

Element Four: Communities that are livable have strong, vibrant economies that encourage local enterprise, serve the needs of residents and promote stable employment. These conditions are affected by many features, including the financial resources of its communities, the diversity of the local economy, state and local laws and programs that affect the economic policy, and the region's inclination towards economic and community development.

Goal: A strong, diverse local economy is the backbone of a livable community. In today's global marketplace and growing e-business sector, it is imperative to focus on nurturing community-supportive local businesses that provide a stable tax base.

Objectives:

1. Meet with lenders, chambers of commerce, area economic developers, and others to promote new business development and determine local market's needs.
2. Provide support to small businesses by offering technical support.
3. Continue working with various funding programs to support small start-ups and expanding businesses.
4. Improve access to capital by identifying potential funding gaps and work to fill these with new or additional resources.
5. Partner with existing programs such as Main Street Nebraska, cities, and chambers to support initiatives designed to support central business districts.
6. Assist local economic development groups on economic development profiles to attract business prospects or retain existing businesses.

Goal: Livable communities ensure their economic development efforts help to increase social equity and nurtures the natural environment. This is particularly relevant in Nebraska with the state's economy centered on agriculture.

1. Develop on the strength of the area's agriculture contributions by using assets to build agri-tourism and other regional opportunities.
2. Continue to build regional resources that tie the area together.
3. Support policies that encourage the development of innovative and developing industries, including advanced manufacturing, life sciences, value-added agriculture, and ag innovation areas.
4. Utilizing available financing options encourage small businesses that operate within or directly support innovative developing industries, including advanced manufacturing, life sciences and value-added agriculture.
5. Champion business succession planning activities, including agriculture.

Goal: A community with a sound economic development program with a well-thought out incentive plan typically improves while the nearby town without a plan labors simply to survive. As national and global competitiveness becomes more pronounced, many areas are working together in regional efforts to improve their economic opportunities.

1. Grow the regional economic development toolkit by adding unique funding options and programs. This might include brownfield services.

2. Partner with economic developers, utilities, and others to create a series of economic development courses for elected officials.
3. Maintain relevant demographic data to support regional economic development efforts.
4. Incorporate the use of technology to advance regional economic development opportunities.
5. Investigate means to expand and diversify regional economy.
6. Continue working with regional economic development groups to develop programs that will benefit the region.

Goal: Serve as a regional convener for community and economic development discussion and activities.

1. Continue to receive information on economic development activities in the region in order to educate local officials and other organizations on possible funding sources.
2. Establish public forums or workshops on community development issues for local officials.
3. Collaborate with peer Economic Development Districts and other organizations on large and statewide initiatives that address substantial projects.