



# *Facade Improvement*

The visual presence of businesses makes a great deal of difference in the marketability of the services contained within. In the case of Minden, attractive building façades in the downtown are vital since the downtown retail hub, otherwise known as “the square,” is contained within a small area and completely interconnected.

In this example, the top illustration shows the existing façade from a building on the south side of the downtown square. The bottom illustration provides suggestions for improvements to this building to greatly increase the attractiveness to the prospective shopper. Improvements include the following:

- New windows, including the placement of windows where they were originally designed and have since been covered with brick
- Addition of a variety of awnings, to provide for facing variance and shade protection, but designed to better match the architectural style of the building structure
- Recreation of signage, to better align with the architectural style of the building structure and coordinate with the awning or overhang

The suggest improvement takes a large building with multiple tenants and recreates it as a large building that takes on the appearance of multiple, smaller buildings. This change is visually inviting to the shopper and helps each business to distinguish its services from that of its neighbor.

## Present Facade

- Windows have been covered and distract from aesthetic appeal
- Lack of cohesive signage to attract the passer-by
- Shingled awning offering no variance for building facing
- Windows and doors, combined with the shingled awning, give the impression of the building as a single-tenant structure

## Improved Facade

- Removal of bricks from building adds visual height to the building and attributes to aesthetic appeal
- Introduction of color in trim adds dimension
- Variance in awnings creates the illusion of multiple small buildings contained within one structure
- Cohesiveness of signage is inviting to the passer-by
- Addition of historic stained glass or leaded glass windows aligns with the original architectural style of this structure

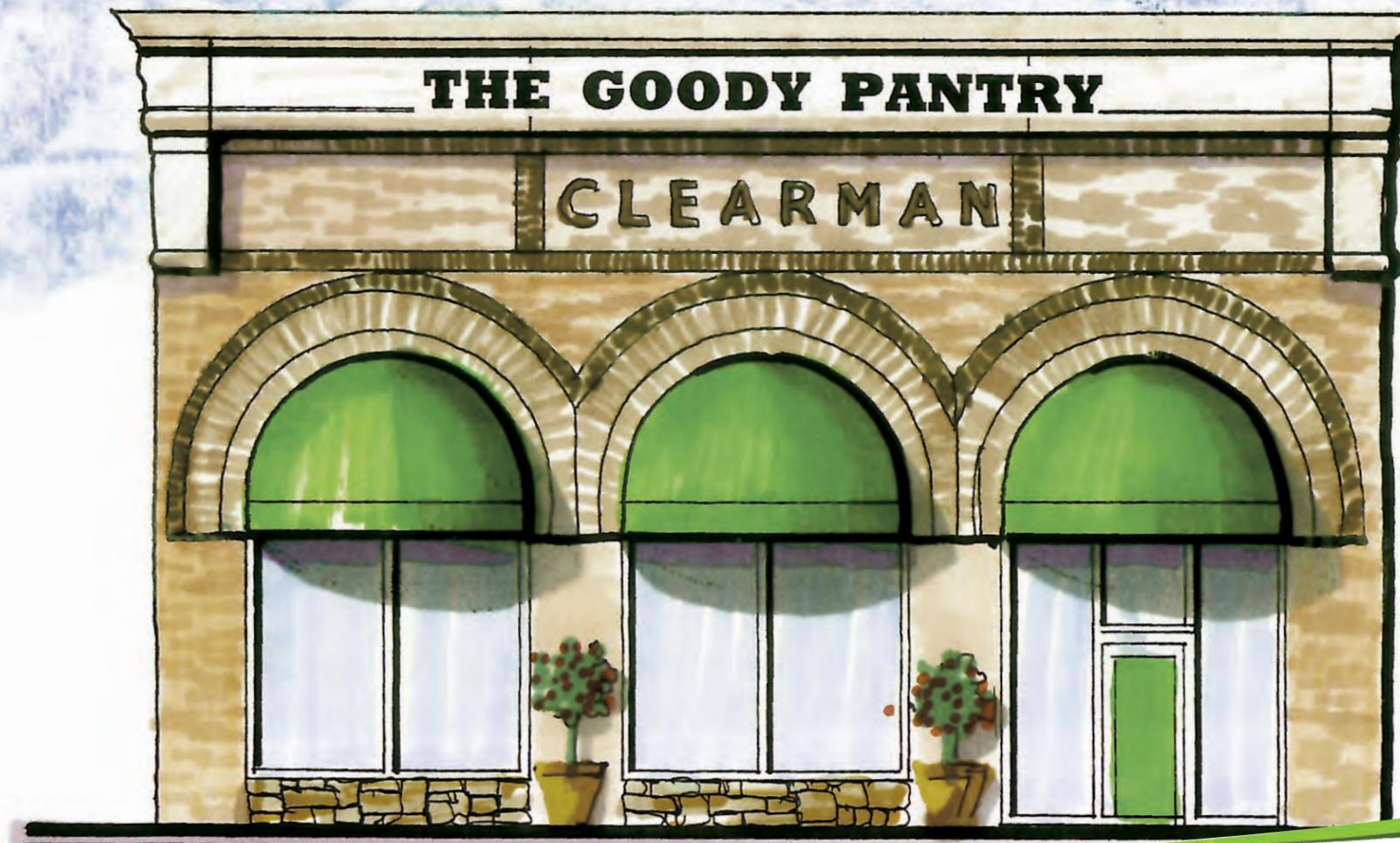


## *Facade Improvement*

The illustrations on this page are additional examples of the power of façade improvements in creating complete aesthetic change for downtown structures.

With a few simple improvements, the structure seen here goes from dull and outdated to warm and inviting. The following improvements are suggested for this structure:

- Repair to exterior masonry to provide a fresh face to the structure's surface
- Addition of a cornice to provide a finished look and space for signage
- Painting of trim and door to provide visual depth
- Addition of rock under facing windows for variance
- Placement of planters to provide aesthetic appeal
- Addition of individual awnings for depth and variance



## Minden Façade Improvement Program

### What is the Minden Improvement Program?

It is suggested that the program be designed to provide matching funds and, in certain cases, design assistance to businesses in the Minden Façade Improvement Program area (determined as the area encompassed in the InVision Minden Plan map), in order to improve the appearance of individual building façades, signs and awnings, as well as the overall look of the program area. Improvements must be to areas visible from the public way. The goal of this program is to leverage private improvements while making revitalization efforts affordable, creative, and community-based.

The Façade Improvement Program should be administered by the City of Minden and governed by an appointed design committee that works in conjunction with the economic development director and the Minden Planning Commission. The committee should be composed of business and property owners as well as residents, some of whom have design expertise and others who just want to improve the physical appearance of the community.

### Eligibility

Any building owner or store proprietor/tenant with lease authority or authorization from the owner should be allowed to apply for funding. The project site must be located in the program area. Tenants should have a minimum of two years remaining on their lease or an option to renew.

The following are suggested improvements that should be eligible for funding:

- Signs (new, repairs, replacements, removal)
- Awnings
- Lighting
- Paint
- Removal/replacement of inappropriate or incompatible exterior finishes or materials
- Recessing/reconfiguring entrances

- Removal of extraneous elements
- Door/window replacement or repair

Priority for funds should be given to removal and/or replacement of incompatible exterior finishes or materials.

### Design Guidelines

Projects should be expected to conform to the Minden Zoning Ordinance (as may be amended). Projects should also meet the approval of the design committee according to its guidelines. Design guidelines, educational material, and sample renderings of improvements should be provided at the time of review for reference by the design committee.

### Award of Funds

It is suggested that the program be set up as a matching grant program, which means that the applicant should pay a portion of the improvement and the Minden Façade Improvement Program should also pay a portion. Common match ratio for this form of program is 1:1—the applicant pays \$1 and the program pays \$1. However, there is no exact formula that works well for every community. It will be important for Minden to determine the appropriate level of grant based upon the source from which the monies will be derived, the amount of need, and the perceived number of applicants. In many communities, a cap is set for maximum grant contribution per project. In multi-storefront buildings, the community may want to consider allocating more grant funding as the proposed improvement project may involve multiple businesses. Work completed prior to the issuance of a letter of commitment should not be eligible for funding. Grant funds should be disbursed on a reimbursement basis and should not be issued until the proposed project has been completed. Before a check is cut, applicants should submit proof of payment for completed work and the city should review the completed project to determine that the actual work performed was for the work approved.

### How Does the Application Process Work?

First, applicants should meet with program staff and then complete a preliminary application. Depending on

the extent, priority, and visibility of the work involved, the design committee may allocate design assistance to applicants to help develop a proposal. This assistance is offered without charge to the applicant.

When the preliminary application has been reviewed, qualified applicants should be asked to complete a full application, which should include architectural drawings, color samples, and cost estimates. (Two bids are required; on larger projects and at the discretion of the committee, a third bid may be requested.) The design committee should then review the application and vote its recommendation to the Minden Façade Improvement Program Board of Directors within 30 days of receiving a complete application. The board of directors should then vote on the application within 30 days of receiving the design committee's recommendation. Every effort should be made to speed the process. Following review and approval of the application, the applicant should then receive a letter of commitment from the program for the specified amount with information on any other requirements. The applicant can then proceed with necessary permitting and city review processes.

Funds should be released to the applicant upon completion, inspection, and documentation of matching funds.

If an application is denied, a new application should be submitted during the next funding round.

### How are Projects Selected for Funding?

Applications should be reviewed and selected based on their compatibility with the vision and goals of the program and their impact on the area.

### Program Expectations

Work selected for a matching grant should be completed within six months of approval of the application, unless extended by program staff. The applicant should be held responsible for obtaining all building permits and any other required permits for the work to be done. The applicant should also be held responsible for conformance with all applicable safety standards and conditions and agree to maintain the property and improvement.

# Improvement Programs



The Minden Façade Improvement Program may choose to promote an approved project by displaying a sign at the site, during and after construction, and using photographs and descriptions of the project in program materials.

## Window-Scaping Improvement Program Framework

### Program Detail

Dynamic store windows are an important sign of a vital community and almost all unplanned buying is the result of touching, hearing, tasting, or smelling something on the premises of a store. A strong window gets the passerby to stop, come in and, in many cases, purchase.

Minden has a strong downtown retail core, budding with both local and regional pedestrian traffic. Market data suggests that the community provides slightly less retail services than needed for the local community, let alone adequate service offerings for regional customers. Hence, programs that will entice residents and visitors alike to visit retail service offerings in Minden will help to not only bolster existing businesses directly, but will also provide for additional tax revenues to the city and growth opportunities for new retail businesses throughout the community.

The following framework is a suggested program set-up. Minden leaders will want to review and create a program that specifically fits Minden's needs and budget allowance. An important element to this program is the identification of a designer that is capable of working with a variety of retail clients to best position their businesses visually.

### Program Start-Up

- Window-scaping improvement programs are often managed through the city, chamber of commerce or economic development corporation.
- It is suggested that the program be set to provide matching grants for window-scaping on a 1:1 ratio (one merchant dollar for every program dollar) of up to \$500 toward design services and implementation.

### Application Process:

- The owner or manager of the store (or property) should request matching funds for services by contacting the entity in charge of the program at least one month prior to beginning the window-scaping design process.
- The owner or manager should complete a questionnaire regarding window dimensions, materials, and merchandise or ideas he/she would like to see featured.
- The owner or manager should then receive general instructions regarding cleaning and preparing for installation of the window-scaping to expedite the process.

### Assessment Process:

- The window-scaping process should take approximately two weeks complete. The process should begin by meeting with the designer to assess needs, discuss options, and strategize how to best visually position their business.
- The designer should make sure to take "before" pictures for documentation to aid in the marketing of the Minden Window-Scaping Improvement Program.
- The designer should then submit a suggested improvements proposal to the owner/manager and program for approval.
- An estimate of labor and materials should be included and all parties will need to sign off on the estimate. Although matching funds should be available to a level of at least \$500, the project may be scoped for more or less with the match remaining at a 1:1 ratio of up to \$500.
- To ensure timely delivery and commitment on the part of the owner or manager, a deposit of one half of the fee should be paid to the designer following the provision of the designer's estimate.

### Design, Preparation, Installation, and Documentation:

- After project review, approvals, and receipt of down payment, the designer should then purchase the necessary materials, including but not limited to:

- Props
- Lettering
- Signage
- Display systems
- The materials purchased should be discussed upfront with an agreed-on amount to be reimbursed between the designer and owner or manager.
- The owner or manager should then work with the designer to install the display items. If there are subsequent follow-up changes that have been suggested, those should be provided by the designer to the owner or manager in writing.
- The owner or manager should play a part in assisting the designer with installation. First, this is a fair contribution on the part of the business to the project and second, this helps the owner or manager to better understand effective window-scaping techniques for future display changes.
- Following implementation, the designer should be responsible for taking and submitting "after" pictures to the program for documentation and marketing purposes.
- The city, via the program, should expect that the displays be maintained or updated for at least six months.

### Program Billing

- The designer should bill the store directly with the final payment expected at the end of installation.
- The owner or manager should submit a paid invoice to the Window-Scaping Improvement Program for reimbursement using matching grants of up to \$500.

### Follow-up/Evaluation

- It is imperative that "before and after" pictures be taken by the designer, submitted to the program, and documented in the files. These pictures are helpful in visually showing improvements to the downtown and will help to entice other community businesses to consider participating in the future.

# Improvement Programs



## Leadership Minden

Community leadership programs have been in existence formally for nearly 50 years throughout the United States. Historically, the typical community leadership program was designed to educate participants on regional issues while providing a networking opportunity with fellow participants and community and business leaders. Early program sessions produced mixed results as it pertained to increasing community awareness, social interaction, and volunteerism. The programs have now largely evolved to include more hands-on, experiential learning opportunities where participants are able to combine their own professional and personal experiences with program experiences to deepen their personal insight and appreciation for the common, community good.

The development of a community leadership program, from here forward referred to as Leadership Minden, will help to address the need to:

- Strengthen ties between community organizations
- Create leadership succession opportunities
- Promote community awareness of important and needed community improvement activities
- Develop advocacy for community and economic development programs and projects
- Recruit willing and engaged community volunteers for community betterment projects
- Train existing and emerging leaders to work toward transformational leadership that takes into account the variety of aspects of the community when making decisions for change

### Program Description

Leadership Minden should consider a course format that will allow participants to engage in a full day of experiential learning, study and training once a month for a period of nine to 12 months. They should accumulate somewhere between 72 and 84 hours of course time. Many programs begin with a weekend retreat to allow for participants to learn more about each other, personally and professionally, prior to beginning their experiences.

Since the personal and professional experiences of the Leadership Minden class are of critical importance to the experiential learning that they will undertake throughout the program year, it is suggested the Leadership Minden participants take part in a retreat at the beginning of the program. During this retreat, activities that allow the participants to learn more about their own and fellow participants' learning styles are also valuable pieces of information that groups use to gain greater knowledge of leadership style preferences. Leadership Minden participants are also advised to practice working cohesively by engaging in a community service project as a team with this activity being a part of the course curriculum.

Additional program highlights are as follows:

- Serve as a year-long adult leadership training bringing diverse community members together to increase their community knowledge on community issues and learn collaborative leadership skills
- Focus on training in collaboration skills necessary for informed and inclusive leadership
- Present information on existing community systems, identify community resources, and work together to create community purpose
- Maintain political neutrality and support participants' development of a common language across individuals and organizations as well as socio-economic status

### Benefits

- Creates of relationships among participants that can be grown to create a network for growing the community or helping to resolve community issues
- Broadens the base and diversity of leadership
- Increases dialogue on critical issues by connecting emerging and existing community leaders
- Provides skilled mentors for upcoming community leaders

### Participant Benefits

- Provides training in practical skills for community leadership
- Creates an opportunity for gaining greater knowledge of how various sectors of the community contribute to one another
- Increases self-awareness regarding assumptions or stereotypes regarding leadership
- Deepens appreciation for how individuals and various leadership approaches fit into and contribute to the greater good in communities
- Increases commitment and courage to engage in leadership activities and community engagement

## Program Framework

### Target Audience

- Adults of all ages who are identified as emerging or existing community leaders
- Participants can be nominated, but the program should allow for self-nomination as some personalities are not as inclined to always readily show as naturally assertive
- Diversity in socio-economic demographics, including professional, educational, geographic and ethnic diversity is fundamental to the program's guiding principles
- Participants numbers in Leadership Minden should total between 10 and 15 persons per year

### Marketing and Recruitment of Target Audience

- Professionals in both for- and non-profit careers
- Individuals in established leadership roles
- Community organizers
- Decision makers
- Business owners
- Potential succession leaders and mentors
- Geographically and ethnically diverse communities

# Improvement Programs



## Proposed Operating Structure

The Leadership Minden program's long-term success and viability are fundamentally linked to broad-based community understanding, perception and value for the program. To develop this broad-based support, it is crucial that the program be representative of diverse participants and engage diverse community sponsorship.

The operating structure should be comprised as two partnering bodies, the Executive Board and the Leadership Minden Program Organization. These two bodies will work in close relationship to develop and administer the Leadership Minden program. However, their individual roles are as follows:

### Executive Board

- Works with the Leadership Minden Program Organization to set fees for participation, set goals for fundraising and corporate sponsorships, and oversee the program budget
- Assures diversity of membership
- Will be composed of participants from the broader community
- Members will work to guide program development and implementation and should serve for a set term
- Members should have community credibility, demonstrated leadership abilities, and model ethics and transparency
- One seat on this committee should be reserved from the Leadership Minden Program Organization
- Will be responsible for the development of the program's operational policies, leadership program design, and identification of an administrative host organization
- Will additionally be responsible for the oversight of committees that should be developed to support the program

### Leadership Minden Program Organization

The organization that houses the Leadership Minden program, for the purposes of this framework, is referred to as the "Leadership Minden Program Organization;" however, it should be noted that in most Nebraska communities, leadership programs are often housed in the local chamber of commerce or as an off-shoot of the economic development corporation.

- Responsible for the day-to-day operations of the annual leadership program in accordance with program policy established by the executive board
- Will administer funds to support program needs at the direction of the executive board and will coordinate volunteers or staff for program trainings
- Will provide administrative support to the program
- Responsible for marketing the program
- Provides assurance that the program topics suggested by the executive board align to the mission statement for the organization
- Ensures that the mission statement and goals reflect ever-evolving community needs and suggests changes to the executive board as needed

### Structural Priorities

The creation of a sustainable leadership program requires concentration on fundraising, curriculum development, marketing, recruitment of participants, selection, and program assessment. Committees should be formed to support these activities and should be reportable to the executive board; however, the program manager or staff for Leadership Minden should be a member of each committee. Considering the size of Minden, committee members should not exceed three persons and members should be allowed to serve on more than one committee.

## Committee Structure

### Fundraising Committee

- Develops a plan to raise money beyond the tuition required of participants to support the program, administration, speakers, and materials
- Develops a strategy for contacting businesses, other potential partnering community organizations, governmental agencies, and local or state foundations to secure financial commitments
- Seeks in-kind donations of materials, food, and staff support in addition to cash contributions

### Curriculum Committee

- Supports the development of a learning community and provides information focused on interconnectedness of communities, best practices of leadership, and practical application of skills and knowledge
- Develops program learning objectives, curriculum guides, and the annual calendar of training days
- Oversees the development of each day's training agenda and educational materials
- Assures diversity of training schedule and engages a diverse group of volunteers to assist in development the program's core learning objectives

### Marketing and Recruitment Committee

- Develops a communications plan that outlines the overall strategy and specific tactics for sharing the program's purpose, value, and successes through Minden, the county and the State of Nebraska
- Engages in developing a marketing strategy to recruit members for each class of Leadership Minden
- Responsible for development of specific marketing materials, including, but not limited to the following:
  - Program Brochure
  - Participant Application Form
- Committee should target a minimum of 25 applications per year

# Improvement Programs



## Selection Committee

- Develops the policy that determines the program's participant demographics and assures consistency and fairness in application review and participant selection
- Selects participants from the applicant pool in accordance with mission statement of Leadership Minden
- Considers application tuition waivers to avoid excluding vital members of the community who may not have corporate sponsorship or personal means of covering program tuition costs

Average leadership program costs in Nebraska appear to average in the range of \$250-\$500 per participant. However, it will be important for the Leadership Minden Program Organization in cooperation with the executive board to determine the costs for providing the program as they relate to corporate sponsorship in determining the amount of tuition necessary to cash flow the program.

## Program Assessment Committee

- Responsible for the review of participant evaluations following each speaker, presentation, training, and session as well as end-of-program, comprehensive evaluations
- Delivers the aggregate results of the evaluations to the executive board and the Leadership Minden Program Organization to identify areas of success and needed improvement as well as identify ways to further align Leadership Minden programming to the mission

## Timeline—Leadership Minden, Year 1

### 1st Quarter—Program Governance

- Assumption is that the Leadership Minden Program Organization is already in place
- Recruit and develop the executive board
- Recruit, from the executive board and in the community, members to serve on stated committees
- Develop a vision and mission statement for the program
- Identify host agencies, city offices, industries, and organizations for inclusion in schedule
- Identify a target audience
- Create a one-page overview of the program

### 2nd Quarter—Operations Planning

- Establish policy for Leadership Minden
- Identify legal structures, roles, and responsibilities for Leadership Minden Program Organization staff, the executive board and committees
- Research other programs to benchmark operations of Leadership Minden
- Develop an overall business plan
- Implement the fund development portion of the business plan

### 3rd Quarter—Program Curriculum

- Develop an operational agreement for the Leadership Minden Program Organization with the organization that will house this program, be it the Minden Chamber of Commerce, economic development corporation or other identified community entity
- Develop a model year-one Leadership Minden program, including learning objectives and curriculum

- Identify and formally contract with staff and volunteer instructors
- Develop a participant recruitment plan, application process, and selection criteria

### 4th Quarter—Plan Implementation

- Release the participant application through a marketing committee and executive board announcement
- Make known the selection process through community and web advertisement
- Field applicants
- Kickoff program

At the end of each year's program, it is critical that the program be evaluated for needed changes and program effectiveness as gauged by the participants.

The framework detailed here for the proposed Leadership Minden program is simply a comprehensive view as to how the program could be structured. The InVision Minden Steering Committee and community representatives may wish to change the suggested framework to better fit community needs. This is completely acceptable and thorough analysis of the aforementioned is encouraged.

# Improvement Programs



## Funding Strategies

The following discusses the application of funding opportunities that could be made available for implementation of the InVision Minden Plan.

### *Business Improvement District (BID)*

This form of special assessment district allows businesses to finance public capital improvements. They are also capable of funding management, maintenance, and promotion. BIDs are petitioned and approved by property owners within district boundaries and are created by the city following statutes set forth by the State of Nebraska. While BIDs are a valuable tool, it is important that the districts be set with assessments that will not place a burden on property owners. This plan recommends that Minden adopt a policy of public financing of major capital projects with required BID financing of maintenance, management, and district promotion.

### *Building Façade Loan Program*

This form of financing would allow for retail and commercial property owners to access funds for aesthetic improvement of their buildings. Funds for façade improvement programs in Nebraska have typically been derived from set-aside sales tax dollars collected by cities through enabling state legislation for programs, such as LB840.

### *City Revenue Funding*

General revenues could be made available to appropriate to the funding of public capital improvements to support the concepts contained within this plan. To best position for this form of funding, further phases of this plan will need to be completed to understand phasing options and costing. At that time, a budget can be more easily determined, helping the city decide how much of the plan is appropriately prioritized in the Minden capital improvements program.

### *Community Development Block Grant*

These funds, appropriated through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), are awarded competitively by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development to cities across Nebraska with a population of less than 50,000 (communities over 50,000 population receive their own entitlements). At least one of the HUD national objectives, which include assistance to low- to moderate-income populations, addressing physical slum or blight and urgent need must be met through the awarded funding. CDBG funding could be used to implement portions of this plan if the State of Nebraska will allow for the use of funds to address slum and blight. Specific areas include paving, curb and gutter improvements and installation of ADA-compliant sidewalks.

### *Historic Tax Credits*

The Historic Tax Credit program offers a 20 percent investment tax credit for certified rehabilitation of National Register of Historic Places or Eligible buildings. The buildings must be used for income-producing purposes. The redevelopment must follow the guidelines of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Additionally, the project must receive preliminary and final approval from the National Park Service. Applications for this tax credit must be made by the property owner to the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and are encouraged to work with SHPO staff to ensure that the appropriate rehabilitation measures are followed. SHPO will then pass recommendation to the National Park Service for approval. This particular credit would be very useful in several of the historic properties found in Minden's downtown square.

### *LB 840 Funding*

The State of Nebraska offers enabling legislation for communities such as Minden to pass a local tax set-aside for the purposes of funding economic development-related improvements. The citizenry can vote to reserve funds from either property or sales tax; however, the sales tax set-aside has been more

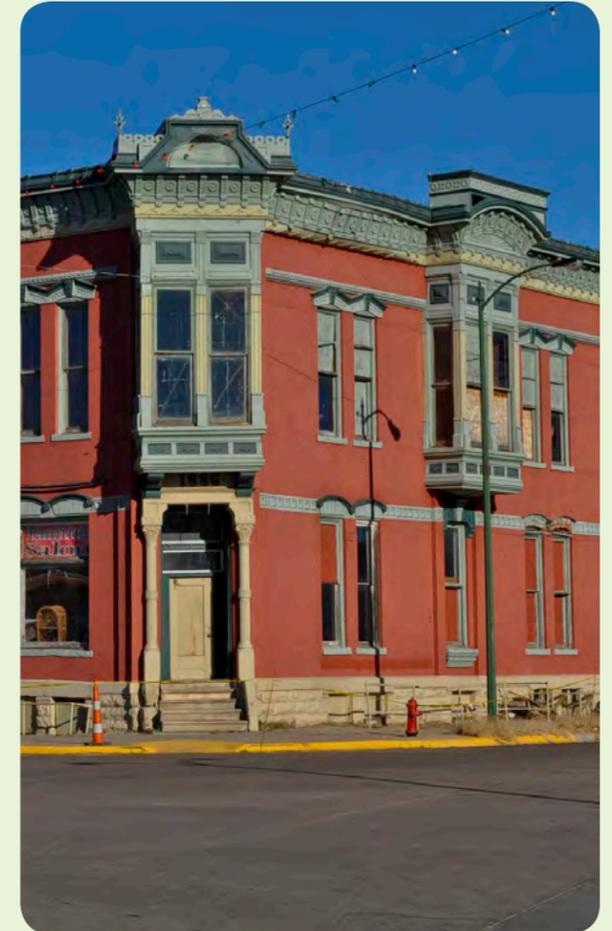
widely used. To enact LB 840 in Minden, a plan of how to use the funds collected must be passed by vote of the citizens separately from an additional vote on the allowable percentage of locally collected property or sales tax to allocate. LB 840 proceeds may be used for a variety of purposes that promote economic development, including infrastructure improvements and direct assistance through grants and loans.

### *LB 1018 Funding*

The Nebraska Advantage Transformational Tourism and Redevelopment Act, LB 1018, allows cities to option a portion of their local sales receipts generated from development to be redirected to the developer to pay for specified development costs. This form of funding would be applicable to improvements made within Minden's downtown square, tying historic and tourism purposes within redevelopment, as well as other areas defined within the InVision Minden Plan.

### *LB 562 Funding*

This bill allows for the issuance, on the part of a community, at the recommendation of its designated redevelopment authority, of limited obligation revenue bonds to support redevelopment projects. Minimum job creation and capital investment thresholds apply and are defined by the size of the county. For Kearney County, the estimated minimums would be two FTE (full-time equivalent) positions and \$125,000 in capital investment. To qualify, an "enhanced employment area" must be defined, with expectations largely reflecting those set forth in the Nebraska Community Development Law for "blight and substandard" designation. A redevelopment plan must then be devised. Upon adoption by the City of Minden, the authority is then capable of issuing limited obligation revenue bonds for completion of the redevelopment plan tasks. The designation of the "enhanced employment area" allows the authority to levy a tax, renewable annually by September 20th, not to exceed \$2.60 on each \$100 of taxable value of property on the business and users of space within an enhanced employment area for the purposes of repaying the debt undertaken in completing redevelopment tasks.



Nearly the entire area encompassed in the InVision Minden Plan is designated by city council action as slum and blight; hence, LB 562 would be a viable option for financing improvements to the InVision Minden study area.

### *National Trust Main Street Program*

The National Trust Main Street Program was established in the 1970s as an approach to the special needs and circumstances of America's traditional downtown and commercial centers. The program's approach combines historic preservation and economic development to work toward revitalization of these important community centers. Tax incentives may be available for any portion or portions of redevelopment within areas that could be deemed as historic, namely portions of the downtown square.

### *Revolving Loan Program*

A revolving loan fund could play a vital role in the accessibility of low- to no-interest loan funds for redevelopment projects pursued by non- or for-profit entities. This form of funding is typically governed either jurisdictionally or via a foundation. Availability of funding would largely depend upon repayment of funds from previous users and contributions made to the fund through gifting. Depending upon the size of the fund, communities may also be able to invest portions of the funds, allowing for growth through interest earnings.

### *Tax Increment Financing*

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) allows for the use of a portion of local property and sales taxes to assist in funding the redevelopment of certain designated areas within a community. This statutorily governed process requires that areas wishing to utilize this form of funding designate the areas to be assessed and improved as "blight and substandard" in accordance with Nebraska Community Development Law, contained within the Nebraska State Statutes. Additionally, once the area has been assessed and determined to be "blight and substandard," the community must then adopt this area designation

via resolution. After designation, projects that are seeking to take advantage of TIF must pay their entire established tax obligation. However, the taxes that are generated by the added value of the property caused by redevelopment or improvements may be used to finance project-related improvements or other public improvements in the district. TIF funds may be used for public-oriented portions of the project development, such as studies, surveys, plans, acquisition, demolition, streets, parking, lighting, and relocation of businesses.

### *Transportation Enhancement (TE) Funding*

The TE program, administered by the Nebraska Department of Roads, provides 80 percent federal financing for projects that provide enhancements to major transportation corridors, trails, and other non-motorized transportation projects. TE funding would match well to suggested improvements along Nebraska Highway 10 and Brown Avenue and U.S. Highway 6 and 34. Streetscaping, intersection, and sidewalk improvements as suggested in the Minden Blight Study that encompasses the InVision Minden redevelopment area would also be applicable improvements for TE funding.

### *USDA Guaranteed Loan and Grants Programs*

USDA offers multiple grant and guaranteed loan programs; however, the most applicable of these programs to the InVision Minden Plan are the community facilities and housing programs.

- **Community Facilities**—loans and grants are made to nonprofits or jurisdictions for community facility improvements. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Day care centers
  - Senior centers
  - Homeless shelters
  - Fire halls
  - Ambulances
  - Fire trucks
  - Emergency equipment

- **Housing**—direct and guaranteed loans are available for the purchase of homes in rural areas, for which Minden qualifies. Loans and grants are also available for home repair or to subsidize rents for apartments and townhomes. Many of the homes identified within the InVision Minden Plan area are also located on lots that have been resolved as "blight and substandard" by the City of Minden. The USDA could play a role in assisting Minden with redevelopment of housing or new housing starts within the plan area.



On October 26, 2010, the Olsson Associates planning team met with members of the InVision Minden Steering Committee in a focus group planning session

## Facilitators

Courtney Dunbar and Doug Halvorson (Olsson)

## Steering Committee

March Brandt, Melissa Wheelock, Lisa Karnatz, Roger Jones, Brent Lewis, Fred Meis, Marshall Nelson, Arlen Osterbuhr, Kelley Ayres, Kerry Lempka, Kevin Raun, Larry Wilcox and Annie Jacobsen

## Meeting Notes, Visioning Methodology, and Findings

Steering committee sat as an informal group at tables. Each participant was asked to think of responses to the following questions and provide responses. Respondents were not asked to weigh their responses through prioritization of first, second, and third priorities, etc., but rather repeat responses when applicable with repetitiveness used as a factor in determining priority. Since this visioning session was more focused on brainstorming than accurate sampling, some questions received more responses than others. All answers were delivered through discussion rather than written by the respondents.

Theme of the visioning process was to center around what participants hoped to preserve, create, and change in Minden.

## Topic 1: What Would the Minden Community Like to Preserve?

### Question 1: Your earliest fond memory of Minden?

- Going to the swimming pool
- Walking to Grandma's house
- Autonomy as youth
- Pioneer Village
- Minden Opera House
- The square
- Downtown shopping
- Homecoming parade
- Safety (2)
- Drugstore chocolates
- Friendliness
- Walkable community (2)
- Christmas Pageant (2)
- Quaintness
- Hanging out in the square on Saturday nights

### Question 2: Three places in Minden where you would take out-of-town visitors and why.

- Minden Opera House (9)
- Hospital (2)
- Minden Coffee House (4)
- Pioneer Village (5)
- Sandhill cranes
- The square (2)
- Burchell Inn
- Platte River—tubing
- Christmas lights
- School (3)
- Specialty downtown shops
- Kearney County Museum
- Tour of new houses and new industries (3)
- Tour of historic homes
- Fort Kearny
- Bethany Home

- KAAPA Ethanol plant
- Firehouse and "civic equipment," such as fire engines, police cars, etc.
- Red River restaurant
- Minden Machine Shop
- Courthouse
- Minden airport
- Minden Country Club
- Examples of community beautification
- Benches
- Signs

### Question 2: Three words or short phrases that describe Minden.

- Traditional values
- Safe
- Historical
- Supportive (2)
- Cliques
- Negative attitudes
- Optimism and cynicism
- Classy
- Sense of pride (4)
- Commuter-based
- Charming
- Friendly
- Progressive (2)
- Community (2)
- Unique
- Competitive (positively and negatively)
- Somewhat complacent
- Independent
- Belonging to community (4)
- Optimism
- This is home
- Taking assets for granted
- Churches are important to the fabric of our town
- Schools are integral

# Appendix A: Visioning Session Results



## Question 3: Three areas or places that should be protected and preserved.

- Brown Street (stately feeling) (2)
- Old bank building
- "Norman Rockwell feel" (3)
- Hospital (2)
- Schools (2)
- Community aesthetics
- Pioneer Village (5)
- County seat
- Wealth preservation (3)
- Minden newspaper
- Minden Opera House (7)
- Grocery store (5)
- Business (in general) (5)
- Community pride
- Infrastructure
- Band shell park
- Swimming pool
- Co-op

## Question 4: Three community organizations that are valuable enough to preserve and grow (did not track repetition).

- Optimists
- Chamber of Commerce
  - Promotions committee
- Beautification team
- Economic development
- CRA
- Rotary
- Lyons
- Senior center organizations
- Parent advisory group
- MOPS
- Volunteer fire department
- Community Players
- Minden Country Club

- Kearney County Ag Club and 4-H clubs
- Pheasants Forever
- SOAR youth organization

## Question 5: Are there any organizations that you wish to be present or play a stronger role in Minden?

- Young professionals
- Minden Schools Foundation
- Housing authority or housing development corporation
- Organization addressing gathering spots for teenagers
- Historical society
- Ag-based involvement in the Minden Chamber

## Question 5: Three businesses that play a major factor in the sustained tax base of Minden (did not track repetition).

- KAAPA Ethanol plant
- Minden Machine Shop
- Community banks
- Downtown businesses
- Minden Coffee House
- Grocery store
- Pioneer Village
- Minden Opera House
- County agriculture

## Question 6: What needs to be changed or created?

- Lack of local sit-down restaurants
- Lack of quality entrance nodes as a welcome front door to the community
- Improvements to support tourism opportunity
  - Attractive hotel development
  - Lack of connection of taxable income from Pioneer Village to City of Minden
  - Pioneer Village has not changed with times
  - Way-finding and serious lack of signage for community navigability
- Would like to see Chamber of Commerce become more of a destination
- Downtown businesses occasionally open late to reintroduce meeting in the square as a community
- More access to local produce through an expanded Farmers Market, etc.

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