environmental feature and the valley dominates the landscape.

- **Residential Land Use**

Most of the town north of Pearl Street is residential. Pursell Heights Addition, consisting of 36 units north of Garfield Avenue, has been the only major addition in the past 50 years. Smaller subdivisions and some in-fill development have taken place, however, the expansion of residential uses, in terms of total acres, has not been significant. Hall's subdivision, on the north side of town along 3rd Street, has added a few new lots, as well as condominiums. Two multi-family apartment buildings exist, as well as several multi-unit rental homes, and some limited upper-story housing in the downtown area.

- **Commercial and Industrial Land Use**

The town's primary commercial district consists of the few blocks that abut Front Street. Area adjacent the railroad is also used for a variety of commercial and industrial uses. Some commercial development has occurred near the Interstate 80 exit.



Land Use Projections/Current trends

Residential uses will continue to dominate the city of Neola. There is some potential for commercial/industrial expansion, particularly near the railroad and interstate. The trend of residential commuters migrating to Neola will undoubtedly continue, keeping Neola a predominantly residential town. The Mosquito Creek floodplain is the only significant barrier to growth of the city. However, the trend of residential development will most likely continue to occur to the north of city limits, away from the floodplain.

Goals

Land use goals are based on identified community assets and values, and to some extent, deficiencies that the community wishes to overcome. One of Neola's greatest assets is its location to major transportation links – this makes the community marketable to both commercial ventures and residential commuters to the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro. Neola's demographic make-up likewise makes the community an attractive place for new employers as well as potential retail outlets.

- **Commercial and Industrial Expansion**

A need for more commercial services has been identified as a community goal. One factor that affects the quality of life in Neola is the ability of residents to find the products and services they need close to home. The lack of any large employers also affects quality of life, but more importantly, it pushes the property tax burden onto residential property, as there are few significant commercial or industrial properties in town to reduce that burden. Neola stands to capitalize on its assets of being close to major transportation links and having a population already engaged in transportation, distribution, manufacturing, and production. Neola's population of professionals earning more than the median household income also creates a good market for retailers.

- *Encourage More Retail:* There is a need for a general store and such a business would contribute significantly to the quality of life in Neola. Marketing the community to chain retail outlets may result in new construction, and the encouragement of revitalization may allow businesses to utilize existing structures along Front Street for commercial enterprises. Western Iowa Development Association (WIDA) can be a great resource for recruiting commercial ventures.

- *Expand Job Opportunities and the Tax Base:* The encouragement of commercial/industrial facilities along the Interstate 80 corridor and along the railroad is a goal of this plan. By capitalizing on the well-trained labor force and access to major transportation corridors, Neola could draw transportation and production related jobs, particularly distribution centers and warehouses.

Adequate space should be dedicated to expansion of these particular use types. WIDA would likewise be a resource for job creation.

- Residential Expansion

The expansion of residential uses is a goal of this plan and a highly likely probability in the near future. The Neola area has seen a slight influx of commuting households, however, little housing development has actually occurred within Neola city limits. A goal of this plan is to encourage the development of residential subdivisions and allow the city to realize its potential.

- *Conventional Single-Family Subdivisions:* The majority of new homes built in Neola will likely be moderate-high value, single-family residential, reflecting the regional housing market trends. This growth will occur on the perimeters of town, outside of the Mosquito Creek floodplain.
- *Retirement Villages and Assisted Living Facilities:* A need for more retirement housing and possibly an assisted living has been identified. The demographic patterns found in Neola suggest that the city will see the population age to the point that a majority of residents will be of retirement age. Unless affordable, accessible housing is made available within the community, those residents may find other more accommodating living arrangements elsewhere. Identifying a suitable property for an assisted living facility or retirement village will be the first step in attracting those types of housing to the community.
- *Mixed Use Housing and In-fill Development:* A nation-wide land use trend has been higher density in-fill development. That is, when vacant land is available within a city, mostly through demolition of existing structures, replacement housing is almost always denser (more housing units per acre) than the previous land use. The density of your city should increase as you travel from the perimeter to the core, thus the older portions of town should accommodate higher density living. Creating a zoning code which encourages in-fill development and higher density housing near the core will help fill the need for affordable housing.

- Floodplain Land Use

The Mosquito Creek floodplain is a significant barrier to development within and around Neola. Aside from being a challenge to land use planning, this barrier can be an asset to Neola by presenting an opportunity for open space reservation and creating capacity for industrial expansion and mixed-use developments.

- *Mosquito Creek Industrial Park:* The creation of an industrial park adjacent to the railroad line, with direct access to Interstate 80 would require significant floodplain mitigation, however, it could be accomplished through the construction of a levee or the use of fill dirt to raise land above the floodplain level. Use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF), extension of municipal utilities to

the site, and access to state and federal grants, are three powerful incentives the City of Neola can offer to make the land more attractive for development.

- *Mixed Use Development:* A landowner in the Mosquito Creek Floodplain has expressed interest in residential development to the east of Second Street. Due to its location to the interstate and along a major corridor into Neola, portions of this land should be used for commercial development and possibly mixed-use buildings, such as an apartment complex with retail and office space on the lower level, facing the road. Such a development would also act as a buffer zone between surrounding lower-density residential areas and the proposed Mosquito Creek Industrial Park.
- *Preserve Agricultural Land and Open Space:* Leaving much of the floodplain as agriculture will reserve a great deal of open space, giving peace of mind to residents and adding to quality of life. The floodplain has also been identified as being suitable for recreational purposes, particularly a multi-purpose trail and City Park expansion.

Community Growth Plan

By establishing proactive community development policies and adhering to a vision of how the community should grow, Neola can successfully attract residential and commercial development, sustain a stable tax base and continue to provide quality public services to all. The sum of all community development policies and the strength of community development principles will determine, to a great extent, future land use in the city. The Community Growth Plan consists of two parts:

- *Community Growth Principles*, setting forth the basic premises and community values used to guide all development actions.

And

- *Community Development Policies*, establishing areas of specific development focus and providing avenues to accomplish the goals contained in the plan.

● General Principles

- *Concentric Growth:* Neola's growth should occur in a logical procession from city limits outward. Residential growth should occur primarily north, east and west of the city, and commercial and industrial expansion should be reserved for land adjacent to the interstate and railroad.
- *Managed Growth:* Areas identified for growth should be related to regional demand in the housing market and land demand for commerce and industry. Development policy should emphasize the need for to provide multiple housing choices or location opportunities for potential residents and

businesses. However, development policy should balance the need for choice with the need for orderly development and infrastructure extensions.

- *Responsible Growth:* A basic, continuous network of streets and open spaces should be pre-planned to maintain linkages between traditional city and newly developing areas. As Neola grows, the City should maintain to some extent the grid street network that characterizes the established part of town. New subdivisions and streets should not be considered as “standing alone” but should provide increased mobility and accessibility for all residents.
- *Growth With the Land:* Neola’s topography and natural features have hindered growth to some extent, however, there is plenty of opportunity to expand without severe environmental limitations. Future development should reflect patterns of the land, using drainage corridors and creeks as greenways that create a linked open space system and connect the city’s neighborhoods.

● Land Use Policies

- *Create Capacity for Growth:* As mentioned in the previous chapter, Neola could see substantial increases in population in the next 20 years. In order to realize this growth potential, the City of Neola will need to make room for new housing units. An annual growth rate of 1% will net about 9 residents per year. Assuming that the persons per household ratio stands at about 2.5, Neola will need to construct 4 homes each year or 40 homes over a ten year span. A 2% annual growth rate will require 7 homes be built each year. A 3% annual growth rate will require that at least 11 homes be built each year. Assuming a large lot size of 10,000 square feet, Neola will need to zone approximately 40 acres as residential in order to satisfy housing needs for a ten-year period assuming a 1% growth rate, 70 acres for a 2% growth rate, and 110 acres for a 3% growth rate. As mentioned previously, a 1% annual growth rate translates to 10% over ten years and is considered rapid growth. Growth rates higher than 1% can be sustained over shorter time frames. However, growth rates over 1% over the course of a decade, can severely strain the city’s resources and ability to fund new infrastructure. Growth on the level of 1% per year is recommended, and while a large subdivision may make annual growth rates spike significantly, ten-year growth rates should not exceed 10%.

Land use needs for commercial and industrial purposes are much harder to predict and plan for. Given Neola’s size and potential to attract business and industry, it is fair to assume that some land will need to be zoned for expansion. An industrial park, or other suitable area with access to highways and/or rail, consisting of 40-80 acres would likely satisfy the city’s needs.

- *Phased Annexation:* A program of phased voluntary annexation is recommended. Annexation of developable land will provide capacity for the future expansion of Neola. This is known as an “urban reserve.” The use of TIF and other financial incentives can draw residential and commercial

development into a community – but land must be incorporated into the City in order for those incentives to be offered. The first step in phased annexation is to gauge landowners' willingness to annex and their future plans for their property. Landowners immediately adjacent to city limits should be the first tier of annexation and those parcels should logically be the first to develop. Fringe, or leapfrog development should be discouraged as it places greater burdens on utility infrastructure and creates fractious land use patterns. Discussing future land use plans with landowners is the most critical step to creating capacity for development. Obtaining voluntary petitions for annexation most often does not occur until a subdivision plat is ready for approval, however, many landowners may find it beneficial to have land annexed prior to a development beginning. Once land is annexed, the City can prepare for utility extensions to the territory.

- *Zoning and Subdivision Regulations:* Zoning and subdivision regulations are the “teeth” behind a comprehensive plan. This plan will establish the desired land use patterns for the City of Neola, however, zoning and subdivision regulations back those ideas up with actual regulatory power. A zoning map, indicating what areas of town are suitable for certain types of development, will essentially mirror the future land use map included herein. Subdivision regulations will ensure that any new development is constructed to be efficient, safe and compatible with the rest of the community. Zoning and subdivision regulations are being drafted in conjunction with this plan.
- *Building Permits and Impact Fees:* Requiring all new construction to obtain a building permit will ensure conformance with established land use regulations and will be essential to enforcing zoning and subdivision regulations upon adoption. Fees charged for building permits can pay for the cost of inspections to ensure proper construction methods and quality. Private firms or individuals, or even larger cities, can provide inspections and permit administration on a contract basis. Impact fees should also be charged for connection to city utilities. An engineering firm can calculate the impact that an average new home or business will have on a wastewater or water treatment plant and translate that impact into a monetary value on a per home, or per acre basis. Assessing these impact fees to new development will ensure that future upgrades or expansions needed as a result of new development can be sustained.

Future Land Use Neola, Iowa

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22ND

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PART II: INFRASTRUCTURE

► TRANSPORTATION

Transportation can be seen as the fabric that ties together all components of an urban area. In addition, public streets often represent the greatest percentage of publicly owned territory within a city and consequently are the most utilized and important civic spaces. The appearance and condition of public streets have a great affect on the health and value of property within the City. Quality public streets which safely and efficiently accommodate vehicular traffic, sidewalks which allow easy and universal accessibility to all, and landscaped rights-of-way which add to the quality of life are all essential functions of a transportation network. This section of the Neola Plan provides an analysis of the existing transportation network in Neola, examines regional trends in transportation habits and patterns, highlights existing or emerging circulation problems and provides suggestions on how to enhance accessibility options and create a transportation network that does much more than provide a paved surface to drive upon.

Existing Conditions

Neola's transportation network is primarily a grid system of paved streets oriented either parallel or perpendicular to the railroad. This pattern is offset slightly at Mendel Avenue. North of Mendel Avenue, the grid pattern follows cardinal directions. This grid pattern features alleys, most of which are paved, providing access to rear-yard garages. Pursell Heights Addition was built with a loop road, Laurie Circle, and is the only major break in the grid street network. Neola's grid street network provides efficient travel options and by having multiple access points within each block, the system effectively distributes traffic and reduces significant impact on any one street, reducing the need for maintenance and making it easier to reroute traffic in the event of repair or reconstruction. South Second Street provides direct access to Interstate 80 and Fifth Street (via 290th Street) and Front Street (via Railroad Highway) both connect to Interstate 680 to the north. In addition to excellent regional automobile connectivity, Neola also features a Burlington Northern-Santa Fe rail line adjacent to Front Street. The City of Neola has made a strong commitment to maintenance of the existing street network and as a result, the condition of the transportation system is good.

In the Fall of 2004, the City of Neola commissioned an infrastructure needs survey which identified street conditions throughout the city and suggested when major improvements should be undertaken. Garfield Avenue, between 2nd and 4th Streets was identified as in need of re-construction. Portions of two roads inside of city limits not currently paved, Pearl Street and Shortstop Avenue, were also singled out as in need of improvement. Pearl Street, from 6th Street to city limits is being paved as part of the Pearl Street bridge project.

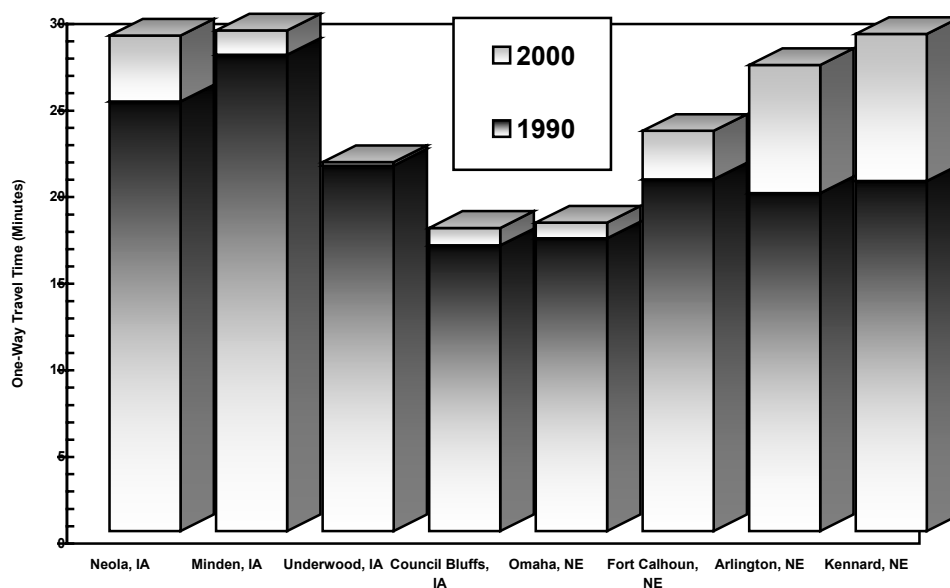
Regional Transportation Trends

People are willing to travel farther for employment. Regional trends show average commute times and distances increasing. Commuters in Neola spend an average of about 28.6 minutes traveling to work, higher than the state average of 18.5 minutes and the national average of 25.5 minutes. Twelve percent of workers in Neola carpool, a positive trend that should be encouraged. Average commute time for the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Statistical Area increased from 17.5 minutes in 1990 to 18.8 minutes in 2000. Increases in commute time have been greater on the Nebraska side of the Missouri River than on the Iowa side. Part of this increase is due to more traffic and travel delays in Omaha, however, it is also evidence of people traveling longer distances for employment. As average travel time in the Metro increases, Neola will become more attractive for commuters.

Neola is within the commuting sphere of the Omaha metro and the residential growth in the community since the 1970's has largely been a result of this paradigm. Even more significant, though, is the movement of employment from the central areas of Omaha and Council Bluffs to suburban areas. As land and transportation costs and traffic increases in the heart of large urban areas, businesses look for advantages such as lower land costs, lower property taxes, and good transportation connectivity, particularly businesses associated with transportation, distribution and warehousing. Neola has good transportation connectivity, at the junction of two interstate highways and along a major railroad route.

- Table 3-1: Average Commute Times and Distances

Source: United States Census Bureau



Goals

- Continue Upgrading Streets and Alleys

The City of Neola has made a commitment to reconstructing, repairing and placing overlays on city streets and alleys. Continuing to identify roads in need of replacement or repair and budgeting for improvements to the existing road network is a major goal of this plan. Alley paving has also been identified as a community need, as many homes in the established portion of town have garages accessed via alleys. The City has paved many of the alleys and completing alley paving throughout the town is also a goal of this plan.

- Adopt Subdivision Regulations to Guide New Street Construction

Many of Neola's streets are too narrow or were not built properly initially. In order to ensure that all new streets are built according to established roadway construction standards, subdivision regulations should be developed and implemented. This plan will emphasize where new streets are the most appropriate or likely. Subdivision regulations will detail the required platted widths of right-of-way, paving widths of streets, as well as detail where sidewalks are required and if curbs and gutters are required.

- South Second Street Bypass

The current access to Interstate 80 could be enhanced to make this major community gateway more aesthetically pleasing, more efficient at moving traffic and safer for motorists and property owners along the current route. South Fifth or Third Street, starting at Front Street, could be extended to the south, meeting up with the current crossing of Mosquito Creek at South Second Street. This roadway could be built above the 100-year base flood elevation and may act as a levee. This may remove floodplain restrictions from land inside of the levee, land that would be most suitable for an industrial park. In addition, this project could provide better accessibility to Neola's water and wastewater treatment plants. Also included in this project would be a pedestrian trail adjacent to the roadway, landscaping and signage. This roadway would become the new gateway to Neola, would open up new opportunity for commercial and industrial expansion, and would provide the first step in building a Mosquito Creek Trail that could connect Neola to Tri-Center Schools Campus, Council Bluffs, and Arrowhead Park.

- Front Street Revitalization Project

Front Street is a community asset and contains the City's central business district. There are many historic homes and businesses along this route and it is the most visible face of the community. The impression that visitors get when traveling down Front Street will greatly affect how they view the community. Likewise, Front Street can be a great source of pride for residents and business owners, spurring involvement with other community issues and in general, enhancing the quality of life. Parking for businesses in the downtown area has been identified as an issue. A "Main Street"-style program could allow for reconstruction of Front Street and be inclusive of other amenities like street

lighting, landscaping, sidewalks and parking. Sight distance obstructions were also identified as a problem on Front Street. This project could work to eliminate some of those problems by creating better traffic control and more parking options. Speeding and truck traffic were identified as problems and likewise could be addressed through better street design and traffic control. Completing such a project will spur investment in property along that thoroughfare and will enhance the image of the community, contributing to increased residential and business growth.

Transportation Policies

- **Develop Five and Ten-year Transportation Plans**

Developing five and ten-year transportation plans will ensure that the City's current commitment to upgrading roadways is continued into the future. Road Use Tax disbursements can be programmed in five and ten-year increments for improvements to local streets and purchasing of equipment. A five-year plan should be developed to deal with street maintenance and repair. A ten-year plan should also be drafted to prepare for long-term roadway improvements. This will allow the City to plan and prepare for minor and major improvements and help to utilize tax revenues in the most efficient manner.

- **Adopt Subdivision Regulations**

The layout and character of new neighborhoods will largely be determined by the roadways built to serve those areas. It is essential that new roadways and future transportation needs be examined to ensure that new development does not conflict with those needs. Many proposed roadways in the Community Growth Plan are logical extensions of existing streets. Engineering limitations and economic concerns will determine the actual location and orientation of these new streets, however, it is vital that those streets are safely and efficient constructed so as to not burden future taxpayers with unneeded repairs and replacement due to failure. Subdivision regulations will detail how city streets are built and will also require the inclusion of curbs and gutters, sidewalks and other incidental features.

- **Accomplishing Transportation Goals**

Many of the roadways identified in the Community Growth Plan can be constructed as part of residential subdivisions through the use of Tax Increment Financing or fully financed by the developer. Other roadways, in particularly the South Second Street Bypass, are eligible for federal funding when designated as a collector or arterial in the Comprehensive Plan.

- *Federal Transportation Funding:* In order to vie for federal funding, the City must work with Pottawattamie County and the Regional Planning Affiliation – Region 18. Member jurisdictions (Pottawattamie, Harrison, Mills and Shelby Counties, IDOT and the cities of Harlan and Glenwood) approve distribution of federal transportation funds, including projects in smaller cities within member counties.

- *Federal Disaster Mitigation Funds:* Funds may also be available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency for projects mitigating the impact of flood on a community. The Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) and Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) programs can provide technical and funding assistance for projects minimizing the impact of disasters – in this case, flood. The South Second Street Bypass could be built partly with these funds. Priority is given to projects which address habitual loss properties and projects which protect critical facilities. Incorporating the South Second Street Bypass project with a project to protect the city's water and wastewater treatment plants likely increase the chances of garnering mitigation funds.

- *RISE Program:* Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) is another funding option offered by the State of Iowa through the Iowa Department of Transportation. RISE offers grants and loans with a variable local match to both speculative and non-speculative economic development projects, such as industrial park creation. The South Second Street Bypass would be an excellent candidate for a RISE grants, particularly if a business were to become interested in the location.

- *Local Funding Options:* Given the cost of constructing new roads, it would be difficult for Neola to program Road Use Tax dollars for new roadway construction and continue to upgrade existing streets as well. Bonded indebtedness is another option for new roadway construction. A voted Capital Improvements Levy of \$.675 per \$1,000 of taxable value (\$67.5 per year on a \$100,000 home) can also help to plan for the costs of new infrastructure and maintenance of existing facilities.

- *Front Street Project:* Funding opportunities for the Front Street Revitalization Project will be limited and the project is a big undertaking for a small city like Neola. Citizens should be consulted for their opinions on what the project should accomplish and how to fund it. In order for this project to come to fruition, there must be significant community support. Iowa Living Roadways and Main Street Iowa are two programs that can provide technical assistance. Funding for such a project can come from traditional transportation sources like Road Use Tax, Tax Increment Financing, or General Obligation bonds. A Local Option Sales Tax could also be a possible funding source as well as special property tax assessments for property likely to directly benefit from the improvement.

Functional Classification Neola, Iowa

► **HOUSING**

Neola's housing stock can be viewed as critical infrastructure and the maintenance, enhancement and continual development of it are essential to sustaining and improving upon the level of service and quality of life that residents currently enjoy. The housing supply represents the city's largest capital investment and the value of the housing stock largely determines the fiscal health of the City. This section of the Plan analyzes current housing conditions, examines regional trends in the housing development market, sets goals based on identified community needs and provides policy solutions to ensure that quality housing is available for all residents.

Existing Conditions

Neola has a relatively old housing stock with an average age of 1913. The majority of single-family homes in Neola were built prior to 1939. While the age of the housing stock is a concern, the lack of much new housing in Neola has had interesting consequences. Since few new homes are being built in Neola, the construction and real estate industries must focus on existing homes if they want to work in Neola. The amount of rehabilitation and renovation in Neola is staggering and there are very few houses that can be considered dilapidated, much less entire blocks with deteriorated houses. Housing policies should continue to encourage rehabilitation and renovation of older homes. Falling valuations could cause serious revenue problems and create difficulties upgrading and maintaining infrastructure in these neighborhoods. The oldest areas of town are those nearest Front Street, comprising the original platted area of Neola. Many of these homes have been kept up well and a few are the process or have just completed major renovations.

Newer construction is found throughout the town on reclaimed lots or vacant land, however, the majority of post-1950 housing is found north of Mendel Avenue. The Pursell Heights Addition added approximately 36 new homes to the City of Neola between 1970 and 1985, accounting for much of the growth of the city since the 1950's. Hall's Subdivision added a few new homes and condominiums recently, continuing the trend of growth towards the north. There has also been some development on the west side of town, along 5th Street and more is planned.

As of 2000 there were 357 total housing units in Neola, with 339 being occupied. Of the 339 occupied units, 22% were rentals and the remaining 78% are owner-occupied. The majority of housing in Neola, over 75%, is valued at between \$50,000 and \$150,000. Although much of the housing in Neola could be considered affordable under HUD guidelines, obstacles to homeownership such as down payments and closing costs make it difficult for first time homebuyers. Of the nearly 60% of households in Neola with a mortgage, the largest portion (23.6%) had mortgage payments of \$700-\$999 per month. Rent was similarly

priced: 86.3% of gross rent in Neola was between \$500 and \$749. Neola also has a relatively low vacancy rate, roughly 5%, leading to inflated housing costs and lack of choices.

Regional Housing Trends

Neola is a part of the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan area housing market. Many communities surrounding the Omaha metro have experienced small housing booms corresponding with fluctuations in the national housing market. When interest rates are low and development costs comparatively low, people often look to “move up” to higher value homes in bedroom communities. This trend is expected to continue, however, a newer trend that is occurring nationwide is towards condominiums and attached two-family living arrangements. The majority of replacement housing on reclaimed or vacant lots takes this form. As jobs and housing become more dispersed, people will look to communities such as Neola as places to live. In the past that has been reserved almost exclusively for higher income commuters, however, now more moderate and even low-income residents are able to commute into the Omaha metro. Another trend that is significant as it relates to Neola, is that of historic preservation. There is a relatively high demand for renovated historic homes, as well as for homes that are in need of renovation. Neola has seen its share of rehabilitation along these lines and should expect the trend to continue.

Goals

- Create more and better housing choices

Creating a zoning code which allows for multi-family dwellings and affordable single-family housing can be effective at creating more and better housing choices. More affordable housing, in the form of new construction of low-moderate income housing units, or apartment complexes, is needed to diversify the housing supply and keep Neola a vibrant city. A need for assisted living and independent, maintenance free housing has been identified, as many retirees must move out of the community when home ownership is not feasible. In order for these housing alternatives to have the greatest impact they must be located close to services and transportation infrastructure.

- Create New Housing Developments

Many communities in Pottawattamie County have capitalized on the growth of the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area by encouraging the development of new subdivisions. Neola has excellent access to Omaha and could likewise capitalize on its location to jobs and services found there. There has been no significant housing development in Neola since the 1970's. There are signs that this is changing – a few new subdivisions in and around Neola are evidence of this. Neola is poised to grow, and creating a sound vision for what form that growth should take, as well as creating incentives and clear guidelines for developers, are major goals of this plan. One obstacle to development has been resistance to development by surrounding landowners.

As pressure to develop increases, though, these landowners may realize the value of development, as well as the benefit to the community it would provide. Offering incentives such as TIF could help create impetus to develop.

- Encourage Neighborhood Revitalization and Historic Preservation

The legacy of older homes in Neola and the physical layout of the neighborhoods contribute to pride of ownership and community involvement. Providing funds for neighborhood clean-up efforts, encouraging the formation of neighborhood coalitions, and subsidizing housing rehabilitation will ensure that this pride and sense of place is maintained throughout the years. Abatement of nuisances like abandoned cars, unkempt lawns and dangerous structures reinforces pride of ownership amongst those who do maintain their property and ensures that resale values of homes are stable. Proactively encouraging housing rehabilitation and reducing nuisances will also ensure that property values do not fall and affect the City's fiscal situation. If left unchecked, many of these homes can fall victim to neglect and deterioration. In addition, the difficulties and costs associated with restoring older homes, which can contain asbestos and lead, is such that many homeowners cannot conduct effective or safe upkeep. While much of the historic property in town is housing, it is recognized that there are other historic structures, particular in the downtown area. While these are commercial structures, their historic role as hotels and upper-story apartments featuring ground level businesses is pertinent to this discussion of housing. Creating policies that encourage and provide incentives for historic preservation is a goal.

Housing Policies

The following policy suggestions are intended to address the goals listed in the previous section.

- Local Housing Trust Fund

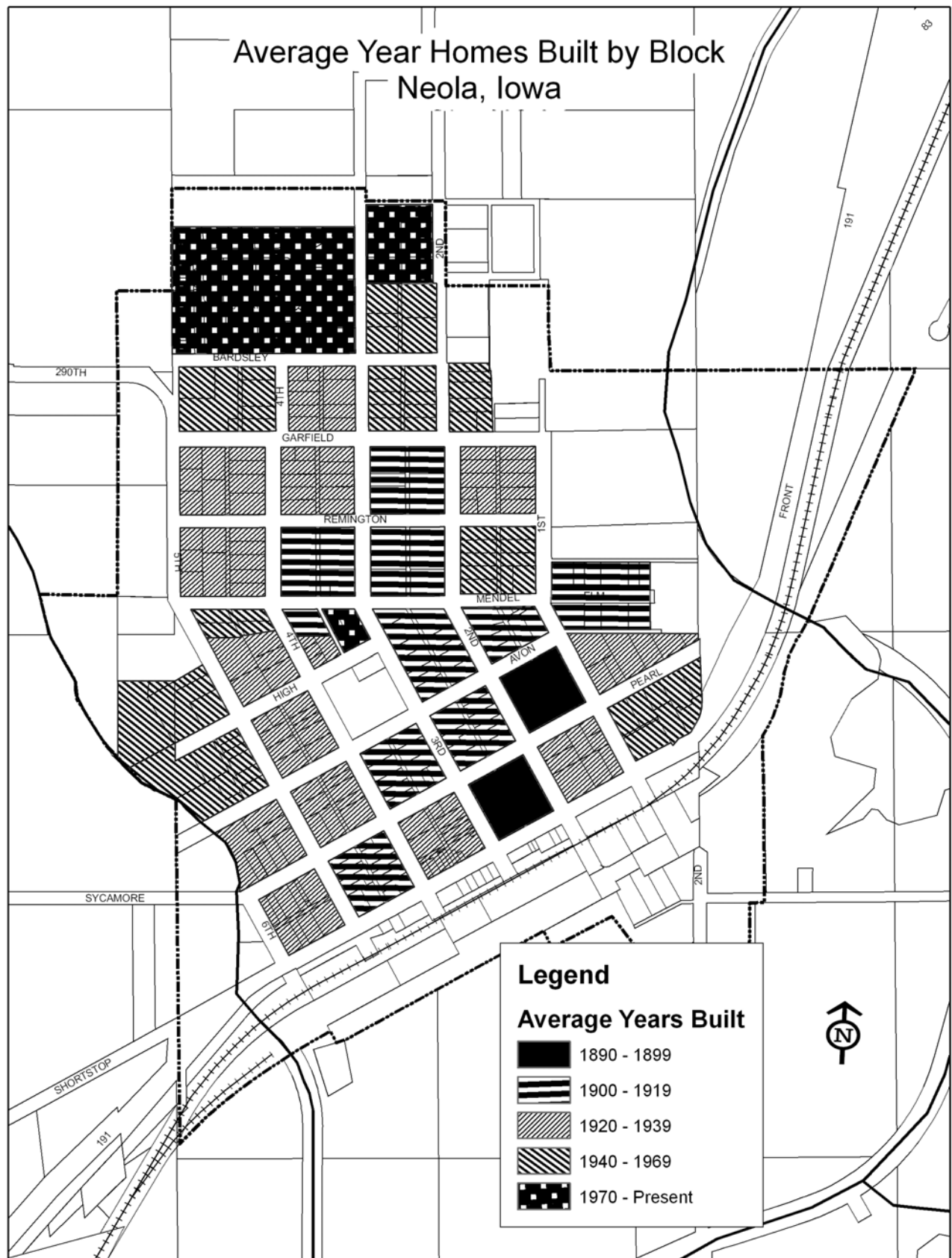
A local housing trust fund could be established using TIF funds. Anytime TIF is used to finance a development, a percentage of the incremental revenue produced by improvement of property must be dedicated to help Low and Moderate Income households. This "set-aside fund" would be available for owner-occupied renovations, mortgage buy-downs and down-payment assistance for first time homebuyers. The predominant need in Neola is for home renovation as the majority of the housing supply greater than 50 years old. In order for TIF funds to be used for this program the recipient must meet low-moderate income requirements. The City could also create a Site Acquisition, Clearance and Preparation program which could be used to acquire properties, demolish substandard housing, and prepare the lot/s for sale to either an LMI qualified household, or a developer who would construct housing for LMI households. This fund would ensure that more and better housing choices become available in Neola.

- Zoning Adequate Space for Expansion

Adopting new zoning and subdivision regulations will ensure that new housing is located so as to provide the best benefit for the City as well as potential new residents. Zoning adequate space for residential expansion is vital to ensuring that there are enough housing units in Neola. By creating high density or multi-family zoning districts, the city effectively encourages the development of alternative housing choices. These zones should be located near the established city center and available transportation links. Single-family zoning districts can be located further from major transportation links and the established city core. Neola has added approximately 77 units since 1970 – an average of just over 2 units per year. If this trend is to continue the City will need to zone space adequate to fill another 70 lots during the next planning 20-30 years. Approximately half of the new units built since 1970 were infill or replacement housing on already platted lots, however, given the potential for increased demand for residential property in and around Neola, it is feasible that 70 units could be added in the next 30 years on green sites, or previously undeveloped land alone.

- Historic Preservation Initiatives

While there are grants, low interest loans and tax credits available through state, federal and private sector agencies for the preservation of historic properties, the requirements to be listed on the National or State Registries of Historic Places are often burdensome for average property owners simply looking to improve their living conditions. However, preservation can be done in such a way that it not only saves important historical and cultural resources, but it provides the most cost-effective and attractive methods for renovation and rehabilitation. By instituting historic preservation regulations on certain properties or blocks, the city can restrict demolition, can impose additional regulations on redevelopment or renovation and in general have more of a say in the future of what should be consider not only private property, but an asset that the entire community has an interest in protecting. The Grow Iowa Foundation's upper story housing program provides low-interest loans for the creation of second story housing. This program has been highly effective at encourage renovation of many under-utilized buildings in Iowa downtowns.



► **FACILITIES AND UTILITIES**

Neola's capital facilities represent major community investments which are essential to the efficient and safe operation of city government and vital to the quality of life. Residents' satisfaction with their community is tied closely to their experiences and perceptions of these facilities. Having quality public buildings and infrastructure also is needed to provide capacity for the growth of a community. This section of the Neola Plan analyzes current condition of public facilities and utilities, sets goals based on identified community needs, and provides suggestions on how to go about accomplishing those goals.

Existing Conditions

- **Water Supply, Storage and Distribution**

Recently, the City of Neola completed construction of a new 200,000-gallon water tower. The new tower will improve water pressure in the community and provide plenty of capacity to accommodate future growth. Additionally, City officials are exploring the possibility of constructing water lines to provide service to Arrowhead Park and potentially the City of Minden. Any water provided to Minden would be stored there and would supplement that community's existing water supply. The City of Neola is served by two wells, both of which need to be rehabilitated to accommodate the new water tower. The water treatment plant has a capacity of 130,000 gallons per day, and is in need of new controls and other general rehabilitation.

Water is distributed through a series of cast-iron mains ranging in size from 2" to 8", and for the most part the mains are in good condition. There are no significant dead ends and most of the system has been looped in recent years. The City currently has 346 residential and 41 non-residential customers water customers that pay an average bill of \$25.45 per month.

- **Wastewater Collection and Treatment**

Presently, wastewater treatment in Neola is achieved through the use of a mechanical treatment facility. City officials feel that the present facility is obsolete and will need to be significantly upgraded or replaced in the next few years. The existing sewer lift stations are in need of some renovations, and the City may also need to add a new lift station in the southeast part of town to accommodate future growth. There are a few houses on the edges of the community that are still using septic tanks, but if residential growth occurs as the City expects, sanitary sewer services will be expanded and eventually all properties within City limits will be sewerred. The City currently has 322 residential and 38 non-residential sewer customers that pay an average bill of \$9.20 per month.

- Storm Water Collection System

Neola has storm sewers throughout the community which are in good condition. Storm water infrastructure, including curb and gutter on streets, is also being added as new streets are constructed and existing streets are re-built. Due to the width of many of the Neola's streets, most of the existing streets can be modified to handle storm water without significant adjustments to right-of-way areas.

- Utilities

Electricity service in Neola is provided by Neola Light and Water, a municipally owned electric utility. Power is generated by Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative (NIPCO), which is a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, then distributed through Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC).

Natural Gas service is provided by MidAmerican Energy Company through a Northern Natural Gas pipeline.

Qwest is the local telephone provider, and also provides DSL Internet service.

Cable television is provided by Walnut TeleServices and will soon offer high-speed Internet to the community.

Solid waste collection is conducted by a private company, R & S Waste. Recycling bins are located at the municipal water plant for use by Neola residents.

- Public Buildings and Facilities

The City of Neola is responsible for a number of public facilities. City Hall is in generally poor condition, and community leaders have explored the possibility of constructing a new City Hall on an adjacent tract of city-owned land. At a minimum, the existing facility is in need of a new roof and significant foundation repairs.

The Neola Fire Station also needs some repairs. While half of the building is only ten years old as a result of a building addition, and the other half well over 50 years old and needs roof, foundation, and concrete improvements.

The City's current maintenance facility was completed in 2003. While the building has adequate storage for City equipment, a furnace and at least a partial concrete floor is needed for City workers to complete equipment maintenance on a year-round basis. The City also owns the building which houses the Neola Medical Clinic. That building is in fair condition but needs a new shingle roof.

The City also owns and maintains several recreational facilities in town which were discussed in the Parks and Open Space section of this plan.

- Educational Facilities and Services

Neola is part of a consolidated school district serving portions of north central Pottawattamie County, southern Harrison County and a small section of western Shelby County. In 1965, the State of Iowa mandated that all local school districts not maintaining a high school consolidate to form larger community school districts. Known as Tri-Center School District it is a consolidation of the smaller school districts previously located in the towns of Neola, Minden, Persia and Beebeetown. The District's 40-acre campus is located at the intersection of I-80 and I-680, just a few miles north of Neola. Bond issues have funded expansions in the past and currently the District has a Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL) to fund improvements to the facilities. Growth in the district may necessitate opening of a second elementary, however, such a development exceeds the scope of this plan. The district is in good condition, financially and physically, and generally receives good support from residents. Tri-Center CSD is a primary draw for new residents in the area.

- Health Services

Neola is fortunate to have a medical clinic in town. The building is owned by the City and is in generally good condition, however, it is in need of a new roof. The clinic is operated by Aleris Health and is a family practice. The presence of a clinic adds a great deal to the quality of life for Neola residents.

Goals

In November of 2004 infrastructure needs studies were completed for the City of Neola and other communities in Pottawattamie which outlined needed improvements to public facilities. The result of these studies was the creation of the CITIES program, administered by WIDA and MAPA and funded by the Iowa West Foundation (IWF). Though funding is not guaranteed from year to year, this program allows Pottawattamie County cities to apply for local grants based on needs identified in their infrastructure needs study. All the projects listed below are eligible for that funding, should the program continue to be capitalized by the IWF. There were numerous projects in Neola that could be considered major goals, however, the most time-consuming, costly and needed projects are listed herein as goals.

- Rehabilitate Water Treatment Plant and Improve Distribution System

Rehabilitation of the existing water treatment plant would include installation of a new alarm system, sandblasting and painting, and improvements needed to comply with modern water treatment standards. Increasing the capacity of the plant is also needed to provide for future growth.

-Financing the Improvements: Water rates in Neola are relatively low when compared with neighboring communities and in consideration of the significant improvements made over the past years. Financing for this project would likely come from revenue bonds which would result in an increase in water rates.

One outside funding source for this project might be the CDBG Water and Sewer Fund. If the city is able to show that 51% of its citizens meet HUD's low-to-moderate income criteria, the city could be eligible for up to \$300,000 in grant funds for this project. For this project to be competitive for CDBG funding, the city would have to demonstrate that the current water treatment is inadequate to meet the needs of the community. Another potential source of funds for this project is the Iowa DNR's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF). This program provides loans for water projects at 3% plus a 1% loan initiation fee and a .25% servicing fee. However, as is the case with the CDBG program, the city would have to demonstrate the need for improved treatment. Improvements to the distribution system include the adding stages to the community's two wells. This would allow the city wells to more efficiently handle the new water tower, thus increasing pressure and capacity in the system. This improvement would also likely be financed by revenue bonds. - -

-Extending Mains to Minden: Extending a water main to Arrowhead Park and the City of Minden would increase the rate base and allow the revenue bonds to be spread out over a larger populace. This would also bring water service to the Interstate 80 exit, which could spur more growth in that area. This could be financed under the same programs as listed above.

- Re-construct Wastewater Treatment Plant and Improve Collection System
The City's current wastewater treatment plant is in need of reconstruction. Included in the reconstruction project would be several improvements to the collection system. Rehabilitation of the Front Street lift station is needed and the construction of two new lift stations would greatly improve the system and allow for future growth.

- Possible Funding Sources: The Iowa DNR's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) may be available to finance this project. Another outside funding source might be the CDBG Water and Sewer Fund. Most CDBG projects are prioritized based on need in the community and impact, both physically and financially. While there are no specific matching criteria for CDBG funds, most projects receive at most two-thirds of a project cost in grant funds, with matching fund projects receiving higher priority. In order for this project to be competitive for CDBG funds, the City would need to demonstrate that the condition of the facility poses a direct threat to the operability of the lift station.

- Seeking out Partnerships: The City of Underwood's lagoon wastewater facility is at capacity and that city is considering options for expansion. Given the proximity of Neola and Underwood to each other (less than 6 miles), and the growth this portion of Pottawattamie County is experiencing, studying the possibility of a joint wastewater treatment facility is advisable. A treatment facility could be constructed in the Mosquito Creek floodplain midway between the two cities and force mains could then service either town.

The City of Underwood, just six miles southwest of Neola, is experiencing capacity problems with their wastewater treatment lagoons, largely as a result of rapid and poorly planned growth. Both cities should jointly explore the option of constructing a new mechanical treatment facility. This would reduce the economic impact of building two new facilities, where one would feasibly meet the needs of both communities and surrounding area.

- Build a new City Hall

City Hall is in need of major repairs to the roof and foundation. Estimates for renovation are nearly half of replacement cost. Renovation and new construction are both considered options for the community and the debt capacity of the City will most likely determine which route is taken. As there are no specific programs providing funding assistance for public buildings, the project will most likely be funded with a general obligation bond. If feasible, the building should be expandable, or include extra programmable space for a future public library or community learning center.

- Create a Public Library

Members of the community have expressed an interest in creating a public library in Neola. Such a facility would not necessarily require new construction and could make use of existing buildings in town. However, if the City does construct a new City Hall, space could be added to house a small public library sufficient to serve the needs of the community. Cooperation with the local school district and Iowa Western Community College could expand the scope of a public library to a Community Learning Center which would not only serve as a repository for literature, but could also provide classroom space for continuing education, educational activities for children, and computers for use by the general community.

► **PARKS AND OPEN SPACE**

Parks and open space are critical to the environmental, social, cultural and economic health of a city. Without adequate open space the quality of life diminishes. The environment suffers from urban land use in the form of increased storm-water runoff and lack of natural habitats that contribute to water and air quality. Open space and parks also contribute significantly cultural and social life, giving residents a place to meet and recreate together, creating bonds that otherwise would not have existed. Parks also provide space for cultural events and youth sports that not only add to the quality of life, but infuse money into local businesses. Economically, parks and open space are vital. Increased costs for water purification, among other things, can result from a lack of open space as natural habitats filter out impurities. Open space functions as storm-water infrastructure as well. Consequently, open space is best located in drainage basins and near watercourses. Parks can be a draw for tourists, bringing people into a community for restaurants or supplies. This section of the Neola Plan analyzes the existing condition of parks and open space in Neola and examines regional trends in the development and use of parks and open space. From this information and information received from the community goals are set for the future and suggestions are made as to how to accomplish those goals.

Existing Conditions

Neola's citizens have a wide variety of recreational opportunities available in or near the community. In addition, being located in a rural setting provides for a great deal of open space and natural habitat. The condition of Neola's Parks and Recreation infrastructure is generally good. The City recently completed construction on its new Community Center, which is located adjacent to the City's indoor swimming pool. The facility contains a fitness center and meeting space and the City intends to complete renovations to the pool area in 2006. Within the last decade, Quail Run Golf Course, a public 9-hole course and country club, opened its doors just southwest of the community. The City also features Centennial Park and an adjacent baseball diamond. Privately owned open space is abundant in Neola and there is great opportunity for more open space reservation and enhancement of recreational opportunities. Arrowhead Park, owned and managed by the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, is just outside of Neola, on the east side of Interstate 80. Arrowhead Park is a regional park and the Conservation Board maintains rental cabins, a full service campground and a small lake featuring paddleboat rentals.

Regional Trends

A nationwide trend of multi-purpose trail building is having a great impact on the Omaha Council Bluffs metro area. Several major urban trails have been constructed and planned extensions are gradually being completed. Investment in trails shows no signs of slowing down as much federal and state grant money goes to trail construction. Council Bluffs has committed to building a trail network

along many of the major floodways, taking advantage of the abundant open space in floodplains and providing a useful purpose to land that otherwise cannot be utilized. A trail runs nearly the entire length of Mosquito Creek within Council Bluffs city limits. Omaha's Keystone Trail is one of the nation's most extensive urban trails and is very heavily utilized. Trails have shown to be great economic development tools, even within this region. Towns like Malvern, Silver City, and Mineola have all benefited tremendously from the Wabash Trace Nature Trail. Aside from the health and well being benefits of recreation, a trail can provide alternative transportation options which have numerous economic and social benefits.

A second trend in regional recreation habits is towards regional weekend excursions. Due to rising prices of gasoline and other economic difficulties, many people have begun to abandon the long summer vacation routine in favor of smaller weekend trips close to home. The rising popularity of places like Arrowhead Park is evidence of this trend. County Conservation Boards and cities are making tremendous efforts to include campgrounds in recreation areas to accommodate weekend travelers. Funding for new campgrounds, playgrounds and other basic park improvements is on the rise, second only to the funding available for trails.

Goals

- Create a Parks and Recreation Oversight Board

The creation of Parks and Recreation Board will make implementation of other goals in this chapter easier. Encouraging greater community involvement will also create more support for future park improvements. The creation of a Parks and Recreation Board would allow citizens to serve and come up with ideas for improvements and maintenance of that facility.

- Improve and Expand Centennial Park

The City Park has been identified as a facility that could be more heavily utilized by residents. It is thought that with minor improvements the Park would be more attractive for recreation.

-Rehab the Tennis Court: A tennis court is present, however, few people within Neola play tennis. Conversion of this area into a basketball court may induce more use.

-Improve Access to The Park: Building a sidewalk along Pearl Street, starting at Fifth Street, would connect the Park to the City's existing sidewalk network and reduce local vehicular traffic and the need for parking. This sidewalk would also connect to a proposed walking trail to be built in and near the Park.

-Take Advantage of Opportunities to Expand: There is vacant land near the Park that could provide for expansion. Cooperation with surrounding

landowners should be a priority and the City should seize opportunities to purchase additional parkland if available.

- *Build a New Fence*: The fence surrounding the baseball diamond is in need of replacement. Keeping the ball field as a viable recreational opportunity for all is essential to encouraging more use of the facility.

- *Build Restroom Facility*: Constructing new restrooms at the park would add to the enjoyment of that facility and would encourage more use by local residents. Building the restroom to comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act would also increase accessibility for those with disabilities.

- Realize Opportunities for Recreational Trails

Neola, more than many cities of its size, has great opportunities to create recreational trails to complement surrounding recreational and environment features. Many of the trails suggested here are consistent with the Nishna Loop plan supported by the Iowa West Foundation – making them eligible for funding through the IWF. In addition, there are numerous sources of trail funding, including: Iowa State Recreational Trails Funding (IDOT, 25% local match); National Recreational Trails Fund (IDOT, 20% local match); Federal Transportation Enhancements Program (IDOT, FHWA, 30% local match); Regional Transportation Enhancements Program (RPA-18, 20% local match); Land and Water Conservation Fund (IDNR, 50% local match); Resource Enhancement and Protection or REAP (IDNR, no local match required); Federal Surface Transportation Program or STP (RPA-18, 20% local match). Numerous other non-profit, private, governmental and corporate organizations offer either partial funding or technical assistance for trail construction and maintenance, the IDOT can provide a complete list of all resources available to the community.

- *Nature Trail at City Park*: The City of Neola recently completed a walking path around Centennial Park. If the park is expanded, this path should likewise be extended through the new area. This path could be extended along Sycamore Road (Pearl Street) if it were to be paved, and eventually connect with Quail Run Golf Course – giving cyclists, walkers, and golf carts a safe right-of-way to traverse when traveling to and from the City's recreational amenities.

- *Arrowhead Park Trail*: The presence of Arrowhead Park, within walking distance of Neola city limits, is a tremendous asset for the City. Though not a huge park, Arrowhead Park is one of the marquee recreation areas within Pottawattamie County. Arrowhead Park also is important to the citizens of Neola, who have the benefit of not only a city park, but also a great county park right outside of city limits. Enhancing the linkage between Neola and Arrowhead will benefit business by drawing visitors into Neola and will benefit residents by providing easier, direct access. A trail should be built that connects Neola to Arrowhead Park. Such a trail could be built adjacent to South Second Street, simply as a wider, paved shoulder, or could be a grade separated trail.

- *Mosquito Creek Trail*: The trail mentioned in the last section, which would connect Neola to Arrowhead Park, could be the first phase in a Mosquito Creek Trail, which could eventually lead to Council Bluffs, or north to the school campus and possibly Persia. Such a trail would allow bikers to ride in from Council Bluffs, as well as give children and parents an opportunity to walk or ride a bike to school. Nature trails have proven to be highly successful as tools for economic development.

Parks and Open Space Policies

The following are policy recommendations that will allow Neola to achieve the goals listed in the previous section and may open up new opportunities for enhancement of recreational opportunities for residents.

- **Require Open Space Dedication**

Subdivision regulations should:

- *Include provisions for the reservation of park space.*
- *Ensure that new development provide adequate recreational and/or open space for the future residents of that area.*

Reservations for parkland can include:

- *Dedication of property to the City.*
- *Open space or parks maintained by homeowner's associations,*
- *Land held in trust with adequate protection in the form of covenants or other restrictions against development or alteration.*
- *A cash payment in lieu of park space.*

- **Create a Floodplain Zoning Overlay That Preserves Open Space**

Creating a zoning overlay that protects floodplain land from irresponsible development and filling will help to reserve productive farm ground, and will create an open space reserve that will benefit all. Filling of the floodplain may be allowed where prudent or necessary for economic development.

- **Create a Parks and Recreation Board**

The creation of a Parks and Recreation Board would engage citizens in the planning and management processes and would increase public support for park expansion and improvement projects. A Parks and Recreation Board could take a number of forms:

- *"Friends of Neola Parks" Group*: A volunteer group not associated with city government that would volunteer for clean up, undertake minor improvement projects and could achieve non-profit status in order to apply for grants that the city may not be eligible for.

- *City of Neola Parks and Recreation Board*: An official public board within the city government. Members could either be elected by the citizens or appointed by the Mayor or City Council. In this scenario, the Parks and Recreation Board could utilize City funds to maintain and improve the park and could use the

financial umbrella of the City to apply for grants and assistance. Such a setup would also allow the hiring of a seasonal maintenance worker under the supervision of the Board members.

- Planning for Improvements

Improvements to the City of Neola's Parks and Open Space infrastructure will need significant community support, help from other agencies and jurisdictions and, of course, funding. Key components of planning for recreational enhancement are:

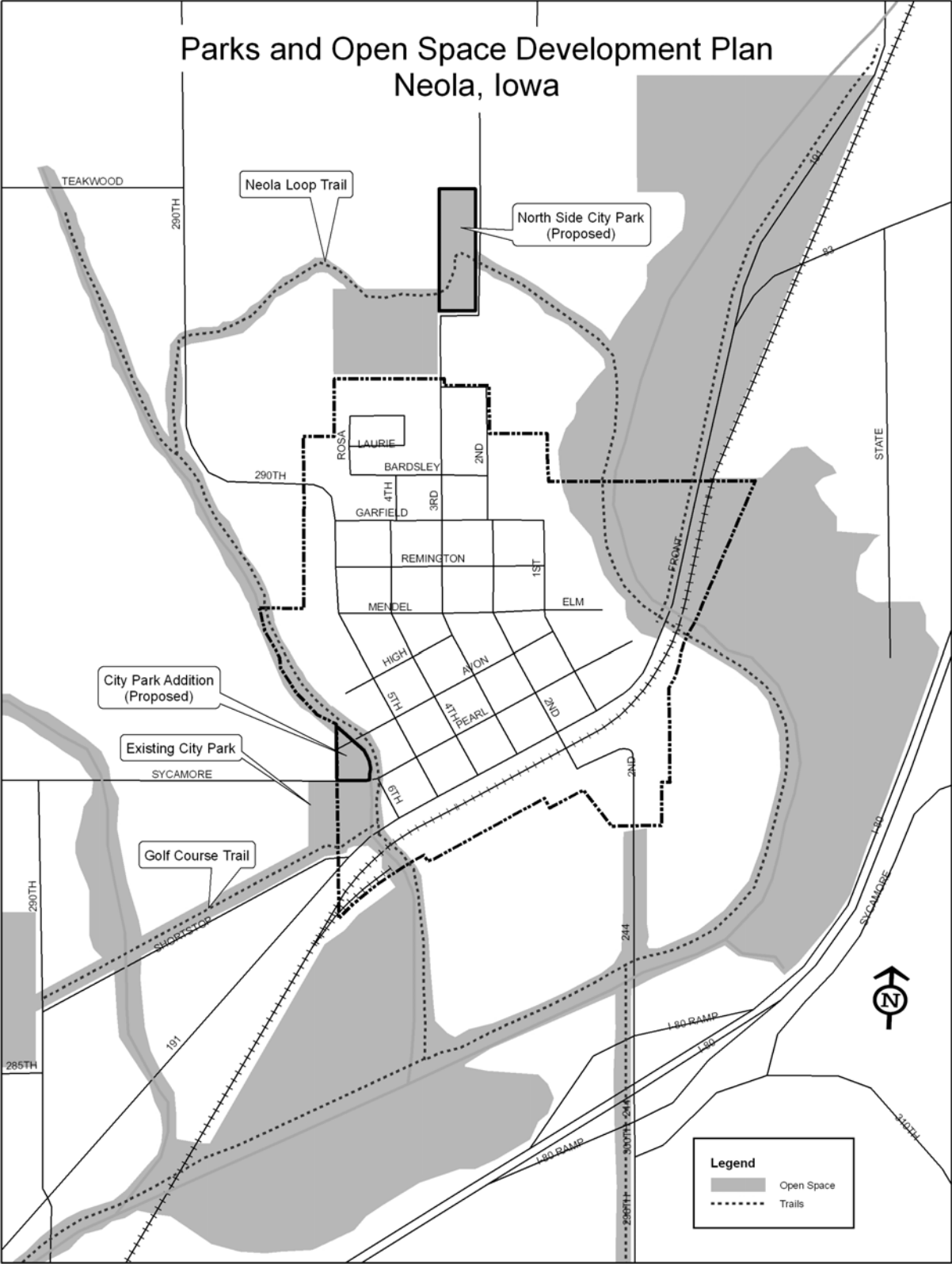
- *Cooperation With Other Agencies:* The cost of constructing a crushed limestone trail is not onerous, however, land or easement acquisition can become expensive. Cooperation with agencies such as the DNR, Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, the City of Council Bluffs and Southwest Iowa Nature Trails is necessary to complete sections outside of city limits.

- *Grant Assistance:* Grant funding is essential to the enhancement of recreational opportunities. The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a competitive grant program that funds many recreational trails, playgrounds and general park improvements throughout the nation, however, funding is sporadic and competition is heavy. The Iowa DOT also has the Recreational Trails Program, co-administered by the Iowa DNR, which distribute federal and state funds to local jurisdictions for trails. Another opportunity would be the Federal Transportation Enhancement Program, however, distribution of funds is handled by the Regional Planning Affiliation, Region-18. Neola would have to seek approval from Pottawattamie County first, then gain approval of the RPA-18 Technical and Policy Boards. Community involvement and support is also necessary, and the establishment of a Parks and Recreation Board would help guide the process of planning.

- *A Capital Campaign:* Improvements at the City Park could be accomplished through a capital campaign involving solicitation of donations from local residents and businesses. Publicizing a City's needs and soliciting donations is a great way to start the planning process. Demonstrating local support is often a requirement of many grant programs as well.

- *Marketing:* An informational kiosk located at Arrowhead Park, telling park patrons about services and events in Neola, could be built at little cost, but would need the approval of Pottawattamie County Conservation Board. Getting the word out about the opportunities found within a community will help to create more regional and local interest in improvement projects.

Parks and Open Space Development Plan Neola, Iowa



PART III: IMPELEMENTING THE PLAN:

► PLAN MAINTENENCE

The scope of the Neola Plan is long term and contains many ambitious goals. When taken as a whole, the Plan presents many long and short-term goals that will place significant burdens on the City. However, developing an implementation schedule will guide city officials in the decision making process and will allow the City to gradually cross off goals contained in this Plan. Every year, the City should take a look at this Plan and determine which goals can feasibly be completed. In addition, the City should review the Comprehensive Plan annually. This review should be in the form of report that:

- *Summarizes key land use developments in the past year and relates them to the goals contained in the comprehensive plan.*
- *Reviews action taken by the City during the past year to implement plan recommendations.*
- *Defines any changes that should be made to the comprehensive plan.*

In this way, the Plan is a dynamic, changing document that is used actively by the City.

► CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

Using data gathered by the City in the development of its Infrastructure Needs Study and Strategic Plan, a strategy for completing capital improvements in a systematic fashion has been developed, with considerations made for availability of financial resources and priority of needed improvements as they relate to the City's overall development goals.

In November of 2004, the City of Neola commissioned an Infrastructure Needs Survey, part of a strategic planning process that documents needed capital improvements, details estimated costs for the improvements, and provides information on how the projects could be financed. This can be considered the basis for the city's Capital Improvements Program and thus, is an essential part of this plan. As projects are completed, the Capital Improvements Program should be reevaluated to determine if there are new needs. This program is a vital instrument to the City's budgeting process and any improvement undertaken should first be reviewed for compliance with both the Capital Improvements Program and the Comprehensive Plan.

The following items are not included in the Capital Improvements Program of the Infrastructure Needs Study of 2004:

- *Improve Access to The Park.* Building a sidewalk along Pearl Street, starting at Fifth Street. The sidewalk can be placed in the Pearl Street right of way, on the south side of the street. Approximately 700 linear feet of sidewalk will be needed to bring the sidewalk from Fifth Street into the Park. A standard four foot wide, four inch thick sidewalk constructed of concrete would cost the City approximately \$7-10,000.
- *Nature Trail at City Park.* The cost of this project would depend on the type of surface desired and the length of the trail. Concrete is the most durable surface available, but also amongst the most expensive. Asphalt is typically not recommended for trail projects, as it is not highly durable and the cost of asphalt is rising commensurate with increasing oil costs. Other alternatives exist, and a surface made from recycling rubber is currently the preferred surface for urban recreational trails.
- *Take Advantage of Opportunities to Expand City Park.* One acre of vacant land north of the City Park may be available for acquisition by the city and would provide excellent opportunity for park expansion. Currently assessed at around \$2,000, the parcel is likely worth as much as a \$6,000. The parcel is close to the city and utilities, however, due to it's location in the floodplain of Neola Creek and the difficulty associated with bringing water and sewer service across the creek, the developability of the parcel is minimal.
- *Build Restroom Facility at the City Park.* The cost of a new restroom facility would depend on the size desired by the community. A stick built structure approximately 20'x20' would cost approximately \$20,000 to \$30,000 and the cost of a concrete block building would be approximately twice that amount. Cost estimates do not include the cost of possible utility extensions to the site, or the installation of a septic tank, if needed. Grant funding may be available for this project, through Iowa West or the variety of programs offered through the Iowa DNR.
- *Re-construct Wastewater Treatment Plant and Improve Collection System.* The cost of this project would depend on whether the City of Underwood jointly pursues the project with Neola. A treatment plant to handle the capacity of Neola would cost about \$1,100,000 to \$1.3 million. While the cost savings of constructing a joint plant would be significant for both cities, the cost of a joint treatment plant, including force mains, would likely top \$2 million.
- *South Second Street Bypass.* This project would require approximately ¼ mile of new roadway and improvements to existing intersections. This project would likely cost the city \$500,000 or more, depending on the scope of improvements and whether or not a trail or pedestrian linkage is included.

- *Arrowhead Park Trail and Mosquito Creek Trail.* The cost of this project would depend on how much participation Pottawattamie County is willing to give. Other trails in the region have been completed completely with volunteer labor and donations. Most, however, are completed with federal or state transportation funds. A total cost for this project would depend on many factors, such as interstate and creek crossings, as well as if sufficient right-of-way exists to allow a trail to “piggyback” the roadway leading to Arrowhead Park.
- *Front Street Revitalization Project.* The cost of this project would depend on the scope of work desired by the city. A community-based design process would determine what aspects would be included. Similar projects in other towns have varied from several hundred thousand to several million dollars.
- *Create a Public Library.* although it could be added to the city hall project, a separate public library could constructed if the city so desired. Depending on the type of construction used, a new building could approach several hundred thousand dollars. Existing buildings could likely be purchased and renovated for significantly less expense.

► **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Neola has great assets in relation to economic development. A workforce that is engaged in a wide range of industry sectors, particularly transportation and distribution, and access to major transportation routes such as Interstate 80 and rail, make Neola particularly attractive to warehouses, distribution centers and transportation related industries. Labor-shed studies have indicated that workers in the Omaha-Council Bluffs area are willing to travel longer distances for employment, making Neola an attractive location for businesses looking to take advantage of the low site development costs and favorable tax structures found in rural areas, but needing access to markets and labor found in urban areas.

While expanding the retail sector in Neola would increase the quality of life for residents, the availability of retail options in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro, combined with the fact that over half of the workforce is employed there, leaves little hope for more retail in Neola. It is possible that Neola could support a general store, along the lines of Dollar General or Family Dollar, however, most commercial development in Neola will likely take the form of consumer services and small, niche retailers.

Neola’s infrastructure is generally in good condition with adequate capacity. Improvements recommended in this plan will enable Neola to be accommodate most industrial or commercial developments.

Current Economic Development Activity

Neola is currently a member of Western Iowa Development Association (WIDA). WIDA was created in June of 1987 out of necessity to promote the area. WIDA was developed with the help of Nishnabotna Valley REC, Oakland Industrial Foundation, and Avoca Promotions. The mission of WIDA is to enhance employment opportunities through marketing, promotion, and development of people, products and resources. WIDA has enlarged its scope to assist individuals and municipalities with projects and to help businesses to locate and develop business opportunities in the region.

In 2004, a subdivision was platted on the north end of Neola, near the cemetery. The subdivision was platted to contain 3 two-unit condominium buildings and 4 single-family homes. To date, only 2 single-family homes and 1 of the condominium buildings have been constructed. The remainder of the condominiums are under construction at current. With an average value of \$150,000 for the each condo unit and \$180,000 for each home, the total potential valuation for the subdivision is \$1,620,000. At the \$8.10 general levy rate per one thousand dollars of valuation, the subdivision will generate \$13,122 annually in property tax revenue for the general fund.

Currently, a 16 unit residential subdivision is planned on the western edge of town, near the park. With a projected average value of \$220,000, the subdivision would create a new tax base of \$3,520,000 and generate approximately \$28,512 for the city annually based on the general levy limit of \$8.10 per thousand dollars of valuation.

Quail Run Golf Course, a nine-hole public country club, has been the largest economic development project in the Neola area in recent years. Although outside of city limits, Quail Run has been a great addition to the area.

Goals

- **Actively Market the Community**

While WIDA is there to assist Neola in marketing the city to potential businesses, the City of Neola can undertake some activities to supplement the current marketing initiatives. Websites such as Location One Information System (LOIS – www.locationone.com) provide an online clearinghouse for information about building sites and infrastructure available in a community. When the Mosquito Creek Industrial Park comes to fruition, or if other sites are currently available, the pad sites can be advertised on LOIS at no charge to the community. Updating the community profile found on LOIS will also aid in marketing efforts – as new amenities are added it should be noted here.

- Participate in Creating “Shovel Ready” Sites

Neola already has great potential for economic development, but can enhance the attractiveness of the community to business interests through infrastructure extension. While speculative development of commercial or industrial sites and buildings by the City is not recommended, the City can assist private entrepreneurs and landowners by providing incentives to extend infrastructure and participating and, in some instances, leading the push for outside funding for infrastructure development. Locally, policies such as TIF and tax abatement can help to offset the costs of infrastructure development and effectively level the playing field for Neola. Outside funding sources, such as RISE grants, revolving loan funds and other economic development oriented grant and loan programs can be used to assist private sector interests in developing infrastructure, buying equipment or training employees. The City of Neola must participate, and take the lead in some cases, in order for businesses to vie for these outside funding sources.

► FINAL REPORT

A summary of the Plan has been prepared and is attached as a separate document entitled “Planning Handbook for Implementation and Citizen’s Guide to Understanding the Plan.” Public participation throughout the planning process was facilitated through meetings with the Neola Planning and Zoning Board, City Staff and citizens. Without the guidance and oversight of the Planning and Zoning Board, and the authorization of the City Council, this plan would not have been possible. The recommendations contained herein are based on identified community needs and represent the first step in planning for and maintaining the services, infrastructure and public amenities that make life in Neola pleasurable, safe and healthy. Dedication to implementing the projects in this plan, and diligence in maintaining and updating all planning documents is necessary to ensure that the quality of life in Neola is maintained and enhanced throughout the years.