



Recertification Application

Ord, Nebraska

June 2008



US Bio Ord, now VeraSun Ord, ethanol plant grand opening ceremony, Aug. 16, 2007.



Nebraska Economic Development Certified Community Program Recertification

Ord, Nebraska

I. Long-Range Strategic Plan

Each year, the Valley County Economic Development Board and Ord Area Chamber of Commerce enlist the help of Nebraska Public Power District to conduct a planning session. As part of this process, board members and community leaders are asked in advance of the planning session for identification of issues that they feel need to be addressed in the community. These are the items that are voted upon during the planning session. Additional items can be added at that time as well for any ideas that were not thought of in advance. In 2007, NPPD assisted the Boards with a one year plan as well as a longer range plan of 3-5 years. From this session, NPPD compiles the data and the staff of Valley County Economic Development prepares a program of work and action plan for the coming year.

An action plan and responsible party are assigned to each goal. A timeline is also assigned so that progress can be tracked throughout the year. In the past, both boards have experienced new opportunities that were not in the annual action plan, but that were too important to pass up. For example, the ethanol plant project and the New Neighborhoods project. Substantial staff and volunteer time were devoted to both projects, even though they were not included in the annual plan. The plans are created with the understanding that as new opportunities arise, it can be flexible to make room for these projects.

For the 2008 Program of Work, the top priorities were as follows in order of priority with all being important.

- Continue to assist existing businesses within Valley County
- Recruitment of New Business based on updated Target Industry Study
- Public Relations Campaign to area residents – positive image creation
- Continue to pursue Central Community College for campus in Ord
- Downtown Revitalization Program
- Continuation of grant writing for community projects
- Joint meeting annually with all public boards to encourage open communication and long range planning
- Growth and Development of countywide housing program
- Construction of speculative building for recruitment of light manufacturing business

For the long range plan, the group looked at issues that are important to the future growth of our community, and realized that many of these items will take more than one year to accomplish. These goals will be reviewed each year and the status of each goal will be discussed to track progress. These items will also be addressed each

year to determine if they should be added to the one year plan. As you can see, our long range plan involves both economic and community development issues as both are critical to our long term success. They are listed in order of priority, with all being important to the boards.

- Build cash reserves for both organizations.
- Research methods to create a large endowment to sustain our efforts in Valley County.
- Community College Campus in Valley County.
- Research possibility of city/county administrator position.
- Develop and promote additional recreational venues in order to draw people and money into the county.
- Hiring of a public relations staff member.
- Hiring of a community grant writer.
- Additional public/private partnerships for funding our efforts.
- Enhancement of countywide housing program to be all encompassing (rehab, down payment assistance, acquisition & demolition, subdivision development, etc.)
- Tourism marketing and promotion through regional collaboration.

II. Marketing Materials

In addition to our facts book, individual sites and buildings and online profiles, we utilize the following marketing materials. In addition to our current website, www.ordnebraska.com, we are in the final stages of development for a new website. This site is being designed by NPPD and DED to focus on workforce attraction, our #1 Target Industry in Valley County. For more information about this site, contact Tim O'Brien at tim.obrien@nebraska.gov.

- Valley County Incentive Brochure: <http://www.ordnebraska.com/ED%20Brochure%202008.pdf>
- Valley County Business Growth 2000-2007: <http://www.ordnebraska.com/Spring%202008%20Quiz%20Insert.pdf>
- Monthly Chamber & Economic Development Newsletter: <http://www.ordnebraska.com/July%202008%20Newsletter.pdf>
- Valley County Economic Development Annual Report: <http://www.ordnebraska.com/Annual%20Report%2006-07.pdf>

Also, we have created a travel guide and websites to promote tourism as well as our community in general. The ESCAPE travel guide focuses not just on tourism but economic development and what Ord has to offer new residents and businesses.

- ESCAPE to Calamus & Scenic Loup River Valley: www.visitloupvalley.com
- Valley County Tourism site: www.visitvalleycounty.com

III. Long-Range Funding Plan

The following long-range funding plan includes all items in our 3-5 year plan. Also attached at the end of this application is a copy of the 2007-2008 Budget of the Valley County Economic Development Board. As you will see from the budget, funding for the ongoing operation of the office comes from the City of Ord, Valley County, Ord Area Chamber of Commerce, Loup Valleys RPPD, Valley County Lodging Tax, Greater Loup Valley Activities (GLVA), private sponsorships, sales tax administration and grants. Efforts are continually underway to secure these sources of funds for longer time frames. For example, the Interlocal agreement that results in the contributions from the City, County and Chamber was initially for three years. The most recent agreement is for five years and is good through 2011. The agreement with Loup Valleys RPPD also continues through 2011.

The following goals are from the Valley County Economic Development 3-5 Year Long Range Plan:

GOAL: Build cash reserves for both organizations.

Volunteers and board members will solicit additional sponsorships.

Staff will research and apply for grants. *Est Cost:* \$5,000

GOAL: Research ways to create a larger endowment to sustain efforts in Valley Co.

Volunteers and board members will identify large donors or challenge grants to create endowment. *Est Cost:* 50 volunteer hours

GOAL: College campus in Valley County. *Est Cost:* Staff time \$1,000

Space will be obtained for Community College campus.

GOAL: Research possibility of a city/county administrator position.

Comparable-sized cities will be interviewed to obtain cost/benefit analysis

Est Cost: Staff Time \$1,000

GOAL: Develop and promote additional recreational venues in order to draw people and money into the county. *Est Cost:* Staff Time \$3,000

GOAL: Hiring of a public relations staff member. *Est Cost:* \$12,000

GOAL: Hiring a grant writer. *Est Cost:* % of grant awarded

GOAL: Additional public/private partnerships for funding.

Volunteers and board members will solicit additional sponsorships.

Staff will research and apply for grants. *Est Cost:* Staff Time \$2,000

GOAL: Development of countywide housing program (rehab, acquisition, demolition, housing subdivisions) *Est Cost:* Staff Time \$10,000

GOAL: Tourism Marketing & Promotion through regional collaboration.

Entire Budget comes from Valley County Lodging Tax Receipts

Est Cost: Staff Time \$4,500

Ads/promos \$5,500

Valley County Economic Development will continue to update its equipment and office needs. Our current office space lease expires in 2011. Our partner, GLVA (Greater Loup Valleys Activities Association,) owns the building and has agreed to provide space and equipment.

LB840 Funds—Ord City Sales Tax and the Investment Club are two resources that can be used to respond to immediate business opportunities. As of June 2008, \$1.3 million has been loaned out, \$97,500 reserved for a spec building, and \$65,000 remains available for use. Sales tax in the amount of \$519,000 was collected in 2006/07 and \$197,000 has been collected to-date in 2007/08 fiscal year.

Valley County ED currently has a cash reserve of \$17,496 in the 2007-08 budget.

IV. Current and Consistent Information

- **Sites**
 - 81 Acre Mortensen Family Industrial Site - <http://gisw.sites.nppd.com/NED/map.jsp?Cmd=report&mid=s52&city=Ord>
 - 47 Acre Site - <http://gisw.sites.nppd.com/NED/map.jsp?Cmd=report&mid=s132&city=Ord>
 - 15 Acre Site - <http://gisw.sites.nppd.com/NED/map.jsp?Cmd=report&mid=s134&city=Ord>
 - 82 Acre Site - <http://gisw.sites.nppd.com/NED/map.jsp?Cmd=report&mid=s133&city=Ord>
 - LOIS - <http://www.locationone.com/lois/logon.do?username=ord&appsection=sites>
- **Buildings**
 - <http://gisw.sites.nppd.com/NED/map.jsp?Cmd=report&mid=b224&city=Ord>
 - <http://www.locationone.com/lois/logon.do?username=ord&appsection=buildings>
- **Community Profiles**
 - NEDI Online Profile - <http://sites.nppd.com/aedc/fastfacts.asp?city=Ord>
 - LOIS Profile - <http://www.locationone.com/lois/logon.do?username=ord&appsection=localities>
- **Community website** - <http://www.ordnebraska.com/econdev.asp>
- **Ord Facts Book** - <http://sites.nppd.com/aedc/FactsBook/Ordbook.pdf>

V. Current Labor Information

Nebraska Public Power District assisted Valley County Economic Development in updating the labor information for Ord and Valley County in 2008. This study includes information about our labor area, labor force and employment by industry, average annual and average weekly wages, commuting patterns, population trends, and age characteristics for the Valley County labor area.

Ord Area Labor Study - <http://www.ordnebraska.com/Ord%20Labor%20Area%20Study.pdf>

In addition, NPPD updated our Trends Study in 2007. The trend study provides additional information about employment trends, manufacturing employment, residence and workflow patterns, population and migration, age distribution, retail sales and income.

Economic & Demographic Trends -
<http://sites.nppd.com/aedc/TrendStudy/Valley07.pdf>

In 2006, the Economic Development Board conducted a wage and benefits survey. This survey was to fulfill the request of many employers as to the prevailing wages for different types of positions. This information was then provided to the participating employers for their use and reference.

VI. Business Retention Activity

Every year since 2000 Valley County Economic Development has participated in the Business Retention and Expansion visits with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. For the past three years we have even included businesses outside of the county boundaries to address our larger service area.

Twenty-nine business owners were interviewed in 2006, nineteen in 2007, and twenty-one in 2008. These interviews are extremely valuable. But even more important is the follow-up that is conducted by Valley County Economic Development staff throughout the year. Every week business visits are conducted. Sometimes it's just to make contact but often it is to notify business owners of economic incentives, programs or courses that may be of interest to them. In addition, we get a significant amount of walk-ins requesting assistance in starting a business.

One of the incentives we offer to businesses that want to start up or expand is the LB840 Sales Tax fund. Another incentive is the Mortensen Industrial Site where businesses can lease property for \$1/acre/year for 99 years. Since the Mortensen Site was developed we have 5 businesses on the property, leasing a total of 16 acres. These businesses were also recipients of the LB840 Sales Tax low interest loans. Since 2005, 18 loans have been approved totaling \$999,745.

Val-E Ethanol, now VeraSun Ord was successfully recruited in 2005. They held a grand opening in August 2007, employing 35 people with an annual payroll of \$1.4 million. To help support the growing truck traffic Trotter Truck & Tire opened its doors in 2006. Shortly after that, Trotter's Whoa & Go convenience store and Arby's restaurant opened, hiring 35 additional employees.

In 2008 we updated our Target Industry Program with NPPD. After reviewing the data, Valley County Target Industry Study Group members selected "Work Force Expansion," "Biofuels Co-products," and "Light Manufacturing" as the economic growth targets.

In 2007 Cornerstone Manufacturing constructed an addition, doubling its square footage and adding more lathes and a robot. They increased their workforce from less than 20 to 31, with highly skilled machinists being their number one recruit.

In order to help Cornerstone with their recruiting, Valley County Economic Development set up tours with area schools to educate the students of the career opportunities. In Spring 2008, Sargent High School Junior Class, Ord High students, and the Ainsworth Entrepreneurship Class toured Cornerstone as well as Valley County Health System, Elyria Canning Company, VeraSun Ethanol Plant and Arby's/Trotter's Whoa & Go. Students were shown the job and entrepreneurial opportunities waiting for them in central Nebraska. In addition to these tours, the Village of Arcadia hosted the Huskie E-ship Forum in September 2007. Students listened to four local entrepreneurs and toured 3 successful Arcadia businesses. The message to the students was, "We want you back."

A database of the alumni from the Ord, Arcadia, and North Loup/Scotia schools has been maintained over the past two years. Those with e-mail addresses receive the monthly economic development newsletter, and all alumni receive quarterly mailings regarding job opportunities, businesses for sale, and economic development incentives.

Publicity

- Matson, Mike (Winter 2008). Seeing is Believing. *Kansas Living*, p.14-16.
- Coddington, Mark (April 6, 2008). Taking entrepreneurship to the World Wide Web. *The Grand Island Independent*.
- Steeves, Brye (Fall 2007). Homemade—Economic development efforts focus on locals. *TEN Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City*. p. 16-21.
- Coddington, Mark (October 11, 2007). Youth Movement, Part II—Rural life: 'We want our young people back.' *The Grand Island Independent*
- Coddington, Mark (October 10, 2007). Youth Movement. *The Grand Island Independent*
- Coddington, Mark (September 28, 2007). Arcadia students told: You're always welcome back in your hometown. *The Grand Island Independent*
- Simmons, Geitner (September 27, 2007) Home-grown talent. *Omaha World Herald*.
- NTV, Channel 13, The Road Less Traveled, March 4, 2007
- Hastings, Lindsay (Spring 2007) Interview with Leadership Quest students and young people who have moved back to the community.
- Lee, Larry (January 8, 2007). Economic Development in Rural Areas. *University of Alabama*.
- (2006-2007). *Loup Valleys Newswire*
- (Dec 6, 2006)—There's no business like GIRL SCOUT business. *National Girl Scout LEADER magazine*
- Lambe, Will (December 2006). Economic Development in Rural America. *University of North Carolina*
- Lediff, Charlie and Smith, Patricia (November 27, 2006). Travis's dilemma. *The New York Times "upfront" magazine*
- Leonhardt, David (October 11, 2006). Philanthropy From the Heart of America. *The New York Times*.

VII. Economic Development Evaluation

From 2005 – Present:

- # of new manufacturing businesses located in your community/county – 0
- # of new jobs created from these new manufacturing/service-sector businesses – 0
- # of new small businesses created in your county – 51
- # of new jobs created from these new small businesses – 165
- # of business expansions – 10
- # of new jobs created from these business expansions – 33
- # of businesses closed – 11
- # of jobs lost due to business closures – 21
- # of industrial sites developed – 2
- # of volunteers working on economic development with you – 61
 - Valley County ED Board – 9
 - Internal Resource Team – 24
 - E-ship Task Force – 7
 - Steering Committee – 7
 - Housing Task Force – 14

Valley County Economic Development has seen a surge in business growth and development since its inception in 2000. A recent study showed 73 New Business Start-ups, 21 businesses sold to new owners, 10 business expansions, 335 new full time jobs, and over \$89 million in investment in our county since 2000. The highlights from 2005 to present are outlined below.

Business Recruitment and Development Highlights

Valley County Economic Development has sponsored EDGE (Enhancing, Developing, and Growing Entrepreneurs), Business Boot Camp, Employee Boot Camp, and seminars on Marketing, Business Transition, Microenterprise Tax Credit, USDA Energy Efficiency Grants/Loans and Open Meetings Law. We've partnered with REAP (Rural Enterprise Assistance Project), USDA, the University of Nebraska, and some of our own alumni as well as neighboring counties.

Mortensen Industrial Site – See description under VI. Business Retention Activity

VeraSun Ord Ethanol Plant – open house August, 2007

- 35 FTEs – payroll of \$1.4 million annually
- Additional 73 secondary jobs created
- \$1.2 million increase in retail sales annually
- \$500,000 in personal property taxes in 1st year
- Increase in corn price for local farmers

Trotter Truck & Tire opened December 2005 with 7 employees.

Arby's and Trotters Whoa & Go opened in July, 2006—35 employees.

Two new full-service banks added—Pathway Bank opened 2005 and BankFirst expanded to new location 2006.

Sales Tax Loans 2005-Present

<u>Sales Tax Loans</u>	<u>Loan Amt</u>	<u># of Employees</u>
2005-01	50,000	18 New
2005-02	30,000	2 Retained
2005-03	40,000	1 New, 4 Retained
2005-04	16,720	5 New
2005-05	100,000	1 New, 8 Retained
2006-01	50,000	2 New, 1 Retained
2006-02	50,000	4 New
2006-03	31,375	2 Retained
2006-04	36,150	3 New
2006-05	58,750	4 New, 5 Retained
2006-06	66,750	2 New, 1 Retained
2007-01	10,000	0 New
2007-03	75,000	3 Retained
2007-04	100,000	8 Retained
2007-05	65,000	1 Retained
2008-02	100,000	12 Retained
2008-03	100,000	1 New
2008-04	<u>20,000</u>	<u>2 New</u>
Total	\$999,745	43 New, 47 Retained

Entrepreneurship & Business Assistance

- Business Boot Camp, 2007—8 businesses participated
- EDGE Class in 2008—14 businesses participated
- First Valley County Job Fair in 2006
- Job Service for employees and employers
- Completion of 140 business visitations with NE DED
- Immediate response to all business prospect inquiries and business assistance requests.
- Microenterprise Tax Credit Workshop, *October 2006*, with local CPA involvement, resulted in \$365,000 back to area
- Orvel Ray Wilson, Guerrilla Retailing Workshop October 2006
- Wage Survey Completed 2006—82 Wage Surveys sent out to 3 counties, 40% returned

Youth

- Youth Entrepreneurship Program/Business Fair at St. Mary's 2005
- Girl Scout Project 2006
- ESI – EntrepreneurShip Investigation Rollout—Derry Trampe, Lead Writer
- Huskie Youth E-ship Forum 2007
- Ord High E-bay project 2008

Leadership

- Leadership Quest Program 5 years—101 graduates

In Progress

- Redesign of Website with DED's assistance

Ongoing

- Job Service for area employees and employers
- Mailings to Alumni from Ord, Arcadia and North Loup/Scotia High Schools, including cost of living comparisons
- Central Community College—Campus presence in Valley County
- Area business visits—Over 100 completed
- Attendance and active participation in development meetings throughout the state for continued education and new ideas for Valley County
- Immediate response to all business prospect inquiries and business assistance requests
- Networking with organizations and agencies about economic and community development issues
- Production and distribution of Monthly Chamber/Economic Development Newsletter
- Promotion of Ord and Valley County as a great place to live and work. This promotion includes providing people and businesses with demographic information and opportunities available in Valley County

Increase in Retail Sales, Personal Income, & Per Capita Income

From 2000 to 2007, retail sales in Valley County increased 37.2% compared to the state average of 30.8 %. From 2000 to 2005, personal income increased by 23.5% in Valley County, compared to 22.3% statewide. In addition, during that same time period, per capita income in Valley County increased by 30.1% versus the 19.2% state average.

Grants Received--\$739,890

- Award of \$20,000 BECA Grant for youth attraction in 2008.
- Award of \$17,000 BECA Grant for youth attraction in 2006.
- Award of \$75,000 Kellogg Grant for Valley County Home Town Competitiveness in 2005.
- Finalization of \$399,890 in housing rehab grant for Valley County in 2005.
- FHLBank Topeka \$25,000 JOBS Grant for Business and Entrepreneurial Assistance Program 2006
- \$203,000 Grant for 1st time Homeowners Down Payment Assistance in Valley County

New Neighborhoods Initiative—Request for \$500,000 grant –one of 9 finalists in 2007

List collaborative efforts with other local and regional economic development organizations.

- **Loup River Valley Tourism Coalition** – The Ord Area Chamber and Burwell Chamber have partnered to develop this coalition for the purpose of promoting

tourism in the region. The coalition has received two tourism marketing grants and has developed the *ESCAPE to Calamus & Scenic Loup River Valley* travel guide. The group has also developed a website www.visitloupvalley.com to promote the travel guide. This coalition has enabled more effective promotion of tourism and has allowed for the pooling of funds to apply for grants.

- **Loup Valley EDGE** – The Ord Area Chamber of Commerce and Burwell Economic Development partnered in 2008 to offer the Loup Valley EDGE course for the first time. Classes were offered both in Ord and Burwell. Classes in Ord were held at the new Loup Basin Technology Center.
- **Central Nebraska Economic Development District** – Valley County Economic Development has partnered with the District for two housing projects. The first project is an application for owner occupied rehab for homes in Ord. This application will be submitted to DED in July 2008. The second project is the development of the New Neighborhoods initiative with the City of Ord. The District is assisting us with planning and the application. This application will be submitted to DED in August 2008.
- **Online Job Listings** – Valley County Economic Development is partnering with Burwell Economic Development and Sherman County Economic Development for an online job listings project. This project will be submitted for a BECA grant during the next cycle. It is critical that our regions collaborate to make potential residents aware of the employment opportunities available. As individual counties we don't have substantial opportunities, but as three counties together we can prove to job seekers that we have quality opportunities for employment.
- **Central Nebraska Tourism Partnership** – Valley County has joined the Central Nebraska Tourism Coalition to partner on tourism promotion projects. This is multi-county partnership that has developed a new website through a tourism advantage grant, www.centralnebraskaadventures.com and attends travel shows together to promote the tourism attractions in each of the member counties.
- **Loup Valleys Rural Public Power District** – Valley County Economic Development Board has partnered with the Loup Valleys RPPD to provide some basic economic development services beyond the borders of Valley County. The Loup Valleys RPPD service territory covers portions of the counties of Garfield, Wheeler, Greeley, Sherman, Custer and Loup in addition to all of Valley County. The Economic Development staff provides trainings and assistance to businesses in the counties where no economic development staff is in place. Quarterly reports are given to the LVRPPD Board of Directors.

Describe status of infrastructure extensions/upgrades needed to serve industrial/business sites and parks to meet community's targeted industry goals.

- **81 Acre Mortensen Family Industrial Site** – The City of Ord completed a water and sewer expansion study a few years ago. It was determined that it would not be feasible to extend city sewer to the site, which is located 2 miles from Ord city limits, unless a large user were to build at the site. City water would be more feasible, but the City has recently focused its efforts on a new 14" water main and well field extending 5 miles to the southeast of Ord to service the ethanol plant. This investment has created tremendous potential along the Hwy 11 corridor southeast of Ord. At the present time, all five tenants at the Mortensen site have private wells and septic systems. None of these businesses are large users of water or sewer therefore they did not request access to city utilities. Electricity and natural gas are available at this site and are sufficient to meet future growth of the site. Our #3 target industry from our 2008 Target Industry Study is light manufacturing. This site is the best of our four sites for this purpose. We feel that the current infrastructure is adequate to support this type of business; however the City is aware that if a large user were to build on this site, the request may come for extension of city water and sewer.
- **15.49 Acre Site** – This site has great access to city water, rail, highway and electricity. Natural gas access is approximately ¼ mile from the site. The only utility that is missing from this site is city sewer because the site is 4 ½ miles southeast of Ord. It was purchased by the Economic Development Board because it was excess land that the ethanol plant could not utilize as a creek runs between the plant and this site. It is doubtful that the City of Ord would ever extend sewer services this far and any business that located on this site would need their own septic system.
- **47 Acre Site** – This site lies adjacent to the Ord city limit boundary. It has access to city water, electricity and sewer. Natural gas is also available at this site. No utility upgrades are needed to support the target industry of light manufacturing, which would fit nicely at this site. This is the site of the 10,000 square foot spec building that the Loup Valley Investment Club is constructing in 2008.
- **82 Acres Site** – This site is the ideal location for our biofuels co-products target as it lies adjacent to the ethanol plant site and has adequate acreage available for substantial development. The site does not lay directly on Highway 11. However, the concrete county road that was paved for access to the plant passes by this area. Loup Valleys RPPD services electricity to the site. Natural gas and city water are available as well. The only missing utility is city sewer and it is doubtful that sewer would be installed at this site since it is 5 ½ miles from Ord city limits.

Describe any additions to controlled industrial/business and sites' inventory, including size and geographic location.

- **15.49 Acre Site** - purchased by Valley County Economic Development in 2007. Access to city water, natural gas and electricity, great access from Hwy 11 and county road to the north, rail access to the site. Located 4.5 miles southeast of Ord along Hwy 11.
- **82 Acre Site** – optioned by Valley County Economic Development. Lies adjacent to VeraSun Ord ethanol plant and would be a strategic location for a business that uses ethanol co-products. Located 5.5 miles southeast of Ord.

List all presently available buildings, including square foot and geographic location.

- **10,000 square foot speculative building** – estimated completion date 4th Qtr 2008. Located on the 47 Acre Industrial Site, zoned General Commercial, along Highway 11 in Ord.