

Schuyler Downtown

VISION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY



Approved by the Schuyler City Council
April 4, 2017

INTRODUCTION

PRIORITY **one**

PRIORITY **two**

PRIORITY **three**

PRIORITY **four**

PRIORITY **five**

PRIORITY **six**

PRIORITY **seven**

PRIORITY **eight**

OTHER STRATEGIC ISSUES

Introduction, Planning Process, Planning Workshop, Ranking Process, Timeframe for Implementation, Current Downtown Situation, Downtown Action Plan		page 04
Improve the physical condition of above-ground and subterranean infrastructure systems of the Schuyler Downtown Historic District.		page 11
To promote economic development within the Schuyler Downtown Historic District.		page 16
Expand the Façade and Building Improvement Fund Program in the City of Schuyler.		page 23
Control the long-term deterioration of structures that support the Schuyler Downtown Historic District Designation.		page 29
Promote the development of residential housing units in second floor commercial buildings in the Schuyler Downtown Historic District.		page 32
Long-term sustainability of special events within the Schuyler Downtown Historic District.		page 36
Maintain good standing with the National Floodplain Insurance Program .		page 40
Improve communication among the Schuyler business community, particularly with Minority-Owned Businesses in the Schuyler Downtown Historic District.		page 44
Other lower priority strategic issues		page 47



INTRODUCTION

To paraphrase Lewis Carroll in *Through the Looking Glass*, if you don't know where you're going, then it doesn't matter which way you go!

The purpose of a Downtown Vision Implementation Strategy is to help communities determine where they want to go, what they want to be, and how to get where they want to go; or in other words, how to achieve their vision for the future. For a Vision Implementation Strategy to be more than an academic exercise that results in an impressive, but dreary document gathering dust on a shelf, it must be developed by people who are passionate about an organization's potential and its future.

Developing a long-term (ten-year) implementation strategy is one of the most important responsibilities of the leadership of any organization. It is the activity that establishes a clear vision for the organization and sets appropriate strategic objectives to guide fulfillment of the vision. It also aligns appropriate resources and deployment decisions to achieve the strategic objectives and establishes measures that ensure attainment of those objectives within specified time frames.

Like most rural downtowns in Nebraska, Schuyler's downtown is continually faced with a myriad of challenges and opportunities. The demands on budgets, outdated public infrastructure systems, floodplain challenges, aged buildings, and ethnically diverse business-ownership underscore the need for a common focus and unifying vision for the downtown. In an era of limited resources (human and financial), it is critical that downtown stakeholders are focused in the same direction. The role of this Vision Implementation Strategy, therefore, is to provide that focus so the Downtown Schuyler Historic District (Downtown Historic District) can embody the true heritage and identify of community life.

The Schuyler Downtown Vision Implementation Strategy will serve as a user-friendly, self-explanatory roadmap for the success of the Downtown Historic District over the next ten years.

It will also serve as a tool to communicate the downtown stakeholders' intentions to the residents of Schuyler, focus the direction of public and private investments, and ensure that priorities and objectives are met in a timeframe established by the community. This Vision Implementation Strategy defines specific results that are to be achieved, outlines a course of action for achieving them, and details measurements to ensure the outcomes of those results. Additionally, this plan will ensure that the most important priorities for the Downtown Historic District are identified, communicated, and achieved with direction and effective planning so that all may know what is expected and how to achieve success. Downtown stakeholders will be diligent in focusing its efforts on strategic objectives that it can control and influence within the scope of its mission and vision. The implementation of this Vision Implementation Strategy and the decision making around it will align with shared vision and values of Schuyler, Nebraska.

Planning Process

On October 27, 2016 members of the Schuyler Community Development Inc., City staff, Schuyler Department of Utilities, Schuyler Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Revitalization and Commercial Development Committee (DRCDC), civic organizations, financial institutions, concerned residents, and business leaders held a Vision Implementation Strategy workshop to discuss, build consensus, and prioritize a wide array of strategic issues facing the Downtown Historic District. A total of 12 downtown stakeholders participated in the workshop. JEO Consulting Group, Inc. was hired to facilitate.

The priority of the Vision Implementation Strategy workshop was to establish consensus on civic betterment initiatives so the Schuyler community can formulate strategies and target local resources (both human and financial) to accomplish the priorities. It was agreed that a formal plan of action was needed to keep the Downtown Historic District moving forward and to provide efficiency in its resources, regardless of personnel changes and political leadership.

Because the Schuyler Downtown Vision Implementation Strategy is a living document, it should be reviewed regularly by the DRCDC. As updates are needed, to reflect new accomplishments and changing priorities, local decision-makers should continue to engage the downtown stakeholders in the planning process. Through ongoing communication and collaboration, downtown stakeholders can ensure transparency and that the Vision Implementation Strategy reflects the priorities of Downtown Historic District, as a whole.

Planning Workshop

At the onset of the October 27, 2016 Schuyler Downtown Vision Implementation Strategy Workshop, stakeholders reviewed the strategic issues facing the downtown. A strategic issue is an important aspect or critical challenge that requires attention in order to achieve a particular purpose. In this case, the revitalization of the Downtown Historic District.

The strategic issues for the Downtown Historic District were identified by City staff, Schuyler Community Development Inc., downtown building and/or property-owners, and the Schuyler Department of Utilities based on their institutional knowledge of the downtown and one-on-one communication with individuals that work, live, visit, and invest in the Downtown Historic District. In no particular order, the strategic issues for the Downtown Historic District include:

- Contributing Historic Buildings (e.g., Top Notch building, Carnegie Library, Coast-to-Coast building)
- Historic District Designation/Lincoln Highway (National Register of Historic Places)





- Infrastructure System in Downtown Area (above-ground infrastructure includes but is not limited to: streets, sidewalks, curbs, street lighting, streetscaping, signage, ADA accessibility, etc. Subterranean infrastructure includes water and sewer lines, electrical, storm sewer, fiber, etc.)
- Condition of Storefront Facades
- Platte River Floodplain Challenges
- Business Development (New businesses, economic leakages, etc.)
- Downtown Housing in Second Floor Commercial Buildings
- Minority-owned entrepreneurs (issues surrounding first generation business-owners, language or cultural barriers, etc.)
- Business Recruitment & Retention
- Special Events
- Downtown connectivity to U.S. Highway 30 Bypass, Highway 15, and Lincoln Highway
- Union Pacific Railroad property impact
- Civic organizations in the downtown (city and county office buildings, police department, post office, utility office, senior center, WIC offices, Museum and Annex and the Homestead Center organizations)

Members unanimously agreed with the importance of these strategic issues, but in the end, the committee combined several issues because they were viewed as inherently integrated and therefore inseparable.

Committee members were then asked to further define these strategic issues by identifying all known issues and concerns surrounding the issue. This exercise offered participants a deeper understanding of strategic issues, their importance to the long-term well-being of the downtown, and to facilitate the ranking process for issue prioritization.

Ranking Process

Once the strategic issues were thoroughly defined, downtown stakeholders were then asked to consider each of the strategic issues and identify their top tier priorities using a dot exercise. Stakeholders were given a total of three (3) dots, or votes, to help rank the strategic issues of most important to them. Before the vote, stakeholders suggested that Historic Buildings and Historic District Designation/Lincoln Highway be combined into one strategic issue. Contributing historic structures in the area led to downtown being listed on the National Register of Historic Places, therefore, merger of the two strategic issues was warranted.

Based upon the results of the dot exercise described above, “Downtown Infrastructure” (7 votes), “Business Recruitment and Retention” (6 votes), “Storefront Façade Improvements” (6 votes), and Contributing Historic Buildings/Historic District (5 votes) votes were prioritized as the most pressing issue facing the Downtown Historic District. These strategic issues are hereinafter referred to as “Tier I” Priorities, or the highest priority needs of the Downtown Historic District, since they received a clear consensus of first round votes of those stakeholders present.

Tier I Priorities were taken down from the wall and stakeholders were then asked to rank the remaining strategic issues. Members were given three additional dots and instructed to vote on “Tier II” Priorities, or low- to medium-priorities of the Downtown Historic District. Again, the strategic issue had to receive a majority of second round votes in order to be considered a Tier II Priority. Second Tier Priorities of the Downtown Historic District include:

- Downtown Housing in Second Floor Commercial Buildings (3 Tier I votes and 10 Tier II votes)
- Special Events (0 Tier I votes and 8 Tier II votes)
- Floodplain Challenges (3 Tier I votes and 7 Tier II votes)
- Minority-Owned Businesses (0 Tier I votes and 4 Tier II votes)

Those strategic issues that did not receive at least one vote during the first or second round were placed into a “Tier III” category. Although these Tier III issues did not receive any votes, they were still identified as important aspects or critical challenges that require attention for comprehensive revitalization of the Downtown Historic District. Tier III Priorities are shown below in no particular order.

- Civic Organizations in Downtown Historic District
- Union Pacific Railroad property impact

Timeframe for Implementation

The final step in the strategic process was to define a timeframe for implementation of Tier I and Tier II priorities. Participants were asked priorities should be implemented in the “short-term” (defined as 0-3 years), “mid-term” (4-7 years), “long-term” (8-10 years), and ongoing (10+ years). The results of this exercise is shown below:

Short-Term Priorities (0-3 years)

- Downtown Infrastructure (above-ground and subterranean infrastructure)
- Business Recruitment and Retention
- Storefront Façade Improvements
- Contributing Historic Buildings/Historic District

Ongoing Priorities (10+ years)

- Downtown Housing in Second Floor Commercial Buildings
- Platte River Floodplain Challenges
- Special Events

Several Tier I and Tier II Priorities were given multiple timeframes for implementation since certain action items within the priority could be undertaken or accomplished at various timeframes. This timeframe for implementation exercise was not performed for Tier III issues.





Current Downtown Situation

Despite its importance - and high visibility - the Downtown Historic District is in a state of declining disrepair. Damaged streets, steep steps, broken sidewalks, step curbing, unmarked ledges, inadequate street illumination, and unreliable water service are perpetual obstacles for local businesses, visitors and patrons of the downtown area. A full description of the above-ground and subterranean infrastructure systems serving Downtown Schuyler can be found beginning on page 23 of the 2010 Schuyler Downtown Revitalization Plan.

Not only do these deficient conditions pose a real public health and safety concern – especially for seniors and persons with physical mobility issues – but they impair sound community growth and constitute an economic liability for the City, in terms of maintenance and funding of public infrastructure repairs. It also precludes economic growth opportunities for the residents of the community. This is an untenable situation for a City that prides itself on advocating a positive community image.

For this reason, the Schuyler downtown area cannot function successfully as the economic core of the community in this state of disrepair.

Community and government leaders across the country have come to the realization that they not only can, but also must initiate programs to enhance their downtown areas. Even with a booming economy and one of the lowest unemployment rates in modern history - on a state and national level, the long-term economic development priority of downtown revitalization to encourage and promote job creation and business retention still remains at the forefront for the City of Schuyler.

Schuyler residents recognize that the downtown area is the literal and symbolic heart of the community, and as such, it enjoys the distinction of being the center of the public arena. It is the place that defines the larger community - culturally, economically and politically. The physical setting of the downtown reveals the values and underpinnings of the local society (the opportunities and constraints therein) and serves as a measure of civic health and vitality.

Setting

Schuyler's has two principal entrances into the downtown: East 11th from Nebraska Highway 15 (a highly traveled north-south corridor), and B Street off of old U.S. Highway 30. According to page 18 of the 2010 Schuyler Downtown Revitalization Plan, prepared for the City by RDG Planning & Design in partnership with JEO Consulting Group, Inc.,

To better understand the character and function of Downtown Schuyler further analysis of the districts is divided by its distinctive corridors.

B Street Commercial Core

Originally, the route of the Lincoln Highway, the B Street Core begins at the Union Pacific crossing. Buildings facing this street range from one to two-stories, were built to the property line, and frequently have awnings extending over the sidewalk. The area is characterized by Schuyler Downtown Plan retail businesses catering to the Hispanic community, restaurants, city hall, and the city's two banks. Since the construction of the original brick street, the sidewalk has been narrowed to allow adequate room for diagonal parking.

11th Street Civic Corridor

11th Street is the primary route of access into the downtown district from Highway 15 (Colfax Street). Like the majority of the district, businesses fronting 11th Street are built to the property line, and range in height from one to two stories. A healthy mix of businesses including offices, automotive service, a theatre, and various retail outlets characterize the area. This corridor also has a number of important civic facilities, including the Post Office, Police Station, City Hall, and Colfax County Courthouse.

12th Street Supportive Services

Railside Green and 12th Street are the northern boundary of the downtown district. The corridor provides the primary access to Railside Green but also some of the city's long standing downtown commercial anchors like Homestead Bank. The deteriorating building at the northeast corner of 12th and B Streets has been a significant concern for many residents of the community. Overall the buildings along the corridor are occupied and provide important business destinations in the community.

A Street

The A Street corridor has several important community and regional destinations, including the former Public Works office, Reinecke Motor, and the Library. There are also some of vacant store fronts, including half of the former Dudek store.

C Street

Like A Street, C ends at the railroad tracks on the north side. The district's only city parking lot is located along C Street adjacent to the Schuyler Sun. The corridor has a few retail businesses, legal offices, American Legion, and one of the larger vacant structures in the Sky Movie Theater.





Downtown Action Plan

Schuyler's Downtown Action Plan will focus on the Tier I and Tier II priorities, as voted upon by downtown stakeholder. By its very definition, an action plan is a sequence of steps that must be taken, or activities that must be performed well, for a proposed strategy or course of action to succeed.

The format of the Downtown Action Plan will be same for each Priority: stated priority, challenges, objectives, actions steps, timelines, responsible groups/agencies, potential resources, and measurable outputs. Although the following priorities are numbered, it is realized that such priorities may take on different forms, be consolidated with other priorities/projects or be re-prioritized based upon unforeseen issues or opportunities. In such cases, this Vision Implementation Strategy shall be re-examined and adopted to provide proper guidance.

PRIORITY #1: Improve the physical condition of above-ground and subterranean **infrastructure systems** of the Schuyler Downtown Historic District.

7 – Tier I Votes

Short-term (0-3 Years)/Mid-term (4-7 Years)

Challenges

- Subterranean Infrastructure (e.g., water and sewer lines, electrical, storm sewer) in the Downtown Historic District was originally built in the early 1920s.
- Brick streets were installed in 1923.
- City must preserve the brick streets to keep the downtown's designation on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The Lincoln Highway era was 1913-1927.
- Much of this above-ground and subterranean infrastructure still exists today and is in a state of declining disrepair.
- Clay tile sanitary sewer lines serving the Downtown Historic District have outlived their useful design and need to be replaced.
- Water mains serving the Downtown Historic District are 8" but need to be greater than 10" for fire flows. Downtown water lines need to be replaced.
- Storm sewer are jetted annually for better drainage.
- Localized flooding problem near the south end of the overpass (East 11th & Colfax)
- The city reconstructed downtown sidewalks in the 1970s but do not meet ADA standards.
- Drinking fountains were originally installed on corners. Water lines still exist but capped.
- Existing downtown street lights were originally installed in the 1950s.
- Downtown street lights are LED and provide adequate coverage.
- Electrical lines feeding street poles are overhead.
- Need modern benches and trash receptacles.
- City interested in exploring bump-outs with new subterranean utilities and new sidewalks/ADA ramps.
- Need landscaping/beautification throughout in the Downtown Historic District.
- Need improved wireless service in the Downtown Historic District.

Objective #1: To evaluate the current physical condition of the Schuyler Downtown Area.

Action Step #1: Coordinate with the Downtown Revitalization & Commercial Development Committee to oversee revitalization efforts in the Downtown Historic District.

Action Step #2: Apply for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Downtown Revitalization (DTR) funds to cost-share a Pre-Development Study for the Downtown Historic District.





Action Step #3: Engage the services of the Schuyler City Engineer to identify and prioritize the comprehensive needs of the Downtown Historic District.



Action Step #4: Inspect the physical condition and capacity of above-ground and subterranean infrastructure serving the Downtown Historic District, including, but not limited to, streets, sidewalks, curbs, street lighting, landscaping, ADA accessibility, water and sewer lines, storm sewer, and electrical.



Action Step #5: Identify other needs of downtown property-owners, such as signage, railroad quiet zones, second story housing/businesses, demolition, niche opportunities, language barriers, and financial incentives for storefront façade improvements/historic restoration.



Timeline: 2017-2018.



Objective #2: To pursue Leadership Community or Economic Development Certification status from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED).



Action Step #1: Review the requirements for Leadership Community and Economic Development Certification on DED's website to determine which designation is best suited for the City of Schuyler.



Action Step #2: Print off the checklist for the selected Designation to identify submittal requirements and monitor progress.

Action Step #3: Complete the components that are required for the selected Designation.



Action Step #4: Prepare and submit an application to DED, consistent with the selected Designation's application guidelines.

Action Step #5: Revise as needed.

Action Step #6: Receive the desired Designation status from DED.



Action Step #7: Monitor the requirements of the Designation to ensure compliance with changing requirements of the program.

Action Step #8: Recertify as required.

Timeline: 2017.

Objective #3: To implement prioritized above-ground and subterranean infrastructure needs of the Downtown Historic District.

Action Step #1: Hold a public meeting to review the needs of the Downtown Historic District.

Action Step #2: Prioritize the public infrastructure needs of the Downtown Historic District.

- Action Step #3: Determine the effect, if any, that above-ground public infrastructure improvements will have on the Downtown Historic District Designation. Revise and modify as needed.
- Action Step #4: Develop opinion of costs for all above-ground and subterranean infrastructure improvements in the Downtown Historic District.
- Action Step #5: Create Pre-Development Study for the Downtown, including a Conceptual Master Plan.
- Action Step #6: Hold a meeting with downtown stakeholders to unveil the Pre-Development Study. Revise the plan as necessary to ensure that it reflects the needs, thoughts and desires of local residents and downtown business-owners.
- Action Step #7: Present the Pre-Development Study to the Schuyler City Council for their review and approval.

Timeline: 2018.

Objective #4: To determine the City’s and business owner’s fiscal capacity for long-term, above-ground and subterranean improvements within the Downtown Historic District.

- Action Step #1: Consider downtown property-owner’s willingness and financial capacity to support implementation of the Pre-Development Study.
- Action Step #2: Meet with the City’s fiscal agent to determine the bonding debt capacity of community.
- Action Step #3: Identify local, regional, state and federal resources for improvements to the Downtown Historic District.
- Action Step #4: Maximize the impact of downtown revitalization efforts by leveraging local monies with “outside” resources.
- Action Step #5: Package all necessary financial resources.

Timeline: 2018.

Objective #5: To secure plans and specifications for above-ground and subterranean infrastructure improvements in the Downtown Historic District.

- Action Step #1: Enter into a service agreement with the City Engineer to prepare plans and specifications for the above-ground and subterranean infrastructure improvements in the Downtown Historic District.
- Action Step #2: Conduct necessary engineering services to prepare plans and specifications to revitalize above-ground and subterranean infrastructure in the Downtown Historic District.
- Action Step #3: Review plans with the Nebraska Historic Preservation Officer to ensure that proposed above-ground improvements respect, preserve, and maintain the historic character of the Historic District.





Action Step #4: Hold a town hall meeting to solicit public input on the plans and specifications.



Action Step #5: Make necessary revisions and submit the plans and specifications to the Schuyler City Council for final approval.



Timeline: 2019.



Objective #6: To reconstruct above-ground and subterranean infrastructure within the Downtown Historic District.



Action Step #1: Bid phase to include advertising, letting and contract award to the lowest, responsible/responsive bidder.

Action Step #2: Hold a preconstruction conference.

Action Step #3: Construction related activities.

Action Step #4: Project close-out.



Timeline: 2020.



Responsible Groups/Agencies



Schuyler City Council, Schuyler Department of Utilities, Schuyler Planning Commission, Schuyler Community Development Agency, Schuyler Community Development Inc., Downtown Revitalization & Commercial Development Committee, Downtown business and property-owners, residents, Schuyler Chamber of Commerce, Schuyler and Colfax County Historical Society, and the Nebraska State Historical Society.



Potential Resources



General Obligation Bonds, Special Assessment Districts, Business Improvement District, LB840 Sales Tax, Tax Increment Financing, private assessments, Schuyler Community Development Inc., Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, Community Enhancement Program (CEP), private monies/foundations, Nebraska Arts Council, Nebraska Energy Office, Community Development Assistance Act, Historic Tax Credits, and USDA Rural Development.

Measurable Outputs

Downtown is the heart of the community and organisms do not live well with a weak heart. A vital, successful, and prospering downtown adds value to a community in both literal and figurative terms. Adding value takes place in many parameters – the value of experience, place, image, culture, public space, neighborhood, distinctiveness, and economics. A strong downtown helps a community recruit businesses and entrepreneurs, broadens the local tax base, and increases the overall desirability and sense of life in the city. This, in turn, affects the value of every owner's property as well as the value of their membership in the community.

Downtown is also a critical capital asset for the city, and smart cities, like smart businesses, invest in their assets to increase revenues. Through wise investment, Schuyler can increase the size of the Downtown economy, improve business, and strengthen the city’s economic well-being. The districts unique Hispanic retailers and its location within easy driving distance of other large Hispanic population centers positions it to become a greater business attraction. In this effort, it is especially important to sustain the town center’s existing commercial base and build on that foundation. This plan is designed to use the assets and character of Downtown Schuyler and surrounding features to create new energy and generate, in the words of Alex Garvin, author of *The American City, What Works, What Doesn’t*, “a sustained and widespread private market reaction which improves the quality of life of the affected community”

Summary – Priority #1

Improving the above-ground and subterranean infrastructure in the Downtown Historic District is the City of Schuyler’s #1 Priority. Due to both its critical importance and declining condition, the City should immediately begin focused, deliberate, and unconditional commitment to replacing all public infrastructure systems serving the Downtown Historic District.





PRIORITY #2: To promote **economic development** within the Schuyler Downtown Historic District.

6 – Tier I Votes

Short -term (0-3 Years)/Ongoing (10+ Years)

Challenges

- Need professional services in Downtown Historic District such as attorney, tax preparation, and accounting.
- Need medical services such as Pharmacy, Optometrist, and Dentist.
- Need more restaurant variety in the downtown.
- Need vocational services such as Electricians, Plumbing, and Heating and Cooling.
- City has a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund for job creation.
- Many downtown business-owners are nearing retirement.
- Schuyler downtown has a need for business transition planning.
- Need builders and contractors.
- Schuyler Development is working with Economic Development professionals throughout northeast Nebraska to provide Business Coaches for business-owners.
- Downtown Schuyler lacks the draw. Need activities and attractions to bring visitors to Schuyler from out-of-town. Must be reinvented.
- The City conducted a 2012 Study for niche businesses for Schuyler.
- The City lacks lots for new commercial development.
- Existing commercial buildings in Downtown Historic District not efficient of costs too much to rehabilitate.
- Recently renovated storefronts are adjacent to “eye sores” structures.

Objective #1: To create a Schuyler Business Recruitment and Retention Strategy.

- Action Step #1: Create a Business Recruitment and Retention Team (BRRT) comprised of individuals with skills, knowledge, and resources to assist business and property-owners.
- Action Step #2: The BRRT should reach out to downtown business-owners to open lines of communication and build trust.
- Action Step #3: Collect data about the businesses/properties within the Downtown Historic District including the name of business and building owner, contact information, address, category of business (NAICS/SIC), first floor and upper floor designations (retail, office, civic, residential, vacant), and size of space.
- Action Step #4: Communicate with building owners and business managers to better understand the individual needs of downtown businesses.

- Action Step #5: Create a form to ensure that the interviewer asks about the business's need for working capital, expansion plans, building improvements, energy efficiency, employee recruitment, business planning, marketing, technical assistance, transition planning, etc.
- Action Step #6: Analyze information.
- Action Step #7: Create a Business Recruitment and Retention Plan, outlining local policies for retention, expansion, attraction programs, and funding.
- Action Step #8: Review existing programs offered by the City/Schuyler Community Development Inc. and make sure they are synchronized with the financial, technical, marketing, and operational assistance needs of businesses. Amend as necessary.
- Action Step #9: Provide the needed resources (human capital, budget, and technology) to ensure that the City's Business Recruitment and Retention Plan achieves the City's short- and long-term priorities.

Timeline: 2017-Ongoing.

Objective #2: To encourage business transition planning within existing businesses.

- Action Step #1: Introduce local business-owners to the concept of business transfer planning such as timetables, business valuation and talent recognition.
- Action Step #2: Encourage local business-owners to register for and attend the Business Transfer Seminars offered by the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC).
- Action Step #3: Encourage local business-owners to access professional and confidential services provided by Schuyler Community Development Inc.'s business coaches to identify business transfer opportunities.
- Action Step #4: Encourage local business-owners to conduct an individual assessment of their current situation (when to retire, how to finance the transfer, etc.).
- Action Step #5: Help business-owners create an Inner Circle of advisors (lawyers, financial planners, accountants, bankers and investors) to facilitate the business transition process.
- Action Step #6: Educate young entrepreneurs about the investment opportunity of purchasing an existing business with an established market and client base.
- Action Step #7: Coordinate local business-owners with young entrepreneurs to facilitate and encourage the business transfer process.
- Action Step #8: Support replacement of above-ground and subterranean infrastructure systems as a catalyst for renewed private investment/ reinvestment into contributing/non-contributing structures in the Downtown Historic District.

Timeline: Ongoing.





Objective #3: To promote and encourage patronization of Schuyler businesses.

- Action Step #1: Inventory available businesses within the Schuyler to gather information on products/services provided within the Downtown Historic District.
- Action Step #2: Utilize local and social media outlets to enlighten Schuyler residents as to the myriad of goods and services provided by local businesses.
- Action Step #3: Foster a program that encourages residents to “Buy Schuyler First.”

Timeline: Ongoing.

Objective #4: To support small business development and entrepreneurial training.

- Action Step #1: Survey the residents of Schuyler to determine community economic development leakages, patronage potential, and interest in and concerns about starting a small business within the City.
- Action Step #2: Tabulate and analyze survey results.
- Action Step #3: Consider the feasibility/possibility of addressing the concerns of potential small business concerns particularly in the Downtown Historic District.
- Action Step #4: Offer ongoing training and education to small business concerns/entrepreneurs about accessing capital, preparing business plans, effectuate niche markets, expanding market share, foster economic clusters, or develop effective marketing strategies.
- Action Step #5: Capitalize a small business revolving loan fund to provide seed monies for small and emerging businesses concerns and for commercial building purchase or renovation.
- Action Step #6: Consider the feasibility/interest in developing an incubator business location to help emerging growth companies survive and grow during the start-up period when they are most vulnerable.
- Action Step #7: Seek the professional expertise of the Schuyler Community Development Inc. and its team of business coaches in fostering entrepreneurial training.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

City of Schuyler, Schuyler Department of Utilities, residents, Schuyler Public School System, Downtown business- and property-owners, Schuyler Community Development Agency, Downtown Revitalization & Commercial Development Committee, Schuyler financial Institutions, Schuyler Community Development Inc., Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NENEDD), Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP),

Small Business Administration (SBA), USDA Rural Development, Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC), Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship, Nebraska Public Power District, Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED), Nebraska Economic Development Corporation, and Federal Home Loan Bank – Joint Opportunities for Building Successes.

Potential Resources

LB840 Sales Tax, Schuyler Public Schools, Schuyler Community Development Inc., private monies, Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District, GROW Nebraska™, Rural Entrepreneurial Assistance Program (REAP), Micro-enterprise loans, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, State Community College System, USDA Rural Development Programs, Small Business Administration, Nebraska Business Development Center, and Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship.

Measurable Outputs

Identified are four proven measures aimed at promoting economic development within the community, specifically: 1. Business Recruitment and Retention, 2. Business Transition Planning, 3. Entrepreneurial Development, and 4. Business Incubation. These objectives should be coordinates with Schuyler Community Development, Inc. and the Downtown Revitalization & Commercial Development Committee.

Business Recruitment and Retention

Small businesses are the driving force in today's economy, especially in downtowns. According to the Small Business Administration (SBA), there are 28 million small businesses in the U.S. which account for 54% of all U.S. sales. Additionally, small businesses provide 55% of all jobs and 66% of net new jobs since the 1970s. Therefore, it's critical for Schuyler and its downtowns to have a business recruitment and retention plan in place to help local small businesses, providing them with opportunities to be successful. After all, small businesses help increase the number of local jobs, preserve or increase the local tax base, increases property values, enhance the community's image, increase consumer confidence, and diversify the local economy.

It is easier and cheaper to keep an existing business than it is to replace one. A business recruitment and retention, properly implemented, not only helps keep businesses open but possibly even helps them expand. For Schuyler, the loss of sales and property tax due to a vacant building will have a negative effect on the municipal budget, operations, and infrastructure investments. For downtown stakeholders, the image of an empty building conveys to consumers the values and underpinnings of the local society (the opportunities and constraints therein) and serves as a measure of civic health and vitality.

Business Transition Planning

The first rule of economic development is keeping the business you already have within your community. Sustaining established family-owned businesses into





the next generation is an important issue for rural Nebraska. Many businesses throughout Nebraska are family-owned, but statistics clearly show that few survive beyond the retirement of the current owner. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, only 30% of all family businesses succeed into the second generation, and of these, only 15% survive into the third generation. These alarming facts, combined with the realization that many new businesses fail within the first five years, demonstrate that losing established small businesses can severely impact economic stability.

No one plans to fail, they just fail to plan. Even though this old adage of yesteryear attests to the importance of thinking ahead, national statistics indicate that a significant number of small business-owners are aging and do not have an exit strategy in place. For some, the thought of giving up ownership and control of a business they have built over many years of hard work is too difficult to contemplate. Others are under the misconception that someone will appear at the door ready, willing and able to offer a fair price for the company when they want and/or need to sell their business. There are still others who are forced into selling/transferring their family-owned business because of circumstances beyond their control (e.g., health issues, age, death, bankruptcy). In any one of these situations, it is clear that transition will come.

One common thread of any successful business transition plan is that it requires time – a minimum of three years. During this transition period, the existing small business-owner must plan their estate, identify a successor(s), and allow the new buyer time to learn the business, build the equity needed to secure the financing, and perhaps create new economic enterprises within the business. Without this advance time, heirs and business successor may be vulnerable to considerable estate taxes and management upheaval; further contributing to the failure rate of generational business transfer.

Business transition planning is important because it helps retain businesses that, by default, may have otherwise closed due to retirement, or possibly be sold and relocated to another community. According to business transition planning experts, the ramifications of a poorly planned sale of a business can be multi-faceted and detrimental. In the event the business transition is not well managed, it can fail due to change in ownership or leadership. Purchase arrangements can create a large tax burden for the buyer, seller, or both; and if done poorly, the impact on the entire community can be emotionally and economically catastrophic. National statistics show that once an existing business closes, it is very difficult to reopen.

Entrepreneurial Development

Entrepreneurship is the starting point, the foundation and the backbone of economies at every level. In fact, the origins of most larger companies can be traced, directly or indirectly, to one or more entrepreneurial founders. Promoting entrepreneurial development however, is a relatively new and increasingly popular approach to economic development for rural communities.

The approach has gained favor because it builds on the skills and talent already existing within the community.

Entrepreneurs are at the heart of the American economy because they drive innovation. Small businesses are established on the premise that they can do a better job of creating new products and services, change the competitiveness of the market, institute new and dynamic ways of doing business, reduce economic leakages within the local economy and connect the community to the larger global market. Creating value through innovation is a common theme that penetrates nearly every accepted definition of entrepreneurship.

The value of American entrepreneurship cannot be overstated. According to the Office of Advocacy, Small Business Administration entrepreneurial businesses:

- are typically owned and operated by individuals with higher education levels. Over two-third of all present-day college students intend to become entrepreneurs.
- represents 99.7% of all employers;
- employ half of all private sector employees;
- pay 44.3% of the total U.S. private payroll;
- generate 70% of net new jobs annually over the last decade;
- created more than 50% of non-farm private gross domestic product (GDP);
- produce 13 to 14 times more patents per employee than large patenting firms.
- are employers of 39% of high tech workers (e.g., scientists, engineers);
- are 53% home-based and 3% franchises; and
- made up 97% of all identified exporters and produced 29% of known export value.

These staggering statistics prove that entrepreneurial development can serve as a powerful engine for economic development in rural areas. Besides the tangible benefits, small businesses are known to be more environmentally-friendly than large employers, have the unique ability to blend into the existing business climate, and radiate a quaint charm that attracts people to a community's Main Street.

Effective entrepreneurial development requires a thorough understanding of obstacles faced by rural entrepreneurs. With the odds stacked squarely against them, small business concerns need cooperation from public and private stakeholders in devising intervention strategies that will enhance their chances of success. Common barriers faced by rural entrepreneurs include:

- isolation from markets, service providers and other entrepreneurs.
- limited opportunities for mentoring and networking.
- absence of clusters to support networking.
- lack of capital and other support infrastructure.
- local culture that does not support entrepreneurship.





Creating support strategies that intentionally focus on the needs of rural entrepreneurs can provide small businesses and would be entrepreneurs with the intellectual resources essential to starting a business on solid footing, thereby maximize their chances for a higher degree of success.

Business Incubators

Business incubators are a good path to capital from angel investors, state governments, economic-development coalitions and other investors. They house several businesses under one roof or in a campus setting, and offer resident companies reduced rents, shared services and, in many instances, formal or informal access financing.

Business incubators are programs designed to support the successful development of entrepreneurial companies through an array of business support resources and services, developed and orchestrated by incubator management and offered both in the incubator and through its network of contacts. Incubators vary in the way they deliver their services, in their organizational structure, and in the types of clients they serve. They help emerging growth companies survive and grow during the start-up period when they are most vulnerable.

Successful completion of a business incubation program increases the likelihood that a startup company will stay in business for the Long-Term: older studies found 87% of incubator graduates stayed in business, in contrast to 44% of all firms.

Summary – Priority #2

Promoting economic development in the Downtown Historic District is a short- and ongoing priority of the City of Schuyler. That being said, the replacement of new businesses into older buildings served by declining public infrastructure are challenges to the downtown's ability to serve as the economic heart of Schuyler.

PRIORITY #3: Expand the Façade and Building Improvement Fund Program in the City of Schuyler.

6 – Tier I Votes

Short -term (0-3 Years)/Ongoing (10+ Years)

Challenges

- The City of Schuyler offers business-owners a Façade & Building Improvement Fund (FBIFund). Program available to all businesses in Schuyler.
- FBIFund (\$50,000) and a \$25,000 Joint Opportunity in Building Success (JOBS) grant has been capitalized with \$25,000 in LB840 funds.
- More money may be needed in the FBIFund Program.
- FBIFund can be used for exterior improvements and certain interior building systems.
- Eligible property-owners may be eligible for a Historic Preservation Rebate to renovate their contributing building.
- FBIFund requires insurance for market value.
- FBIFund has not had any defaults since its inception.
- FBIFund flyers describing the program are available to property-owners in English and Spanish.
- No formal Historic Design Guidelines have been created.

Objective #1: To assess the need to expand the FBIFund Program in the Downtown Historic District.

- Action Step #1: Conduct a survey of downtown property-owners to solicit information on individual building conditions.
- Action Step #2: Conduct a windshield assessment of existing building conditions.
- Action Step #3: Conduct a focus group session with Schuyler downtown property-owners to present the results of the survey and assessments.
- Action Step #4: Review the FBIFund and Commercial Construction Loan Program guidelines with the downtown building owners.
- Action Step #5: Identify any concerns and/or barriers for participation in either program.
- Action Step #6: Discuss financial incentives with downtown building owners.

Timeline: 2017.

Objective #2: To identify and pursue other resources to further capitalize the FBIFund and Commercial Construction Loan Program.

- Action Step #1: Identify local, regional, state and federal resources that may be available for restoration/preservation of contributing historic structures.





Action Step #2: Consider grants, loans, tax credits, and statutorily-authorized programs.



Action Step #3: Solicit applications from interested building- and property-owners to illustrate the need for financial assistance to restore/preserve contributing structures in the Downtown Historic District.



Action Step #4: Leverage local resources for historic restoration/preservation activities by package and secure funding.

Action Step #5: Amend and refine FBIFund and Commercial Construction Loan Program guideline, as needed and where possible.



Timeline: 2017-Ongoing.



Objective #3: To ensure that rehabilitation measures maintain or restore the historical appearance, character, and integrity of contributing structures.



Action Step #1: Create a Downtown Facade Preservation Committee. Members of the Committee should have knowledge and a passion for restoration/preservation of historical structures.



Action Step #2: The City should consider entering into a Programmatic Agreement with the Nebraska State Historical Society and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to ensure that historic preservation activities are carried out pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.



Action Step #3: Create guidelines and policies for restoration/preservation of contributing structures in the Downtown Historic District.



Action Step #4: Consider pre-qualifying a list of licensed, qualified, and experienced historic preservation architects to provide on-call services to owners of contributing historical buildings in the downtown.



Action Step #5: Maintain a list of contributing structures in the Downtown Historic District.

Action Step #6: Consider full or partial reimbursement of professional architectural services for downtown building- or property-owners that wish to undertake measures to maintain or restore the historical appearance, character, and integrity of a contributing structure in the Downtown Historic District.

Action Step #7: Establish policies for maximum reimbursement per structure.

Action Step #8: Establish historic design parameters for consultant reimbursement as it relates to proposed aesthetics, historic appropriateness, and harmony with surrounding buildings and the Downtown Historic District.

Action Step #9: As needed, further refine program guidelines for the FBIFund/ Commercial Construction Loan Program to incentivize downtown building- and/or property-owners to restore/preserve their contributing structure.

- Action Step #10: Submit proposed renderings of proposed improvements, cost opinions, and other documentation to the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office for their review and comments. Modify plans, as needed.
- Action Step #11: Upon securing plan approval from SHPO and the Schuyler Downtown Historic Preservation Committee, meet with the building- and/or property-owner to discuss the terms of financial assistance, schedule for restoration/preservation activities, and expectations.
- Action Step #12: Issue a Letter of Understanding to the building- and/or property-owner.
- Action Step #13: Once construction is completed, the building- and/or property-owner should submit photographs of the completed project, along with receipts showing payment for all project expenses to the Downtown Facade Preservation Committee. Once the Committee has reviewed the completed work, the Schuyler Community Development Inc. will then provide the financial assistance pursuant to the Letter of Understanding.

Timeline: 2017-Ongoing.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

Schuyler City Council, Schuyler Planning Commission, Schuyler Community Development Agency, Schuyler Community Development Inc., Downtown Revitalization & Commercial Development Committee, Schuyler and Colfax County Historical Society, Downtown Facade Preservation Committee, Heritage Nebraska Program, Downtown building- and/or property-owners, Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NENEDD), Professional Historic Preservation Architects, Colfax County, Nebraska State Historical Society, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and U.S. Department of The Interior.

Potential Resources

FBI Fund Program, Commercial Construction Loan Program, LB840 Sales Tax, Tax Increment Financing, Certified Local Government Program, Federal Tax Incentive Program, Civic and Community Center Financing Fund, Nebraska Valuation Incentive Program, Nebraska Historical Preservation Grant Program, Community Development Block Grant – Downtown Revitalization Program, Private Foundations, and USDA Rural Development Programs.

Measurable Outputs

The storefronts and facades of a downtown can tell the story, true or false, of where business is and has been within a community. These storefronts/facades can paint a picture of economic booms and busts. In addition, they are also the element that most typically defines the character of the downtown area. When working with the typical storefront of older downtowns, it is critical to respect the original character and architectural characteristics of the building. The 1940's through the 1970's saw too





many storefronts being covered up with newer “industrial mass produced” materials. A lot of times these makeovers were also hiding potential problems and structure in need of repair.

As mentioned previously, any future restoration efforts need to account for how the original building appeared, when cost effective. When a storefront/façade is rehabilitated it can be costly to bring the original character back; however, if specific items regarding the U.S. Tax Code, as well as other State defined items regarding the building and ownership, an individual could be in line for a number of tax incentives at the State and Federal level, which could aid in cash flow for completing the project in an appropriate manner.

In addition to complying with the appropriate architectural characteristics and design, the renovation needs to closely follow the anatomy of older buildings and be sensitive to the visual elements. These elements are what provide the building with the proper proportions and character.

In a January 1999 article entitled “Revitalizing Downtown”, Main Street News breaks down the basic anatomy of a typical downtown commercial building. “Regardless of their age, almost all downtown commercial buildings are composed of three basic elements: the storefront, upper facade, and cornice.

- The storefront is the ground-floor section of the front facade. It typically contains large glass display windows with bulkheads, or kick plates, below that provide protection from breakage and elevate merchandise to eye level for pedestrians looking inside. Above the display windows, many storefronts have transoms that filter light into the ground-floor space. A structural beam spans the storefront opening, supporting the weight of the upper façade. Sometimes, the structural beam is exposed on the outside of the building and might be decorated or used as a background for sign lettering. In other instances, the structural beam may be concealed by a decorative cornice running the width of the storefront opening.
- The upper facade is the area above the ground-floor storefront opening. It contains both wall material (typically brick, wood, or stucco) and windows. Upper-façade windows are usually arranged in even horizontal rows, sometimes accentuated by horizontal bands of a contrasting building material.
- The cornice. The entire facade -- storefront and upper facade together -- is capped by a decorative cornice. The cornice might be made of elaborate wood moldings (common during the federal and Victorian periods), pressed metal, terra-cotta, brick, or other materials. In addition to giving the building a visual termination, the cornice sometimes conceals gutters and facilitates roof drainage as well.”

During the past several decades, many of Schuyler’s downtown buildings – including those who are contributing structures to the Downtown Historic District - have suffered from deferred maintenance or attempts to disguise or alter their original architectural features. Fortunately, many of these changes can be easily reversed. The first step in

correcting insensitive alterations is to identify the changes and analyze their impact on the basic design of the buildings and streetscape. The most common architectural design problems found in the Downtown Historic District include:

- False historical themes
- Slipcovers
- Filling in display windows, transom windows and doors
- Using color inappropriately
- Inappropriate building components

The City of Schuyler has a Façade & Building Improvement Fund (FBIFund) and Commercial Construction Loan Program as part of an overall redevelopment program to improve the appearance and historical character of contributing structures, as well as commercial buildings throughout the city. The program is designed to assist property and business-owners with low cost financing to rehabilitate the facades and remodeling of commercial properties to create a positive visual impact, stimulating private investment, and complementing other community revitalization efforts.

Due to the demand for these program resources, the City, through Schuyler Community Development Inc., should pursue supplemental resources (grants, loans, tax credits, and statutorily authorized programs) to further capitalize these programs and to provide customized financial incentivize to building- and/or property-owners of contributing structures in the Downtown Historic District.

The terms of the assistance should be flexible to encourage private reinvestment, however improvements should be limited to those that promote rehabilitation measures that maintain or restore the historical appearance, character, and integrity of contributing structures. Improvements should be comprehensive, incorporating enhancements/additions to several components of the existing façade. Examples of eligible improvements include painting, lighting if attached to the structure, windows, doors, stucco, masonry work, tile, signage, canopies, awnings and restoration of historic properties.

Most of the buildings in the Downtown Historic District are vernacular one- and two-part commercial blocks with flat roofs and brick cladding. Ornamental materials such as terra cotta, aluminum, cast iron, and wood provide detailing at cornices and storefronts. The one- and two-part commercial block forms have well-defined ground floor storefronts. Buildings in the district house a variety of businesses that support Schuyler's continued development, including grocery stores, financial institutions, restaurants, specialty stores, and automobile-related businesses. The non-contributing resources include properties that do not retain sufficient integrity due to alterations or those that have not reached the 50-year threshold for historic significance. Overall, the district retains integrity and communicates the commercial development of Schuyler, throughout the period of significance (circa 1880 to the late 20th century).





Due to the complexity of historic preservation and the potential consequences of rescinding of the Downtown Historic District Designation, the administrator of the program and downtown building- and/or property-owners should have access to a licensed, experienced, and qualified historic preservation architect during the conceptual design process. Not only will these professional services provide building- and/or property-owners in formulating the scope and cost of needed repairs, but it will ensure compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and compatibility with building proportions, harmony and design characteristics of other buildings in the downtown area. Full or partial reimbursement of these consulting costs should be considered.

The ideal approach to dealing with storefronts and facades is to be true to the original character when possible; however, beware that there may be some hidden expenses once the project is undertaken. This project will require a number of tasks to be completed and will involve a number of partners to see the project to completion.

Summary – Priority #3

The City of Schuyler should continue to amend and refine the FBIFund and Commercial Construction Loan Program to offer downtown building owners with contributing structures financial assistance that will incentivize them to undertake rehabilitation measures that maintain or restore the historical appearance, character, and integrity of contributing structures.

Expanding the Façade and Building Improvement Fund Program for building- and /or property-owners in the Downtown Historic District is a short- and ongoing priority of the City of Schuyler.

PRIORITY #4: Control the long-term deterioration of contributing structures that support the Schuyler Downtown Historic District Designation.

5 – Tier I Votes

Short-Term (0-3 Years)/Ongoing (10+ Years)

Challenges

- Top Notch and Carnegie Library Buildings are contributing structures to the Downtown Historic District designation.
- The Top Notch building, which is owned by the City, is structurally sound and has a new roof. Private restoration of the Top Notch building may not be feasible.
- The Carnegie Library has been inspected by a licensed Architect. The building is in need of a new roof and windows.
- The future use of the Top Notch and Carnegie Library buildings are still in question.
- These landmark buildings can be “moth balled” to protect against further deterioration.
- The Coast-to-Coast building, also a contributing structure, is in a state of disrepair. The building has been found to be structurally unsound.
- The old Theater is in need of rehabilitation.
- The building north of Hunter’s bar needs repairs.
- Due to the condition of these four structures, renovation is not feasible for the private sector.
- The existing library will be replaced with a new library in 2017. The new library will be located along north Highway 15, outside of the downtown area.
- On July 22, 2016, Downtown Schuyler officially became a part of the State of Nebraska Historical Society and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- This historic district includes 48 historic buildings from the 1880s through the 1950s that represent the City’s development as a thriving agricultural community sustained by the eras of railroad transportation and the arrival of the Lincoln Highway.
- The former city hall, Carnegie library, post office, and courthouse represented the civic functions that supported the historic designation.
- Many of the contributing structures in the downtown are in need of preservation/restoration.
- Historic preservation is costly.
- Financial incentives are available for façade improvements to encourage property-owners to maintain the historic character of the building.
- The City must preserve the historic integrity of the Lincoln Highway.





Objective #1: To close up – or “mothball” - certain historic, yet deteriorating structures in Downtown Schuyler to protect them from the weather as well as secure it from vandalism.

Action Step #1: Create a Downtown Facade Preservation Committee. Members of the Committee should have knowledge and a passion for historic building restoration/preservation.

Action Step #2: Create “mothballing” practices and procedures that can protect historically significant structures for ten years. To the greatest extent possible, these “mothball” efforts should not harm historic materials.

Action Step #3: Inventory vacant historic structures that represent Schuyler’s development as a thriving agricultural community sustained by the eras of railroad transportation and the arrival of the Lincoln Highway.

Action Step #4: Document the architectural and historical significance of the contributing structure.

Action Step #5: Prepare a condition assessment of the contributing structures.

Timeline: 2017.

Objective #2: To stabilize, or correct deficiencies to slow down the deterioration of the contributing structure while it is vacant.

Action Step #1: Hire a licensed, professional structural engineer to conduct a physical condition assessment of the contributing structure.

Action Step #2: Where possible, structurally stabilize the contributing structure.

Action Step #3: Inspect and exterminate pests, including termites and rodents.

Action Step #4: Protect the exterior of the structure from moisture penetration. Among other items, replace damaged roof, broken windows, and unsecured doors.

Timeline: 2017-Ongoing.

Objective #3: To control the long-term deterioration of the contributing structure while it is unoccupied as well as finding methods to protect it from sudden loss by fire or vandalism

Action Step #1: Secure the structure and its components features to reduce vandalism or break-ins.

Action Step #2: Provide adequate ventilation to the interior.

Action Step #3: Secure or modify utilities and mechanical systems.

Action Step #4: Develop and implement a maintenance and monitoring plan for protection.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

Schuyler City Council, Schuyler Planning Commission, Schuyler Community Development Inc., Schuyler Community Development Inc., Downtown Revitalization & Commercial Development Committee, Schuyler and Colfax County Historical Society, Downtown Facade Preservation Committee, Heritage Nebraska program, downtown building- and/or property-owner, Schuyler Community Development Agency, Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District, Private Historic Preservation Architects, Colfax County, Nebraska State Historical Society, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and U.S. Department of The Interior.

Potential Resources

Local funds, FBIFund Program, Commercial Construction Loan Program, Private Donations/Foundations, and LB840 Sales Tax.

Measurable Outputs

Providing temporary protection and stabilization for vacant historically significant and contributing buildings can arrest deterioration and buy the owner or City valuable time to raise money for preservation or to find a compatible use for the property. A well-planned mothballing project involves documenting the history and condition of the contributing building, stabilizing the structure to slow down its deterioration, and finally, mothballing the structure to secure it. The three highest priorities for a mothballed building are 1) to protect the building from sudden loss, 2) to weatherize and maintain the property to stop moisture penetration, and 3) to control the humidity levels inside once the building has been secured.

Summary – Priority #4

While issues regarding mothballing may seem simple, the variables and intricacies of possible solutions make the decision-making process very important. Each building must be individually evaluated prior to mothballing. In addition, a variety of professional services as well as volunteer assistance is needed for careful planning and repair, sensitively designed protection measures, follow-up security surveillance, and cyclical maintenance.

In planning for the future of the building, complete and systematic records must be kept and generous funds allocated for mothballing. This will ensure that the historic property will be in stable condition for its eventual preservation, rehabilitation, or restoration.





PRIORITY #5: Promote the development **residential housing** units in second floor commercial buildings in the Downtown Historic District.

3 – Tier I Votes
10 – Tier II Votes

Ongoing (10+ Years)

Challenges

- There is an overall need for housing in Schuyler. Downtown housing can help satisfy that need.
- Second floor housing in commercial buildings can be a revenue stream for building- and/or property-owners.
- The need for public education on building codes is needed.
- Fire codes, egress, and sprinklers for second floor apartments/business ventures makes occupancy too expensive.
- Need transitional housing in Schuyler. Second floor apartments in commercial building would offer potential tenants with a unique housing choice.
- Hard surfaced, off-street parking for future downtown tenants is available at the southeast corner of East 12th & C Street.
- The current market rate for a two bedroom apartments is \$625 or more, per month.

Objective #1: Provide an environment which encourages and promotes residential development in second floor commercial buildings in the Downtown Historic District.

- Action Step #1: Conduct a housing market study to quantify and qualify the housing needs of the Downtown Historic District.
- Action Step #2: Quantify and qualify the future housing needs of Downtown Historic District.
- Action Step #3: Meet with building- and/or property-owners in the Downtown Historic District to consider the pros and cons of developing housing in second floor commercial buildings.
- Action Step #4: Hold a Housing Developers' Summit to discuss housing demand and pros/cons of developing housing in second floor commercial buildings in the Downtown Historic District.
- Action Step #5: Review the Comprehensive Development Plan and development regulations to ensure that it promotes residential development in second floor commercial buildings. Consider needed amendments.
- Action Step #6: Complete the Downtown Housing Market Study and present the result to the public.

Timeline: 2017-2019.

Objective #2: Provide an environment which encourages and promotes residential development in second floor commercial buildings in the Downtown Historic District.

- Action Step #1: Make the study available on the City's website and disseminate it to housing developers.
- Action Step #2: Review local building codes to determine barriers to renovating second floor structures commercial buildings into residential housing.
- Action Step #3: Meet with the Schuyler Floodplain Administrator, Building Inspector, and the Nebraska State Fire Marshall to discuss possible Historic District Design Standards and code modifications to promote second floor residential development in commercial buildings, while preserving public health and safety.
- Action Step #4: Where possible, adopt code modifications.
- Action Step #5: Meet with building owners, housing developers, and investors to discuss construction requirements for second floor residential housing in commercial buildings.
- Action Step #6: Develop public/private partnerships, where necessary, to facilitate development.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Objective #3: To provide assistance to building- and/or property-owners, housing developers, or investors to develop residential development in second floor commercial buildings in the Downtown Historic District.

- Action Step #1: Review local programs to determine any financial assistance that may be available to incentivize development of residential housing in the second floor of commercial buildings. Modify program guidelines, as needed.
- Action Step #2: Streamline the plan review and local building permit process.
- Action Step #3: Streamline the building inspection process during construction.
- Action Step #4: Ensure sufficient amount of off-street parking spaces to accommodate future tenants of downtown units.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

City of Schuyler, Schuyler Planning Commission, Schuyler Community Development Agency, Schuyler Community Development Inc., Downtown Revitalization & Commercial Development Committee, Schuyler Building Inspector, residents, downtown building- and/or property-owners, Private Developers/Investors, and Nebraska Department of Economic Development.





Potential Resources

Local Programs, Local Lending Institutions, LB840 Sales Tax, Tax Increment Financing, Private Funds, NIFA Programs, Nebraska Department of Economic Development Housing Programs, and U.S.D.A. Rural Development Programs, Certified Local Government Program, Federal Tax Incentive Program, Nebraska Valuation Incentive Program, Nebraska Historical Preservation Grant Program.

Measurable Outputs

Historic downtown districts across the nation have achieved successful housing in second floor commercial buildings, but not without facing significant challenges. Beyond money, other considerations influence whether or not the development of addition upper story housing in rural, historic downtown areas is feasible.

The most critical requirement for anything much to happen is a supportive City. The governing body is typically the organizations that must apply for federal and state assistance whereas the administrative offices plays a critical role through their inspection and permitting functions. City boards and commissions study and make recommendations to City Councils on zoning, rental codes, historic property preservation, and parking regulations that impact all aspects of downtown revitalization.

But even with strong local government support the development of housing in second floor commercial buildings, rural, historic downtowns may face a number of barriers. The most frequently mentioned potential barriers include:

- Off-street parking.
- Leaky roofs and deteriorating masonry walls.
- Antiquated sewer and water systems.
- Upper story access.
- Regulatory compliance costs.
- Absentee and aging property owners.
- Various perception and personal preference issues.
 - Downtown housing is viewed as being low-income housing,
 - Obtaining renovation assistance requires too much paperwork,
 - Finding types of assistance for which properties and people qualify is too complex and time consuming,
 - Finding the right tenants can be a problem,
 - Going after public funds requires disclosing personal financial information, and
 - Belief that housing assistance funds are only available for low-income housing.

In spite of real and perceived barriers a number of people have undertaken second floor housing in commercial buildings.

Summary – Priority #5

The City of Schuyler should explore Historic District Design Standards and International Existing Building Codes (IEBC) that are being used throughout the nation to promote upper level housing in downtown structures. Design standards are regulatory provisions that promote historic preservation best practices. They seek to manage change so the historic character of the district is respected while accommodating compatible improvements. They reflect the city's priorities to promote economic and sustainable development, enhance the image of the city and reuse historic resources.

Prevailing rental rates, household income levels, and rehabilitation costs indicate that upper story housing projects often will not be feasible without some public assistance. Assistance for housing in second floor commercial buildings should be directed to two primary categories of recipients. The first category consists of individuals that desire to develop downtown housing for their own use. The second category consists of people, businesses, and non-profit organizations wanting to develop rental housing. Owner-occupied housing will likely not require as much assistance as would rental housing.

Promoting residential housing development in second floor commercial buildings in the Downtown Historic District is an ongoing priority of the City of Schuyler.





PRIORITY #6: Long-term sustainability of **special events** within the Downtown Historic District.

0 – Tier I Votes

8 – Tier II Votes

Ongoing (10+ Years)

Challenges

- Several hundred cars participate in the car show in June. Some businesses are open to serve visitors.
- Thousands of visitors attend the Labor Day Weekend Parade in Schuyler. The 3½ day event draws visitors for family reunions, golf, class reunions, dance, and a 5K run.
- The Library Foundation hosts an annual carnival over the Memorial Day weekend. The event is a fundraiser for the Foundation.
- Harvest Party, which is not held in the downtown, is held during the fall. Participants dress up in costumes and provide candy.
- Visit Santa and Parade of trees are held during the same weekend in December. During this event, Santa arrives by fire engine. Children are entertained by Storytime, free movies, games and crafts. Carriage rides are available.
- The annual Brotherhood Day Festival draws residents from Schuyler and surrounding communities to enjoy a family day filled with entertainment and a variety of food from all ethnicities.
- Nearly 1,000 people of all ages and nationalities participate in the celebration, including the United States, the Czech Republic, Peru, Mexico, Bolivia, Ireland, Guatemala, Honduras, United Kingdom, El Salvador, Chile and Puerto Rico.
- Volunteer recruitment is needed to continue these annual events.
- The Local Historic Society gives tours of the annex building which is where the newspaper was printed.
- The Schuyler Chamber of Commerce hosts a monthly After Hours event.
- Consider public demand for Historic Walking Tours in the Downtown Historic District.
- Weekly events, like those held in Plattsmouth, should be explored for Downtown Historic District.

Objective #1: To inventory all local projects/festivals/activities

Action Step #1: Develop a list of all local projects/festivals/activities within the City of Schuyler, in particular, the Downtown Historic District.

Action Step #2: Identify the dates for these events.

Action Step #3: Prepare a brief description of each local project/festival/activity, including but not limited to: purpose of the event, historical information, attendance records, attractions, scheduling, marketing efforts, and stakeholders.

- Action Step #4: Where possible, consider the possibility of consolidating these local projects/festivals/activities to ensure maximum impact and avoid volunteer burn out.
- Action Step #5: If not possible, consider stagger events to avoid scheduling overlap and volunteer burn out.
- Action Step #6: Consider the dates of area project/festivals/activities to avoid scheduling conflicts.

Timeline: 2017.

Objective #2: To garner public support for local Projects/Festivals/Activities.

- Action Step #1: Hold a town hall meeting to discuss the public's attitude towards supporting local projects/festivals/activities.
- Action Step #2: Openly discuss factors that hinder attendance at local projects/festivals/activities.
- Action Step #3: Consider ideas that will enhance attendance and enjoyment of these civic events.
- Action Step #4: Develop a list of volunteers that are willing to help with each event.

Timeline: 2017-2018.

Objective #3: Maximize the economic impact of the local project/festival/activity.

- Action Step #1: Identify potential resources to help offset the cost to market, host and provide enhanced entertainment at these civic events.
- Action Step #2: Employ a community-wide survey to solicit public opinion on what types of events, activities, displays, and programs residents would like to see offered at local projects/festivals/activities. Consider Historic Walking Tours, Lincoln Highway Celebration, Flea/Farmers Markets, and weekly networking events for the Downtown Historic District like those held in Plattsmouth, Nebraska.
- Action Step #3: Develop a list of potential attractions and consider the likelihood/feasibility of offering each.
- Action Step #4: Foster cooperation and link with travel and tourism partners. To avoid conflicts, consult the Nebraska Travel Guide to determine the scheduled dates for other area events.
- Action Step #5: Establish the official date, time and location for civic events, as well as a final list of attractions to be held.
- Action Step #6: Identify and delegate responsibility to volunteers (residents and organizations) that are willing to assist with lining up, scheduling and overseeing events.





Action Step #7: Conduct the necessary fundraising events, where applicable, make the necessary contacts, and procure equipment/materials/facilities needed for the event.



Action Step #8: Hold regular meeting of local stakeholders to monitor event progress and provide assistance to volunteers.



Action Step #9: Develop an Implementation Plan which outlines the time of each event, its location and volunteer responsibility.

Action Step #10: Market local projects/festivals/activities in tourism guides and media outlets. Coordinate with the downtown marketing efforts.



Timeline: 2018-Ongoing.



Objective #4: Implement local projects/festivals/activities.



Action Step #1: For each civic event, mobilize community volunteers.

Action Step #2: Hold the civic event.

Action Step #3: Clean-up Activities.



Timeline: Ongoing.



Objective #5: To evaluate the performance of local projects/festivals/activities.



Action Step #1: Hold a Town Hall meeting to recognize community volunteers.

Action Step #2: Evaluate the civic event's outcomes (pros and cons).

Action Step #3: Identify proposals to improve the civic event in the future.



Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

Schuyler City Council, Residents, Schuyler Community Development Inc., Downtown Revitalization & Commercial Development Committee, downtown business- and/or property-owners, Schuyler Chamber of Commerce, Civic Organizations, Local Churches, Schuyler and Colfax County Historical Society, and Regional Tourism Partners.

Potential Resources

LB840 Sales Tax, City Funds, Chamber of Commerce, Schuyler Community Development Inc., Private Donations, Advertisers, Vendors, Volunteer Efforts, and Tourism Marketing Grant Program.

Measurable Outputs

For several years, civic events have served as a perennial focal point for residents in and around the city, as well as the major fundraiser for local organizations. Each year, thousands of area residents converge on Schuyler to participate in the myriad of activities at the community celebrations, including, but not limited to a parades, games, flea markets, fireworks show, street dances, ball tournaments, county fair, golf tournaments, etc. Unfortunately, these well-attended, much-enjoyed events have not reached their maximum impact because of the lack of marketing and “volunteer burn out.”

Summary – Priority #6

Schuyler residents aspire to bring back civic events to the Downtown Historic District. Continuing traditional programs/festivals/activities will not only connect the citizenry with their community, it will also yield a plethora of positive, long-term civic benefits. Specific outcomes – both tangible and intangible – include:

Tangible Outcomes

- hundreds of volunteer hours.
- thousands of dollars in fundraising for local organizations.
- provide a stage in which to showcase the quality of life found in Schuyler to the thousands of individuals participating in the event.
- increase in economic activity for local businesses and LB840 Sales Tax revenue for the City.

Intangible Outcomes

- increase citizen participation in civic events.
- rekindle a sense of community pride.
- improved communication among local residents
- identification and evaluation of new civic leaders.
- build capacity among local volunteers.

Long-term sustainability of special events within the Downtown Historic District. Is on ongoing priority of the City of Schuyler.





PRIORITY #7: Maintain good standing with the National Floodplain Insurance Program.

3 – Tier I Votes

7 – Tier II Votes

Ongoing (10+ Years)

Challenges

- As of April 5, 2016, the Schuyler Downtown Business District is officially in the 100-year Platte River Floodplain Area.
- The entire Downtown Historic District is affected by the Platte River Floodplain.
- Located in the floodplain limits building remodeling to 50% of market value (Source: FEMA Unit 8 Substantial Improvement/Substantial Damage)
- The impetus for the historic designation of the downtown was to the redrawing of the Platte River floodplain boundaries by FEMA. This process started three years ago.
- This means that downtown property-owners of contributing historical structures may not have to conform to all floodplain regulations should they decide to renovate.
- National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) can be several hundred dollars per month, plus certain fees.
- NFIP floodplain management regulations provide some relief to historic structures.

Objective #1: To maintain good standing with the National Floodplain Insurance Program to provide significant relief to affected property owners located in the floodplain, particularly those contributing historic structures in the designated Downtown Historic District.

- Action Step #1: Maintain a local Floodplain Administrator to oversee floodplain management and to ensure that property-owners located within the floodplain can purchase Flood Insurance.
- Action Step #2: The local Floodplain Administrator should work closely with the Schuyler Planning Commission to review building permits and flood-resistant design, permit conditions, establish future land use policies and practices, and code enforcement.
- Action Step #3: Continue floodplain management education for proper enforcement of floodplain management provisions as it relates to Federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances that impact the building permit process.
- Action Step #4: Avoid future enforcement actions by FEMA by making good-faith efforts to successfully resolve violations.
- Action Step #5: Monitor the status of the Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) previously submitted to FEMA.

Action Step #6: The City of Schuyler’s recent Historic Designation of the downtown area can serve as an incentive to restoration/preservation efforts since historic structures do not have to meet the floodplain management requirements of the program as long as they maintain their historic structure designation.

Action Step #7: Continue to monitor changes to NFIP’s Floodplain Management Bulletin on Historic Structure for guidance on mitigation measures that can be taken to minimize the devastating effects of flooding to contributing structures.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

Schuyler City Council, Schuyler Planning Commission, Schuyler Floodplain Administrator, Schuyler Community Development Inc., Schuyler and Colfax County Historical Society, Downtown Facade Preservation Committee, Downtown Revitalization & Commercial Development Committee, Heritage Nebraska program, Affect Property Owners, Schuyler Community Development Inc. Authority, Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, Colfax County, Nebraska State Historical Society, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and U.S. Department of The Interior.

Potential Resources

City Funds and Local Floodplain Administrator.

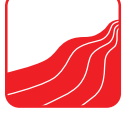
Measurable Outputs

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) gives special consideration to the unique value of one of our Nation’s most significant resources – its historic buildings, landmarks, and sites. It does so in two ways.

First, the NFIP floodplain management regulations provide significant relief to contributing historical structures. Historic structures do not have to meet the floodplain management requirements of the program as long as they maintain their historic structure designation. They do not have to meet the new construction, substantial improvement, or substantial damage requirements of the program. This exclusion from these requirements serves as an incentive for property owners to maintain the historic character of the designated structure (44 CFR §60.3). It may also serve as an incentive for an owner to obtain historic designation of a structure.

Secondly, a designated historic structure can obtain the benefit of subsidized flood insurance through the NFIP even if it has been substantially improved or substantially damaged so long as the building maintains its historic designation. The amount of insurance premium charged the historic structure may be considerably less than what the NFIP would charge a new non-elevated structure built at the same level. Congress





requires that the NFIP charge actuarial rates for all new construction and substantially improved structures (National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, 42 U.S.C. 4015).

Although the NFIP provides some relief to historic structures from having to comply with NFIP floodplain management requirements for substantial improvement and substantial damage, communities and owners of historic structures should give consideration to mitigation measures that can reduce the impacts of flooding on historic structures located in Special Flood Hazard Areas (44 CFR §60.3). Mitigation measures to minimize future flood damages should be considered when historic structures are rehabilitated or are repaired following a flood or other hazard event. Qualified professionals such as architects, historic architects, and engineers who have experience in flood mitigation techniques can help identify measures that can be taken to minimize the impacts of flooding on a historic structure while maintaining the structure's historic designation.

In addition to the relief from the NFIP floodplain management requirements described above, owners of “contributing historic structures” may obtain and maintain flood insurance at subsidized rates. Flood insurance coverage is required for most mortgage loans and for obtaining Federal grants and other financial assistance. The ability to obtain flood insurance coverage is also important to ensuring that historic structures can be repaired and restored after a flood event.

The National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, as amended, requires that FEMA charge actuarial rates reflecting the flood risk to buildings built or substantially improved on or after the effective date of the initial Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for the community or after December 31, 1974, whichever is later. Actuarial rating assures that the risks associated with buildings in flood prone areas are borne by those located in such areas and not by the taxpayers at large. These buildings are referred to as Post-FIRM.

FEMA has developed a series of mitigation planning “how-to” guides for the purpose of assisting communities, States, and Tribes in developing an effective hazard mitigation plan. These guides have been developed by FEMA to provide an overview of the core elements associated with hazard mitigation planning. The four core elements include – organizing resources, assessing risks, developing a mitigation plan, and implementing the plan and monitoring progress. These “how-to series” include:

- Getting started with the mitigation planning process, including important considerations for how one can organize efforts to develop an effective mitigation plan (FEMA 386-1);
- Identifying hazards and assessing losses to community, State, or Tribe (FEMA 386-2);
- Setting mitigation priorities and priorities for community, State, or Tribe, and writing the plan (FEMA 386-3); and
- Implementing the mitigation plan, including project funding and maintaining a dynamic plan that changes to meet new developments (FEMA 386-4).

Summary – Priority #7

FEMA had developed a “how-to” guide specifically to address historic properties and cultural resources entitled, “Integrating Historic Property and Cultural Resource Considerations into Hazard Mitigation Planning (FEMA 386-6 / May 2005).” This guide should be used in conjunction with the four guides described above. This guide will help communities accomplish the following with respect to historic structures and historic districts:

- Identify and pull together resources for incorporating historic property and cultural resource considerations into a hazard mitigation plan;
- Determine which historic properties and cultural resources are likely to be damaged in a disaster and prioritize them for protection;
- Evaluate potential hazard mitigation actions for historic properties and cultural resources through the use of benefit-cost analysis and other decision-making tools; and
- Develop and implement a hazard mitigation plan that addresses historic properties and cultural resources.

Copies of these publications can be obtained at the following link:
<http://www.fema.gov/library/index.jsp>.

Maintaining good standing with the National Floodplain Insurance Program is an ongoing priority of the City of Schuylers.





PRIORITY #8: Improve **communication** among the Schuyler business community, particularly with Minority-Owned Businesses in the Downtown Historic District.

0 – Tier I Votes

4 – Tier II Votes

Challenges

- Language is a barrier to effective communication.
- Multiple languages spoken at Schuyler Central High School and at Cargill Meat Solutions.
- Most however have limited English proficiency.
- Need more public education on programs available through local, regional, state, and federal agencies.
- City sends bilingual monthly Newsletter to utility customers.
- Multilingual resources are available at Schuyler Public School.
- Schuyler Community Development Inc.'s business coach speaks Spanish.
- Homestead Center provides technical assistance to existing and potential business-and/or property-owners in Schuyler.
- Approximately 50% of the businesses in the downtown area are minority-owned.
- Businesses are more successful if they communicate in both English and Spanish.

Objective #1: To create a regular newsletter that details upcoming civic events, community news, and local programs for the Schuyler business community.

- Action Step #1: Gauge public interest and support for a Schuyler Business Community newsletter.
- Action Step #2: Identify individuals and organizations that are willing to help assemble a monthly or quarterly newsletter, including but not limited to layout, writing articles, photography, etc.
- Action Step #3: Consider selling advertisement space to offset the cost of the production and distribution.
- Action Step #4: Seek assistance from to translate the information into the various languages spoken in Schuyler.
- Action Step #5: Identify upcoming civic events, community news, and local programs available to the business- and property-owners in the Downtown Historic District.
- Action Step #6: Identify locations throughout the community where newsletters could be made available to the general public.
- Action Step #7: Prepare and distribute the newsletter.
- Action Step #8: Periodically survey local readership to determine the newsletters effectiveness.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Objective #2: To utilize technology to market the Downtown Historic District and provide technical assistance to downtown business- and property-owners.

- Action Step #1: Inventory available businesses within the Downtown Historic District to gather information on products/services provided within the downtown area.
- Action Step #2: Utilize local and social media outlets to enlighten Schuyler residents as to the myriad of goods and services provided by local businesses.
- Action Step #3: Foster a program that encourages residents to “Buy Schuyler First.”
- Action Step #4: Notify minority business-owners with limited English proficiency about the various technical assistance programs offer by business coaches at the Heartland Center.
- Action Step #5: Solicit input from the Schuyler business community on strategies for creating new products and services, change the competitiveness of the market, institute new and dynamic ways of doing business, reduce economic leakages within the local economy, and connect the community to the larger global market.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Responsible Groups/Agencies

City of Schuyler, Downtown Revitalization & Commercial Development Committee, Schuyler Department of Utilities, residents, Schuyler Public School System, Downtown Business-owners and Building Owners, Schuyler Financial Institutions, Schuyler Community Development Inc., Schuyler Chamber of Commerce, Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NENEDD), Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP), Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC), and Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship, Nebraska Public Power District.

Potential Resources

LB840 Sales Tax, Schuyler Public Schools, Schuyler Community Development Inc., private monies, Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District, GROW Nebraska™, Rural Entrepreneurial Assistance Program (REAP), Micro-enterprise loans, Nebraska Public Power District, Nebraska Department of Economic Development Program, State Community College System, USDA Rural Development Programs, Small Business Administration, Nebraska Economic Development Corporation, Nebraska Business Development Center, and Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship.

Measureable Outputs

Communication is the first and most important ingredient in creating unity and strength in a well-rounded, safe and empowered community. Studies show that the free flow of local information creates a civic space that fosters social interaction which provides valuable information for community homes, schools and businesses.





Summary – Priority #8

The City of Schuyler has expressed interest in increasing the business community's awareness and understanding of civic affairs, particularly with minority business-owners with limited English proficiency. The City has selected the following means in which to deliver the information to local residents: a community newsletter and local/ social media outlets.

When there's increased public awareness and understanding of community affairs, upcoming civic events, or local programs offered by the business coaches at the Heartland Center, citizen – including those not native to Schuyler – are more likely to get involved, responsibilities are decentralized, and the special talents and interests of ethnically diverse individuals/organizations are engaged. In addition, a well-informed public promotes:

- a greater understanding of other ideas and culture;
- the free flow of accurate information; reducing the negative impacts of civic rumors.
- trust among elected officials, community leaders and civic organizations.
- a greater understanding of our community's shared priorities and vision;
- a readily available source of information on a community's wants and needs;
- consensus and understanding between residents and civic polices;
- well-publicized town hall meetings and local events;
- information on how to participate in community events and volunteer activities;
- access to findings and results of civic meetings in the community;
- frequent "word-of-mouth" communication; and
- residents communicating needs to local government.

Preparing a regular business community newsletter can provide valuable experience to student at the Schuyler Public School interested in pursuing a career in journalism, business, English, marketing, political science or writing. Once translated, the newsletter can provide community transparency to limited English proficient residents of Schuyler about upcoming civic events, community news, and local programs offered to business-owners and entrepreneurs.

The newsletter can be simple, or sophisticated (multiple pages, colored, pictures, etc.), but should be consistent (monthly or quarterly). Direct mailing (the cost of which can be offset by selling advertising space to local businesses, or via private donations) or placing copies at strategic locations throughout the community, most frequented by local residents, are effective means in which to get the newsletter out to the general public.

OTHER STRATEGIC ISSUES that were discussed but not in the top eight priorities include:

Civic Organizations in Downtown Schuyler

0 – Tier I Votes

0 – Tier II Votes

Challenges

- City of Schuyler
- Chamber of Commerce
- Schuyler/Colfax County Museum and Genealogy
- Schuyler and Colfax County Historical Society
- Schuyler Sun
- Comité Latino Schuyler (Homestead Center)
- Schuyler Senior Center

Railroad

0 – Tier I Votes

0 – Tier II Votes

Challenges

- Downtown stakeholders would like to install quiet zones at the three at-grade railroad crossings within the City limits. The quiet zone along B Street would be the most beneficial to the downtown area in terms of ambient noise.
- An estimated 75-80 pass through Schuyler on a daily basis.
- Trains sound their horn 24-hour a day, seven days a week.
- Railroad owns a 200' right-of-way; 100' on each side.
- The Railroad's ROW south of the tracks, east of B Street is used as a staging area for construction and maintenance personnel. At times, this staging area can be unsightly.
- When trains stop within the city, they block all at-grade crossings. Emergency vehicles must use the viaduct.
- The Railroad has recently installed a new, attractive black fence along the north side of the railroad tracks at B Street.
- The Railroad Foundation has contributed to local causes.
- The Railroad has leased part of their ROW, south of the tracks and west of B Street to the City to establish the Railside Green Arboretum. This 2.7-acre linear Arboretum is a downtown oasis and includes 22 overstory trees, 18 understory trees, 70 evergreens, 254 shrubs and features three varieties of native grasses.

