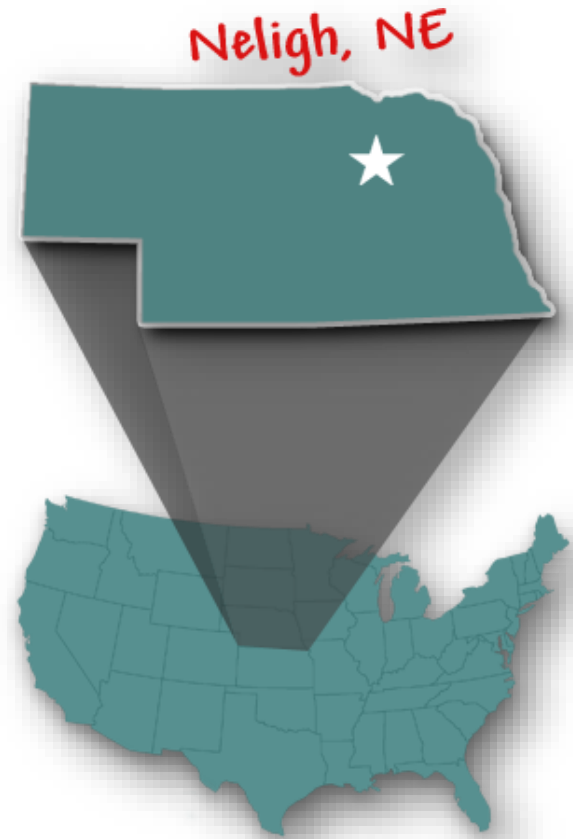




NELIGH

NOT TOO SMALL TO HAVE IT ALL



Neligh, NE

Strategic Plan

For the Neligh Economic Development Office

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NELIGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

The Neligh Economic Development Office will look to three basic elements to bring its vision of Neligh to life.

ENERGIZE

The Neligh Economic Development Office (NEDO) will become the spark that ignites and energizes the community by:

MARKETING NELIGH – NEDO must market “Neligh” to current and future residents through the use of several programs: the Neighbor-to-Neighbor Program, Quality of Life Showcase Grant, Seasonal Photo Contest, This is MY Neligh Marketing campaign, and re-branding Neligh.

REVITALIZATING DOWNTOWN – NEDO will spur downtown development and revitalization by attaining a Leadership Designation, apply and receive Downtown Revitalization Grant, redevelop the New Moon Theatre, encourage private investment, foster historic preservation, develop a relationship with Main Street Nebraska Network, and create a Main Street centered festival.

DEVELOPING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS – NEDO will develop partnerships with state, regional, and local organizations.

ENHANCE

NEDO will enhance the quality of life and business community of Neligh by focusing on:

Business Retention and Expansion – NEDO will augment the business culture in Neligh and focus on retaining and expanding the businesses already located in Neligh through instituting a Business and Expansion Visit program, developing a Shop Local Campaign, establishing a revolving loan fund, helping transition businesses to new owners, and developing expansion incentives.

Workforce Development – NEDO will enhance the labor pool by marketing Neligh to attract new residents, implementing the NICHE development program, and partnering with the Center for Enterprise to educate and develop the current workforce.

GROW

NEDO will foster growth and investment in Neligh by:

Attracting Business – NEDO will grow Neligh by attracting businesses that are the “Right Fit” for Neligh by creating incentives, developing a passive attraction plan, and helping to create businesses.

Develop Quality Affordable Housing – NEDO will grow Neligh’s housing portfolio by implementing the findings of its Housing Study, encouraging new housing in Countryside Acres’ Subdivision through the use of TIF, developing a housing beautification program, and making full use of its housing partners.

Vision of Success

Neligh will be considered a rural role model. It will be acknowledged as the premier business-friendly community in Northeast Nebraska. Neligh's outstanding attitude, amenities, and overall high quality of life will attract millennials and their families from across not only Nebraska but the United States. The City of Neligh and Neligh Economic Development Office will be recognized for pushing the envelope with outside-of-the-box solutions to the problems plaguing rural Nebraska.

Mission Statement

Two Word Mission Statement

Grow Neligh

'Serious' Mission Statement

The mission of the Neligh Economic Development's mission is to promote business retention and expansion while energizing commercial and residential areas to enhance Neligh's quality of life.

Critical Success Factors

Energize

MAKE IT SO – change cannot be enacted without first dedicating yourself to action! Complacency is death in community development! If you are not growing, you are dying! In order to ensure Neligh does not succumb to a “Culture of Complacency,” Neligh Economic Development Office (NEDO) must become the spark that ignites and energizes the community. NEDO must become the driving force behind change, development, and action in Neligh. This office must re-invigorate the community. It must have the buy-in from community members if Neligh is to move forward. It is the responsibility of this office to convince others to dedicate themselves to action.

NEDO will energize the citizens of Neligh by *Marketing Neligh* to those who live in Neligh. This office must remind our residents that they truly do live the “Good Life” and that Neligh really is “Not too small to have it all!” These are more than simple slogans - they identify core values of our state and our community. Neligh possesses a quality of life unlike any other community in Nebraska and it is this office's responsibility to energize its current and future residents around the endless possibilities that exist in our fine community.

CULTURE OF COMPLACENCY

“The opposite of love is not hate, it is indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it is indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it is indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, but indifference between life and death.”

- Elie Wiesel (Nobel Laureate and Holocaust survivor)

The people of Neligh are not the only thing needing energized. The building stock in Neligh, especially downtown, needs energized. It is a common practice to look at the condition and occupancy of a rural community's Main Street

when determining if the community is successful and vibrant. The Neligh Economic Development Office must focus on **Downtown Revitalization** if it is to be successful in its energizing efforts!

NEDO must expand its energizing effort beyond the corporate boundaries of Neligh. Neligh cannot create a vibrant future alone. It must look to cultivate, revitalize, and maximize **Partnerships**.

Enhance

Neligh really is “Not too Small to Have it All!” It is a community that has a great foundation. However, if Neligh is to remain a prosperous regional hub, maintain its current business stock, and encourage investment, Neligh must work to enhance certain elements of the community. NEDO must work to augment Neligh’s quality of life, its business climate, and culture to ensure it is prosperous for decades to come. Developing a **Business Retention and Expansion** program will work to enhance Neligh’s current business stock as well as identifying business needs that NEDO might be able to address. The Neligh Economic Development Office will work to enhance the labor pool available to Neligh’s employers. **Workforce Development** is critical to the success of Neligh as a place to do business. Workforce Development is more than ensuring a pool of warm bodies is available to fill positions. Rather it is making certain that those potential employees have access to training and development tools that will enhance the operations of their future employer. **Youth Retention** will serve to enhance Neligh’s labor pool with employees that are acquainted with Neligh and will be more likely to be long-term employees worth investing in.



Old Mill Day's Grand Parade

Grow

There is no status quo in community development, it is a zero sum game ... You either grow or you die. The Grow Neligh Group saw Neligh’s slow decline on the horizon and decided to act. The Neligh Economic Development Office is committed to carry on the legacy of the Grow Neligh Group. NEDO must firmly resolve itself to encourage investment in Neligh. There are two primary areas where NEDO must focus if the office is to steadily grow the business climate in Neligh: attracting new business to Neligh and increasing adequate housing in Neligh. Like most of Nebraska, Neligh does not have access to ample workforce. It is next to impossible to attract new employers or entice current employers to expand if there is not a reliable labor pool to draw from. If Neligh is to attract more workforce then suitable **Housing** must be created to house the expanded workforce. New **Business Attraction** will act as an economic stimulus by ensuring new money is invested into Neligh economy.

Tourism often falls under the guise of economic development programs. While the Economic Development Board feels tourism is important, with the Economic Development program in its infancy the above mentioned critical success factors are the initial priorities of the program. The Neligh Economic Development Office will continue to support tourism activities on the City’s website and through quality of life outreach and marketing materials. Once initial efforts on the above mentioned priorities have been completed, the Neligh Economic Development Office will re-assess how it will support tourism.

Energize - Strategies and Action Objectives

Marketing Neligh

Neligh is a rare community that possesses small town feel while delivering the opportunities that one might equate with a larger city. The Neligh Economic Development Office will showcase this rare trait as well as Neligh's high quality of life by utilizing on a several pronged marketing strategy. This marketing strategy must target both current and potential residents. Retention of residents is just as important as attracting new community members.

Neighbor-to-Neighbor Program: The Neighbor-to-Neighbor Program was started when the Economic Development Program was in its infancy. Neighbor-to-Neighbor was formed in response to comments about Neligh being "cliquey." If new residents encountered this a "cliquey" atmosphere, they could potentially feel unwelcome and leave. The program was designed to encourage community engagement and the neighborly attitudes that are associated with small town living. There are three major elements to the program:

- ◆ *Local Buyer Appreciation* helps foster the shop local mentality rural Nebraska must embrace if we are to survive with any semblance of quality of place. It thanks those who already shop and encourages those who don't regularly shop Neligh by randomly rewarding local shoppers with Neligh Chamber Big Bucks.
- ◆ *Neighbor of the Month Award* is a way to reward those who truly embody the spirit of neighborliness. Outstanding neighbors are spotlighted on the City's web and social media pages, as well as given \$21 in Neligh Big Bucks.
- ◆ *Community Wide Block Parties:* Once a year, multiple block parties are hosted, simultaneously, throughout Neligh on the same night. Harkening back to the days of *Leave it to Beaver*, this event brings the nostalgic idea of bonding over a picnic table while the kids play in the yard. This simple exercise in community engagement is well worth the time and energy required to plan the event.



Seasonal Photo Contest: A picture is worth a 1,000 words is a saying that holds a tremendous amount of truth.

NEDO needs content to market to both current and future residents. Attaining quality marketing materials requires dubious amounts of patience and often copious piles of cash. Since NEDO is a small office and neither possesses the budget nor the personnel to compile the marketing materials, the Seasonal Photo Contest was implemented. Local photographers submit photos seasonally on the City's Facebook page or via email and the photographs are then voted on by the populous. The Seasonal Photo Contest suffices multiple needs: it gives NEDO access to marketing content while simultaneously engaging the citizens of Neligh. The photo contest also gives the City a unique opportunity to view a snapshot of the high quality of life possessed by Nelighenites.

Ideas from Public Input Process: The City of Neligh looks to citizens to offer solutions rather than consume solutions. Due to this rather unique stance, ideas are brought to both the City and NEDO's attention frequently. Some of these ideas are not cost effective or would require significant planning but others are more realistic to implement. Neligh is situated

along U.S. Highway 275 which carries a significant amount of traffic. Community marketing has not been used to its full



Spring Photo Contest Winner

potential along this corridor. One community-generated idea is to erect an *Electric Sign* that would broadcast community happenings to both the community members as well as potential new residents passing through town. Another fairly easy to implement idea that would enhance Neligh's quality of life is a *Dog Park*. As of right now, if a family does not have a large lot, there is no place to legally let a dog run free off the leash in Neligh. NEDO will continue to listen to community generated ideas and pass them along to the appropriate channels.

Quality of Life Showcase Grant: The Neligh Economic Development Office takes a holistic approach to economic development. The Quality of Life Showcase Grant is a unique and innovative approach to marketing Neligh in order to attract new workforce. The Quality of Life Showcase Grant offers financial assistance to events and programs that positively showcase the quality of life in Neligh. A total of \$1,000 in grant funding is offered annually with a maximum grant amount of \$500. The funding ensures that these events showcase Neligh in a positive light.



Old Mill Days Kids Fishing Derby

Community Re-Brand: Neligh participated in the Rural Futures Institute's Marketing Hometown America (MHA). In that process groups of concerned citizens met to discuss how to market Neligh to new residents. The overall consensus was that Neligh has a lot of amenities to offer along with a very high quality of life. MHA groups also found that Neligh has been branded with only two images, the "Home of the Neligh Mills" and the "Home of the Drive-In." The groups loved that we have these two attractions in Neligh but thought that Neligh was a lot more than just home to these two attractions. MHA groups wanted to focus on marketing Neligh as a great place to raise a family with a wide variety of amenities. A community re-branding initiative was launched after the MHA meetings. New logos and slogans were devised and voted on by the populous. This new marketing direction will need to be implemented fully by the City and used in all marketing exposure for Neligh if the effort is to be a success.



"This is MY Neligh" Marketing Campaign: Another off-shoot of the Marketing Hometown America Program is the "This is MY Neligh" campaign. This campaign is focused on an innovative way to market the numerous aspects of Neligh's high quality of life. The "This is MY Neligh" Campaign uses grass roots video content from various aspects of everyday life in Neligh. Video will be shot using point-of-view cameras showing activities from baseball games, to canoeing, to swimming at the pool, to playing youth sports. It will highlight activities that make up small town living, focusing on recreation, community, and amenities. The clips will be edited and uploaded to the City's YouTube Channel, Facebook Page, Twitter, and Instagram. Final videos will be used to give a fresh perspective on Neligh at differing marketing events.

Downtown Revitalization

A thriving and active Main Street has long been a signal of a prosperous community. Some of Neligh's Main Street properties have suffered from years of neglect. A few bad apples can spoil the lot and the overall look of Neligh's downtown could be energized. The Neligh Economic Development Office was founded on the tail coats of a grassroots organization, the Grow Neligh Group. One of the main missions of the Grow Neligh Group was to spur reinvestment and energize Main Street Neligh. It is only fitting that NEDO should carry on that legacy. To do that will require a multi-pronged transformative approach. NEDO cannot simply throw money at problem buildings as decades' worth of local sales tax dollars could easily be invested into one or two buildings. The Neligh Economic Development

Leadership Designation Requirements

- ◆ Community Needs Assessment
- ◆ Community Strategic Plan
- ◆ Comprehensive Plan
- ◆ Capital Improvement Plan
- ◆ Zoning Ordinances
- ◆ Building Codes
- ◆ Community Website
- ◆ Business Retention and Expansion Program
- ◆ Identified Financing Options for Goals set for the Community

Office must develop a rock-solid Downtown Revitalization Plan and consider which buildings will energize and transform all of downtown Neligh.

Leadership Designation: The City of Neligh must attain a Leadership Designation from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. This Leadership Designation provides proof that Neligh is ready for significant investment at the state and local levels. This designation opens the door to grant funding as well as shows public and private entities that Neligh has done its homework and has invested a significant amount of time developing solid implementation and planning processes. Once achieved, the designation will be good for five years with annual reviews of websites. The requirements for the designation are quite robust, as seen in the table to the left. The planning and designation effort will be spearheaded by NEDO.

Downtown Revitalization Grant CDBG: One of the major grants available to designated Leadership Communities is the Downtown Revitalization Community Development Block Grant Funding through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Once Neligh's Comprehensive Plan is complete and the Leadership Designation is attained, NEDO and the City of Neligh will apply to receive Phase 1 Downtown Revitalization (DTR) Funding. DTR is a multi-year process with the Phase 1 constituting an extensive planning process. Phase 2, which can be applied for following the completion of Phase 1, consists of the implementation of Phase 1

planning and gains the community access to \$350,000 in CDBG funding to enact change in downtown districts. NEDO will work closely with planners at the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District, as well as with private consultants, to ensure the time-sensitive application is submitted thoroughly and with haste. DTR will take an estimated two to three years from application to construction completion.

New Moon Theatre: Energizing downtown Neligh will take more than just money. It will require a culture shift as well. In order to energize a culture shift to wide spread Main Street stewardship, NEDO will need to identify transformational buildings. Most transformational buildings will be identified in the Phase 1 DTR planning. However, there is one building that could certainly serve as a cornerstone building that would spur the transformation of Main Street Neligh: the New Moon Theatre. Its crumbling brick façade and long-neglected neon sign serve as a constant reminder of Neligh's glory days. If this linchpin building were to be redeveloped it could spark development and reinvestment not only at a financial level but on an emotional level as well. NEDO will work with the current owners of the New Moon Theatre to encourage a financially feasible renovation of this Main Street cornerstone building. This will be done through identifying grant funding, tax credits, and acting as a networking resource with contacts at the state and local levels.



Photo courtesy of Nick Krohn Photography

Encourage Private Investment: NEDO has several avenues to encourage private investment. One such tool is Tax Increment Finance. Downtown Neligh was included in Neligh's most recent Blight and Substandard Study, giving redevelopers access to Tax Increment Finance funding. NEDO also offers low-interest, flexible termed, and possibly forgivable loans through its Local Option Municipal Sales Tax LB 840 fund. These funds are available to help encourage cost-effective private investment in Neligh.

Historic Preservation: The Neligh Economic Development Office will stay current on historic preservation tax credits at both the state and federal levels. NEDO will act as a resource to businesses and redevelopers looking to preserve the historic value of Neligh’s building stock.

Nebraska Main Street Network: NEDO will work to create close ties with the Nebraska Main Street Network and, if the fiscal resources become available, will work to become an associate or full-fledged member.

Nostalgia Days: Collaboration has been cited as one of the effective ways of enacting culture change. If Neligh is to thrive it will be through the engaged and energized business community. Nostalgia Days is a local effort by the Neligh Economic Development Office to engage downtown business owners through facilitating a one-of-a-kind commerce focused festival. The festival draws its inspiration from the six antique stores located in Neligh. Nostalgia Days will be organized by a committee of downtown business owners and will feature a plethora of antique vendors invited from all over the Midwest who will set up shop in downtown Neligh. City-wide garage sales will be organized to supplement the amount of antiques, re-purposed, and upcycle items in order to draw large crowds to Neligh. Similar events in other rural communities have been known to draw ten thousand people or more. A large portion of the vendor and garage sale fees will be earmarked for Downtown Neligh Façade Improvement Matching Grants that will be administered by the Neligh Economic Development Office.

“COMING TOGETHER IS A
BEGINNING; KEEPING
TOGETHER IS PROGRESS;
WORKING TOGETHER IS
SUCCESS!”

Henry Ford

Partnerships

In our increasingly interconnected world, partnerships are becoming all the more important. Strong partnerships will allow NEDO to stretch its budget by focusing resources in specialized areas and not duplicating the efforts of our partners or expanding upon elements already formed by NEDO’s partners.

Lobbying: The Neligh Economic Development Office is responsible for lobbying for the City of Neligh in matters that will affect the municipality or business community. Collective lobbying has proven time and time again to be effective. For that reason, NEDO will utilize three State-wide partnerships to augment its lobbying abilities. The Nebraska Economic Developer’s Association (NEDA) holds a lobbying day in which economic development professionals from across the state join forces to look at proposed and current legislation that might have an impact on economic development. NEDO will keep a close eye on updates from NEDA’s Legislative Committee and take action when necessary. The League of Nebraska Municipalities (LNM) publishes a weekly newsletter which keeps member communities abreast of legislative issues that might affect municipalities.



Nebraska Capital Building

LNM also lobbies on legislation that it either opposes or supports. NEDO will read LNM’s Legislative Bulletin and testify in support or opposition of legislation that might positively or negatively affect Neligh. The Nebraska State Chamber is the premier business and industry lobbying organization in Nebraska. NEDO will stay current on the State Chamber’s activities and lobbying efforts. If support is deemed necessary by Neligh’s ED Director, then a support effort will be organized.

Regionalism: Northeast Nebraska has a strong history of regional partnerships through various organizations. With the formation of the Economic Development Office, Neligh has started developing partnerships with many of these organizations. NEDO must continue to have a strong presence at regional meetings. Cooperative efforts, such as the Stronger Economies Together (SET) program, help to energize the Northeast Nebraska region. SET was brought to Northeast Nebraska by the UNL Extension Office, Rural Futures

Institute, and USDA Rural Development. SET will identify regional target industries as well as formulate a plan that will better identify Northeast Nebraska as a regional entity. The plan will also include action items that NEDO will dedicate time and efforts to enacting.

The Northeast Nebraska Economic Developer's Network is an organization of economic development professionals that meet once a month in various locations in the region. Formal educational trainings are held, relevant speakers are invited to present, and discussions about happenings in individual communities or counties are always heard. Monthly network meetings provide cooperative insight into how other communities are approaching the same problems facing Neligh. A representative from NEDO will make every effort to attend Network Meetings.

Norfolk is the regional center of Northeast Nebraska and has seen major success with economic development. NEDO has laid the groundwork of a partnership with Norfolk's mayor and economic development department. NEDO must work to strengthen this partnership and enact change with a strong partner such as Norfolk.

The Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NENEDD) is an economic development organization implemented by the state Department of Economic Development. NENEDD offers membership to municipalities of the 17 counties it services. NENEDD will assist with grant writing and community development projects. NEDO must look to maximize this partnership through utilizing NENEDD to its fullest potential.



Northeast Community College (NECC) is an invaluable partner as NEDO looks to provide help and services to Neligh businesses. NEDO does not have the staff nor the resources necessary to implement educational programs or technical help to area businesses. NEDO will work closely with NECC and its newly launched Center for Enterprise to provide trainings and workforce development programs to Neligh's businesses.



Photo courtesy of Nick Krohn Photography

Local Partnerships: Neligh is home to several organizations that have a vested interest in energizing and developing the community. NEDO must look to capitalize on forming strong relationships with these organizations if it is to maximize its efforts. The Neligh Chamber of Commerce has proven to be a strong partner of the Economic Development Office. NEDO must strengthen this partnership by continuing the work they have already started with them and by serving as an advisor for the Chamber. NEDO will work to solidify its relationship with Neligh-Oakdale Public Schools as they have a vested interest in growing the school aged population of Neligh and share several common goals with the Economic Development Office. CORE Economic Development is an organization of local municipalities in Antelope and Holt Counties that work together to accomplish housing and economic development tasks. Neligh is currently a member of CORE but the NEDO office has not exploited this relationship to its fullest potential. NEDO should look to work with CORE on future projects and not duplicate efforts. Antelope County could prove to be a strong partner in the future and NEDO will form relationships with Supervisors and other elected officials. Neligh is

the regional center for Antelope County and NEDO must build relationships with the surrounding communities and in an effort to grow the surrounding communities and in turn grow Neligh.

Enhance - Strategies and Action Objectives

Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E)

In 2011, a survey was sent to all Neligh residents in an effort to see where the newly created economic development program should focus its efforts. One of the major areas of focus was ensuring the businesses who have already chosen to be in Neligh were not neglected. In keeping with this sentiment, NEDO has adopted a Business Retention and Expansion Visit Program, is developing a Shop Local Campaign, Expansion Incentives, and has created a Revolving Loan fund.



Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Visits: NEDO's BR&E Visit program was implemented in order to identify areas where NEDO Staff or Board can help develop Neligh as a whole or serve as a resource to individual businesses. Weekly BR&E visits are conducted by NEDO staff from the pool of over 150 businesses in Neligh. NEDO has identified "primary employers" or large employers in Neligh in manufacturing related industries. NEDO staff will visit "primary employers" yearly in order to assess how NEDO or one of its partners might be able to better serve each business. This important process will identify what stage of development a business is in and if the business is contemplating expansion. If they are thinking about expansion, NEDO may have programs to make expansion financially feasible or may be able to pinpoint resources at the State or Regional level. These visits will also help identify businesses who will be transitioning in the near future. NEDO will be able to help promote transitioning businesses and identify possible new owners. After visits are conducted, the ED Director will consult his board of directors, NENEDD, or Nebraska Department of Economic Development staff as needed to discuss possible action. For a blank BR&E Visit form, see ATTACHMENT A.



Shop Local Campaign: Development of a shop local campaign was an idea from the City's Envision Neligh online town hall forum website. The idea was pitched to several businesses in town to see if they would benefit from such a campaign and the response was positive. The "Shift Your Shop – Shop Neligh" campaign is in the initial stages of development and will require more time to develop it into a full-fledged local shopping campaign. "Shift Your Shop – Shop Neligh" will focus on a visual and social media marketing campaign to encourage supporting local businesses. Visual marketing materials will be used to passively remind people of the importance of shopping local. These materials will be in business windows, car decals, and used online. "Shift Your Shop – Shop Neligh" will also have a social media outreach aspect. A Facebook page will be developed in which Neligh business patrons can post thank you's to businesses, promote cool new products or services they didn't know existed in Neligh, or share great customer service stories. "Shift Your Shop – Shop Neligh" will also have an email blast service available to both residents and businesses alike. The email blast will shoot emails to residents

who have signed up for the Shift Your Shop “What’s In Store Email Blast” alerting them of sales or special events happening at the businesses in Neligh. In order to ensure that one bad experience doesn’t ruin the shop local experience NEDO will implement a Service Challenge portion as part of the “Shift Your Shop – Shop Neligh” Campaign. Customers will be encouraged to fill out a survey about their shopping experience was. The Neligh Economic Development Office will award the top three service businesses in Neligh with a plaque praising them for their awesomeness. For those businesses who may need a little help, the Economic Development Director will compile the responses and make the business aware of what its patrons are saying, partnering with them to come up with some solutions.

Revolving Loan Fund: Neligh recently passed the Local Option Municipal Sales Tax LB 840 fund. This gave the City access to 1/4 of 1 cent sales tax to use for economic development purposes. Those funds are accessible to businesses looking to expand or re-invest into their current facilities in the form of a revolving loan. As loans are issued and re-paid they are earmarked to stay in a fund offering low-interest and very flexible terms, as well as potentially forgivable loans if certain criteria are met. These loan funds can also be used for business transitions. There are several Federal programs NEDO can leverage to bolster its local revolving loan fund. One of those programs is the USDA’s Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program. NEDO will identify a non-profit project that meets the needs of the REDLG program and look to apply for REDLG funding.

Expansion Incentives: Neligh recently conducted a Blight and Substandard Study in which 26% of Neligh was designated Blighted see ATTACHMENT B for a map. This gives the City of Neligh the option to offer Tax Increment Finance (TIF) funds to developers looking to redevelop the blighted area. TIF is a commonly used economic development tool which pledges the tax increase created by redevelopment to help make the project financially stable. NEDO must develop other expansion incentives if it is to encourage investment in Neligh. Businesses who might do a substantial improvement should have access to expansion incentives such as utility discounts if certain metrics are met. NEDO should spearhead these efforts and work closely with the City Council to identify proper expansion incentives.



Country Junction Antiques Store – Main Street Neligh



Heritage Bank entrance

Business Transition: While NEDO’s resources are limited, it does serve as the initial point of contact for those looking to expand, move to, or invest in Neligh. For that reason, NEDO will offer its assistance to businesses looking to transition to new ownership. NEDO will help advertise on its website and will attempt to identify individuals who might be a perfect fit for business ownership.

Workforce Development

Marketing Neligh: Enhancing the labor pool of Neligh requires attracting new residents. Marketing Neligh to attract potential employees is paramount to the success of enhancing Neligh's labor pool. The same marketing strategies detailed in the previous *Marketing Neligh* section will be used to increase workforce.

Neligh Recruitment Network: Several quality jobs in Neligh are not posted on listing services for the simple fact that employers are leery of getting swamped with applicants. However, this means that if someone does not know the employer personally or through acquaintances, they may never have a shot at these quality jobs. The Neligh Recruitment Network was formed to bring together well-placed individuals who may not know of positions or potential quality employees. The Economic Development Director is the initial contact and will accept inquiries or employment opportunities from serious candidates. The Director will then forward on that information to the network to see if they have any suitable contacts.



NICHE Program: The Neligh Intern and Craftsman High School Employment (NICHE) Program was developed to mitigate problems in workforce development, youth retention, and business transition. Neligh, like most small towns, has significant difficulties recruiting youth back to the community once they've graduated. A challenge is the misconception that there are no "quality employment" options available upon return. This is a fallacy. The opposite could not be truer. These "quality employment" opportunities are somewhat hidden. Rural Nebraska is starving for craftsmen like plumbers, welders, carpenters, or electricians. These are jobs that are

and will continue to be in high demand and offer salaries that afford a high quality lifestyle. With "baby boomers" verging on retirement age, several white collar careers such as dentists, pharmacists, local government, and lawyers will be in demand with no one to fill them. Now is the time to open the eyes of Neligh's youth to these "quality employment" opportunities! How better to achieve this than to have those who they would replace or work under mentor them? For this purpose, Neligh Economic Development Office is developing the Neligh Intern and Craftsman High School Employment Program (NICHE).

#LEARNtoEARN

NICHE's purpose is to entice Neligh businesses to offer true internship and junior journeymen positions to the youth of Neligh. NICHE does not provide "summer help" but instead fosters mentorship opportunities between businesses and potential future employees/successors. NICHE will serve to open the eyes of Neligh's youth to the employment opportunities that exist right here in Neligh! The NICHE program is in its infancy and NEDO and other local partners will first need to pilot test the program before unleashing it to all of the Neligh businesses.



Center for Enterprise: The Neligh Economic Development Office will form a strong partnership with Northeast Nebraska Community College and its newly formed Center for Enterprise. The Center for Enterprise can offer workforce development training through the college. NEDO will work to identify workforce needs and formulate plans with the Center for Enterprise to offer needed trainings.

Youth Retention

Attracting and retaining youth in Neligh is crucial to Neligh's future. For this reason NEDO must make every effort to work closely with N-OHS staff and the Neligh Chamber of Commerce to ensure that Neligh's youth feel at home in Neligh and understand they will have opportunities if they choose to reside in Neligh.

Grow - Strategies and Action Objectives

Business Attraction

The Neligh Economic Development Office's focus is on Energizing and Enhancing its current business portfolio. In the next three to five years NEDO will need to look at expanding the business stock in Neligh. For that reason, NEDO will develop a business attraction strategy that it will implement when business attraction becomes a major priority.



Find the "Right Fit" - NEDO will focus its efforts on attracting businesses that will be the right fit for Neligh. These businesses will be identified by focusing on community input and regional planning processes. At the formation of the Neligh Economic Development Office, the Grow Neligh Group distributed a survey with the help of the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District asking the populous which businesses they would like to see in Neligh. In order to attain a Leadership

Designation from the NE Department of Economic Development, a Needs Assessment will be distributed to residents and the surrounding area. One of the questions included in the Needs Assessment concerns attracting new businesses. NEDO staff have also been partaking in the Stronger Economies Together (SET) process which is facilitated by the Rural Futures Institute and the University of Nebraska at Lincoln Extension Office. SET will identify industry clusters that would pair well with or fill holes in the current business culture of Northeast Nebraska. NEDO will examine these three avenues to attract businesses that are the "Right Fit" for Neligh.

Passive Attraction: NEDO has developed an all-encompassing website that features 400+ pages of content about the community of Neligh. The "WORK" section of the website will feature a passive attraction process. NEDO will keep available business sites updated on the website's "Available Properties" section. This will provide easy access to businesses or site selectors interested in expanding into Neligh. The "WORK" section will also show available incentives and a two-page Community Profile which provides a general overview of Neligh. Basic utility information such as peak electric usage, fiber access, and telephone and cable access will be included.

You'll never catch a fish if you never
cast a line into the water.

Dennis Anderson – NEDO Board Member



NEDO must also utilize the Location One Information System (LOIS) site which is provided by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. NEDO will use Location One to provide site selectors easy access to available properties and community information. NEDO staff will keep the site current.

Business Creation: Neligh is blessed to have an abundance of entrepreneurial spirit. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, 51% of all jobs in Antelope County were sole proprietorships in 2010-2011, well above the average for the whole state of Nebraska. Nevertheless, NEDO must look to further grow this entrepreneurial spirit. NEDO must become the first point of contact for those looking to start a business in Neligh. NEDO will help entrepreneurs identify funding sources and provide them with further information on conferences, and state/regional business development contacts.

Incentives: In the competitive world of economic development the 'cherry-on-top' quite often seals the deal for new businesses to relocate. Neligh currently has Local Sales Tax funds that can be used for low interest, flexible term, and

potentially forgivable loans. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is also available to businesses who might invest in Neligh's Redevelopment Area. NEDO must look to increase its Business Attraction Incentive portfolio. Over the next several

years, NEDO will partner with the City Council to develop new incentives that might help attract new businesses to Neligh.



Aerial View of Neligh from the South

Housing

Like most of rural Nebraska, Neligh is in desperate need of quality affordable housing. Houses in the \$60,000 - \$120,000 range sell quickly or often do not make it on the open market before being sold. The Neligh Economic Development Office must make developing quality affordable housing a priority.

Housing Study: The City of Neligh is undergoing a holistic planning approach with several planning tenants. One of the main tenants of the plan is conducting a Housing Study to identify areas that must be focused upon to add value to Neligh's current housing portfolio. NEDO will be an integral part of conducting the Housing Study with the contracted planner, Miller and Associates. The Housing Study will develop several areas of focus that will be incorporated into this strategic planning document once the study is completed. At that time NEDO will work diligently to implement the findings of the Housing Study and foster growth of Neligh's quality housing stock.

Countryside Acres Second Addition TIF Project: The Neligh Economic Development Office spearheaded the Countryside Acres Second Addition TIF Project which was enacted in March 2014. This project uses Tax Increment Finance (TIF) to reduce lot prices to entice new home construction. This project was developed with the hope that current/stable families who know they will remain in Neligh for several years will up-size to a newly constructed home. This will free up their current quality affordable home for new families. NEDO will continue to work with the Redeveloper and the Re-Development Authority of the City of Neligh to ensure this project will cultivate Neligh's housing market.

Housing Beautification: The citizens of Neligh have voiced their concern for some sort of housing beautification effort through several mediums. NEDO will look to develop some form of a Housing Beautification program whether it be a Beautification Incentive, coordinating a volunteer effort, or encouraging the enforcement/extension of current nuisance ordinances.



Countryside Acres Second Addition Lot Map

Housing Partnerships: Neligh is very fortunate to have a plethora of housing organizations that either directly service Neligh or have a vested interest in the community's housing stock:

- ◆ *CORE Development Inc.* – administers and writes CDBG Owner Occupied Housing Rehabilitation grants for CORE communities. Neligh is a CORE community and its residents have access to CORE's CDBG funds. NEDO will promote CORE's housing programs.

- ◆ *CDS Inspections and Beyond* – CDS administers \$350,000 in CDBG Owner Occupied Housing Rehabilitation funds dedicated strictly to Neligh residents. CDS is willing to administer/write a second grant if a need is identified.
- ◆ *Northeast Housing Initiative* – Northeast Housing Initiative writes and administers grant funding from State and Federal housing programs. Neligh has yet to develop a strong partnership with Northeast Housing Initiative but will look to developing a partnership in the future.
- ◆ *Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District's Housing Department* – NENEDD's Housing Department services all 17 counties within the District's boundaries. NEDO has laid a solid foundation with NENEDD's Housing Department but has not had an opportunity to work closely with their staff on housing projects.

Energize - Prioritization and Delegation Schedule

Market Neligh

Action Item	Who is Responsible	Frequency	Timeframe to Start
Local Buyer Appreciation	Staff/Chamber	Quarterly	Continue
Neighbor of the Month	Staff/ED Board	Monthly	Continue
Community Wide Block Parties	Staff/Chamber	Annually	Continue
Seasonal Photo Contest	Staff/Chamber	Quarterly	Continue
Implement Public Ideas	Staff/ED Board	As Needed	As Needed
Quality of Life Showcase Grant	Staff/ED Board	Annually	Continue
Community Re-Brand	Staff/Council	Once	Continue – Finish by June 2014
"This is MY Neligh" Campaign	Staff/ED Board/Interns	Continuously	Spring 2014 – Winter 2014

Downtown Revitalization

Action Item	Who is Responsible	Frequency	Timeframe to Start
Leadership Designation	Staff/Clerk/Planner	Once	November 2014
Downtown Revitalization Grant	Staff/Clerk/Planner	Once	February 2015
New Moon Theatre	Staff/ED Board	As Needed	Immediately
Encourage Private Investment	Staff/CRA	Constantly	Immediately
Historic Preservation	Staff/ED Board	As Needed	Immediately
NE Main Street Network	Staff	As Needed	Continue
Shabby Chic Days	Staff/Businesses	Quarterly Meetings	Immediately

Partnerships

Action Item	Who is Responsible	Frequency	Timeframe to Start
NEDA – Legislative Day	Staff	Annually	Immediately
League of Nebraska Municipalities – Legislative Bulletin	Staff	Weekly – when in session	Continue
Stronger Economies Together (SET)	Staff	Monthly	Continue
Northeast NE Network	Staff	Monthly	Continue
Northeast’s Mayors Meeting	Staff/Mayor	Quarterly	Continue
Center for Enterprise	Staff	As Needed	Continue
Neligh Chamber	Staff	Monthly	Continue
Neligh-Oakdale Public Schools	Staff/ED Board	As Needed	Immediately
CORE Development Inc.	Staff/Council	As Needed	Immediately
Antelope County	Staff/Council/Ed Board	As Needed	Immediately
Surrounding Communities	Staff/ED Board	As Needed	Immediately



Antelope Memorial Hospital

Enhance - Prioritization and Delegation Schedule

Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E)

Action Item	Who is Responsible	Frequency	Timeframe to Start
Business Retention and Expansion Visits	Staff	Weekly	Continue
Shop Local Campaign	Staff/ED Board/ Chamber	As Needed	Immediately
Revolving Loan Fund	Staff/Loan Review Committee	As Needed	Continue
Expansion Incentives	Staff/ED Board/Council	As Needed	Immediately
Business Transition	Staff/ED Board	As Needed	Continue

Workforce Development

Action Item	Who is Responsible	Frequency	Timeframe to Start
Marketing Neligh	Staff/ED Board	Continuously	Continue
Neligh Recruitment Network	Staff/Network	As Needed	Continue
NICHE	Staff/ED Board/Chamber/ N-OHS	As Needed to formulate Annually once started	Fall 2014
Center for Enterprise – Educational Training	Staff/ED Board/Chamber	As Needed	Immediately

Grow - Prioritization and Delegation Schedule

Business Attraction

Action Item	Who is Responsible	Frequency	Timeframe to Start
Find the "Right Fit"	Staff/ED Board	As Needed	Immediately
Passive Attraction – Keep Website up to date	Staff	As Needed	Continue
Passive Attraction – Manage LOIS	Staff	As Needed	Continue
Business Creation	Staff/ED Board	To Be Determined (TBD)	Spring 2015
Create Incentives	Staff/ED Board/Council	TBD	Summer 2014

Housing

Action Item	Who is Responsible	Frequency	Timeframe to Start
Implementing Housing Study Findings	Staff/ED Board	TBD	Winter 2014-2015
Countryside Acres TIF Project	Staff/CRA/Hild Construction	As Needed	Immediately
Housing Beautification	Staff/ED Board	TBD	Fall 2014
CORE Development Inc. Housing	Staff/ED Board/Council	Quarterly	Winter 2014
CDS Inspections and Beyond	Staff/Council	As Needed	Continue
Northeast Housing Initiative – develop relationship	Staff	TBD	Summer 2014
NENEDD's Housing Department – partnership	Staff	As Needed	Immediately

LB 840 Local Sales Tax Financial Projections and Plan

Financial Projection

Fiscal Year	Projected Sales Tax Revenue*	Total Program Revenue
Preceding Years	\$85,157	\$85,157
2013-2014	\$47,000	\$132,157
2014-2015	\$47,940	\$180,097
2016-2017	\$48,898	\$228,995

* THIS TABLE ASSUMES A CONSERVATIVE 2% ANNUAL INCREASE IN REVENUES.

Future LB 840 Financial Expenditures Plan

Downtown Revitalization Grant and USDA's REDLG Revolving Loan Program

Fiscal Year	Revenue	Expenses	Expense Detail	Revenue
Preceding Years	\$85,157	-	-	\$85,157
2013-2014	\$47,000	\$9,550 \$2,990 \$1,000 \$500	Sales Tax Loan Envision Neligh Quality of Life Showcase Grant Misc. Expenses	\$32,960 + \$85,157= \$118,117
2014-2015	\$47,940	\$60,000*** \$7,500 \$15,000** \$2,000 \$1,000 \$1,000 \$1,500	REDLG Match* DTR Phase 1 Planning Match * Sales Tax Loan Demolition Grants Healthcare Professional Attraction Quality of Life Showcase Grant Misc. Expenses	-\$40,060+ \$118,117 = \$78,057
2015 - 2016	\$48,898	\$87,500 \$2,000 \$1,000 \$1,000 \$1,500	DTR Phase 2 Implementation Match * Demolition Grants Healthcare Professional Attraction Quality of Life Showcase Grant Misc. Expenses	-\$44,102 + \$78,057= \$33,955

* For more information on the [Downtown Revitalization](#) or the [USDA's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant \(REDLG\)](#) programs please see the [Energize](#) and [Enhance](#) sections, respectively.

** The LB 840 Expenditures Plan also assumes moderate sales tax loans will be given out in the second year, totaling \$15,000.

*** The REDLG Match of \$60,000 is the maximum required match. NEDO will look for more fiscally conservative project, therefore, this number may be more around the \$20,000 to \$30,000 mark.

Summary and Final Recommendations

The Neligh Economic Development Office is a little more than a year old. The staff and board have a tough job ahead of themselves but this document provides a workable framework around the Energize, Enhance, and Grow tenants and those critical factors must be addressed if NEDO is going to attain its vision of success. The NEDO Board and Staff must resolve themselves to follow through with the findings in this document and re-assess this document annually in the spring of each year. This document is a playbook for the next two to three years and will be of little use past 2017. The Prioritization and Delegation schedule was intentionally developed to give significant latitude to both the Board and Staff. As situations change in the organization and Neligh, this document may need to be amended.

Details

Neligh Economic Development Office Board of Directors

Terry Jensen - President
Ryan Koinzan - Vice President
Jennifer Blackburn-Nielsen - Secretary
Dennis Anderson
Al Stelling



Neligh Economic Development Office Staff

Greg Ptacek – Executive Director

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Neligh, NE 68756



This document was prepared by:

Greg Ptacek – Executive Director of the Neligh Economic Development Office

With input by:

The Neligh Economic Development Office Board of Directors

Attachment A

All responses are CONFIDENTIAL

Name _____

Title _____

Company _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Interviewer: _____ Date: _____

1. What is your email address and would you be willing to receive relevant emails from the Economic Development Office?
2. What is your company's greatest achievement(s) in the past 3 years?

Comment:

3. Has your attitude toward doing business in the community changed in the past 2 years?

More positive, Comment:

No Change, Comment:

More negative, Comment:

4. How likely is it that you will recommend this community to another business executive as a good place to do business?

Not likely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Absolutely

5. Are the majority of business sales: (Pick One)

Local (15 miles)

Regional (50 miles)

Multi-State

National

International

6. Generally speaking, are sales:

Strongly up (<15%)

Up

Steady

Down

Strongly down (>15%)

Start-Up

7. Has your company expanded in the past two years? Yes/No

If yes,

Employment _____ #

Facility _____ sq. ft.

Equipment \$ _____

Business History

- Started: _____

- Who Started: _____

- Time at Current Location: _____

- Current Management Time: _____

- Chain and how many: _____

- Main Office: _____

Previous Expansion Notes

Attachment A - cont.

If no, do you plan to expand in the next three years? Yes/No

- Current location
- Move to new location in the same zip code
- Set up a new branch facility in the same zip code
- Set up a new branch facility in a new zip code or different community
- Move to a different zip code or a different community
- Approximate date _____

Future Expansion Notes

8. Do you have any challenges hiring? Yes/No

- Administrative/clerical Skill(s)/Position(s) _____
- Management/marketing/sales Skill(s)/Position(s) _____
- Scientific/technical Skill(s)/Position(s) _____
- Skilled production worker Skill(s)/Position(s) _____
- Unskilled production workers Skill(s)/Position(s) _____
- Other Skill(s)/Position(s) _____

9. How many employees do you currently have:

- Full-time _____ #
- Part-time _____ #

10. Do you have challenges retaining workers? Yes/No

- Administrative/clerical Skill(s)/Position(s) _____
- Management/marketing/sales Skill(s)/Position(s) _____
- Scientific/technical Skill(s)/Position(s) _____
- Skilled production worker Skill(s)/Position(s) _____
- Unskilled production workers Skill(s)/Position(s) _____
- Other Skill(s)/Position(s) _____

11. If you could choose any company to locate closer to make your life easier, who would you choose?

12. If you could change one thing in Neligh it would be? And why?

13. Have you heard about our low interest Neligh City Sales Tax Loans?

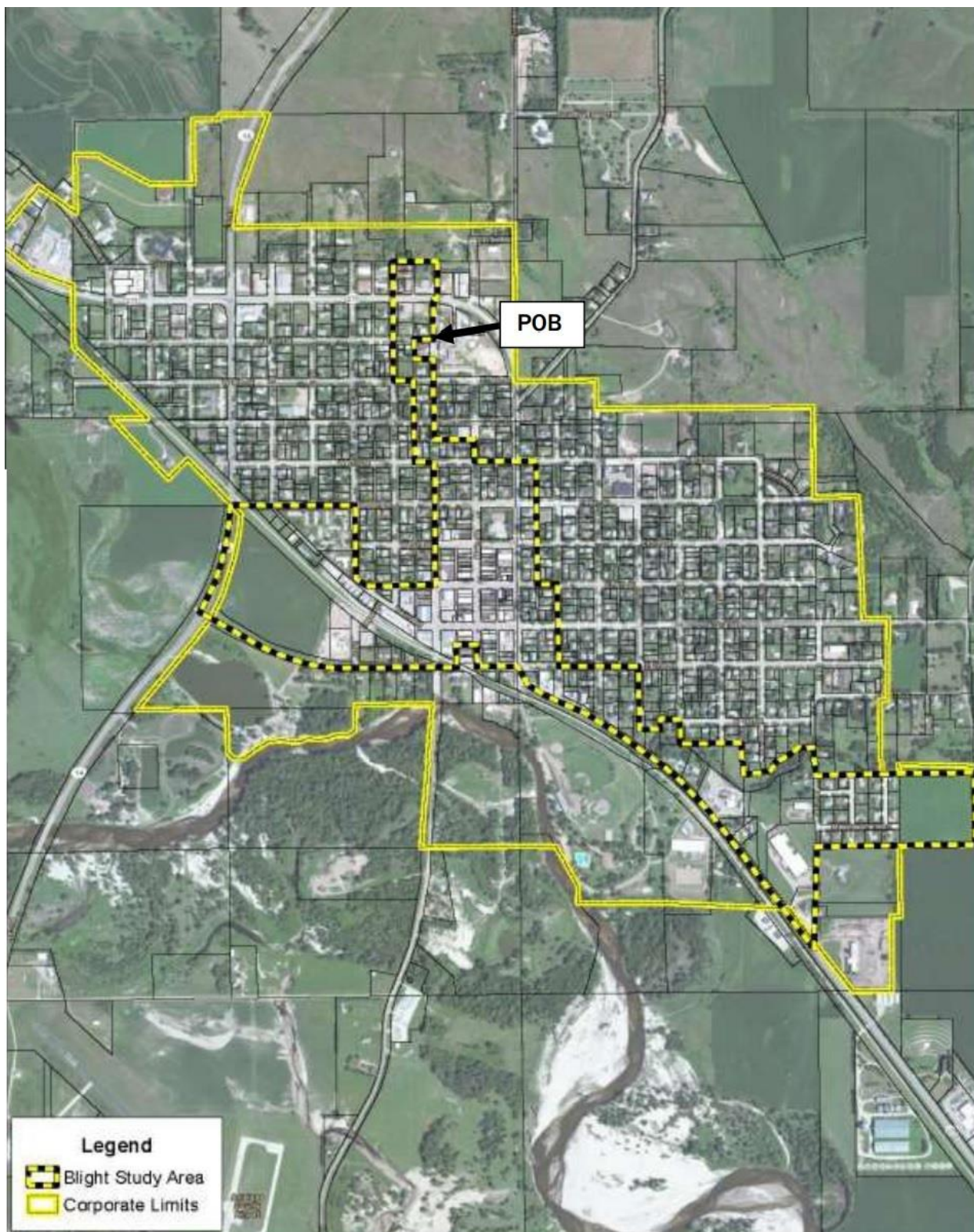
14. Would you like to participate in the Neligh Service Challenge Program?

15. Is your business a Chamber Member? If so are will you accept Neligh Big Bucks?

Copy of the results of this business survey? Yes/No

Marketing Notes

Attachment B



Neligh Redvelopment Area

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NELIGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

STRATEGIC PLAN

July 2014