ASHLAND
Small Town, Big Opportunities

A Case Study by Students in Natural Resources
Hospitality, Restaurant and Tourism Management

School of Natural Resources
University of Nebraska–Lincoln
This case study includes a strategic ecotourism development plan created by masters and bachelors students in the School of Natural Resources under the guidance of professors and faculty at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This diverse team of students has strong academic credentials while contributing individualistic knowledge and creativity.

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COURSE GOALS
1. To teach UNL students principles of ecotourism, tourism marketing, visitor services and entrepreneurship and empower them to assist rural Nebraska communities in developing successful ecotourism plans and businesses.
2. To assist Nebraska’s rural landowners and communities in developing successful ecotourism and agritourism ventures that contribute to the economic viability of rural areas and provide economic opportunities for young people.

Acknowledgements
The NRES 498 class would like to thank the professors of this class, all the community members of Ashland (especially those that are part of the ECAP and Chamber of Commerce organizations) who took time to listen and give us feedback, Charlotte Narjes of UNL Extension, Pastor Paula Lawhead of Lutheran Family Ministries (Camp Carol Joy Holling), Dee Ebbeka and Les Howard at UNL School of Natural Resources for helping this case study look professional. Lastly, this project would not have been capable without the support of the Rural Futures Institute.
The title of this report, “Small Town, Big Opportunities,” was created to promote the small town Nebraska feel that Ashland offers and to emphasize that the Ashland community has many opportunities to offer.

The motto we chose emphasizes our recommendation that Ashland use its opportunities to, “Remember the past, promote the present, and improve the future!”
The Merriam Webster Dictionary definition of tourism is, “the activity of traveling to a place for pleasure”. However, tourism has further been defined as simply staying somewhere that is outside the everyday normal environment of a person for no longer than a year. There are many ways and various categories that also fall under the general term tourism. The three that mostly impact rural areas – Ecotourism, Geotourism, and Agritourism are discussed below.

**Ecotourism** is generally known as enjoying the natural environment and visiting habitats that are working at being sustainable or where conservation is taking place, that one could view from a distance. Within ecotourism there are also various levels or degrees of sustainability, all have an environmental consciousness to them. Soft ecotourism could be visiting parks or enjoying a sunset on a beach. While hard ecotourism, would be backpacking up a mountain to enjoy nature first hand and then leaving no trace of the visit when hiking out.

**Geotourism** focuses on the geographical location and encompasses all that entire and specific place has to offer. Similar to ecotourism it sustains or enhances its location. An example of this would be riding a camel through the Egyptian pyramids or visiting a farm in the Midwest. In Nebraska geotourism would be used to show its visitors the history and culture of prairie life.

**Agritourism** can also be considered a sector of ecotourism, except its focus is primarily on agriculture. This has become an increasingly popular type of tourism over the past few years. Agritourism includes U-pick berry farms, pumpkin patches, or dude ranch visits, just to name a few. Nebraska has only focused on agriculture as a high yield commodity, yet agritourism has the potential to keep family farms thriving by drawing visitors out to the countryside in search of new adventures.

These forms of tourism can be very beneficial to a small community, like Ashland. Benefits include not only extra revenue but also can include continued community enhancement and involvement. This case study offers the opportunity for its citizens to start developing a vision for its future based on the efforts of external stakeholders in addition to the current community development process through the Entrepreneurial Communities Activation Process (ECAP), conceptualized by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Service.
The students in this work used the community capitals framework (CCF) in their assessment research. This sociological community model was created by Corneila and Jan Flora from Iowa State in 2004, to address a decline in rural economic and population growth. The idea is that if communities are able to holistically evaluate their communities in terms of these seven capitals, they can then see the interconnections and gaps necessary to strengthen several important foundations such as a vital economy, social inclusion, and a healthy ecosystem.

Our class formed three distinct groups responsible for conducting several assessments of tourism development resources in Ashland, NE. The goal was to identify those existing businesses and activities available to ecotourists as well as suggestions as to how the community of Ashland can enhance the visitor experience via the seven community capitals. Ultimately, our goal is to provide Ashland with the necessary tools to not only improve their economy but assist in their future growth.

Our focus was then narrowed down to three specific areas: redevelopment of the downtown historic district (including tourism type businesses); development of culturally relevant festivals and special events; and development of an agitourism and geotourism sector.

Each of the three segments has been broken down into “Key Findings” followed by a Tourism Development Action List.
Ashland, NE – Its Vision and ECAP Study Results

The community of Ashland has identified their vision and what they expect from future growth. Local residents realize the significance and advantages of being situated between Omaha and Lincoln, NE. The community wants to take economic advantage of their locale, strong community interest, and forward-looking leadership. Their idyllic setting and location is a positive when it comes to courting potential start-ups and young entrepreneurs; however, both civic leaders and residents are cognizant of growing too fast and too big, thus losing that “Norman Rockwell” feel.

The ECAP survey indicated that Ashland residents are focused on three central themes:

1. Appropriate and steady infrastructure expansion.
2. Development and marketing of recreational and community activities.
3. Street/sidewalk/green space improvements.

Ashland leaders are dedicated to appropriate and controlled growth, yet realize outside assistance is required. Below is a breakdown of Ashland’s known strengths within the community capitals framework.
Ashland is a community where you want to live your life, build your business and raise your family. We share in the vision of keeping the best of our past, while striving towards a prosperous future.

ECAP Vision Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Capitals Framework</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural</strong></td>
<td>State parks, hiking/biking trails, Platte River, Salt Creek, Linoma Beach, Wildlife Safari, hunting/fishing opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Built</strong></td>
<td>Ashland Community Resource Center and Library, Historic Downtown, four premium golf courses, upscale neighborhoods with lake front access, baseball/softball fields, high/middle/elementary school, Carol Joy Holling Center, Family Medical Center, some eateries, Carnegie building (future sight of the Ashland Historical Society)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Financial</strong></td>
<td>Access to various foundations (Kiewit, Scott, Dunlap, UNL), wealthy and involved Ashland residents</td>
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<td><strong>Cultural</strong></td>
<td>Ox-bow Trail, numerous historically registered sites, Stir-up Days and Classic Car Show in July, art galleries, numerous wineries and tasting rooms, Historical Site Tours, Holy Family Shrine</td>
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<td><strong>Human</strong></td>
<td>A community interested in volunteering, excellent school system, ECAP group, Nebraska State Tourism, Lower Platte South Natural Resources District</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>Excellent leadership, safe and peaceful community, churches, American Legion and VFW Clubs, Rotary Club involvement, Chamber of Commerce, 4-H Club, FFA, FBLA</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
<td>Community leaders have a vision which is appropriate and reasonable</td>
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<td>Suggested Areas of Need Using the Community Capitals Framework</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Natural</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Enhancement of their natural environment</td>
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<td>- Offer Outdoor outfitter’s business</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Continue the expansion of the regional recreational/tourism hiker-biker trails</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Sharing of information regarding outdoor activities, cultural events, and lodging</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Strive to become that “mini-vacation” destination for residents living in Omaha, Lincoln, and the surrounding areas are around</td>
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<td>- Development of an area airport in Saunders County</td>
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<td>- Consider city park maintenance, landscaping, and community gardens</td>
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<td><strong>Built</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Consider more lodging and restaurant opportunities</td>
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<td><strong>Financial</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Foundation assistance</td>
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<td>- Local community fundraising</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Promotion of the community’s pioneer history</td>
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<td>- Marketing the many historical homes and sites of Ashland to history and architectural aficionados</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Human/Social</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Encouraging young people to stay in or return to Ashland</td>
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<td>- Development of internship programs between students and local businesses</td>
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<td>- Youth Involvement</td>
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<td>- Entrepreneurial Opportunities</td>
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<td>- Internships</td>
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<td>- Leadership Opportunities, Speaker’s Bureau, and workshops on entrepreneurship</td>
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<td>- Community Engagement, Awareness, and Community</td>
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<td>- Openness/Acceptance</td>
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<td>- motivate local galleries, wineries, and boutique shops to partner together for more community events</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Attract tourist dollars</td>
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<td>- Provide a tourism center</td>
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<td>- Incorporate the Chamber of Commerce office into the tourism center</td>
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*Photo by Nicole Wall*
Outdoor outfitter, trail system, coalition with nearby state parks

The most crucial need of Ashland and its surrounding area is the enhancement of their natural environment in order to draw in various types of tourists (soft-, hard-, geo- and ecotourists).

The fact that Ashland does not have an outdoor outfitter’s business providing equipment rental, offering advice on hiking/cycling trails, and educating environmental awareness is surprising.

Continued expansion of a regional recreational/tourism hiker-biker trail system should continue along with bringing in statewide trail races and running events.

The establishment of a positive tourism relationship between Ashland and the surrounding state parks would also benefit both entities. The sharing of information regarding outdoor activities, cultural events, lodging, and food only enhances the overall positive experience of the tourist.

In the end, Ashland should strive to become that “mini-vacation” destination for residents living in Omaha, Lincoln, and the surrounding area.

It was also suggested in the Olsson and Associates Comprehensive Plan that development of an area airport in Saunders County could alleviate congestion from both Eppley and Millard airports while at the same time bringing visitors closer to Ashland’s front door.

Because of the high potential in the Natural Capital area, this assessment suggests this area as a “Key Finding” with some potential “To-Do” List action items.
Existing infrastructure providing opportunities for future growth

It is apparent that in order for this community to grow, it requires certain businesses, attractions, infrastructure improvements, and diverse cultural events. The majority of respondents to the ECAP survey indicated that they would like to have more accommodations (B and B’s, hotels, cabins), family-style restaurant(s), bakery, specialty supermarket, unique boutique shops (i.e. antique store, book store, floral or landscaping business), cell phone store, and perhaps a community theater. In order to cater to those tourists interested in family-centered and/or hardcore recreational activities, the development and marketing of outdoor opportunities is vital. Improving and expanding the local green space would not only appeal to tourists but residents who have voiced their desire for a skate park and improved swimming facility or splash pad. The need for cultural arts (visual, literary, and vocal/instrumental) is apparent, as the Ashland Arts Council exists, and although a few impressive local galleries exist within the historic district, there is no community theatre or book store.

Improving Ashland’s “curb appeal” from Highways 6 and 66 should be considered a top priority. The first step toward increased tourism is encouraging potential visitors to actually enter the town. Securing a billboard along I-80 near Gretna and Waverly would introduce Ashland to tourists from both the east and west sides of the interstate. First impressions are critical to achieving increased visitor flow as well as attracting new businesses. Improving roads and sidewalks within the historic district as well as additional parking is a necessity when encouraging visitors to stay and meander through the town. Incorporating bike racks, public restrooms, and drinking fountains is also expected in tourist districts.

“The green space should incorporate a skate park for kids. The Tony Hawk Foundation offers grants to develop healthy areas for this type of recreation. Also, instead of an expensive swimming pool, think of a splash pad that encompasses water conservation.”
Financial

Loss of Revenue

Too many dollars are being lost to tourism efforts that exist in Lincoln, Gretna, and Omaha. While these locations are able to host more large scale events like arena concerts, baseball games, and commercialized shopping, Ashland is in a unique position to catch these tourists that are passing along the way by promoting and providing different tourism opportunities. Many large to small scale public and private grants can help provide the financial resources for tourism development. By starting to compile a database of ideas and possible funding sources is a good place to start. Sectors of people that specialize in information technology, software development, entrepreneurship, natural resources, sustainability, and leadership are already in Ashland. By energizing, providing incentives, or perhaps simply reaching out to these individuals, an increase in financial capital will eventually build. A key question that could be asked, “How do we get more people to visit Ashland to learn about our community capitals?” or “How can we be an incubator of holistic wealth for our future generations in Ashland?”

Cultural

Historical district, history awareness/signs

Although Ashland has a historical district, it is far from fully established. Promotion of the community’s pioneer history is worth developing, and marketing the many historical homes and sites of Ashland to history and architectural aficionados would be well worth the effort. The addition of more signage explaining sites of historical significance could be achieved through foundation assistance or local community fundraising. Support of a designation for a Historic Commercial District nomination for downtown should be considered a funding and preservation priority.


**Human/Social**

**Leadership opportunities/speaker’s bureau/workshops on entrepreneurship**

By providing certain leadership opportunities it will continue to build human and social capital for Ashland. With the new Community Resource Center, it provides an excellent venue and also connection for people in the community, including youth, to learn and enhance their leadership-business skills.

**Youth involvement, internships, entrepreneur possibilities**

Encouraging young people to stay in or return to Ashland is necessary for its expansion and ultimately its growth. Establishing relationships with young students either through high school leadership programs or workshops lead by business executives is one step in the right direction. The Ashland Rotary Club has offered leadership training classes in the past to local high school students; visiting professors and/or foundation chairs could also be a force in encouraging young people to use their skills and connections within Ashland. Development of internship programs between students and local businesses would be a direct way to encourage graduates to consider Ashland as an “opportunity” rather than a place to “exit”.

**Community engagement, awareness, community openness/acceptance**

Community engagement is critical to Ashland success as well. Respondents to the ECAP survey were interested in volunteering for an event but stated that better dissemination of information advertising the need and event was needed. The relationship between those interested in starting a business and local government was a key issue in the survey as well. Those wanting to become an Ashland business owner found the entire start-up process confusing and felt there was too much regulation and micromanagement from the top.

**Farmer’s market, CSA/food co-ops**

Providing a local food source like a farmer’s market can have a multitude of benefits in several areas. The most frequently mentioned advantage is support of local farmers and the availability of fresh produce; however, there are positive impacts on the environment, economy, and community as well. Reduced transportation to move produce from the ground to the consumer also reduces the use of fossil fuels, lowering vehicle emissions and the environmental impact. Farmers markets can create jobs and by encouraging consumers (both community members and tourists) to shop locally, money remains within the local economy which is crucial to future infrastructure development.

**Community resource center**

Attracting tourist dollars would be a significant boost to Ashland’s economy. Providing a tourism center capable of not only directing visitors to various sights but also assisting with nature tours, hiking/biking trails, and rental information should be a consideration. Locating the center in the new resource community center would allow for more community interaction. Staffing of the center could be achieved by encouraging high school and college students as well as local residents to volunteer their time. This would create another opportunity for young people to get involved in community affairs while learning about the business environment. Incorporating the Chamber of Commerce office into the tourism center would allow for cooperative efforts between the two entities.
Community leaders have a vision which is appropriate and reasonable

A commitment to tourism development, especially in the area of sustainability and entrepreneurship would open up many funding channels. A list of these resources can be found at the end of the report.

While Ashland wants to exhibit and control its own collective vision for the future, reaching out to other external stakeholders in various communities (in terms of tourism) can be very helpful. Not only to listen and learn from their experiences, but also to build more community capital. Another possible connection could be exploration in opportunities and people who specialize in mutualistic rural-urban linkages.

Continued relationship building with the school is a must. The youth are the future and they want to help shape their own world. Engagement and programs designed to help build this relationship is very important in any community. A good place to start, is making sure that community meetings don’t conflict with school meetings. Lastly, there should always be youth representation on any community board.

Ashland should also consider connecting more with both of their Natural Resource Districts, the Nebraska Tourism Board (at this point Ashland is not listed on their website as a key destination), and the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance—the LPRCA, (a non-profit who can help with environmental tourism possibilities). These three local to state entities can help explore and expand the various trails (including water ones) and other ecotourism opportunities. The LPRCA, can also assist in zoning concerns.
Ashland Historic/Cultural District Revitalization

KEY FINDINGS

● Historical district ready for more galleries, ethnic restaurants, and unique boutiques

● Brand new Community Resource Center and Library can be used for leadership and entrepreneur workshops as well as horticulture, arts or cooking classes open to the public

● Surprising number of historically registered sites; visitors can take self-guided historical site tours

● Interesting Old West history pertaining to the pioneer’s westward expansion along the Ox-bow Trail

● During the late 1800’s Ashland was the hub of four different railroads (the CB & Q – Burlington Route)

● Very walkable town

● Situated between two large cities and at least three state parks lending itself to many opportunities/activities

● Projected population increase of 10,000 by 2020

● New upscale housing development built around a golf course and man-made lake – new base of clients willing to spend their dollars in Ashland

Residents feel that the greatest strengths of Ashland are its small town appeal nestled in a tranquil and safe environment surrounded by breathtaking scenery. The existing leadership is cognizant of the huge potential for both population and economic growth and has taken steps to develop a vision that is both reasonable and attainable. Their involvement in the ECAP study process confirms this forward-thinking by allowing the community to voice their wants and needs along with local city input. Expansion and renovation by some of the local wineries and art galleries in the historic downtown adds to the belief that business owners are eager to reach this growth potential. Although the citizens of Ashland are willing to support infrastructure expansion as demonstrated by the new library and resource community center, they understand the importance of maintaining a strong educational system. Investing in the future of young people and entrepreneurs is the key to a dynamic and economically strong business environment. The idea of local volunteerism is also alive and well within both the business and neighborhood communities as is the desire to showcase their pioneer heritage via stories of the Ox-Bow Trail and railroad expansion westward.

The issues hindering development range from a lack of specialty stores and family restaurants to minimal development of outdoor activities in and around Ashland. The obvious lack of green space not only in residential but in commercial areas must be rectified in order for future gatherings of neighborhood activities, festivals, and cultural events to occur. The addition of Ashland signage along Highways 6, 66, and I-80 is a priority in order to direct tourism traffic into this peaceful yet charismatic small town. Continuing to improve the aesthetics (no boarded up windows, addition of small gardens and flowers along main street) and infrastructure (wider sidewalks, bicycle racks, public restrooms, ample parking) in the historic district is a necessity in order to encourage return visits. The local government must also streamline and simplify the business start-up process so that new ventures can enter the market without impediment. Delays, costly fees, and confusing city codes only deter entrepreneurs from opening shop in Ashland.
Tourism Development “To Do” List

- Improve Ashland’s events website, especially the historical component
- Get a Downtown Historic District preservation designation and thus more grants
- Development of a Tourist Information Center which also encompasses the Chamber of Commerce in the new community resource center
- Partner with other communities to advertise and market Ashland culture
- Improve the signage into Ashland off Hwy 6 and 66; erect billboards along I-80
- Market the community as a “mini-vacation” destination
- Develop an Artist in Residence program which allows artists of all genres (writing, painting, musical, etc) the opportunity to improve and showcase their craft (perhaps hosted by the Ashland Arts Council at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church)
- Increase the historical dimension of the community by offering upscale Conestoga-style dinners and carriage rides on weekend evenings
- Enhance the arts feel by inviting local artisans to help paint murals which are then showcased throughout the downtown district
- Improve the feel of downtown by creating an atmosphere of romance by bringing in more unique restaurants, live music, old-style gas lamps along Main Street, fountains, etc
- Introduce a First Friday Art Walk during the summer to motivate local galleries, wineries, and boutique shops to partner together for more community events
- Make visual improvements by maintaining the town’s landscape; this includes flower beds, landscaping the downtown area, and maintaining the city parks better
Festivals/Events

KEY FINDINGS

- Develop a brand or theme: agriculture, Old West (pioneers), Native American, Arts Community
- Current events and festivals in Ashland: Stir up days, Quilting Expo, Car show, Hometown Christmas
- Distinct area from which to project their pride and host events, i.e. the historic district or public park
- Currently have four community baseball/softball fields and four golf courses located within a twenty mile radius
- I-80 Speedway, five miles east of Ashland, provides sprint car racing almost every night of the week

Tourism Development “To Do” List

- Create an online calendar which businesses can access in order to post upcoming events and volunteer activities
- Use Husker football weekends to their advantage; offer special packages providing lodging and transportation to and from game.
- Offer shuttle/bus service for tourists staying in Ashland to Omaha, Lincoln, Nebraska Crossings Outlets, the state parks
- Become a part of Market to Market, the Omaha to Lincoln road race; sponsor half-marathons; triathlons and cycling races starting and ending in Ashland
- Develop a modern sports complex in order to host tournaments; flood plain designation should not be an impediment to expansion
- Organize a Flea Market/Antique Fair some weekend
- Encourage more regional golf tournaments at each of the four golf courses
- Cooperate with the Nebraska Tourism Board to develop packaged tourism experiences
- Coordinate with neighboring communities to host a music festival during the summer either in Ashland or one of the nearby state parks
KEY FINDINGS

Ashland is surrounded by the Platte River, Salt Creek, and Wahoo Creek providing them a multitude of aesthetic and recreational opportunities. There are several locations that covered wagons used to take during the Civil War. Saline Ford is unique in the fact that it was the only place that had a low water bridge with a limestone base that allowed crossing which is now called Ashland. Many of the settlers heading west were the ones who stopped and claimed the rich and fertile land and realized the agricultural productivity of the area. Grain and livestock were the main commodities in this agricultural region.

The Ashland area sits on top of one of the highest aquifers in the state. Both Omaha and Lincoln have significant pumping stations in the Ashland area, which draws millions of gallons of water each day. In addition to the land fertility and water abundance, several wildlife habitats exist in the area including a variety of bird species such as bald eagles. Opportunities abound for the outdoor enthusiast: pheasant and deer hunting, various wild edible plants and mushroom collecting, stargazing, birding, fishing and canoeing.

Tourism Development “To Do” List

- Provide maps detailing the public access points for the various recreational activities
- Promoting entrepreneurship opportunities for local guides and outfitters
- Working with the Lower Platte South Alliance Corridor in order to develop water trails available to Geotourists as well locals
- Work with Omaha and Lincoln to complete the bike trail between the three communities
- Bring in educators for the community and the outside public about the natural environment and the impact of certain climate extremes (such as droughts and floods). Facilitate dialogue with all stakeholders in order to highlight Ashland’s current and future efforts towards a “climate ready community” between two metro hubs. This will help highlight the rural-urban connection within the natural surrounding environment
Agritourism

KEY FINDINGS

- No weekly farmer’s market. Local, farm fresh produce is currently being sold out of the back of a pickup truck. While trying to gather information about an Ashland Farmer’s Market, it was discovered that there is a desire but perhaps no one available to spearhead such an event. With the close proximity to Omaha and being located in the midst of prime farmland, there is a near certainty that a farmers market would be welcomed and thrive in Ashland

- No CSA or food co-op available to community

- The nearest pumpkin patch and Halloween entertainment venue is located at Vala’s Pumpkin Patch, 20 minutes away

- Prairie Pine Plantation, a nearby Christmas tree farm, provides families the opportunity to choose and cut their own tree

- Abundant wineries and tasting rooms in the area. Many of their events can be found at http://www.cellar426.com/

Tourism Development “To Do” List

- Market and exploit the advantages of local farm production and viticulture facilities

- Explore the cost effectiveness of bringing vendors from Omaha and Lincoln to Ashland

- Market local wineries/tasting rooms more and work together with local restaurants to create dining out experiences

- With the assistance of local food producers, develop a farmer’s market which provides fresh produce on a weekly basis throughout the summer months

- Promote a “Dine with the Gourmet Chef” evening (includes local foods and wines) in conjunction with live music

- Consider development of a microbrewery using local hops
Complete a Tourism Visioning exercise with key external and internal stakeholders.

We have bolded this “to do” item as a very important first step since it refers to a thought process that community members can perform as a group to help plan for the future in terms of tourism potential. Gutierrez, et. al 2006, describes the process as “gaining the most out of the possible”. The process involves a mind mapping process centered on three important questions

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to be?
3. How do we get there?

The students of this class would like to follow-up with interested community members regarding this process.

Our class met with the Ashland Chamber to discuss different Eco-tourism opportunities in Ashland. During this time we had them write down different things that they wanted to see.

The first thing we asked them was what type of tourists they want to attract. They really stressed they want to attract middle-aged families and defined an age group of 25-40. They also want to attract people looking to getaway from Omaha and Lincoln. In general, they want people looking for outdoor opportunities and shopping.

The next thing we asked them was what type of tourism needs they wanted to see in Ashland. They stressed they needed more dining with possible musical contests, hotels, and restaurants. They also wanted more and better quality advertisement such as new highway signs.

Established day trips and outdoor opportunities like canoe and hiking trips were also wanted because of all their outdoor resources.

Remember the past, promote the present, and improve the future!
The idea of Ashland pursuing an Artist in Residence program is a worthwhile endeavor. Currently, there are two existing programs in Nebraska. The Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts is located in Nebraska City and has been in existence since 2001. Each year the center accepts up to five artists for a two- to eight-week residency. Each artist receives a weekly stipend of $100 along with housing located at the center. Artists are free to practice their craft 24/7 without distraction. Throughout their stay, many artists volunteer to offer public talks, performances, exhibitions and presentations to the community. The KHN Center for the Arts is fully funded by the Kimmel Charitable Foundation. (Nebraska City, NE, 801 3rd Corso)

Omaha houses the older of the two Artists in Residence programs. Founded in 1981, the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts has two campuses – downtown in the Old Market and North Omaha. The Bemis Center supports up to twelve artists for a three-month residency. Individuals receive a $750/month stipend plus housing at either location. The Bemis Center receives both public and private support. (Omaha, NE, 724 s. 12th Street)

The Alliance of Artists Communities is an organization that supports various Artists in Residence programs throughout the U.S. Although a visit to both the Kimmel and Bemis art centers would be worthwhile, the Alliance should be considered an important secondary resource. This member-driven organization has helped establish over 1500 residency programs and provides a myriad of supporting functions.

- Provides grants and funding partnerships for artists and residency programs (i.e., Midwestern Voices and Visions funds seven residency centers in the Midwest)
- Helps with networking (i.e., Cohorts Groups – smaller networks of residency programs)
- Provides artists resources
- Advocacy at many levels
- Consulting services
- Emergency relief programs for artists

● Training events
● Research

* Omaha will be hosting an Emerging Program Institute workshop geared to those communities interested in starting a residency program, April 21-23, 2015. Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Omaha, NE

The artist in residence program located at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts has been in existence for nearly 35 years. At the present time there are two Omaha locations: Old Market and North Omaha. The residency programs provides artists from around the world opportunities to practice their talent without financial worry or outside pressures. The center has a $1.1 million annual budget and looks for funding from both the private and public sectors, and its non-profit status allows for application to various public grants.

If Ashland is interested in starting a residency program, the first step for assistance in financing such an endeavor would be the Non-profit Association of the Midlands for guidance. Many of the various studios in the center were sponsored by a local corporation; the name of the sponsor was indicated on the wall next to the resident’s door.

Only 36 artists are accepted into the program annually. Each residency lasts two to three months with individual monthly stipends running from $750-$1000. Although thousands of applications are submitted each year, only a handful of artists are accepted into the program annually. The artist is given a studio where they sleep, cook, and create. The Center also provides a place to try out new things, create without pressure, and demonstrate their art to the public through various events.

The downtown arts center occupies five floors. The main floor contains a gallery for the artists in residence as well as local Omaha artists to display their work. The second and third floors are occupied by the artist studios and the fourth
and fifth floors contain business offices and a thrift store for the residents.

Questions for anyone interested in the residency program can contact:
Holly Kranker, Residency Program Manager at 620.875.4418, (hollyk@bemiscenter.org)
Aileen Tobin, Director of Operations at 402.651.1070, (aileen@bemiscenter.org)

Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts, Nebraska City, NE

The artist in residency program located in Nebraska City, NE has been up and going since 2001. Their mission is to support established and emerging writers, visual artists and composers by providing working and living environments that allow uninterrupted time for work, reflection and creative growth and to present and support arts-related programming that expands public awareness and appreciation of the arts.

Each year the residence in Nebraska City had hosted over 50 working artists including: visual artists, writers, composers, and interdisciplinary artists. This residence accommodates up to five artists at a time for times varying for two to eight weeks.

This renowned artist residency program was originally built in 1969 as a communal home for three prominent couples. It was originally built for three different couples so the setup of the building is just as that. It is basically three stories of three connected apartments and the garages in the back are made into the different studios that artists have to work in. In 2001, the KHN Center was established by the Richard P. Kimmel and Laurine Kimmel Charitable Foundation, Inc. Each resident is given a stipend each week to help with their groceries and little cost such as that. This makes it a bit easier for the artists to live comfortably while staying. This is a benefit from this particular residence as not all residence offer a stipend to their artists.

Carol Joy Holling Center, Ashland, NE

When meeting up with Pastor Paula Lawhead from the Carol Joy Holling Center she had a lot to say about what the center had to offer. More importantly she was focusing on what the Ashland community and how they could utilize what they have to attract more tourists.

Lodging has been a deficit in the community and the Carol Joy Holling Center is one way that could help the community. The Carol Joy Holling Center isn’t just a place you use as a temporary residence but also to have meetings, retreats, team building activities, and camping experiences. The team building activities they have for corporate and private groups are low rope challenge courses, indoor challenge course, and high rope challenge course. They also offer activities such as swimming, horseback riding, boating, fishing, sledding, volleyball, stargazing, and many more. A cafeteria is on-site; offering breakfast, lunch, and dinner with professional on-site chef.
Appendix 2 - Sites

Sites inside city limits:
Angela Joy Art gallery - 1412 Silver Street, 402-944-4000
Cheri O's - Coffee and sandwich shop, 1404 Silver Street, 402-944-9499
Cooper Studio and Gallery - 1526 Silver Street, 402.944.2022
Majeski Art Studio - Silver Street, 402.944.3225 Niche Gift Shop - 1414 Silver Street, 402-944-2182
Willow Point Gallery and Museum (Gary Roncka artist) - 1431 Silver Street, 402-944-3613

Sites outside city limits:
Ashland Community Resource Center and Library, 1324 Silver Street, contact: Heather St. Clair (Library Director), librarydir@ashland-ne.com
Ashland Country Club, 799 Hwy 6, 402.944.3388
Ashland Historical Society, 1438 Silver Street, 402-217-1580
Baker’s Chocolate Factory (located off Hwy 6), 831 s. Baker Street, Greenwood, NE 402-789-2700
Breadeaux Pizza, 1425 Silver Street Ashland, NE 68003, 402-690-1040
Carol Joy Holling Center, 27416 Ranch Rd, Ashland, NE 68003, 402-944-3100
Cellar 426 Winery, 1402 Dennis Dean Road, 402-944-8109
Country Drive Golf Course, 951 Country Road 4, 402.944.2333
Glacial Till winery and gallery, 1419 Silver Street, 402-944-2546
Holy Family Shrine, 23132 Pflug Rd, Gretna, NE 68028, 402-332-4565
Iron Horse Gold Club, 900 Club House Drive, 402.944.9800
Iron Horse neighborhood
Jayz Café, 604 Hwy 6, Ashland, NE, 68003, 402-944-2000
Linoma Beach
Mahoney State Park
Our Place (bar/food),1539 Silver St, Ashland, NE 68003, (402) 944-3325
Platte River State Park and Schramm State Park.
SAC (Museum), 28210 West Park Highway, Ashland NE 68003, 402-944-3100
Quarry Oaks Golf course, 16600 Quarry Oaks, 402.944.6000
Wildlife Safari, 16406 292nd St, Ashland, NE 68003, (402) 944-WILD or 9453
Woodland Hills Golf Course, 6000 Woodland Hills Drive, Eagle, NE 402.475.4653

Photo by Jodi Delozier
Appendix 3 - Helpful References and Links

The Community Capitals Framework:
http://www.soc.iastate.edu/staff/cflora/ncrcrd/capitals.html

Spiraling-Up:
Mapping Community Transformation with Community Capitals Framework:
Tourism Destination Visioning Exercise:
Excerpted from Linking Tourism, Communities and Conservation: A Tourism Assessment Process (Gutierrez, E., Lamoureux, K., Matus, S., Sebunya, K, 2006)
http://www.gwu.edu/~iits/Sustainable_Tourism_Online_Learning/Gutierrez/Tool_Tourism_Destination_Visioning_Exercise.doc

Rural Tourism Resources from the USDA:
http://ric.nal.usda.gov/rural-tourism

EPA Smart Growth for Rural Communities:

Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance:
http://www.lowerplatte.org/
Why Plan for Drought?
http://drought.unl.edu/Planning/WhyPlanforDrought.aspx

Nebraska Rural Living:
http://www.nebraskaruralliving.com/essays/bedandbreakfasts.asp

City of Ord, NE:
http://www.ordnebraska.com/live/

TEDx Talks:
Noah Wilson-Rich, “Every City Needs Healthy Honey Bees”
Terry Brunner, “The Secret to Thriving Rural Communities”

Contact for Artist in Residency Ideas:
Bone Creek: Museum of Agrarian Art,
(Anna Nolan-anolan@bonecreek.org) David City,
NE 402-641-6458
Front Cover Photos
Wine tasting - cellar426 web site
Ashland High School - Ashland Public Schools
Golf course - Nicole Wall
Ashland street - Tyler Kearney

Back Cover Photos
Cart wheels - Tracey Adams
Ashland Middle School - Ashland Public Schools
Art gallery - Jodi Delozier
Horse statue - Nicole Wall
Linoma - Tracey Adams
Ashland school fan - Nicole Wall
Ashland Elementary School - Ashland Public Schools
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