

Gering, Nebraska Comprehensive Plan



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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2	4.2 Transportation Framework	76
Table of Contents	4	4.3 Parks & Open Space Framework	94
		4.4 Energy Framework	103
1 Purpose and Process		5 Vision to Action	
1.1 Introduction	7	5.1 Strategies & Action Plan	112
1.2 Need for a Comprehensive Plan	8	5.2 Monitoring & Review	119
1.3 Plan Framework	9		
1.4 How you built Plan Gering	10	Appendices	
		Appendix A: Public Facilities	
2 Gering Today			
2.1 Snapshot	16		
2.2 Challenges	17		
2.3 Priorities	18		
3 Gering Tomorrow			
3.1 Community Vision	20		
3.2 Community Values and Policies	21		
4 Shaping Gering			
4.1 District Framework	48		
Northwest Monument Neighborhood District	54		
West Gering Neighborhood District	56		
Southwest Gering Neighborhood District	58		
East Gering Neighborhood District	60		
Five Rocks Agriculture/ Residential District	62		
Gering Valley Agriculture/ Residential District	64		
North Platte River Residential District	66		
Downtown Gering District	68		
10th Street Commerce & Industry District	70		
Gering Employment District	72		
East Gering Industrial District	74		



01

Purpose & Process



1.1

Introduction

Plan Gering is a comprehensive, long range plan that guides decision makers on issues related to where new jobs and homes should go, how to strengthen our neighborhoods, where to invest new infrastructure and amenities, and how to improve our transportation system. This plan gathered the values and vision regarding Gering’s future into a narrative that tells a story about where the community is going. The purpose of Plan Gering is to provide our community with a path toward our best outcomes for managing growth and change.

A fundamental concept in the preparation of this plan is how to preserve what we have while continuing to evolve to realize our future vision. Plan Gering provides a blueprint for how to manage future growth while maintaining the small-town feel we all have come to cherish. The plan makes recommendations based on a shared vision and expresses our community values through long range policies for land use, transportation, economic development, and natural resources. Ultimately, Plan Gering is a guide that will help us implement our community vision and shape the future of our City in a way that honors our unique needs, values and traditions. The plan is an umbrella covering a broad spectrum of issues and achieves the following:

- Identifies a common vision and articulates community values to help guide decision making related to future growth, development, policy, and capital improvements.
- Provides clarity for the community about priority programs.
- Defines and prioritizes strategies for key elements addressed in the plan.
- Supports the development of realistic and achievable work plans.
- Guides small area planning through a District Framework.
- Meets statutory prerequisite enabling the City to administer zoning codes.

Plan Gering is your plan. It was created by the community, for the community, and reflects where we want to go and lights the path to get us there.

1.2

Need for a Comprehensive Plan

As mentioned above, one legal rationale for adopting a Comprehensive Plan is to enable the City to administer zoning codes. These codes provide for a predictable framework that impacts the use of property along with property values. A plan is important because it enables the community's vision to carry on despite changes in personnel and elected officials over time. While specific projects and issues may change quickly, the broad principles and values that frame our perspectives can carry on for decades or more. Because managing a municipality is unpredictable, the Comprehensive Plan works to provide clear direction on issues we can anticipate, while providing a decision-making framework to help officials as they consider unforeseen challenges.

Plan Gering represents a bit of a hybrid approach to Comprehensive Planning. In years past, a comprehensive plan functioned as an encyclopedia of municipal information. Population demographics, utility maps, and other critical information was housed in the plan. With the advent of online resources, digital mapping and other technical advances, the pace of information availability has diminished the role of the comprehensive plan as a data clearinghouse.

Today's comprehensive plan serves to tell a story about the future of a place and strategies that can be employed to get us there. In the case of Plan Gering, we've retooled the traditional approach to storytelling to encompass the guiding principles that will serve as sidebars for decision making over time. Using this method, we've worked to personalize the policies into a vernacular that's unique to Gering.

Plan Gering was adopted on November 25, 2019. The plan will be administered by City staff as proposed development projects are reviewed, as well as Planning Commissioners, City Council Members, community members and others. Over time the Plan may require updates or amendments due to changing market forces and other factors. Amendments to the plan must be adopted by City Council.

As with any voyage, most start with a destination and route in mind. Yet detours can crop up, requiring recalibration of your route. The same happens with comprehensive plans— changing conditions can impact your vision. It is recommended that this Plan be reviewed every 5-years or less to keep the vision relevant and fresh.

1.3

Plan Framework



Gering Today 02

Gering Today summarizes the unique attributes of Gering and the people that live there.



Gering Tomorrow 03

Gering Tomorrow describes the vision for Gering's future, including community values, principles and policies.



Shaping Gering 04

Shaping Gering provides land use, transportation, parks and energy recommendations for the community.



Vision to Action 05

Vision to Action provides strategies for implementing the plan.



1.4

How you built Plan Gering

The Plan Gering Process

Plan Gering was developed through an extensive public engagement process with the goal of translating the values of our community into a growth management and land use strategy. Over the course of a 9-month period with multiple in-person public workshops, focus group meetings, and online information and surveys, more than 400 participants had the opportunity to engage with the plan and provide feedback on their vision for the future.

Key Events and Activities

Community Workshop #1

The first community workshop took place in October 2018, which structured community conversations around developing a cohesive vision. At this workshop residents described the unique qualities of Gering and their aspirations for the city’s future. This meeting served as the backbone of Plan Gering and informed future phases of the project. Four community values resulted from the meeting that express community members’ beliefs about the most important and desirable characteristics of Gering. These values describe how Gering can position itself by reflecting on the heritage of the community and prospectus for the future. We appreciate the historic origins, but also want to continue to look to the future where innovators are pushing boundaries and challenging assumptions.



Community Workshop #2

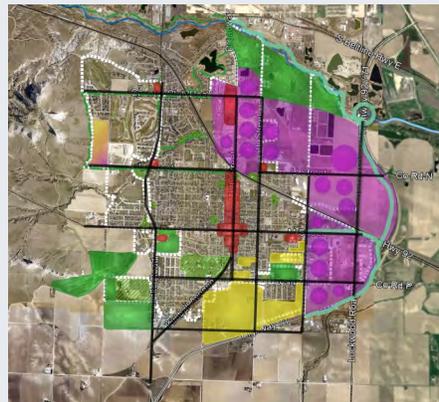
The second workshop held in January 29, 2019 distilled the stories and values heard during the Values workshop. Statements for each of the values were developed and vetted by the public. These statements serve as the basis of the plan and helped arrange the recommendations, policies, physical projects, and capital investments. In addition, several mapping exercises were structured to get feedback on physical growth elements valued by the community. Three distinct scenario maps were created to illustrate alternative approaches to accommodating future growth and funding priorities. Good ideas were mixed up with challenging ideas to ensure there wasn't one "right" scenario. Participants were then able to pull the best concepts from each scenario. The three scenarios are described below:

Scenarios



Destination Scenario

The first scenario focused on positioning Gering as a **destination**. In this scenario, the focus is on accommodating the visitor and the provision of activities and events. The community is open for business and desires to draw visitors to the area. The energy of the community is based on the movement of people in, around and through Gering.



Home Scenario

The second scenario positioned Gering as a **home**. In this scenario, Gering is focused on daily living and community lifestyle. Quality of life and enhanced daily experiences are emphasized. As we conduct even the most mundane of our daily activities, we see our values reflected in the quality of housing and neighborhoods, new commercial and industrial development, and public facilities and services.



Livelihood Scenario

The final scenario looked at Gering through a **livelihood** lens. In this scenario, Gering is focused on the economy and the environment. While supportive of businesses that create jobs, the physical environment is enhanced. Natural resources, outdoor spaces and cultural places are highlighted and highly visible components of our community serving as an inspiration for the creation of new jobs and business activity.

- **INFRASTRUCTURE** - Regional approach to utilities with the goal of reducing visual clutter. Green infrastructure will be encouraged to improve efficiencies and storm water quality will be addressed through best management practices.
- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** - The City will focus efforts on developing home grown and small businesses and will support the development of commercial retail and services that support the residential and employment-based elements of the community.

Community Workshop #3

The third workshop held on August 26, 2019 presented the Draft Plan to community members. The meeting began with a brief presentation of Plan Gering. Following the presentation participants were given the opportunity to review the Plan and share their feedback. The Plan was also posted to the City's website for public comment and review.

After the public identified desired elements from the three maps, a final scenario map was created to illustrate how Gering should grow in the next 20 years. Participants generally preferred elements and policies consistent with Scenario 1.

The final scenario map was then converted into a District Framework which breaks up the city into 11 districts based on character, context, development patterns, natural features, and types of destinations. Existing and desired character is described for each district which will help residents understand differences in land use and built form and will also help City staff adapt strategies to encourage development that is appropriate in location and type. The District Framework is described in more detail in Chapter 4.

Key findings that resulted from the scenario preferences are as follows:

- **GENERAL GROWTH DIRECTION** - The City will focus on infill of vacant properties and directing growth within current city limits.
- **DOWNTOWN** - Downtown will serve as the primary hub for visitor-oriented commerce. There is also a desire to preserve the small-town Main Street character.
- **COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERN** - Commercial development will be primarily concentrated downtown near civic uses.
- **NEIGHBORHOODS & RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT** - There should be a variety of housing styles and types integrated within neighborhoods. Medium density housing can be blended with single-family housing while higher-density housing should be located along major roadways.
- **INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT** - New industrial development should be located within existing and new Industrial Parks with buffering requirements to mitigate impacts.
- **PARKS & RECREATION** - Resources should be used to improve connections between recreational destinations and the enhancement of existing facilities.
- **MOBILITY & TRANSPORTATION** - The transportation network should be context based with improvements based on supporting employment activities. Primary corridors will have a multi-modal approach with some streetscape enhancements.

Outreach Methods

Several methods were used to inform residents about the planning process to increase participation. Promotion for the public workshops included TV interviews, Facebook posts, meeting announcements posted in downtown businesses, and project updates posted to the project website.

Online Survey

Beyond in-person meetings, the consultant team deployed an online survey to provide another way for Gering residents to share their views and perceptions on issues related to growth and development. The survey was posted online from September 5, 2018 to October 22, 2018 and resulted in 420 responses. The survey provided important input and a deepened understanding of key themes that emerged from the responses, including but not limited to economic health, environmental stewardship, affordability, transportation, and community amenities.

Plan Gering Project Team

Plan Gering was led by the City's Planning Department, with assistance from other City staff and a Steering Committee. These two groups were fundamental to the plan's development and are described below.

Project Technical Group

This committee was made up of the key City staff representatives who provided assistance in getting interested people and groups to participate in the engagement activities and events, and also reviewed and commented on draft deliverables for the project.

Steering Committee

This 8-member group was established to meet periodically throughout the planning process. The committee functioned as a "sounding board" for thoughts and ideas related to the creation of Plan Gering. Members of the committee discussed ideas and issues and helped guide the consultant team in synthesizing public input. This group also provided advice and recommendations at key points throughout the process.

02

Gering Today



2.1

Snapshot

Gering is closely connected to nearby Scottsbluff and Terrytown, which has played a major role in shaping its economy. What affects one community, by and large, affects the others. Therefore it is important that key issues are tackled in a collaborative manner with solutions that are mutually beneficial for all three communities.

Trends

Gering's population saw significant growth at 9.7% from 2000 and 2010 compared to Scottsbluff's 2.1% growth rate. From 2010 to 2016, both cities experienced slight decreases in their population. Yet during this time period, Scottsbluff's taxable sales increased while Gering saw a decrease in net taxable sales. This trend is likely attributed to Gering resident's spending their dollars in Scottsbluff which offers a more diverse mix of retail and services. As Gering continues to grow, there will continue to be demand for commercial services and the potential to capture more sales tax from eating and drinking establishments, which is one of the largest growing sales tax generators nationwide. Moving forward, Gering needs to build upon its entertainment base and leverage new types of businesses that will support and enhance the overall experience for residents and visitors alike. Attracting businesses that provide services and one-of-a-kind retail will help strengthen Gering's position in the regional market.

Household incomes for Gering residents are higher on average when compared to those of Scottsbluff residents. According to the 2017 American Community Survey, Gering's Median Household Income was \$56,010 compared to \$41,143 for Scottsbluff. This difference is likely the result of a higher percentage of Gering residents holding technical and professional positions. Gering's largest job sector is in educational services, health care and social assistance at 28.20% with large job increases occurring in the professional, manufacturing, and construction sectors. Gering should capitalize on this asset and find new growth in sectors that require higher levels of education and work to have a larger concentration of higher-wage jobs. While Gering should also look to grow its service-oriented sector to keep pace with the demands of new residents, the growth of professional and higher-paying jobs should be Gering's primary focus.

Home values in Gering have continued to rise and housing costs are increasing throughout the region. As a result, households faced with lower-paying jobs and increasing housing costs are experiencing greater economic stresses. Providing affordable housing choices for all income and age groups will become increasingly important as Gering continues to grow.

As mentioned previously, finding solutions to these issues should be approached through a regional perspective. As Gering continues to grow, the City should look to partner with its neighbors to improve regional quality of life and economic competitiveness.

2.2

Challenges

In creating a new Comprehensive Plan, Gering identified that the prior document, adopted in 1995, was severely outdated and needed a fresh start to create a modern decision-making framework. Additionally, the existing zoning code has not been systematically reviewed and does not provide the tools that staff needs to respond to changing conditions. This system has severely hampered the ability of elected officials and staff in advancing a predictable regulatory environment.

Starting fresh with a new plan provides the opportunity for residents to weigh in on the greatest challenges and opportunities facing Gering. Once this vision has been established, adjusting the regulatory codes so they support the implementation of this vision is essential to success.

Beyond the rust on the plan and code, a few other challenges were identified by stakeholders when the process launched:

- Gering’s identity as a community sometimes gets overshadowed because we don’t have a clear vision of our future.
- Predictability of regulatory enforcement is unclear due to a disconnect between the plan and codes.
- Like many rural communities, Gering is losing younger populations to larger cities.
- Gering is perceived as a bedroom community, with many people choosing to live in Gering, but working in another community.
- Presenting a positive visual impression of Gering while supporting industrial businesses on the 10th Street Corridor.

Despite these and other challenges, Gering is being proactive in identifying solutions. By undertaking a comprehensive planning effort and subsequent code update, the City is able to not only chart a course for success, but also take several important next steps to help realize the vision.

2.3

Priorities

Through the Plan Gering process, many suggestions and ideas were identified by the community that will improve the city over the coming years. One goal of this plan is to make sure those ideas are documented so that we don't forget these great ideas in the shuffle of our daily lives. Several priority themes came up in discussions time and time again during the process. These items are represented in this plan and are woven into the vision, policies and strategies. Here's how three community priorities are addressed in the plan.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS: Gering is a place that is ready and willing to welcome entrepreneurs to sink roots and expand their business. This plan and subsequent zoning code update will help to align the vision and codes to remove barriers while providing more flexibility. Additional policies and strategies describe other ways Gering can build a positive reputation as being a great place to set up shop. What's in the plan?

- **Our Vision** - being "Champions of Commerce" highlights our commitment to welcoming business. (P21-22)
- **Our Policies** - provide additional detail on things we can do make the vision a reality. (P34-38)
- **Our Land Use Framework** - is structured with a flexible approach so that development proposals consider compatibility, intensity and scale when reviewing appropriate zoning. (P49)

QUALITY OF LIFE: Gering is place where people have chosen to invest their lives, largely because of the parks system. Additional planning and continuing to prioritize parks will help Gering maintain a competitive edge. How does the Plan help?

- **Our Vision** - Represented by the theme "Nature Close at Hand," quality of life is a signature focus helping Gering capitalize on the amenities present in the local geography. (P24-33)
- **Our Open Space Framework** - identifies that a diversity of park types and proximity to residents is key to ensuring that amenities continue to be a driving factor attracting residents to Gering. (P94)

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: the experience of arriving in Gering is monumental. We only get one chance to make a first impression. Enhancing the entryways and offering great neighborhoods can help communicate our pride of living in Gering. What does the plan say?

- **Our Vision** - highlights "Establishing Roots," focusing attention on creating quality places that make Gering a welcoming place. Our gateways, neighborhoods and downtown set the tone for lasting impressions. (P39-42)
- **Our Transportation Framework** - identifies key locations and corridors that should be enhanced. (P80)
- **Our Strategies** - describes steps that can be taken to help support this priority, including gateway beautification, housing diversification, and steps to add vitality to downtown. (P109-115)

03

Gering Tomorrow



3.1

Community Vision



The language of the community vision found on the following pages emerged through multiple community conversations and was presented to and approved by the community during the second planning workshop. The community vision represents the ideals expressed by the community for its continued growth over the next twenty years and serves as a foundation of Plan Gering. The vision is intended to protect and enhance the elements that contribute to Gering's unique sense of place while planning for growth that will positively contribute to the city's quality of life and livability.



Pioneers Welcome

There's a spirit in Gering that draws inspiration from years past and guides our vision for the future. It is timeless and calls each one of us to endure and explore, linking our past with our future.

For generations this spirit has called out over the bristling tallgrass of the prairie and echoed through the ancient land forms that stand watch over all those who have made Gering home. The first native pioneers were guided by this spirit to find herds of buffalo and live a nomadic lifestyle based in adaptation and innovation. A second wave of frontier pioneers, were guided by this spirit as they traveled through and settled in the area seeking opportunity.

Today the ancient landforms known as 5 rocks – Saddle, Dome, Eagle, Sentinel and Crown - still serve as iconic guardian landmarks; the North Platte River provides life-giving sustenance; and the wagon ruts, roadways and rail lines that connect us beyond the horizon.

Those looking for a better life have long been drawn to Monument Country, attracted by the natural geography and breathtaking vistas. They've discovered a place where cultivating roots is rewarded with unrivaled opportunity, and quality of life is more than just a buzzword. In Gering it is the spirit of community which overcomes adversity through adaptation, innovation, and creativity. This spirit provides an invitation to everyone to be part of the community through the words - "Pioneers Welcome!"

For those who live here today and those who will come – Pioneers Welcome! - means Gering is a community where exploration is encouraged and perseverance leads to prosperity. Where newcomers and life-timers appreciate the quality of our community and everyone is invited to create lasting connections. Our vision is intimately tied to four themes which reflect what we value most and desire to nurture in the future.



Nature Close at Hand

In Gering, we welcome trailblazers and stewards who not only carve out new trails but also lead others along established trails, exploring and enjoying the numerous outdoor experiences and opportunities offered in the badlands of western Nebraska. Here in Gering, we appreciate and value the natural beauty and resources that are close at hand.



Champions of Commerce

In Gering we welcome entrepreneurs and commerce based on working an honest day, creating something of value, and building an enterprise that lasts for generations. Here in Gering, we support and champion a culture of thriving commerce, where products and services are delivered with pride.



Establishing Roots

In Gering we welcome visitors to our community and surroundings as we celebrate friendship, conduct business, and enjoy the natural environment together. Here in Gering we provide you with a reason to stay a little longer, come back a little sooner and become a future resident.



Meaningful Connections

In Gering we welcome opportunities that are created via connections with people and places as we develop our neighborhoods and businesses, engage in neighboring and community gathering activities, and move around, through, and in-and-out of the community. Here in Gering we are a socially, physically and technologically connected community.

Whether you're visiting Gering for the first time, part of the legacy of longtime families, or somewhere in between, we welcome you to discover the monumental upside of Gering. Come, explore Nature Close at Hand, become our next Commercial Champion, watch your family flourish when you Establish Roots, and find the rewards of Meaningful Connections. Whatever it is you're seeking, your trail leads to Gering. In Gering our vision is simply stated – Pioneers Welcome!

3.2

Community Values & Policies

Throughout the planning process, the community articulated a desire to leverage its natural resources, champion a resilient economy, improve connections between people and places, and maintain a unique sense of place. These ideas are expressed in the following community values:

- Nature Close at Hand
- Champions of Commerce
- Establishing Roots
- Meaningful Connections

The following pages describe what we intend to achieve for each value along with supporting policies that the City of Gering can use to help advance the vision embodied by Pioneers Welcome!

The terms “principle” and “policy” are used in this plan to mean:

Principles articulate the overarching aspirations of the community. These are broad statements that describe how we would like our community to grow.

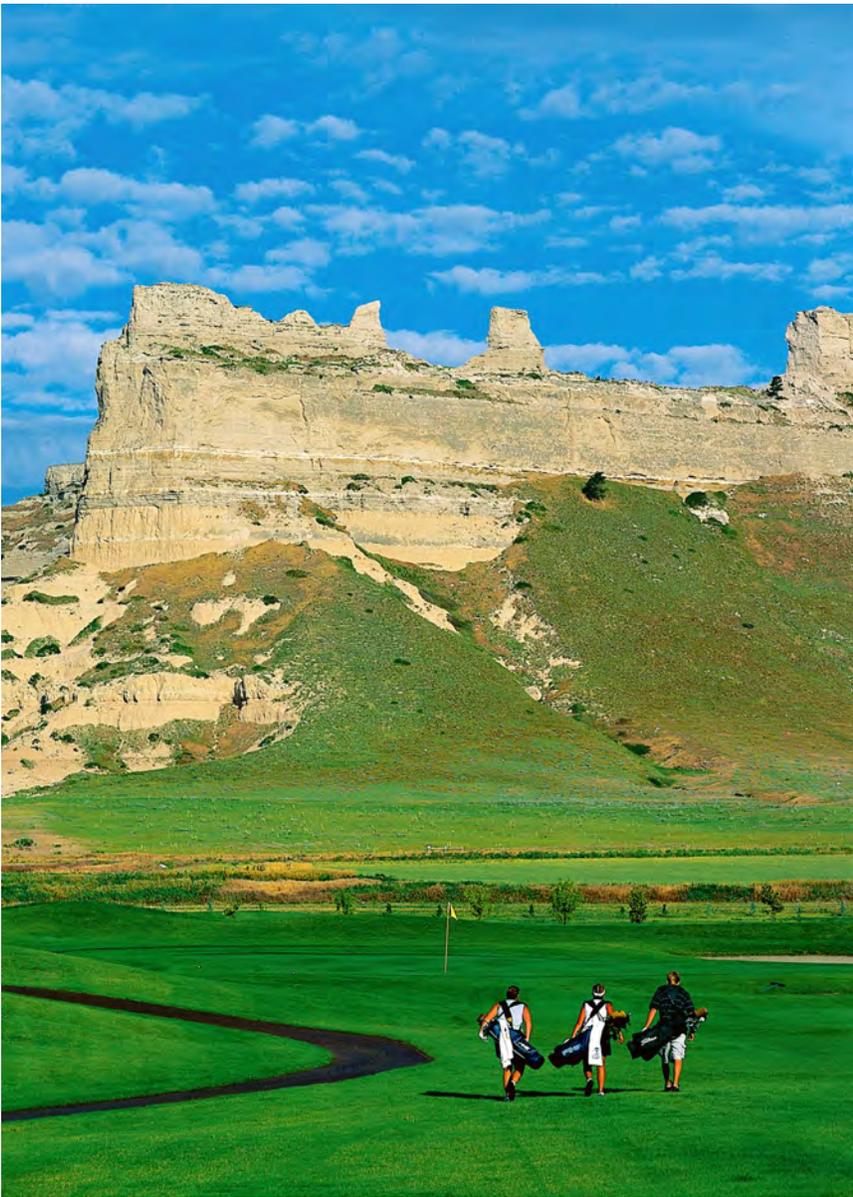
Policies are statements providing a course of action to move the community towards attainment of the Principle. Policies guide the work of staff in formulating changes to the zoning code and other regulatory documents.

The principles and policies are meant to be flexible to adapt to changing contexts and can help guide decision making, work programs and long-range planning projects, in addition to preparation of the budget and capital improvements program over the coming years.

When facing decisions, use these principles and policies to help identify considerations that can help provide guidance. The Plan helps staff and decision-makers approach topics from a “big picture” perspective.

Nature close at hand

Gering's parks and open spaces are major assets that are highly valued by residents and visitors alike. As the city continues to grow, we want to ensure that close access to nature remains a defining attribute of our community. Nature Close at Hand reflects our community's commitment to maintain and protect our natural spaces and provide a connected system that is accessible to the entire community. We will prioritize maintaining and improving our public spaces to ensure they are memorable, interesting, and reinforce our sense of community. Nature Close at Hand will be accomplished by using regulations that will allow growth to occur without compromising the integrity of our natural spaces. The following principles and policies will help to ensure the open spaces we experience today last long into the future.



Glen Park in the City of River Falls shows how native plants can be integrated into the landscape to give a better sense of place.

Principle 1.1: Our community will preserve views of the Scotts Bluff National Monument and other views of significance.

Policy 1.1.A: The geography sets Gering apart from other places. Views to the Monument should be preserved and/or framed from key public locations like parks, public buildings and other key landmarks.

Policy 1.1.B: Preserve and frame views of the Monument whenever possible, while also respecting existing uses and private property rights.

Policy 1.1.C: Encroachment upon the Monument by development should be discouraged. The City should work with community partners to protect lands adjacent to the Monument that have significant environmental and/or historical value.

Principle 1.2: Our community will conserve natural resources.

Policy 1.2.A: Prioritize the conservation of sensitive environmental resources and lands of significance.

Policy 1.2.B: Conserve natural areas in private and public spaces and introduce new ones.

Policy 1.2.C: Integrate and restore waterways, wetlands, and other natural features into site design.

Policy 1.2.D: Preserve significant site features such as trees, whenever possible. When not possible, relocate, replace, or replant site features.

Policy 1.2. E: Promote the design of buildings and landscapes to conserve, store and reuse water.

Policy 1.2.F: Encourage the use of durable building materials that enjoy a long life span.

Principle 1.3: Our community will develop a system of quality open spaces.

Policy 1.3.A: Adopt and implement an Open Space Master Plan.

Policy 1.3.B: Seek and dedicate funding sources for the acquisition and stewardship of public open space.

Policy 1.3.C: Ensure open spaces are accessible, universally designed, and interconnected across developments and neighborhoods.

Policy 1.3.D: Design of open spaces should facilitate public access to and movement along the system.

Policy 1.3.E: Areas along the river and wetlands should be integrated into natural components of development proposals.

Policy 1.3.F: Encourage the creation of new publicly-accessible open spaces with new development using incentives— including, but not limited to, parks, outdoor squares, courtyards and landscaped areas.

Policy 1.3.G: Improve standards for new open spaces by providing guidance on scale, design, maintenance, lighting, landscaping and other amenities.

Policy 1.3.H: Encourage responsible environmental stewardship for existing and new open spaces.

Policy 1.3.I: Maintain and improve physical assets of existing parks.

Policy 1.3.J: Develop new requirements for landscaping or strengthen existing regulations.

Principle 1.4: Our community will embrace the river.

Policy 1.4.A: Protect key views and access points to the North Platte River, treating it as a vital resource for recreation and a means of generating economic development based on quality of life.

Policy 1.4.B: Development proposals should approach the river as an asset rather than turning its back on it. New projects should integrate the river as an amenity.

Policy 1.4.C: Development proposals adjacent the river should preserve and enhance the natural benefits of floodplains and the river's natural environmental value.

Policy 1.4.D: While the river frontage isn't extensive in Gering, the river is a recreation asset. Access along the river should be provided to support recreation and transportation connections.

Principle 1.5: Our community parks will serve all populations.

Policy 1.5.A: All parks should be designed to be accessible, enjoyable, and welcoming to all people regardless of age, ability or geography.

Policy 1.5.B: New parks and trail systems should be built in underserved areas when funding is available in order to ensure all Gering residents live within a 10-minute walk to a park or trail.

Policy 1.5.C: Improve access to existing parks.

Policy 1.5.D: Develop facilities and programs in existing parks to meet community needs.

Principle 1.6: Our community will preserve and improve our tree canopy and urban forest, and provide appealing public right-of-way amenities.

Policy 1.6.A: Establish a program on tree care that provides training and education for all residents.

Policy 1.6.B: Establish programs such as tree giveaways, neighborhood planting programs, and education workshops.

Policy 1.6.C: Seek grant funding for community tree planting to improve City parks, neighborhoods and streets.

Policy 1.6.D: Ensure a healthy tree planting environment along streets by requiring adequate growing space.

Policy 1.6.E: Inventory street trees and develop a tree replacement program.

Principle 1.7: Our community will have trail connections between key open spaces.

Policy 1.7.A: Coordinate capital improvement planning to improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to and within key open spaces, parks and public facilities.

Policy 1.7.B: Address physical barriers to open space access and improve wayfinding to help users find their location and destination.

Policy 1.7.C: Continue to create a series of pathways and greenways that link parks and recreational amenities within Gering and connect them to adjacent lands and natural amenities such as the Monument and North Platte River.

Principle 1.8: Our community will support the use of renewable energy and energy efficient design.

Policy 1.8.A: Harnessing natural resources will help to preserve the natural qualities in and around Gering.

Policy 1.8.B: Alternative energy projects should consider the values of the community when siting facilities to minimize impacts to views.

Policy 1.8.C: Encourage passive solar design by orienting buildings for maximum solar access.

Policy 1.8.D: Encourage energy efficiency for building design.

Principle 1.9: Our community prefers a green infrastructure approach to supporting multi-purpose infrastructure.

Policy 1.9.A: Seek opportunities to integrate stormwater features into parks and open spaces.

Policy 1.9.B: Encourage the use of infiltration best practices to reduce stormwater impacts of surface waters.



Champions of Commerce

Economic opportunity is a large contributing factor to quality of life and well-being. Champions of Commerce reflects our community's commitment to maintain and foster a healthy economy. We will collaborate with our partners to address our community's economic development needs and pursue initiatives that will help local businesses thrive, improve wages, and make our community a great choice for new businesses and young professionals to locate. The following principles and polices seek to advance community-wide economic prosperity that will be felt by individuals, households, businesses and the broader community.



Principle 2.1: Our community will expand and diversify our economic base.

Policy 2.1.A: Support the development of outdoor recreation and experiential tourism.

Policy 2.1.B: Strategically promote industrial park development that leverages the strengths of the community.

Policy 2.1.C: Prioritize investment in infrastructure that supports the economic health of the community.

Policy 2.1.D: Continue to build a creative economy including technology, arts, and agriculture science by nurturing innovation.

Policy 2.1.E: Support job creation by focusing on retention, expansion, incubation, and recruitment efforts.

Policy 2.1.F: Support the creation and growth of local businesses.

Principle 2.2: Our community will develop human capital and a skilled, diverse, and trained workforce to help promote economic growth.

Policy 2.2.A: Explore and implement strategies to increase access and participation in employment training programs.

Policy 2.2.B: Focus resources and efforts on building and maintaining a skilled and employable workforce through education, placement, and training.

Policy 2.2.C: Invest in Gering youths' academic, social, and financial outcomes through high-quality paid employment programs that expose teens and youth to work, education, entrepreneurship, and career pathways.

Policy 2.2.D: Boost educational achievement by partnering with, and supporting community organizations that focus on reducing achievement gaps through extended learning opportunities.

Principle 2.3: Our community will support economic development through City policy, regulations, tools, and programs.

Policy 2.3.A: Explore ways to assist businesses and the workforce through training programs and/or by supporting the work of partner organizations.

Policy 2.3.B: Develop a toolkit of incentives to attract businesses to locate in Gering.

Policy 2.3.C: Clarify and streamline City processes by reducing uncertainty and making it easier to improve properties as well as to start and operate businesses in Gering.

Policy 2.3.D: Encourage local entrepreneurial opportunities and support existing small entrepreneurial businesses.

Policy 2.3.E: Provide incentives for business development to reduce the need for out-of-town shopping trips.

Principle 2.4: Our community will support continued revitalization of the downtown.

Policy 2.4.A: Encourage infill and redevelopment of underutilized properties downtown.

Policy 2.4.B: Encourage the location of activity-generating uses such as retail and restaurants.

Policy 2.4.C: Encourage integration of higher-density residential in the downtown to create a critical mass of patrons and increase activity levels.

Policy 2.4.D: Downtown is the center of activity and the place to find everything you need. When considering public facility investments, like City Hall, Library or Post Office, adopting a “Downtown First” approach can ensure that municipal investments support the overall vitality of downtown.

Policy 2.4.E: Encourage rehabilitation and preservation of existing historic structures in the downtown core to preserve Gering’s character and promote community investment.



Establishing Roots



Gering is made up of several neighborhoods that contribute to our community’s character and quality of life. As we grow, we want to ensure our neighborhoods are safe, well-maintained, attractive and stable with easy access to schools, shopping, recreation and other community amenities. Establishing Roots will be accomplished by providing a range of housing options across all parts of the city and creating people-friendly places that enhance the city’s attractiveness and can be enjoyed by the entire community. Establishing Roots is also a reminder to us to celebrate our rich history and preserve the important historic buildings and landscapes that have shaped Gering into what it is today. The following principles and policies lay out how we are going to achieve the Establishing Roots value.

Principle 3.1: Our community will create neighborhoods that offer a variety of housing options tailored to individual cycles in life and income levels.

Policy 3.1.A: Increase housing choice and diversity for all lifestyles to meet community's housing needs.

Policy 3.1.B: Promote mixed income housing through City policy, regulations, tools, and programs.

Policy 3.1.C: Promote the integration of multifamily units into neighborhoods with mixes of housing types or in mixed-use development.

Principle 3.2: Our community will continue to develop quality places by maintaining and enhancing our built, historic, and natural environmental assets that project an image of Pioneer Pride.

Policy 3.2.A: Maintain Downtown as the commercial center by directing the greatest share of future commercial development to the downtown.

Policy 3.2.B: Focus commercial development in areas that have good transportation access and support the development of multiple uses.

Policy 3.2.C: Identify and preserve historically significant structures and sites in the community.

Policy 3.2.D: Encourage infill development on vacant and underutilized sites, particularly within the downtown area.

Policy 3.2.E: Promote compatible infill and redevelopment that fits Gering's neighborhoods and is consistent with the desired future character of the area.

Policy 3.2.F: Enhance Gering's gateways and create a common vision for these areas.

Policy 3.2.G: Require mitigation of the impacts of growth on service levels.

Policy 3.2.H: Improve the appearance of the community.

Policy 3.2.I: Create opportunities for neighborhood serving businesses to locate in neighborhood centers.

Policy 3.2.J: Continue to invest in quality City facilities including the Civic Center, Civic Plaza, Amphitheater and Library.

Principle 3.3: Our community will create a network to give our kids a way to find their way back home.

Policy 3.3.A: Promote what's great about Gering to support retention of youth and recruitment of young professionals.

Policy 3.3.B: Develop a diversified economy that supports well-paying jobs and provides jobs at a spectrum of income levels.

Policy 3.3.C: Continue to strengthen partnerships with organizations such as the Library and School District to educate Gering's youth and provide opportunities for growth for future generations.

Meaningful Connections



Meaningful Connections reflects our desire to be a connected community. We want to be physically, technologically, and socially connected. The policies under this value will help to encourage active transportation by promoting infrastructure that accommodates multiple modes; will help expand our technological infrastructure to increase access to information and facilitate better communication, and; will promote social connectivity by creating gathering places and neighborhoods that bring people together. The following principles and policies lay out how we are going to achieve Meaningful Connections.



Principle 4.1: Our community will provide a well-connected and balanced transportation system.

Policy 4.1.A: Multiple modes of transportation will be considered for street improvement project with priority given to routes that enable adults and children to safely ride from home to civic destinations.

Policy 4.1.B: Design streetscapes to support a pedestrian friendly, high-quality and distinctive environment.

Policy 4.1.C: Continue to create opportunities for people to use alternate modes of transportation to reach destinations.



Principle 4.2: Our community will maximize technology platforms to minimize distance between Gering and the world.

Policy 4.2.A: Encourage expansion of technological infrastructure to serve and connect the community.

Policy 4.2.B: Establish a technology platform that connects employers to candidates and allows candidates to find jobs in the community.

Policy 4.2.C: Continue to partner with and support community organizations that invest in technology and provide access to digital resources to further knowledge for members of the community.

Principle 4.3: Our community will improve social connections through support of community gatherings and public spaces that promote the history and culture of Gering.

Policy 4.3.A: Create social opportunities where people can meet, interact, and experience Gering.

Policy 4.3.B: Continue traditions and community events that celebrate the character of Gering and provide a strong sense of community pride for residents.

Policy 4.3.C: Develop a diverse network of public spaces for a variety of activities and user groups.

Policy 4.3.D: Continue to support and partner with community organizations that provide places for people to meet and interact.

Principle 4.4: Our community will ensure that new public facilities and updates to older facilities will consider universal design principles.

Policy 4.4.A: All new community facilities should incorporate universal design principles.

Policy 4.4.B: Encourage the use of universal design principles when updating and remodeling existing facilities.



04

Shaping Gering



4.1

District Framework

One of the goals of Plan Gering is to provide a framework that is flexible enough to respond to changing conditions and needs in the community. The District Framework aims to strike a balance between the need for flexibility and the aspirations of the community regarding future characteristics of the varied places that make up Gering. The District Framework is a context-sensitive approach to implementing the community vision. It divides the community into 11 Districts— areas with similar patterns, functions, and characteristics. Rather than assigning a specific land use designation to each property, the District approach identifies the Existing Characteristics of the area along with Future Desired Characteristics. These statements identify what type and scale of development is currently present, along with patterns that should be reinforced over time.

Each District also includes a thumbnail land use map which illustrates distinctions of use and intensity within the District more specifically. Designations could include places where higher densities may be appropriate or where distinctive use transitions exist. Some Districts also may include a designation of community Nodes. These locations indicate places that may be more appropriate for a higher intensity and diversity of uses that support the overall character of the District. Nodes located in predominantly residential areas could be considered for neighborhood service uses and other commercial development that fits the scale and intensity of the area. Taken together, the District Framework should illustrate what we want each district to look like and how we expect it to function. The Future Places map found on page 51 is a composite of all of the districts and includes three individual elements— land use, intensity, and nodes— described below.

LAND USE

Residential- Areas where a balanced mix of housing is promoted, allowing for a wide range of housing types.

Mixed Use- Areas where there are a variety of retail, service, employment, entertainment, and cultural destinations with residential development.

Historic Core- The focal point of the community where development encourages preservation of the cultural and historic character of Gering.

Commercial- Areas where there are a range of commercial uses which serve the needs of the community.

Industrial- Areas with uses that have large employment bases and have the potential to create noise, smoke, and/or odor.

INTENSITY LAYER

High Density- areas where high-density housing is encouraged near major corridors or near a mix of other uses.

Low Density- areas where large-lot, single family detached dwelling units are encouraged.

NODE

Commercial Nodes- Mixed-use places of varying scales. Some commercial nodes are well-connected to nearby neighborhoods and are support by neighborhood residents while others are larger and attract people from larger geographic areas.

Zone Changes

The District Framework is intended to help with incremental, site-specific determinations of policy applicability by defining the types of development that may be appropriate within each district. When a new zoning district is being proposed for a site, the future places map should be used along with the land use table to guide which zone districts are appropriate. The scale and form information identified in the land use compatibility table provides a general sense of scale for new development but is not intended to be prescriptive in nature.

When transitioning between different land uses, new development should respect and complement existing development such as adjacent neighborhoods. Establishing harmonious transitions requires looking at the context, building setbacks, heights, and orientation of neighboring areas, as well as design elements such as building massing, lighting, location of parking, and landscaping. The table below will help to guide compatibility of different land uses and create a land use pattern that prevents conflict between adjacent uses.

CONTEXT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the building & use have similar operational characteristics, hours of service, user groups?
SETBACKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a distinct setback that all (or nearly all) buildings adhere to?• Are there many different setbacks visible?• Consider buildings next to and across the street.
HEIGHT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the proposed building height within 1-2 stories of existing neighbors?• Are there increased setbacks to minimize the impact of height on neighboring buildings?• Consider buildings adjacent, behind and across the street.
ORIENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do buildings access from the street or alley?
MASSING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the level of detail match the character of existing buildings?• Is the bulk of the building similar?
LANDSCAPING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does any proposed landscaping help mitigate or buffer the impact of the use?
PARKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the parking located in a way that minimizes visibility and impact on neighbors?• Is the parking similar in number of spaces to neighbors?• Would demand for parking exhaust the available on-street supply?
LIGHTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the lighting cause glare beyond the property boundary?• Would shielded lighting mitigate off-site impacts?

Annexations

To ensure future growth is in alignment with the values of the community, Plan Gering seeks to manage growth by prioritizing infill opportunities and directing development to areas that are readily serviceable with utilities or to areas where infrastructure is planned. In order to develop in a way that balances infrastructure opportunities and system management equitably, areas that currently have access to water and sewer utilities should be prioritized for annexation. Additionally, focusing growth in areas that already have access to utilities will help Gering to increase the overall utilization of infrastructure without adding maintenance burden. This can serve to delay possible cost increases that are passed along to customers.

Additional focus should be placed on annexing unincorporated islands that are already served by City services. Annexing these islands can help reduce jurisdictional confusion and improve response times, thereby enhancing public safety.

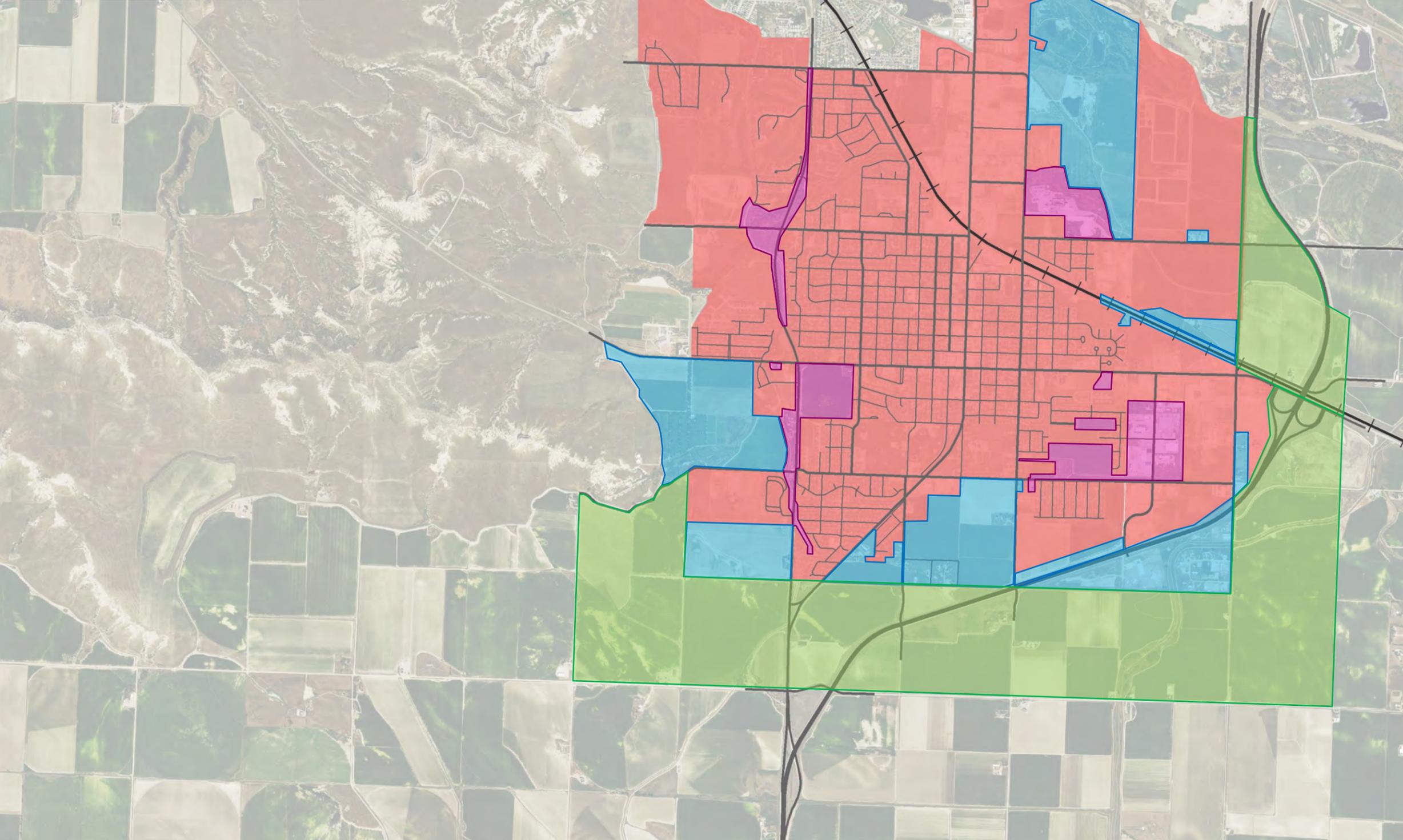
When considering annexation, Gering should consider the following:

1)The potential for enhancing public safety, 2) providing municipal services where water quality is a concern, 3) potential impacts– both positive and negative– on tax base and public services, and 4) whether the annexation enhances the overall efficiency of the infrastructure system.

Based upon these recommendations, the following priority areas for annexation have been identified. (See map on next page.)

- **Immediate Term:** These areas include unincorporated islands within existing municipal boundaries where municipal services are currently available. Additional priorities are roads where only half the right of way is annexed.
- **Medium Term:** These areas include unincorporated islands where City services are not currently available and areas slated for growth. These growth areas are best optimized for residential, commercial, and industrial development. Annexation of these areas could help encourage and guide investment.
- **Long Term:** These areas are not currently positioned for development but could see investment in the future.

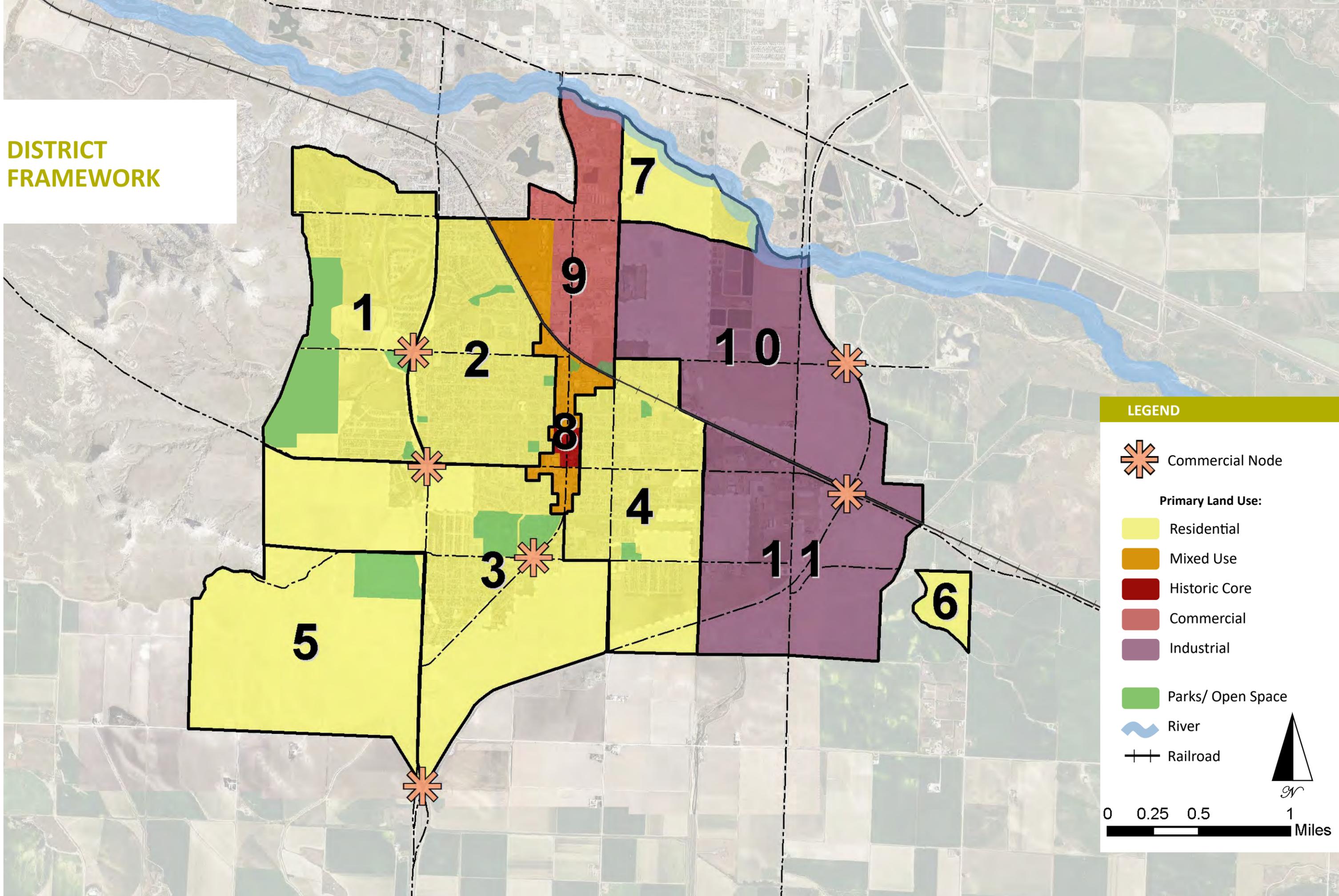
ANNEXATION STRATEGY



LEGEND

- Existing City Limits
- Immediate Term
- Medium Term
- Long Term

DISTRICT FRAMEWORK



LEGEND

Commercial Node

Primary Land Use:

Residential

Mixed Use

Historic Core

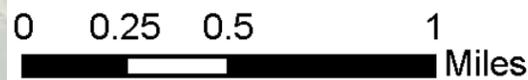
Commercial

Industrial

Parks/ Open Space

River

Railroad

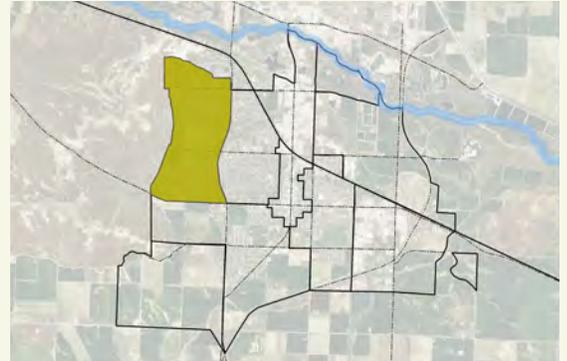


District 1

Northwest Monument Neighborhood District

Existing Characteristics

The Northwest Monument Neighborhood District is characterized by low density, large lot housing, ranging from small to, large-lot subdivisions to large estate properties. The housing in this area is clustered and organized along the golf course with irregular block patterns on curvilinear streets, with little to no connectivity between neighborhood areas. The district contains some medium density housing patterns in the southern portion along M Street.



Access to residences is via driveways with alleys being present in a few of the neighborhoods. There is a mix of attached and detached garage forms. Buildings are set back at varied distances.

Open space is plentiful due to the large golf course and private yards in the front and rear of the residences.

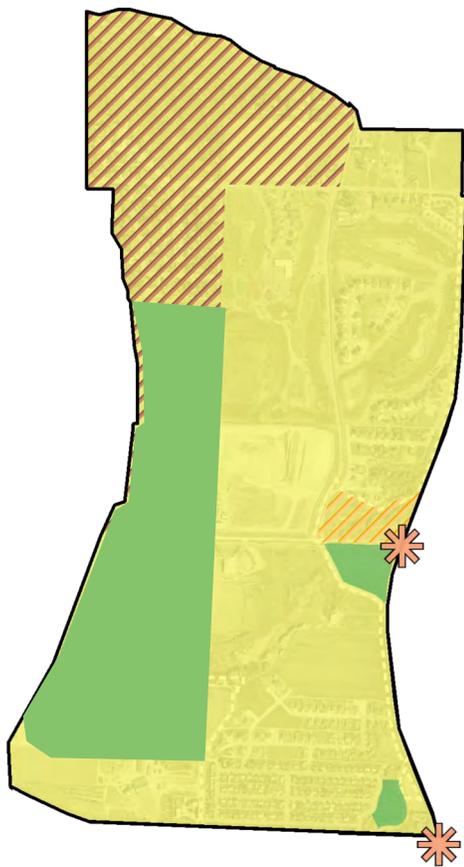
Future Desired Characteristics

A future goal is to maintain the open space feel of the district while promoting single family home development and integrating some denser residential housing forms/ formats. Accessory dwelling units and compatible two-unit uses are appropriate and could be thoughtfully integrated into the existing neighborhoods or planned as new clusters. Neighborhood serving retail at key intersections and slightly higher-intensity housing would be appropriate at select locations, such as the northwest corner of 5 Rocks Road and County Club. Commercial uses should be limited to the needs of the residents with the goal of reducing trips and located in small clusters along arterials and at arterial/ collector intersections.

Whether small or large, future development should continue to preserve and enhance the natural and scenic resources present in the district. Scenic view sheds that highlight the nearby Monument should be preserved and integrated into the development pattern.

District 1: Northwest Monument Neighborhood District

Future Places



Land Use

 Residential

Intensity

 Low Density

 Higher Density

Node

 Commercial Node

Land Use Scale & Form

Residential: The predominant use is residential, with an emphasis on Low to Medium intensities. All intensities of residential development can be accommodated, although higher intensity residential uses may not be appropriate in all areas. Appropriate locations to introduce additional intensity are at select sites along arterial and collector streets or intersections.

Commercial Node: Small footprint and lower scale commercial uses that act to support the neighborhood may be appropriate in higher traffic areas such as the intersection of U Street and 5 Rocks Road. Commercial uses should be consistent with the character of the area in scale and design.

Neighborhood and community based public/ semi-public facilities—places of worship; public safety facilities; schools.

Neighborhood parks, trails, and recreational facilities.

Primary Zoning

R1 Low Density Residential

R2 Medium Density Residential

R3 High Density Residential

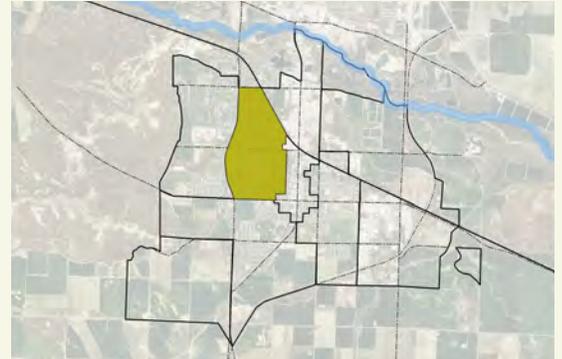
C1 Neighborhood Commercial

District 2

West Gering Neighborhood District

Existing Characteristics

West Gering is made up of single-family detached residential uses on medium sized lots. In the northern portion of the district, lots are wide and deep and generally rectangular in shape. The southern portion of the district contains smaller lot sizes that are narrow and deep, typical of a traditional urban neighborhood. The district has a mix of suburban and urban block patterns, with streets being long and rectangular in the northern portion, transitioning to a grid in the southern portion.



Access to residences is from driveways with alleys in the rear. Attached garages are predominant in the north while detached garage forms are more typical in the southern portion of the district, with buildings set back from the street. Access is mostly from local streets with good connectivity for all modes.

Open space is in the form of private yards and small parks. Northfield, Legion, Gardner, and Gentry Parks are all located in this district. A trail stretches east-west through the district, connecting 21st Street and Pacific Boulevard.

Neighborhood support uses include parks and open space system elements, schools, retirement centers and assembly type uses.

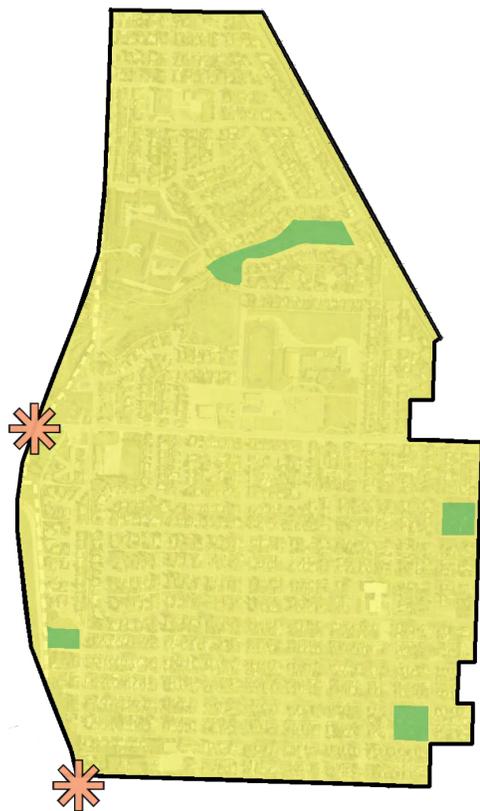
Future Desired Characteristics

A primary focus of the district should be to provide quality multimodal connectivity allowing residents to walk and bike comfortably and safely to neighborhood and near-by destinations. Focus should be on sidewalk enhancements and physical linkages within and between neighborhoods, and design that facilitates pedestrian and bicycle transportation. Street trees should be encouraged throughout the district to enhance neighborhood character and encourage people to walk to nearby destinations. Multimodal options become more important closer to Downtown Gering and along arterials and collectors in this district.

Additional goal should be to maintain and enhance the character of the area. Infill development of vacant lots and reinvestment and improvements to existing homes will help ensure the district continues to be a desirable place to live.

District 2: West Gering Neighborhood District

Future Places



Land Use

 Residential

Node

 Commercial Node

Land Use Scale & Form

Residential: The predominant use is residential, with an emphasis on Medium density. Two-unit residential may be dispersed throughout the district with areas along or at intersections of arterials or collectors being appropriate locations to introduce low- to mid-scale multi-unit residential options.

Commercial Node: Small scale commercial and mixed use may be appropriate at arterial and collector street intersections. Commercial uses should be consistent with the character of the area in scale and design and provide neighborhood based support functions.

Neighborhood and community based public/ semi-public facilities— places of worship; public safety facilities; schools.

Neighborhood parks, trails, and recreational facilities.

Primary Zoning

R1 Low Density Residential

R2 Medium Density Residential

R3 High Density Residential

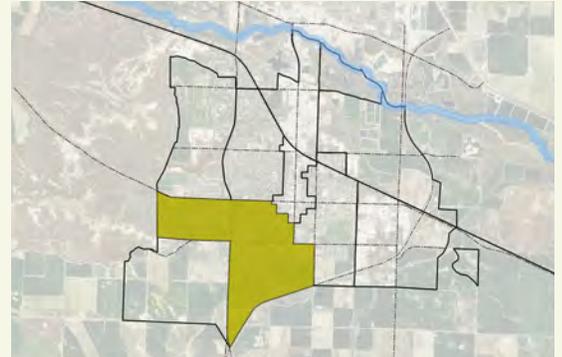
C1 Neighborhood Commercial

District 3

Southwest Gering Neighborhood District

Existing Characteristics

The Southwest Gering Neighborhood District is predominately single-family detached residential uses on medium sized lots. Several small-scale multifamily uses are located off of M Street with neighborhood serving uses such as medical, schools, parks, and churches embedded throughout the district. Individual lots are wide and deep resulting in longer rectangular blocks. Front loaded driveways with alleys in the rear are typical with buildings set back from the street.



There is a high degree of interconnectedness yet limited multimodal choices. The wider lots and longer blocks makes travel by car most convenient for trips due to the separation between land uses. However the proximity of the district to the downtown, coupled with its relatively low density, should allow pedestrians and cyclists to share roads with vehicles in order to access downtown amenities.

A large community serving park and ball park are located within the district.

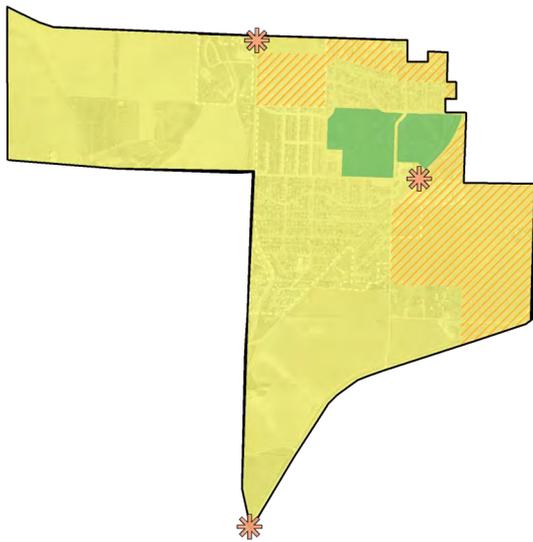
Future Desired Characteristics

The district includes some multifamily uses along M Street but contains predominately single-family detached housing forms. An important goal within the district will be to develop a variety of housing types and densities, including duplexes, tri-plexes and multifamily housing. Generally speaking, higher-density housing should be located along major streets or intersections with transit availability, or within or adjacent to commercial or mixed-use areas as a buffer between single-family neighborhoods and areas of commerce activities. Duplexes and tri-plexes can be blended and integrated throughout the neighborhood as part of an overall mix of housing.

New development should maintain a gridded street pattern with alleys to shift garage and parking access away from the street. As new residential areas are developed, sidewalks with street trees should be incorporated as well as multimodal linkages so residents can access key community amenities by foot, bike, or transit, including parks, schools, and commercial activity nodes. The large vacant piece of land located on the south-east corner of M Street and 5 Rocks Road is well suited for a commercial node that includes an assemblage of neighborhood serving uses such as convenience and small retail, professional services, food establishments, daycares and other uses that are compatible with the nearby residential.

District 3: Southwest Gering Neighborhood District

Future Places



Land Use

 Residential

Intensity

 Higher Density

Node

 Commercial Node

Land Use Scale & Form

Residential: The district is envisioned to contain a variety of residential densities and residential types. Existing residential should be maintained and enhanced whenever possible. New residential development should include a mix of low- to mid-scale multi-unit residential options. Small-scale multi-unit buildings are appropriate to intersperse between single- and two-unit residential with mid-scale multi-unit appropriate along heavier trafficked areas.

Commercial Node: Mixed-use along arterial/ collector streets as well as important intersections may be appropriate. Small scale commercial with a mix of medium and smaller scale buildings may be appropriate near the intersection of M Street and 5 Rocks Road. Transitions from the commercial activity node to nearby residential will be an important consideration.

Neighborhood and community based public/ semi-public facilities— places of worship; public safety facilities; schools.

Neighborhood parks, trails, and recreational facilities.

Primary Zoning

R1 Low Density Residential

R2 Medium Density Residential

R3 High Density Residential

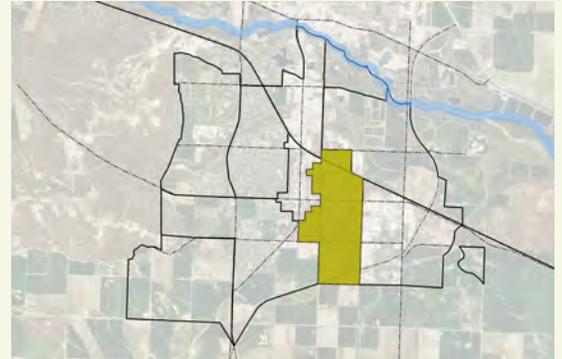
C1 Neighborhood Commercial

District 4

East Gering Neighborhood District

Existing Characteristics

Eastern Gering neighborhoods consist primarily of single-family detached residential uses on small to medium lots, with a few two – to three-unit uses integrated within several of the neighborhoods. The district also has a mix of low– to mid-scale multi-unit residential options clustered together on select sites throughout the district. The district has urban block patterns close to downtown transitioning to longer block patterns as you move east and south across the district. Detached sidewalks are prevalent in blocks near downtown with attached sidewalks in the newer developed residential areas.



Access to residences are taken from driveways with alleys in the rear. Both attached and detached garage forms are present in the district, with buildings set back from the street. Access is primarily from local and collector streets with good connectivity for all modes.

Open space is in the form of private yards and neighborhood parks.

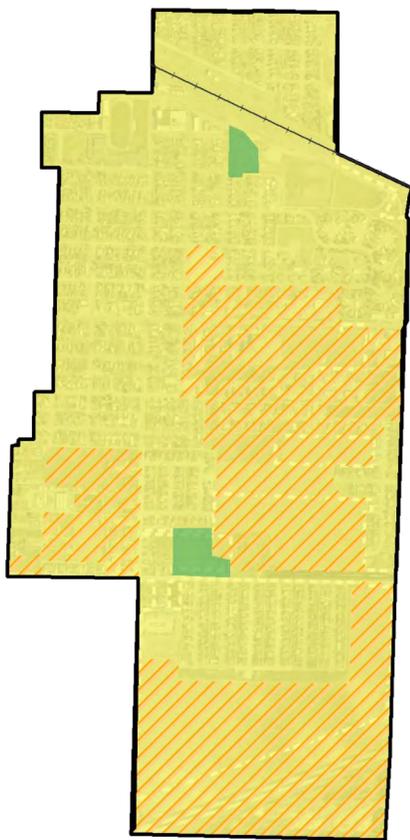
Secondary uses include parks and open space systems, schools, retirement centers and assembly uses.

Future Desired Characteristics

As new neighborhoods are developed, inclusion of a variety of housing types and densities at various price points should be prioritized. The district has a considerable amount of vacant land providing opportunities for new housing, which should include a compatible mix of single family on different lot sizes, as well as townhomes, condominiums, and apartments that are designed to fit the context of nearby housing and neighborhoods serving a mix of incomes. Higher-density housing should be located along major roads such as M Street and 10th Street. Parks should be incorporated into new neighborhoods in addition to other community facilities where appropriate. Alternative transportation connections should be provided to the Downtown area and other key destinations.

District 4: East Gering Neighborhood District

Future Places



Land Use

 Residential

Intensity

 Higher Density

Land Use Scale & Form

Residential: New residential development should consist of detached single-family homes on small lots, as well as a range of attached units (duplex, triplex, townhomes) and standalone apartments or condominium style buildings with up to four units. Vacant lots located near major roads would be appropriate for higher density housing, including mid-scale apartment buildings of 8 units.

Neighborhood and community based public/ semi-public facilities— places of worship; public safety; schools.

Neighborhood parks, trails, and recreational facilities.

Primary Zoning

R1 Low Density Residential

R2 Medium Density Residential

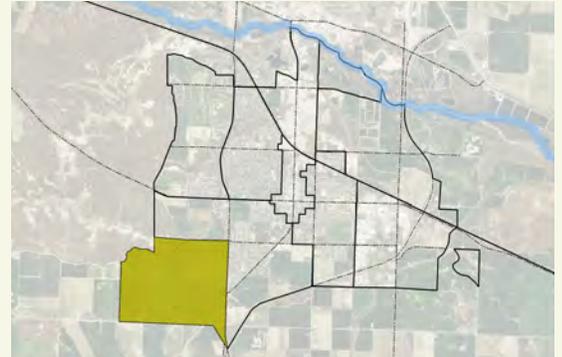
R3 High Density Residential

District 5

Five Rocks Agriculture/ Residential District

Existing Characteristics

The Five Rocks District contains a large amount of undeveloped agricultural area. This area is anchored by the presence of the Five Rocks Amphitheater public use area. This area may remain undeveloped for a long period of time and would not be expected to be served by utilities—lots should be large enough to accommodate wells and septic.

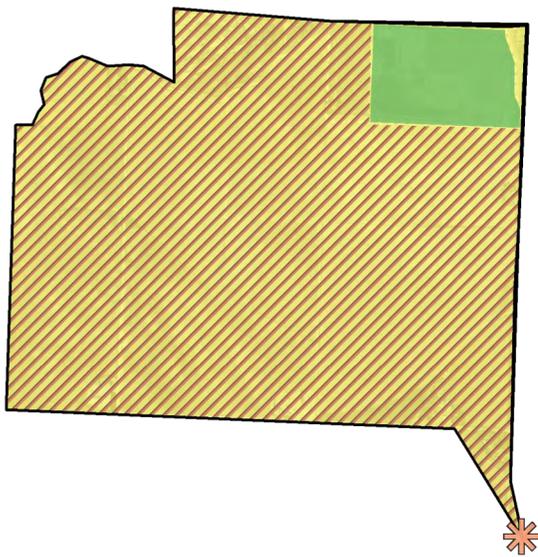


Future Desired Characteristics

The primary future use of this area will remain agricultural and public use oriented as development is not anticipated in the near future. The scale of any future development should be rural in character with large lots or clustered residential neighborhoods that integrate open space. Residential development should be designed to preserve the scenic viewsheds to the west/ southwest/ south with a priority on maintaining views to the monument whenever possible. The street network will consist of low volume local streets without any pedestrian or other alternative mode accommodations.

District 5: Five Rocks Agriculture/ Residential District

Future Places



Land Use Scale & Form

Agricultural

Residential: Large-lot, low-density single family residential and residential supportive of agricultural uses.

Commercial Node: Commercial uses at key intersections along Kimball & 5 Rocks Road.

Public use areas for community activities/ events and trail connections.

Primary Zoning

AG Agricultural

RR Rural Residential

R1 Low Density Residential

C1 Neighborhood Commercial

Land Use

 Residential

Intensity

 Lower Density

Node

 Commercial Node

District 6

Gering Valley Agriculture/ Residential District

Existing Characteristics

The Gering Valley district is characterized by a rural dispersed development pattern with single family homes on large parcels. The district is removed from the core of the community and is surrounded by agricultural land. The scale of development is rural in character with large portions of the lots being undeveloped. The district is not serviced by city utilities and is not appropriate for expansion.



Future Desired Characteristics

The priority of this district is to preserve agricultural land and rural characteristics. Buildings and sites should be designed to complement the character of surrounding area and should not detract from the open character of the landscape. Accessory buildings, home businesses, contractor and other small-scale agricultural uses that do not detract from the surrounding agricultural character may be appropriate.

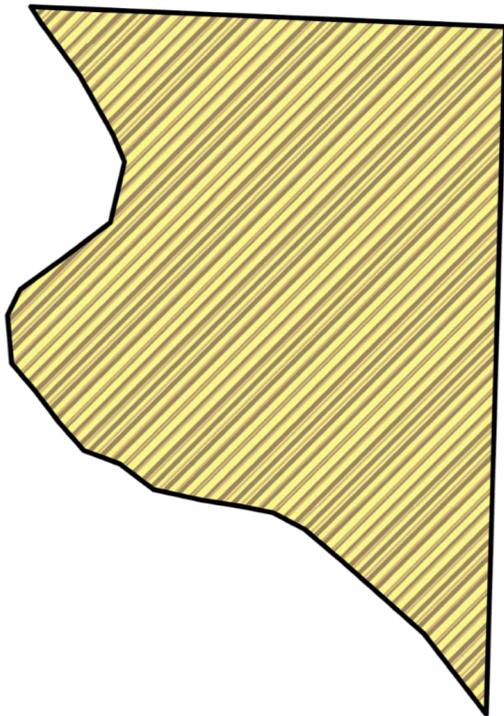
While there is no expectation for the provision of urban infrastructure, the City may look to provide a trail connection to the district to provide some form of pedestrian connectivity if strongly desired by residents.

District 6: Gering Valley Agriculture/ Residential District

Future Places

Land Use Scale & Form

Primary Zoning



Agricultural

AG Agricultural

Residential: Rural large-lot, low-density single family residential. Residential supportive of agricultural uses.

AEDS Agricultural Estate

RR Rural Residential

Land Use

 Residential

Intensity

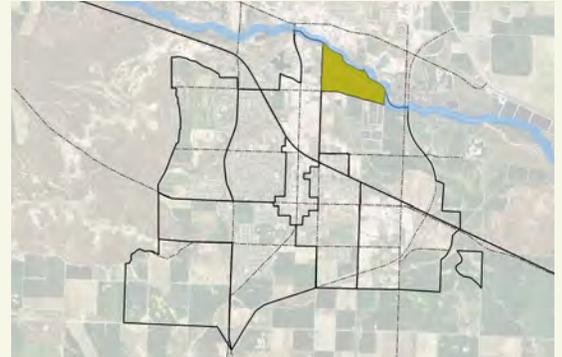
 Lower Density

District 7

North Platte River Residential District

Existing Characteristics

The North Platte River district is characterized by single-family residential units on large parcels. The district is adjacent to the river and contains riparian habitat and open spaces which provides a unique physical context. Existing properties are not connected to City water and sewer, and are serviced by individual well and septic systems.



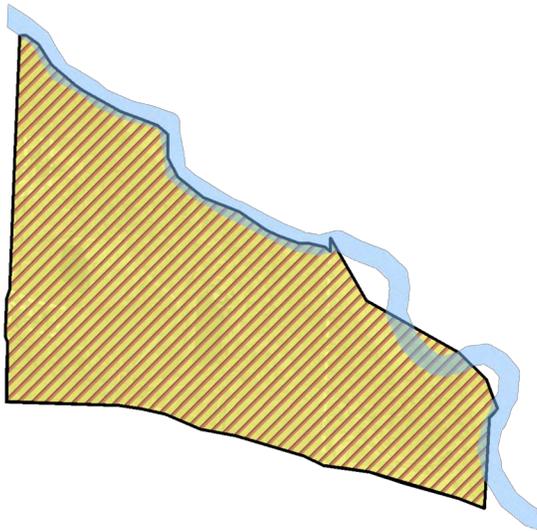
Future Desired Characteristics

Development should be designed to protect and enhance the riparian habitat and should work with the topography and other natural features. New housing should continue to convey a high level of quality and distinctive character by providing variety in the design and placement of homes, and incorporating landscaping, a variety of architectural styles and placement of features such as garages, that will help distinguish the district. Low density development is desirable in this district and may take the form of large lot development or clustered development patterns which incorporate open space. Development should leverage the benefits of the riparian environment and floodplain as recreation and wetland areas. Best practices should be used to mitigate potential impacts from stormwater runoff. Appropriate development will protect natural features and sensitive areas and help preserve open space. While lower density development is more desirable in the floodplain, all development should be property elevated and properly located, with no development occurring in the floodway.

A future goal within this district is to provide pedestrian connectivity in the form of a trail that connects to the city's existing trail system. Consideration of a water trail along the river would create an additional community amenity. Providing access to and promotion of the river as a recreational asset will further contribute to the city's network of public spaces.

District 7: North Platte River Residential District

Future Places



Land Use Scale & Form

Residential: Low density residential which includes a variety of large-lot and/ or clustered residential estate properties.

Public open space and trails as part of and connecting the residential development to the city wide trail system.

Rural to suburban level street, sidewalk, stormwater and other infrastructure improvements as appropriate.

Primary Zoning

RR Rural Residential

R1 Low Density Residential

Land Use

 Residential

Intensity

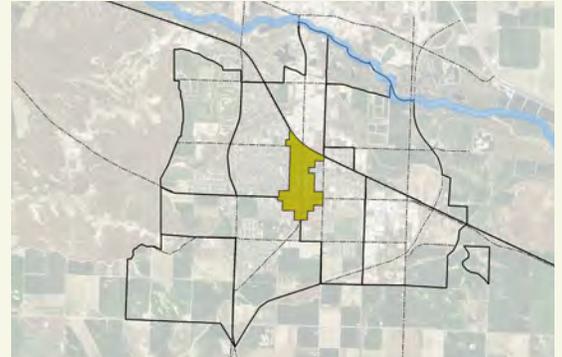
 Lower Density

District 8

Downtown Gering District

Existing Characteristics

Downtown Gering represents the center of business and government activity that provides opportunities for shopping, dining, conducting professional business, social gatherings, and experiencing Gering’s unique history and culture. The district is organized around 10th Street which is dominated by non-residential uses and surrounded by neighborhoods to the east, west, and south. Downtown Gering is the heart of the community.



Future Desired Characteristics

The goal within this district is to create a vibrant mixed-use area by accommodating a variety of uses and amenities. Commercial uses should be located primarily on the first floor of buildings with residential and office uses appropriate on upper floors above retail storefronts.

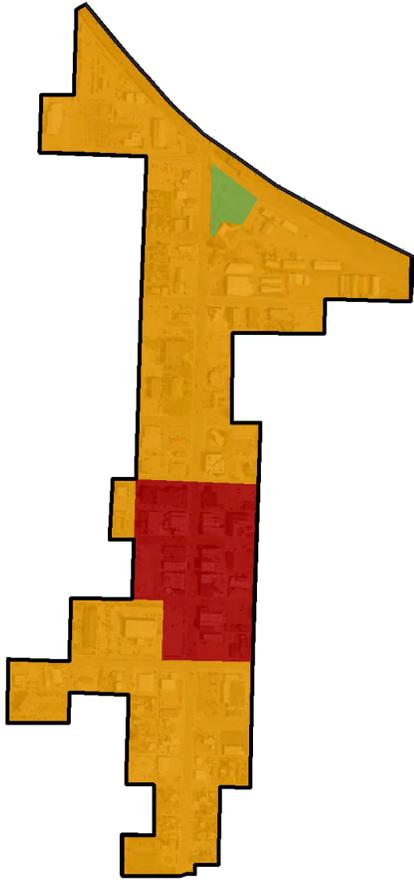
A number of vacant and underutilized properties are present downtown that would benefit from redevelopment, revitalization and reinvestment. Priority should be given to increasing residential opportunities that will help increase activity levels and support local businesses as well as feed uses such as restaurants and retail shops. For new structures, buildings should be consistent in scale and design with a variety of two- and three-story buildings that already exist in this district. Buildings should be located near the street while off-street parking is primarily placed behind or to the side of buildings with minimal street or no frontage along 10th Street on public lots in a manner that supplements the on-street parking pattern. Downtown should have an active street level presence and contain a good mix of commercial, retail, restaurant/ entertainment, office and residential uses.

Public realm improvements, such as consistent lighting, streetscape, landscaping and other features that aid in increased pedestrian comfort and safety are of great importance. Downtown should prioritize pedestrians and enhance pedestrian connections to surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Entryways into the Downtown should be strengthened to reinforce and define the overall identify and image of Downtown. Improvements should include landscaping, signage and other visual features.

District 8: Downtown Gering District

Future Places



Land Use

-  Mixed Use
-  Historic Core

Land Use Scale & Form

Mixed Use and Historic Core: Mixed-use center for commerce; government administration; civic venues and spaces; restaurants/ entertainment; residential; and tourism uses.

Multiple story formats with commerce related activities on the first floor and office/ residential uses on upper floors.

Public parking provided on-street and in off-street parking lots located behind or to the side of buildings with minimum street frontage.

Zero setback development pattern.

Urban level density and intensity of activity.

Primary Zoning

C2 Central Business District

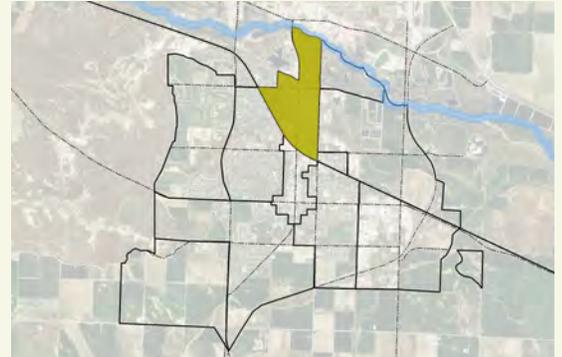
C1 Neighborhood Commercial

District 9

10th Street Commerce & Industry District

Existing Characteristics

This commerce and industry district is the northern gateway into the community from Scottsbluff and serves as a transition area between two downtown areas. The district is and will continue to be defined by its civic, commercial and lighter industrial functions and character. The district is largely built out and consists of lots accommodating a variety of uses along 10th Street. The remainder of the district is influenced by increases in industrial use intensity that requires more land for equipment and material storage.



Future Desired Characteristics

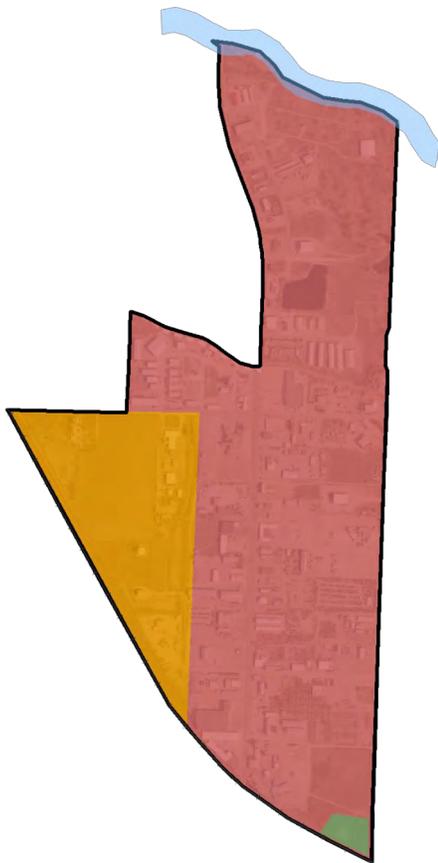
Efforts to enhance the appearance of the district as a part of the northern gateway into Gering should be encouraged. While industrial development is suitable throughout the district, individual lots should have landscaping to mitigate impacts to adjacent uses of lower intensity and provide appropriate buffering along highly travelled roadways.

Streetscape features within the right-of-way will be minimal with an emphasis on reinforcing safety and functional elements related to both motorized and non-motorized movement in the area. Defined streetscape elements such as street lighting, traffic signalization lights, medians, transit furnishings, wide sidewalks with connections to adjacent uses will help create a district 'feel' by improving the functions of facilities in the right-of-way and complementing landscape buffering enhancements along the frontage of property in the district.

As large vacant parcels accommodate industrial and commercial service uses, landscape and distance buffering should be used to separate such uses from adjacent residential uses.

District 9: 10th Street Commerce & Industry District

Future Places



Land Use Scale & Form

Commercial: Auto-oriented commercial businesses and restaurants. Municipal uses. Light industrial manufacturing, warehousing distribution uses.

Mixed Use: Commercial services and other uses such as multifamily that help transition the commercial and industrial uses to the existing residential uses in District 2.

Primary Zoning

C3 Regional Commercial

M1 Light Industrial

Land Use

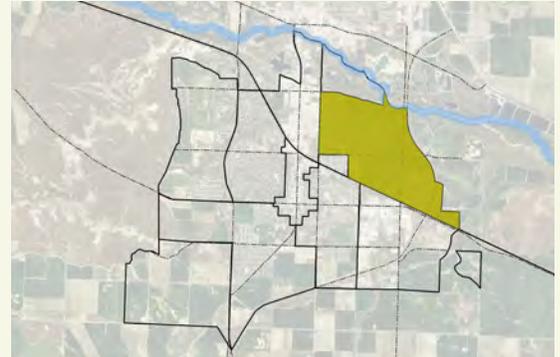
-  Commercial
-  Mixed Use

District 10

Gering Employment District

Existing Characteristics

The Gering Employment District is located on the eastern perimeter of the city and runs north of the railroad. This district consists of a mixture of primarily employment uses and vacant land. The employment uses range from commercial services to office to trucking to warehousing/ distribution to fabrication/ manufacturing. The district has convenient rail and road access to Highways 26, 71, and 92. The district is essential for Gering's economic stability and future growth.



Future Desired Characteristics

This district is intended to accommodate future employment uses seeking adequate space. The goal of the district is to preserve land that has attributes crucial to future industrial development, such as proximity to highway and rail access. A broad range of employment uses including manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, business and office parks, and office/ industrial flex buildings are appropriate. New development that is higher in intensity would be concentrated away from residential areas. The district would support commercial uses for the purpose of serving employee and business needs. These commercial uses should be located at key arterial intersections or interchanges within the district. Enhancements in the district should be concentrated on gateway and streetscape features to help strengthen the visual character of Gering's eastern entryway at the Highway 72/ 91 interchange and along M Street. Properties and buildings along M Street should incorporate design features to enhance and improve the visual character of the corridor.

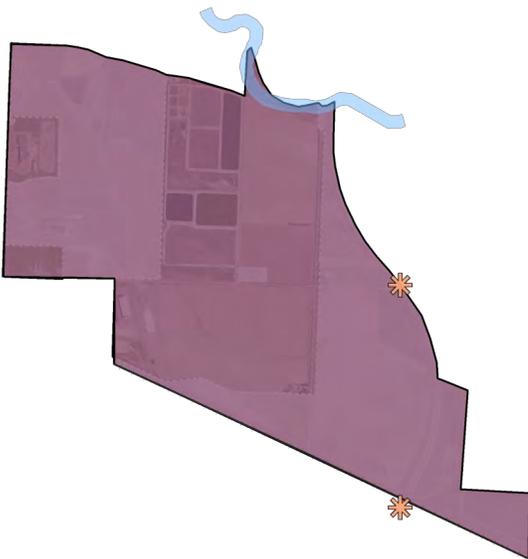
Commercial, office, or retail development is appropriate at the interchange of Highways 92 and 71 and the intersection of Highway 71 and U Street to support and strengthen major employment uses. These commercial nodes will act as the eastern gateway into the city and could include highway commercial as well.

Low maintenance landscaping and screening at the site perimeter and along street exposures is encouraged to mitigate visual and operational impact. This landscape/ open space area may also be used to address stormwater quantity and quality issues.

Land uses such as single-family residential, schools, or civic uses are not appropriate within this district.

District 10: Gering Employment District

Future Places



Land Use Scale & Form

Commercial Node: Commercial uses supporting employment uses at arterial intersections and interchanges.

Commercial services.

Highway commercial at Highway 71/92 and M Street.

Commercial uses at Highway 71 and U Street.

Industrial: Light industrial manufacturing, warehousing, distribution.

Heavy industrial.

Office and other employment uses.

Business and industrial parks.

Primary Zoning

C3 Regional Commercial

M1 Light Industrial

M2 Heavy Industrial

Land Use



Industrial

Node



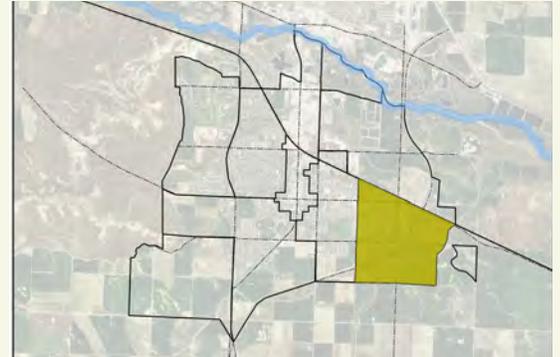
Commercial Node

District 11

East Gering Industrial District

Existing Characteristics

The East Gering Industrial District rounds out the priority areas within the city reserved for commercial and industrial uses. The district has great highway access and accommodates industrial uses that are difficult to integrate with less intense uses. The district is bounded on the west by residential and the north, east, and south by vacant/ agricultural land.



Future Desired Characteristics

The goal of the district is to preserve land that has attributes crucial to industrial development, such as proximity to highway and rail access. New development that is higher in intensity should be concentrated away from residential areas. While much of the western edge is already developed, mitigation controls should be used to screen the industrial uses from the adjacent residential neighborhood.

Major arterial frontages should be heavily landscaped and buildings along M Street should consider incorporating design features to enhance and improve the visual character of the corridor.

Commercial, office, or retail development is appropriate at the interchange of Highways 92 and 71 to support and strengthen major employment uses. This commercial node will act as the eastern gateway into the city and could include highway commercial uses as well.

District 11: East Gering Industrial District

Future Places



Land Use Scale & Form

Commercial Node: Commercial uses supporting employment uses at arterial intersections and interchanges.

Commercial services.

Highway commercial at Highway 71/92 and M Street.

Industrial: Light industrial manufacturing, warehousing, distribution.

Heavy industrial.

Office and other employment uses.

Business and industrial parks.

Primary Zoning

C3 Regional Commercial

M1 Light Industrial

M2 Heavy Industrial

Land Use



Industrial

Node



Commercial Node

4.2

Transportation Framework

Within the City of Gering we value the ability to move from place-to-place in a convenient and safe manner. Our mobility network is defined by a variety of transportation modes and experiences. In Gering, citizens and visitors should feel comfortable walking, biking, and using public transportation in addition to driving personal vehicles. The mobility network is built upon a desire to have an interconnected system that provides not only convenient and safe options for getting from place-to-place but also enhances the quality of our commerce and employment areas, and residential neighborhoods.

Much of our time and money is spent getting from one place to another. Therefore, it is important to provide a positive functional and visual experience for all users of our mobility network. Impressions regarding our community are formed by what is seen and experienced on the journey to a destination. Commerce in Gering is impacted by the ability to move goods and products in addition to people in, out and through our community. The appropriate design of the mobility network takes into consideration the context of its components balancing aesthetic and functional priorities.

The Principles and Policies in Section 3 – Community Vision provide an outline of several important considerations that relate to transportation. For a full description of each policy and principle, please reference Section 3, but the list below includes the transportation-related highlights:

Policy 1.1.D: The river is a recreation asset. Access along the river should be provided to support recreation and transportation connections.

Policy 1.7.A: Coordinate capital improvement planning to improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to and within key open spaces, parks and public facilities

Policy 1.7.C: Continue to create a series of pathways and greenways that link parks and recreational amenities within Gering and connect them to adjacent lands and natural amenities such as the Monument and North Platte River.

Policy 2.1.C: Prioritize investment in infrastructure that supports the economic health of the community.

Policy 3.2.F: Enhance Gering’s gateways and create a common vision for these areas.

Policy 4.1.A: Multiple modes of transportation will be considered for street improvement projects with priority given to routes that enable adults and children to safely ride from home to civic destinations.

Policy 4.1.B: Design streetscapes to support a pedestrian friendly, high-quality and distinctive environment.

Policy 4.1.C: Create opportunities for people to use alternate modes of transportation to reach destinations.

A few of these are critical to advancing Gering’s goals related to the foundation of Creating Meaningful Connections. Specifically, Principle 4.1 states: Our community will provide a well-connected and balanced transportation system. The following policies will require support to advance the vision:

Policy 4.1.A: Multiple modes of transportation will be considered for street improvement projects.

What this policy means for Gering: In a community like Gering where large street reconstruction projects only take place once-in-a-while, transportation improvements are more likely to happen incrementally over many years. As yearly maintenance programs are being developed, consider each project from a multi-modal perspective early in the process, and prior to setting a budget. Review whether there are any “quick fixes” that can help to make a project better for cyclists, pedestrians and transit users. For instance:

- A road resurfacing project is a great time to consider the addition of bike lanes and crosswalks.
- When repairing curb & gutter, consider installing missing sidewalk links.
- If repairing traffic signals, consider installing pedestrian countdown timers.

A wide variety of treatments can help to make our transportation network more accessible and functional for many users. Many helpful documents can be found at the Institute of Transportation Engineers.

Policy 4.1.B: Design streetscapes to support a pedestrian-friendly, high-quality and distinctive environment.

What this policy means for Gering: Streets are everywhere in Gering, and the goal of improving them all is a bold vision. However, acknowledging the fact that budgets are limited, we have to prioritize our investments. This plan presents a system of context-based street options. This system is complimentary to the traditional functional-classification system. Considering both the context of a street and the functional classification is important to help in determining the level of investment necessary in any particular location. Where new streets are constructed, like in the case of a new neighborhood development being added to Gering, new streets should consider the cross-sections included in this plan for local roads.

Similarly, where new industrial streets are being constructed, designing to meet this policy should be considered. When modifications are made to existing roads in Gering, streetscapes should be evaluated to identify those that will have the greatest impact on users, while presenting a high-quality impression of the community.

Modifying the requirements in your code to specify which areas require higher standards is a key next step. Creating a matrix which identifies basic minimums and quality additions will help set the foundation of requirements for streetscape like sidewalk, street trees, and lighting. Additional options could be presented in a handbook format to help demonstrate the value of these items to property owners.

Policy 4.1.C: Create opportunities for people to use alternate modes of transportation to reach destinations.

What this policy means for Gering: Improving transportation requires a wholistic view of considering the mobility needs of different modes. Putting yourself in the shoes of a cyclist, a walker, a transit-user can be a great way to understand the needs of these community stakeholders.

Consider holding a mobility workshop with each of the alternative modes of transportation. Walk to school with students, join a cyclist on their morning ride to work, hop on the Roadrunner to purchase your weekly groceries. This type of insight can help identify the small (and probably large) elements that are missing from the system.

For cyclists, are there:

- bike racks at key destinations to safely secure their bike?
- repair stations along pathways to fix a flat?
- bike lanes and signs on designated streets to elevate awareness and safety?

For pedestrians, are there:

- direct connections to destinations, connecting public sidewalks with business entrances?
- detached sidewalks with trees to help buffer walkers from traffic, while also providing shade?
- benches at regular intervals offering a place to rest?

For transit users, are there:

- clearly designated stops, with benches, windbreaks, and lighting?
- maps available, clearly defining the route?

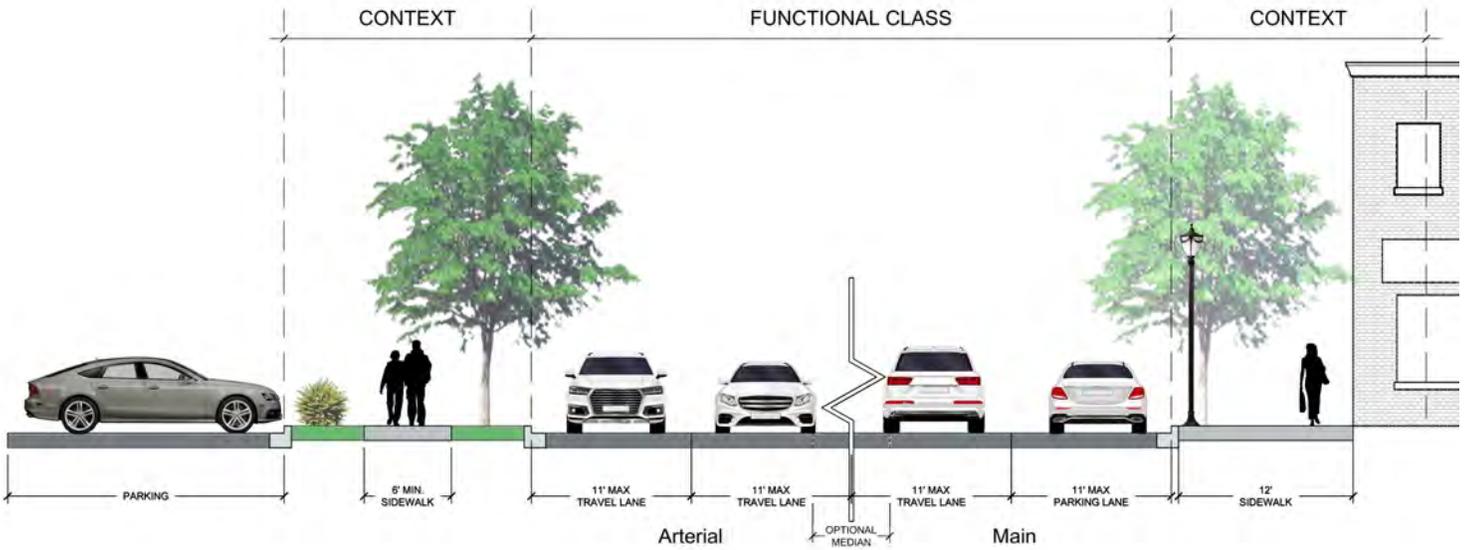
Using this policy during the design process for road projects can help to identify missing elements that will help to make the entire system more efficient for all users.

Mobility Framework

While Gering's slow but steady growth won't likely require the construction of many new roads over the life-cycle of this comprehensive plan, there will be some new roads constructed. The following Mobility Framework provides options for Gering to consider in constructing new streets, while also providing considerations for smaller repairs and modifications that may take place over time.

Traditionally, transportation planning uses a Functional Classification System to characterize the intended function of various roadway in the street network. Typical parameters for roadway design within this system include access management practice, number of lanes, mode(s) of transportation, along with the type, speed and volume of traffic to be served. This system is based upon the categorization of the roadways as Arterial, Collector, and/or Local streets. The approach doesn't however consider the context of the street - the land use and development adjacent to the street - as it may change from block-to-block or area to area.

While Functional Classification is used to define what's going on in the street – number of lanes, volumes and to some extent, speeds, this plan introduces the concept of a Context Classification to better address the unique conditions of adjacent development and what happens behind the curb. At times, the dynamics of the land use / development context and roadway function create undesirable impacts in a specific location or segment of the system. Ultimately, meshing context and function will help to ensure that a one-size-fits-all designation doesn't adversely impact Gering's existing and future neighborhoods. This approach can also help in managing roads that change character as they pass through the community. 10th Street is an example of a road that changes from Industrial Arterial, to Main Street Arterial over the course of a few miles. Using context considerations can also enhance desirable character areas – such as the Central Business District - in a manner that balances community priorities and values with efficient operation of the mobility system throughout Gering.



Functional Classification	Context Classification
Pertains To: Speed, Width, Volume	Pertains To: Site Development, Setbacks, Access
ARTERIAL	Thoroughfare
	Main Street
	Gateway
	Industrial
	Residential
COLLECTOR	Industrial
	Neighborhood
LOCAL	Industrial
	Neighborhood

Providing this approach enabling both consideration of Functional and Context Classifications will enable the Gering Zoning Code to better respond to the unique conditions of each specific site. Different elements, or exceptions, may be keyed to different Context Classifications within the code. In this way, the plan and subsequent code can better address more flexibility in the regulatory approach, which is a key goal of this plan expressed in Policy 2.3.C – (Clarify and streamline City processes.)

The following pages include the Functional Classification Map. Use this map to help identify the overall function of the street, anticipated widths, speeds and volumes. Next is the Context Classification Map, which can be used to help identify tailoring of site development standards, setbacks and other elements further described in the zoning code.

Additionally, several cross-sections examples have been provided for representative types, illustrating the blend between Functional and Context Classifications. Each provides a description of the Context along with primary elements and how they can be tailored to that specific Context. Watch for elements that vary between Contexts and Function on the following transportation elements:

Movement: Vehicles, Pedestrian, Bicycle, Public Transit

Parking: On-Street, Off-Street

Amenities: Streetscape, Lighting, Character Enhancements

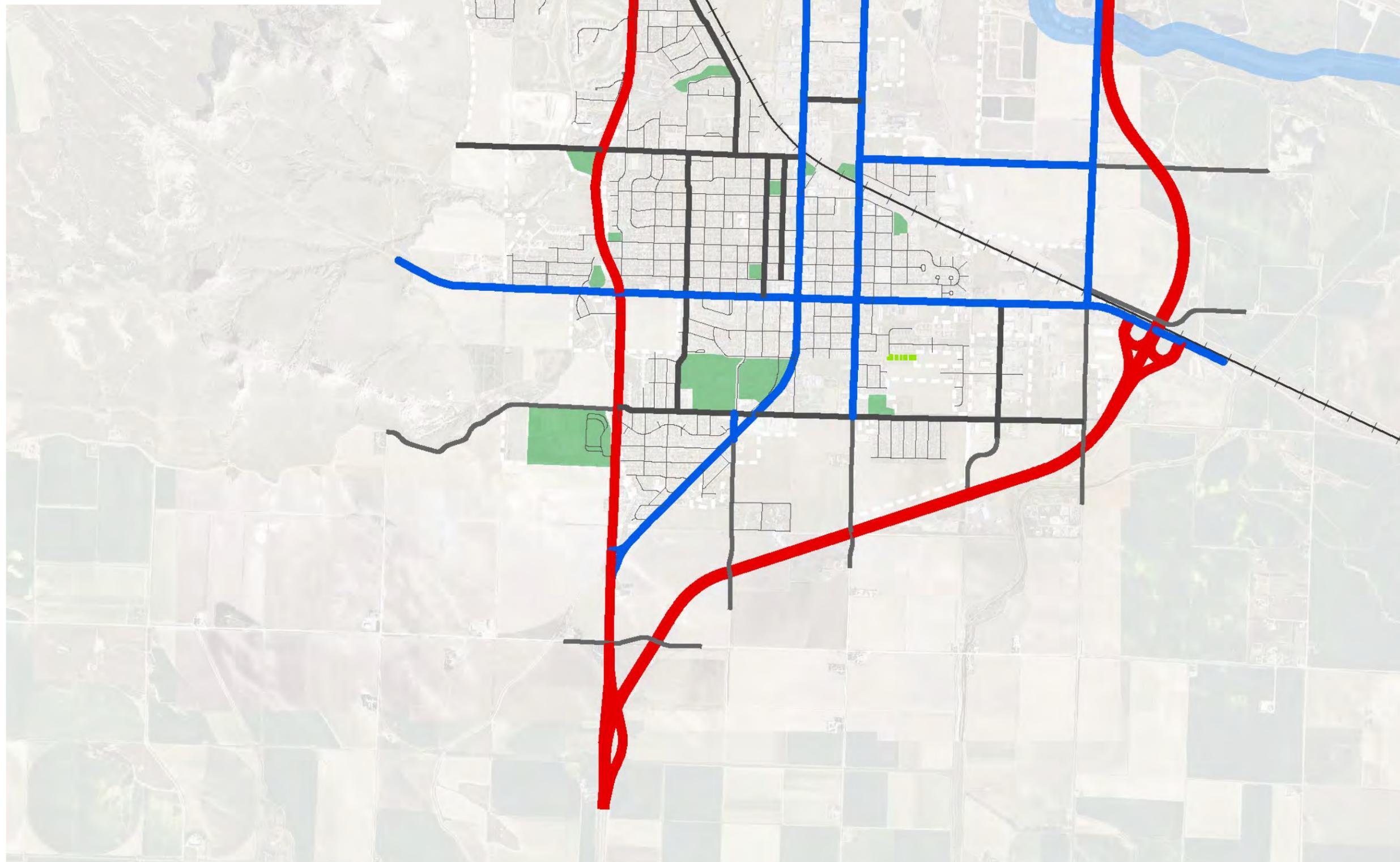
Development Interface: Setbacks

Use these descriptions to help in guiding the creation of a street environment that reflects the individual qualities of a district, while maintaining critical function of the transportation network.

Street Typology

The mobility framework map depicts 4 primary types of streets. In the case of commerce and residential streets a differentiation is made between the traditional main street / grid block context and the more automobile oriented arterial / suburban context that exists in Gering. Descriptive and dimensional guidance is provided in the following narrative, but the application of such design guidelines is subject to adjustments based upon the district and context in which the street is located.

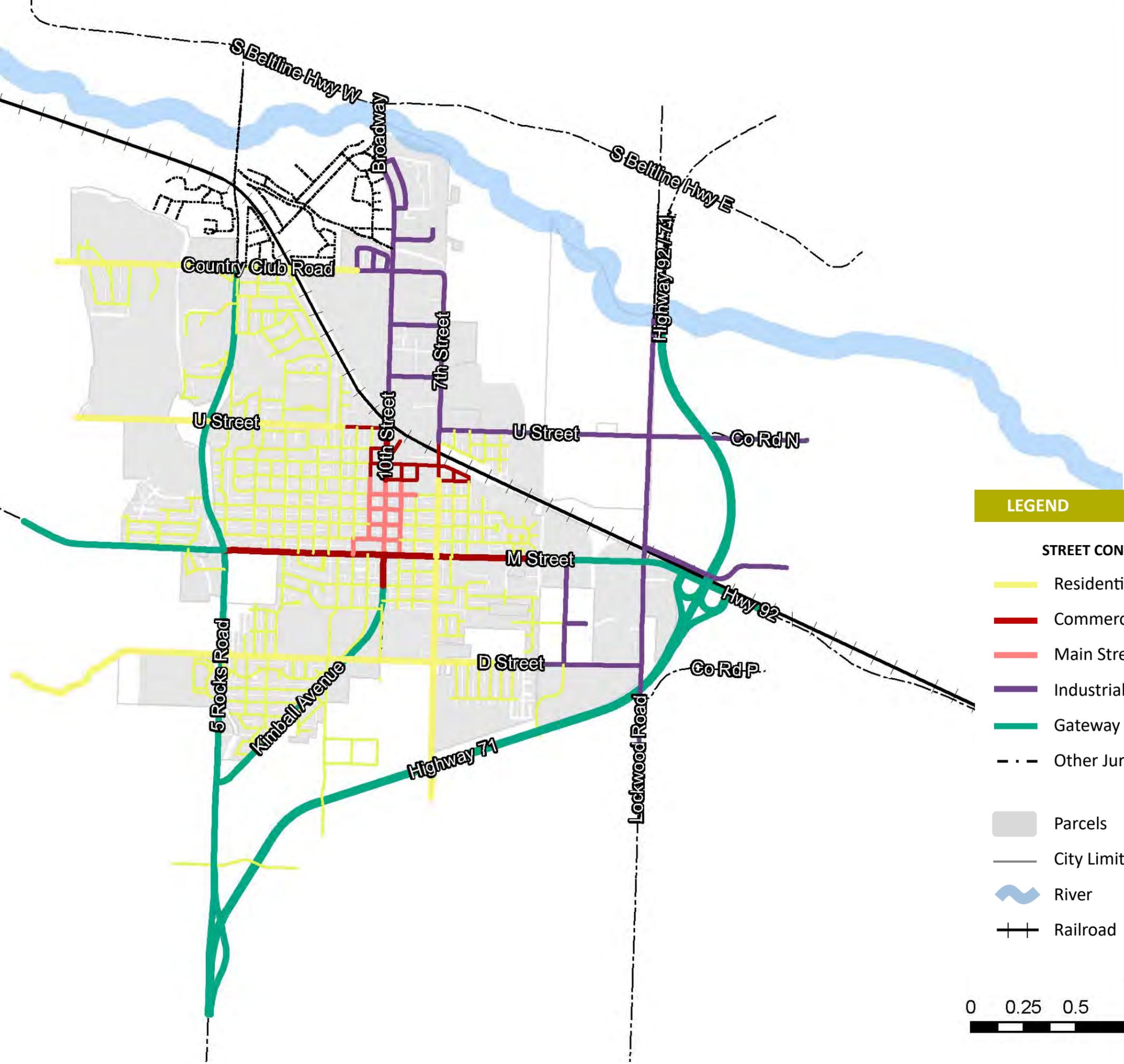
FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION



LEGEND

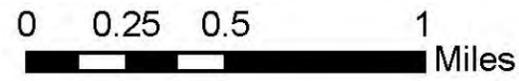
- CLASSIFICATION**
- Local
 - Collector
 - Arterial
 - Highway
 - Proposed Road
 - County Road
- Parks
- River
- Railroad
- 0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

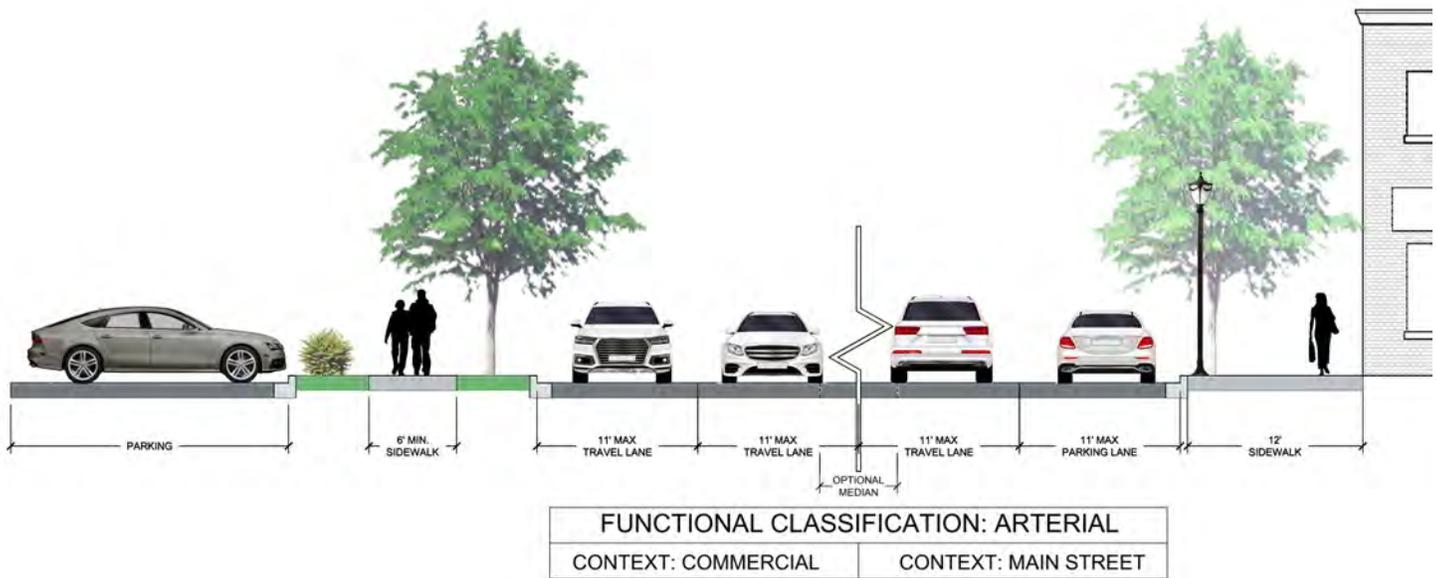
CONTEXT CLASSIFICATION



LEGEND

- STREET CONTEXT**
- Residential
 - Commerce
 - Main Street
 - Industrial
 - Gateway
 - - - Other Jurisdiction
- Other Features:**
- Parcels
 - City Limits
 - ~ River
 - | Railroad





Commerce Streets

Commerce streets serve as primary commercial business corridors. Commercial activities may stretch all along the corridor or be concentrated at nodes where major streets intersect with the commerce street. In Gering there are two contexts in which this type of street may occur.

Arterial

This type of commerce street is characterized as an automobile-oriented roadway serving typical commercial development. The primary purpose is to get people and goods from one place to another via vehicular means (automobile, public transit, truck) while accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians. Commercial development along the arterial commerce street generally provides off-street parking and access from the road / sidewalk to the uses adjacent to the street while minimizing the number of access points.

Main

The main street context must accommodate a greater level of pedestrian movement and activity along the street as well as on-street parking. Through traffic, as well as circulating local traffic, is accommodated but slower moving within a commercial development framework in which buildings are closer to the street. These streets should have wider sidewalks and convenient crossings to serve pedestrians, as well as provide a higher amenity level. In this context a safe and enjoyable pedestrian experience is a high priority.

Movement

- **Vehicle:** up to two (2) lanes on each side of the street, with each lane a maximum of eleven (11) feet wide. In the main street context one (1) travel lane in each direction may be desirable. Medians may serve as access management tools in the arterial context to allow for left turns onto streets at intersections, and limit left turn access to private property. Medians should be well defined and if used as turn lanes should be eleven (11) feet wide.
- **Pedestrian:** sidewalks intended for pedestrian travel and direct access into businesses should occur on both sides of the street and be a minimum of six (6) feet wide (along commerce arterials) and could expand up to twelve (12) feet wide in the main street context. Note: All sidewalk widths and crossings should meet ADA standards. Additionally, crossings at street intersections and private drives should be designed with pedestrian safety in mind – smaller turning radii to slow vehicle turning movement and the proper placement of landscape materials and signage so as not to block sight lines is important.
- **Bicycle:** bike lanes when provided along commerce streets should be six (6) feet wide, located on both sides of the street if possible, and should include a two (2) foot wide strip that separates the bike lane from the adjacent travel lane.
- **Public Transit:** stops should be accommodated within the width of the right-of-way without creating traffic flow interference when possible.

Parking

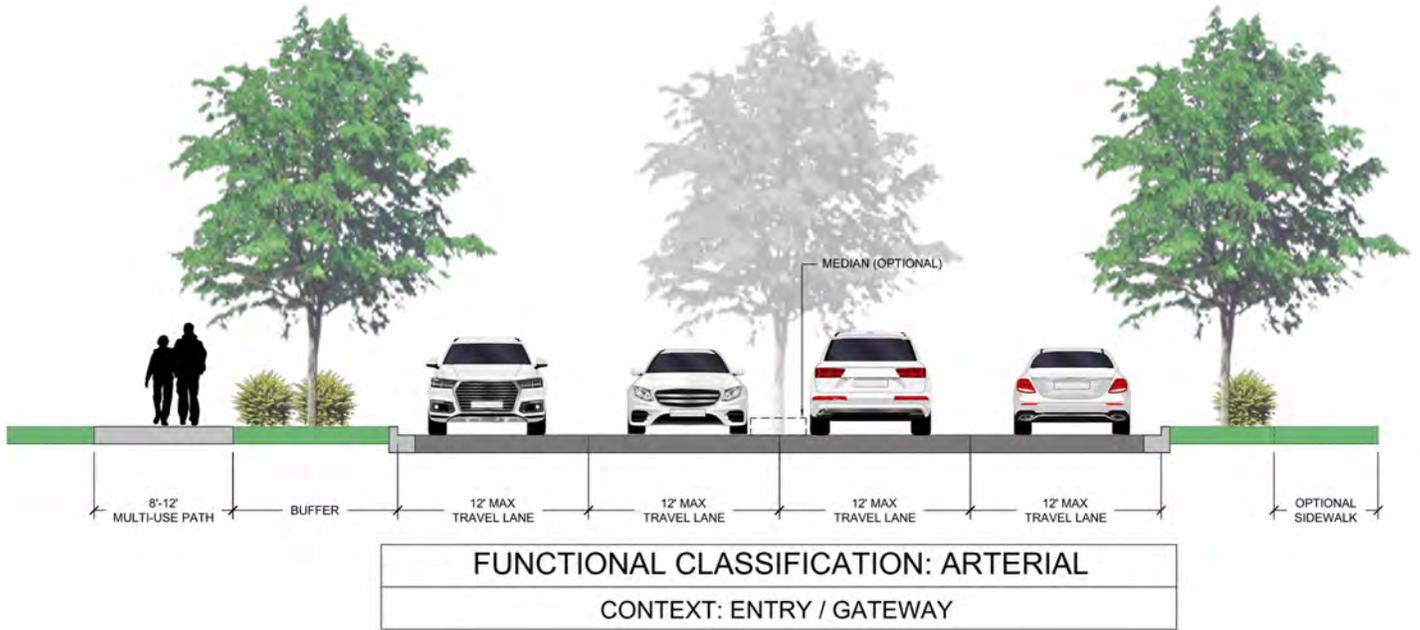
- **On-street:** would not be found along arterial commerce streets. Within the main street context on-street parking may be provided in a variety of formats – angled (to the side or in the middle between travel lanes) spaces may be designed to back-in or back-out. Parallel parking spaces may be more likely along cross streets within one or two blocks of the main street context.
- **Off-street:** in the main street context off-street parking should have minimum frontage along the street with the parking area being behind or to the side of buildings and a wall / fence / landscape feature between the sidewalk and the parking area which extends the dominant building setback. Drive access should be from cross streets or alleys in this context. In the commerce arterial context off-street parking may be located in the front of properties along the sidewalk with a landscape buffer defining the public and private space, and minimal direct drive access points off of the arterial.

Amenities

- **Streetscape:** promoting consistent street character adds to the visual appeal and definition of place in areas of commerce. Trees should be protected and the use of tree grates along sidewalks (especially in main street commerce areas) may be option depending on tree species and streetscape design. Low maintenance trees and vegetation that are drought resistant, and adaptable and tolerant of the commerce environment are preferred. Median areas and extended corners at intersections may also provide opportunities for enhanced streetscape elements, pedestrian refuge areas at intersections, and enhanced character utilizing accent materials. Medians should have a design width that best suits the purpose and desired design character along the street.
- **Pedestrian Lighting:** intended to provide a well-lit and safe environment along public rights-of-way may be provided through typical street lighting standards on arterial commerce streets. But in areas where an enhanced character is desired, such as the main street context, independent pedestrian light poles; tree lighting; architectural feature lighting; and display window lighting should be utilized.
- **Character Enhancements:** may include public art; educational / interpretive components; benches / bike racks; planter areas / boxes; banner systems; wayfinding elements; bike racks; newsstands / information kiosks; street vendor stands; outdoor eating areas; and/or other amenities.

Development Interface

- **Setbacks:** The character of building edges and the presence of direct building entrances located along or connected to sidewalks will influence pedestrian activity. Main street areas have minimal building setbacks of zero (0) to five (5) or ten (10) feet and outdoor sales display or sitting / eating areas are encouraged. Typical commerce arterials reflect greater building setbacks allowing for off-street parking and landscape buffering between the public sidewalk and the building.



Gateway Streets

Gateway streets operate as primary entryways into Gering but may also serve a through or around town function. This street type has a parkway feel in that there are minimal access points or intersections along these streets. Additionally, enhanced visual elements provide an inviting experience. Adjacent but separated wide sidewalks and/or trails encourage and support bicycle and pedestrian activity. Enhanced streetscape elements as well as green infrastructure elements provided along this street type serve to reinforce the natural physical context of, as well as beautification efforts in Gering.

Movement

- **Vehicle:** one (1) or two (2) travel lanes in each direction are a maximum of twelve (12) feet wide. Access management practices minimize the number of private access points and intersections along these streets.
- **Pedestrian / Bicycle:** an enhanced sidewalk / multi-use trail is provided on one or both sides of these streets. The width is eight (8) to twelve (12) feet with a significant separation distance between the path and vehicle travel lanes. Intersection crossings are enhanced to ensure compliance with ADA standards and provision of up-to-date ramps, crosswalks, and signal control that accommodates pedestrians and bicyclists.
- **Public Transit:** likely to be express oriented service with no stops or minimal stops being accommodated at major intersections only in a manner that does not interfere with traffic flow.

Parking

- **On-street:** no on-street parking.
- **Off-street:** access management practices eliminate entry / exit access points so there is no direct access to off-street parking areas or adjacent property.

Amenities

- **Streetscape:** shade trees and landscape enhancements are provided in the ample open space associated with this street type. Landscaping may be incorporated in medians or along the sides of the roadway giving a parkway or boulevard feel. Shade provision along the associated sidewalk / trail is important. The open space area (median and adjacent) may include low maintenance native vegetation that also serves as a “green infrastructure element for gathering, filtering and conveying storm water run-off.
- **Pedestrian Lighting:** intended to provide a well-lit and safe environment along the multi-use sidewalk / trail independent pedestrian lighting is provided.
- **Character Enhancements:** may include public art; educational / interpretive components; entry monuments / fountains; benches; banner systems; wayfinding elements; and/or other amenities.

Development Interface

- **Setbacks:** generally, the side or back of private property will be adjacent to these streets. It is critical that appropriate visual buffering through the use of plant materials, berms and fencing be visually appealing.



Industrial Streets

A significant and important part of Gering is the industrial activity that provides employment opportunities. Such activity generates truck traffic with specific needs for the efficient movement of goods and products. Accommodation of public transit, pedestrians and bicycles is necessary for getting people from where they live to where they work. Wide sidewalks serving as multi-use paths are encouraged to provide alternative means of transportation separate from vehicular traffic. Landscape amenities are provided on private property as buffers between the public corridor and industrial uses. Pedestrian crossings are enhanced to provide greater pedestrian safety.

Movement

- **Vehicle:** should include one (1) or more travel lanes on each side of the street, with each lane a maximum of twelve (12) feet wide. Larger corner radii are desired at intersections and access points to accommodate industrial oriented traffic.
- **Pedestrian:** sidewalks intended for pedestrian travel should occur on both sides of the street (designated arterials) and be a minimum of eight (8) feet wide. On local or collector streets in the industrial context sidewalks maybe be reduced in width (six (6) feet). Sidewalks should be separated from the vehicle lanes for safety purposes utilizing low maintenance methods and materials. Note: all widths and crossings should meet ADA standards.
- **Bicycle:** bicycle use is primarily intended as an alternate means of transportation (not recreational purposes) in industrial areas, thus wider sidewalks are provided to separate bicycle use from vehicle use and intersections should be appropriately signed or signalized for safety purposes.
- **Public Transit:** industrial streets should be adaptable / designed in a manner that can easily accommodate public transit as an alternative means of transportation.

Parking

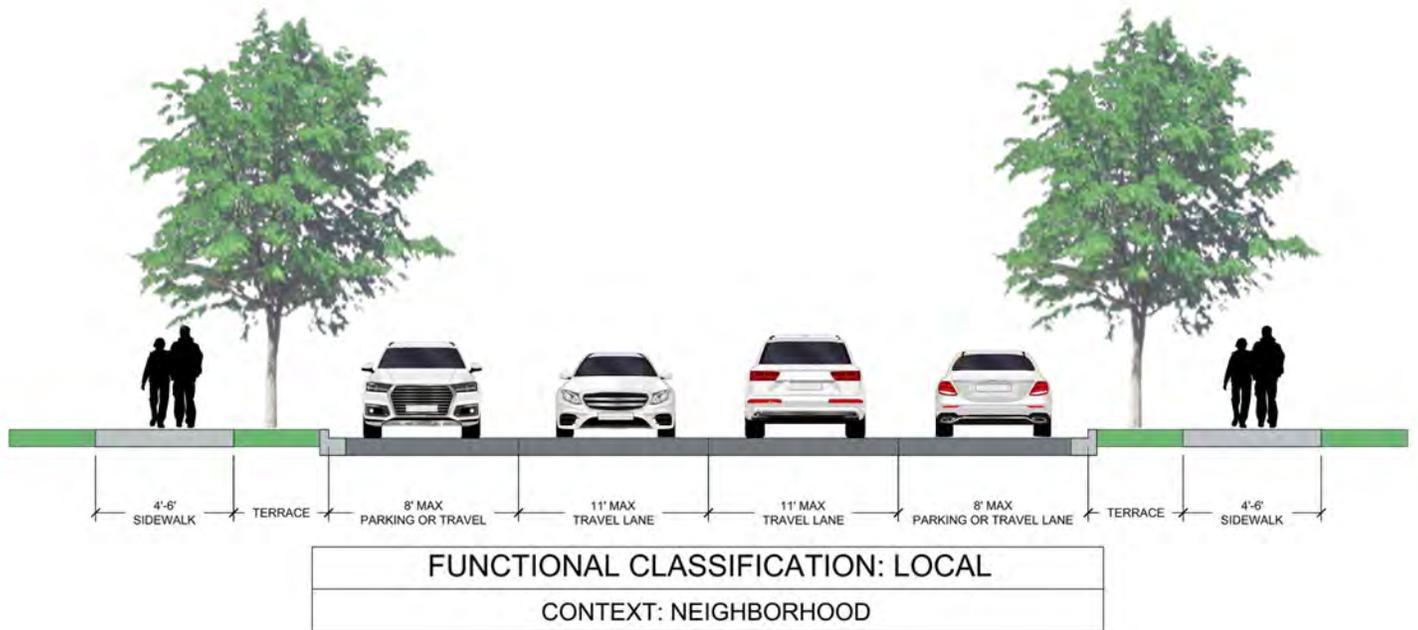
- **On-street:** may be accommodated when it does not interfere with primary traffic movement.
- **Off-street:** lots / structures adjacent to buildings with landscape buffers between the parking areas and public sidewalks. Convenient pedestrian / bicycle connections should be provided from the public sidewalk to the building entry. Landscape buffers may serve as storm water features and incorporate low maintenance native plantings.

Amenities

- **Streetscape:** trees and other plant materials are generally placed on the landscape buffers between parking areas / buildings and the public sidewalk. The area between the public sidewalk and vehicle lanes may include low maintenance native vegetation that also serves as a green infrastructure element for gathering, filtering and conveying storm water run-off.
- **Pedestrian Lighting:** is provide via standard street lighting.

Development Interface

- **Setbacks:** development setbacks will vary depending on the type, intensity and building form of the various industrial uses and settings.



Residential Streets

Residential streets connect Gering’s residential neighborhoods to other parts of the community. These streets influence the perceived quality of the neighborhood and serve local bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The users of these streets range from very young children to the elderly as they go to and from community activities / events, places of employment and shopping areas, as well as other destinations in and around Gering.

Residential streets exist in two contexts a grid and a suburban framework. In either context the residential street serves as a place for neighborhood interaction. These streets also connect neighborhoods and link different parts of the same neighborhood. Such streets should be designed to minimize through traffic and speed while also providing safe and inviting places to move and interact.

Movement

- **Vehicle:** two (2) travel lanes maximum each a maximum of eleven (11) feet wide.
- **Pedestrian:** sidewalks intended for pedestrian travel should occur on both sides of the street and be a minimum of four (4) to five (5) feet wide. In the suburban context sidewalks should be six (6) feet wide on both sides of the street. Note: all widths and crossings should meet ADA standards. Wider widths are intended for designated trails that may exist in the neighborhood context as described in other parts of the comprehensive plan.
- **Bicycle:** bicycle traffic may take place on the sidewalk (in the case of young families or individuals) and/or roadway (older children and adults for recreational and alternate means of transportation). In the residential context sharing the road is an expectation. Designated trails or bicycle routes with intentionally designed wider widths may exist within a neighborhood to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists in and coming through the area.
- **Public Transit:** designated collector streets within the grid or suburban residential context should be designed in a manner that can easily accommodate the provision of public transit.

Parking

- **On-street:** creates a buffer between pedestrians and traffic lanes. On-street parking should consist of a minimum of eight (8) foot lanes on each side of the street.
- **Off-street:** is provided via private residential driveways and in the case of higher density residential development parking areas with landscape buffers between the parking areas and sidewalks.

Amenities

- **Streetscape:** intended to provide shade and promote a consistent street character. Species should be selected that are native to the area; drought tolerant; adaptable to the street environment; and have minimal maintenance requirements. Placement can be determined based on species type and be either in the street right-of-way or on private property along the sidewalk.
- **Pedestrian Lighting:** intended to provide a well-lit and safe environment along public rights-of-way throughout residential areas. Increased levels of pedestrian lighting may be required along sidewalks and pathways that are primary connectors between neighborhoods and other community destinations.

Development Interface

- **Setbacks:** are intended to provide desired separation between the public right-of-way and private development. In areas where the street grid is prevalent setbacks are likely to be smaller (zero to 20 feet) than suburban areas (25 or more feet).

Gateways and Wayfinding

Although Gering is a small community by population standards there are many activities, events and destinations that draw visitors to and through Gering. For visitors the first and most lasting impression of the community they visit or pass through is formulated based on the perceived quality of the travel experience. Many times, this perception is based in the visual aspects of the route and by the ease / convenience of getting from point A to point B.

Wayfinding components such a thematic entry gateways and directional signage have a positive influence on the perceptions formed by visitors. While a much progress has already been made on wayfinding efforts, the community should continue to build upon previous efforts and determine a thematic for the design of a unified wayfinding system that lends direction in regard to the community’s vision statement – Pioneers Welcome!

Gateway areas can provide an opportunity to leverage the unique context and history of Gering by creating highly visible arrival points that define the community and leveraging unique features in and around Gering. gateways are intended to reflect the character and vision of Gering and can be a community asset for citizens and visitors to experience by:

- Promoting a sense arrival and anticipation.
- Establishing landscaping, artwork, signage, and other sculptural elements that reflect local history and culture, tell the story of commerce in the area, compliment and highlight the natural landscape, as well as define community boundaries.
- Featuring views to landmarks, focal points and significant community features big and small.



4.3

Parks & Open Space Framework

Public parks, open space and pathway corridors can define and enhance the quality of community life in Gering. Residents have access to many recreational experiences provided via a number of public entities. Whether interacting with neighbors in a local park or walking a trail in a national monument these places are integral to life in Gering.

The framework of public spaces is utilized for both passive and active recreation, as well as organized and self-directed participation. No matter the activity these spaces offer the potential for unique and memorable experiences for all parts of the community. Trails can be planned as pathways and links to a system of public open spaces, schools, commercial and employment areas, and entertainment locations. By creating a system of diverse public open spaces / parks connected by multi-use pathway corridors Gering will benefit by enhancing community health / wellness and promoting positive social interaction.

The Principles and Policies in Section 3 – Community Vision include a broad list of items that impact the Parks & Open Space Framework, indicating how important these items are to the community. The vision even included one of the four primary foundations – Nature Close at Hand – to highlight many of the policies associated with Parks & Open Space. For a full description of each principle and policy, please reference Section 3.

Many of these policies could be handled through more specific and tactical investigation over the years. However, several are interrelated with the broader vision of the plan and should be carefully considered to ensure they don't get lost in the shuffle. Additionally, many of the most critical issues are regional in nature and will require broad collaboration between local, regional, state and even federal government, along with community and non-profit partners.

Specifically, the following Principles embody the strategic differentiation that Gering can use to leverage natural assets to promote growth and economic investment:

Principle 1.1 – Our community will embrace the river.

What this principle means for Gering: The river is a defining asset for the community, yet the leveraging of its impact is currently limited. As economies shift from resourced-based geographic limitations, quality of life is becoming a predominant factor influencing business site selection. Approaching this issue through an economic development lens will help add strategic focus as well as horsepower to the initiative.

Due to the regional impact of the North Platte River Corridor on the tri-town area, a collaborative approach to planning and enhancement should be considered. Gering can take a leadership role to ensure that this initiative doesn't get caught up in red tape. To help advance this principle, a logical next step would include diving deeper into what it means to the local communities to Embrace the River. Exploring specific action steps of how the policies in this comprehensive plan could be carried out would help define funding needs and specific policy changes to pursue. Additionally, creating a master vision for the River could help in securing funding.

Principle 1.1 – Our community will preserve views of the Scotts Bluff National Monument and other views of significance.

What this principle means for Gering: Views of the rock formations provide a geographic exclamation point to the Gering area. Visitors, prospective residents and business owners, and locals appreciate this diversity in landform, viewing the formations as a key amenity to the area. Preserving views of the Monument will require several different action steps. First, identifying the most important locations that views should be preserved from is essential. While changes over time and new construction may impede views from individual properties, key public locations should be identified where the views are non-negotiable. Once you've agreed upon these key locations, a series of guidelines should be created to help future decision-makers evaluate proposals. Specific locations to consider views from may include public buildings and parks.

Additional consideration should be given to the protection of land leading up to the bluffs. Creation of a buffer area around the base of the Monument and other areas can help to preserve the dramatic quality and function of these areas as public recreation amenities. In addition to purchasing lands, consider exploring a variety of tools, including conservation easements, to help minimize development nearby these landforms.

Principle 1.5 – Our community parks will serve all populations.

What this principle means for Gering: Parks are a beloved asset to the people of Gering. The superior quality of life has resulted in families choosing to establish roots in Gering over other area communities. In order to maintain this competitive advantage, Gering should carefully monitor the types of facilities and experiences its parks offer to ensure that it continues to meet local needs.

To help Gering address the principle to serve all populations, a Parks Master Plan is recommended to aid in reviewing your current assets as well as liabilities. In several instances, there may be too many or too few fields, courts or parks. Considering changing trends is also important to prioritize popular emerging activities – like pickleball – to ensure Gering is meeting the needs of its population.

Additional considerations in a master plan include maintenance. Merging stormwater control facilities can be an effective way to utilize open lands while also reducing the amount of area that needs to be maintained. Adding naturalized landscapes to parks can reduce irrigation requirements as well as mowing operations. Exploring these options in greater detail will help to ensure that your team can manage the assets in an efficient manner.

Parks & Open Space Framework

With many different assets and elements to work with, the Parks & Open Space Framework includes corridors, natural areas, various types of parks, and specialty areas. The following categorization system helps to create a shared classification system to help ensure everyone is using the same language to describe the types of facilities. These include:

Parks & Open Space Classification	
Functional Classification	Context
PATHWAY CORRIDORS	Trails
	Bike Lanes
NATURAL AREAS	
PARKS	Community
	Neighborhood
	Pocket Park
	Plaza
	Specialty Areas

Pathway Corridors

Objective: Provide safe access to and connectivity between neighborhoods and community destinations throughout Gering while enhancing opportunities for recreation, interaction, health and wellness, and alternative means of transportation.

Pathway corridors serve as links between areas and places in Gering. Such corridors are based in providing the opportunity to walk, run, bike for recreational, health / wellness, or alternate means of transportation purposes. Two types of pathway corridors have been identified.

Trails

Trails are intended to promote social interaction as people move about the community for recreation, health, and transportation purposes. These links and paths may serve multiple type of users and uses – e.g. green storm water infrastructure, wildlife habitat, walking / hiking, cycling, etc. – may all coexist in the trail corridor.

Bike Lanes / Routes

Bicycling is an affordable and popular mode of transportation that provides physical activity and produces no pollution. The lane / route network must integrate with and complement the functions of the various street types and trails. In a community like Gering virtually every street may see bicycle traffic but identifying the best location for bicycle facilities e.g. designated lanes or routes, requires detailed planning with safety as a top priority.

Natural Areas

Objective: Provide nature-based recreation and environmental education opportunities while protecting and preserving valuable or unique natural resources and open space.

Natural areas serve as places where people can escape the built environment of the community to enjoy natural landscape features and amenities. The area may serve a number of natural functions such as storm water management, wildlife habitat, flood control. The size and shape of the area is dependent upon the functions, purpose and uses that are associated with the area. Such areas while protecting or conserving natural resources or features also allow public access and support outdoor recreation opportunities that may be unique to the area – trail related activities; bird and wildlife viewing; and environmental education / interpretation.

Trail heads, variations of trail materials, interpretive / informational signage, fishing or water access points, viewpoints mark the types of low-impact facilities that may be present in natural areas. These areas are easily connected to other community destinations by the overall trail system and mobility network.

Community Parks

Objective: Provide opportunities for multiple types of recreation and community gathering that requires larger open spaces capable of supporting organized activities and events in addition to day-to-day use.

Community parks are usually 15 or more acres of area serving residents from throughout the community. People may come to the park via personal vehicles, walking, biking or even public transit, which ties to the importance of such parks being located on collector or arterial streets and pedestrian / bicycle trail systems as people may be coming to the park for communitywide activities. These types of parks will support active and passive forms of recreation that appeal to a wide range of user groups. Amenities may include group picnic areas / shelters, sport fields / courts, children's play areas, gardens, trail or pathway systems, community festival or event space and green space or natural areas. Additional support facilities such as indoor recreation facilities, off-street parking and restrooms may also be present in these types of parks.

Neighborhood Parks

Objective: Provide green space and recreational opportunities within the neighborhood at the individual, family and small group level for all ages.

Neighborhood parks are typically less than 10 acres in size and serve residents within a ½ mile walking distance of the park but may attract users from further away. Such parks may be associated with school facilities. These close to home recreational opportunities typically include amenities such as playground equipment; outdoor sports courts and fields; picnic facilities; walking paths and open space areas. Users of these parks may be from a wide age range and most activities are non-supervised / non-organized activities. Walkers and bicyclists will frequent these parks so connectivity to the surrounding neighborhood and the larger trail system is important.

Pocket Parks / Plazas

Objective: Provide easily accessible and comfortable green space and/or basic recreation opportunities while contributing to neighborhood, district and community identity.

These smaller spaces are intimately tied to their immediate surroundings. Generally, such facilities are less than 3 acres in size and meet basic recreational needs or take advantage of a unique context. These parks and plazas are small lots with limited amenities – playground, seating and tables, landscape / public art – which fit the context and primary user needs. Such parks / plazas will make use of vacant land or other unused space and will foster community interaction and civic pride.

Specialty Areas

Objective: Provide regional or citywide opportunities for specialized recreation, social and cultural activities and contribute to community identity and civic pride.

The size of these areas is determined by the type of use. The special use area usually has a single dominant use / purpose such as a sports complex, field or stadium; dog areas; skate park; boat or water-oriented facility; swimming pool; community center; fair grounds; community entertainment / event venues; etc. Because of the specific nature of the facility or area design consideration must take into account the provision of adequate and appropriate support facilities on the site, as well as access to mobility networks utilized by the user group(s) coming to the specialty area.

The Service Area Map provides an overview of accessibility to parks and pathways to help identify areas of Gering that may be underserved. A quarter-mile buffer is illustrate around each park (in green) and pathway (in blue). While it is preferable for the majority of residents to be proximate to a park facility, access to a pathway which connects to a park is a beneficial alternative. The map illustrates that a majority of Gering’s residential neighborhoods do have reasonable access to parks facilities with a few gaps to consider addressing.

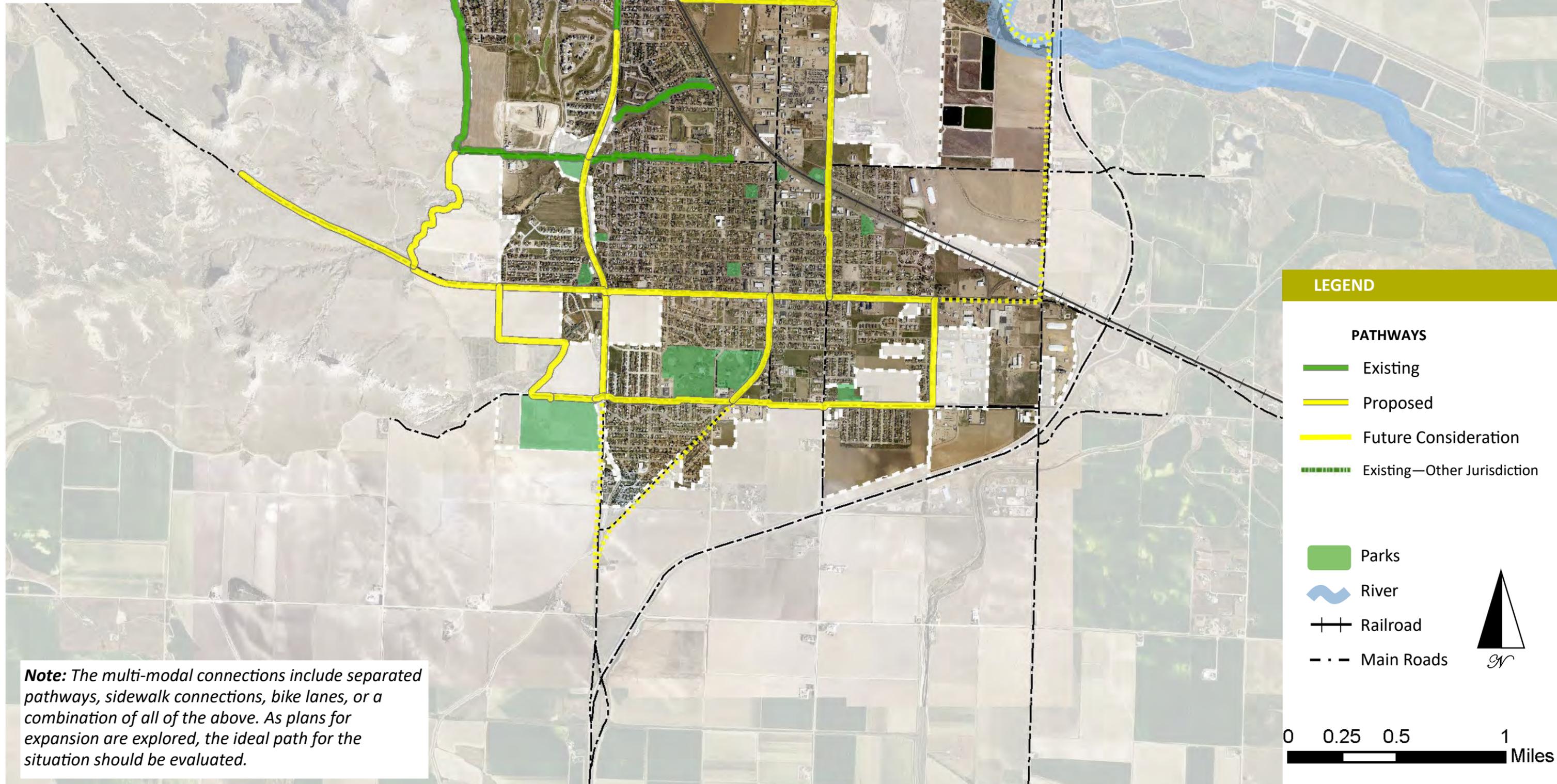
As residential growth occurs, planning for additional parks and pathways should take place in advance of neighborhood buildout to ensure that new gaps are not being created. Phased park development can help to address the timing and balancing capital investments. The first critical step is identifying the location of future parks. Second, property acquisition ensures that a public facility can be built in the future. A third and possibly much later step is the actual development of the park, which should take place when the demand is present for the facility.

Specific consideration should be given to identifying a property in Gering’s south growth area (District 3) north of the bypass and southeast of Kimball Avenue.

Understanding pathway connections are also important to ensuring that both non-motorized transportation and recreation needs are addressed in Gering. The Multi-Modal Connections Map depicts the location of existing pathways (both on-street bike lanes and trail connections) and parks. Proposed pathways identify primary locations for new facilities to be considered in the near-term for Gering. The indication of a Proposed Pathway does not specifically define how that facility might be installed. In some areas, a separated trail may be feasible, providing a separated facility that offers a more recreational experience. In other areas, on-street bike lanes may be necessary due to existing conditions and building adjacent to the street. In any instance, additional design plans will be needed to formalize the approach to construction of these pathway facilities.

The Multi-Modal Connections Map also identifies Future Pathways for consideration over time. These routes are located in areas that could possibly be considered, but are not as high a priority to serve the community in the near term. As road projects and development of properties along these routes emerge over time, consideration should be give to ensure that the option to install a pathway facility is not eliminated. Preservation of right-of-way is one tool that can help in addressing these segments.

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS



LEGEND

PATHWAYS

- Existing
- Proposed
- Future Consideration
- Existing—Other Jurisdiction

Parks

River

Railroad

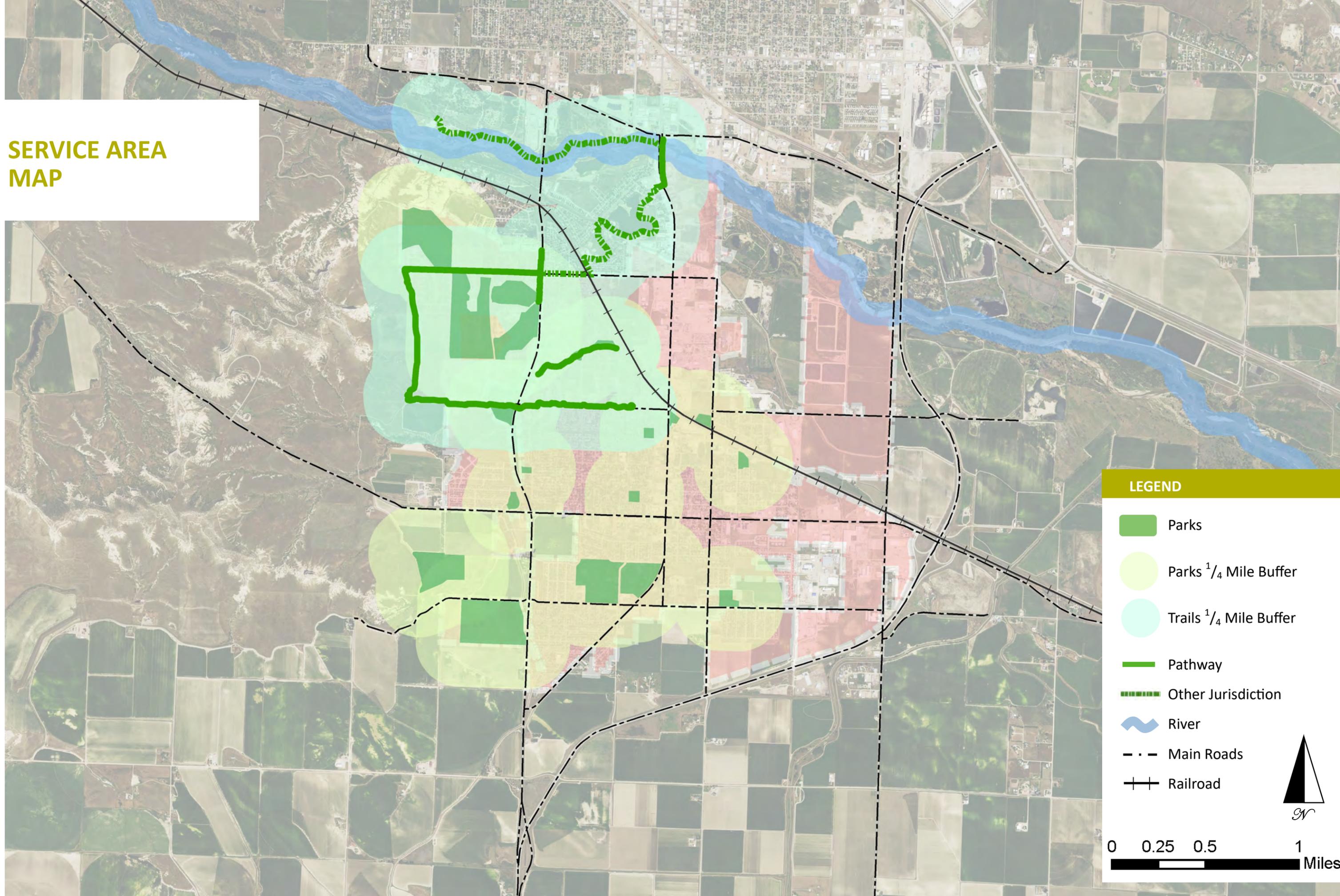
Main Roads



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

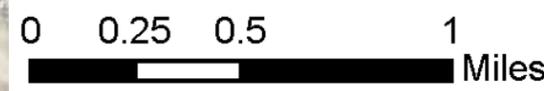
Note: The multi-modal connections include separated pathways, sidewalk connections, bike lanes, or a combination of all of the above. As plans for expansion are explored, the ideal path for the situation should be evaluated.

SERVICE AREA MAP



LEGEND

-  Parks
-  Parks 1/4 Mile Buffer
-  Trails 1/4 Mile Buffer
-  Pathway
-  Other Jurisdiction
-  River
-  Main Roads
-  Railroad



4.4

Energy

Everyday life in Gering is dependent upon the availability of reliable energy to support mobility, employment, education, commerce and agriculture in and around the community. Gering's future growth and development will impact energy sources and systems and the need for affordable energy provision will grow as well. Through proper planning and policy implementation it is possible for the community to save money, promote a resilient economy, conserve resources, and have a prosperous future. The energy framework for the Gering Comprehensive Plan consists of a summary of Nebraska Energy Policy, a profile of Gering's existing energy use by sector (Residential, Commercial, Industrial, and Transportation), and an overview of renewable energy sources, as well as strategies and actions for Gering.

Recent Energy Policy in Nebraska

The State of Nebraska passed Legislative Bill 997 in 2010 that requires all cities and counties in Nebraska (with the exception of villages) to incorporate an energy element into any new or updated comprehensive plan. Such element must address energy utilization and use by sector, utilization of renewable energy sources and energy conservation measures that benefit the community. This section has been prepared in accordance with Nebraska State Statute 19-903(4).

Additionally, the state has developed an energy plan and adopted an energy code. The 2011 Nebraska Energy Plan identifies 3 objectives with 14 supporting strategies. The primary objective are as follows:

- Ensure access to affordable and reliable energy for Nebraskans to use responsibly.
- Advance implementation and innovation of renewable energy in the state.
- Reduce petroleum consumption in Nebraska's transportation sector.

By adopting the International Energy Conservation Code (IEEC), effective August 2011, as the Nebraska Energy Code, the State of Nebraska allows all cities and counties to adopt codes that differ from the Nebraska Energy Code, but state law requires that such codes be equivalent to the Nebraska Energy Code. State Statute Sections 81-1608 to 81-1616 outlines the provisions of the Energy Code that are intended to see that new structures and significant renovation of existing structures meet uniform efficiency standards. As stated in the State Statutes:

there is a need to adopt the International Energy Conservation Code in order (1) to ensure that a minimum energy efficiency standard is maintained throughout the state, (2) to harmonize and clarify energy building code statutory references, (3) to ensure compliance with the National Energy Policy Act of 1992, (4) to increase energy savings for all Nebraska consumers, especially low-income Nebraskans, (5) to reduce the cost of state programs that provide assistance to low-income Nebraskans, (6) to reduce the amount of money expended to import energy, (7) to reduce the growth of energy consumption, (8) to lessen the need for new power plants, and (9) to provide training for local code officials and residential and commercial builders who implement the International Energy Conservation Code.

Additional information regarding the Nebraska Energy Code can be found at the Nebraska Energy Office website (http://www.neo.ne.gov/home_const/iecc/counties/gage.htm).

Another piece of impactful energy related State Legislation is LB 436 which allows for net metering. Through net metering citizens can generate their own energy and send the excess energy they produce back onto the grid. The practice of net metering has many benefits related to the diversifying the use of energy resources, promoting growth in the economy, and providing affordable and reliable energy relate service. The citizen / customer is encouraged to employ renewable energy sources with the utility purchasing the excess energy produced through a credit system.

In addition to net metering legislation, the State of Nebraska has also incorporated easement provisions allowing property owners to create binding solar and wind easements to protect and maintain access to sunlight and wind for energy related purposes. Local jurisdictions may also develop plans and regulations to protect solar and wind access, as well as grant variances under certain parameters to solar and wind energy systems that would be restricted under current local regulations. Additional information regarding programs, incentives and policies related to energy are summarized on the Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency (DSIRE) website: <http://www.dsireusa.org/>

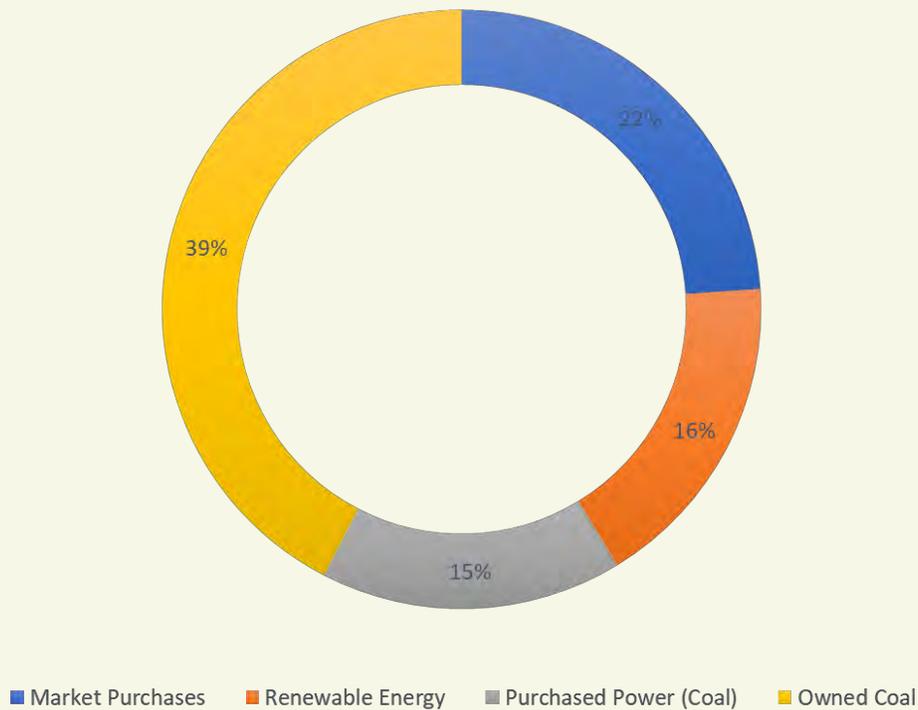
Gering's Energy Infrastructure & Consumption

Energy provision in Gering is primarily provided through the local electrical and natural gas infrastructure systems.

Electricity

In Gering the electrical system is owned and operated by the City. The purchases wholesale electricity from MEAN (Municipal Energy Agency of Nebraska). MEAN uses a variety of traditional and renewable energy sources to generate electricity.

MEAN Sources of Energy



Source: MEAN 2017-2018 Annual Report

Natural Gas

Black Hills Energy is a private utility provider of natural gas in Gering. The natural gas infrastructure system consists of a network of service lines of various sizes and ages. The primary feeder main into the city is a main. The system P.S.I is # pounds.

Heating Fuel Sources in Gering

	Occupied Housing Units	Percent
Utility Gas	2,623	81.2%
Bottled/ tank or LP gas	56	1.7%
Electricity	515	15.9%
Other Fuel	30	0.9%

Source: American Community Survey 2017 estimates

Potential Renewable Energy Sources

Nebraska is a unique state in that it is the only state in which power is provided by public providers only. This has resulted in some of the lowest electricity costs in the nation. Low cost energy provision through traditional means of production has also served as a stumbling block to implementing renewable energy projects in Nebraska at a time when much of the nation is looking to non-traditional renewable energy sources. Yet several renewable energy sources may serve as options for Gering in the future.

Biomass

The use of biological materials (e.g. living or recently living organisms) as an energy source is most recognized or associated with the production of ethanol, biodiesel and methane gas. Indirect energy generation from biomass sources through the fermentation or degradation of agricultural, natural, and municipal wastes, residues or by-products may create a number of fuels. These fuels can be used to produce heat and electricity.

Geothermal

Geothermal energy can be cost effective and environmentally friendly but may be limited in application in the Gering area. The most likely application of geothermal energy would be the use of individual heat pump systems consisting of closed loop piping filled with fluid which circulates underground at a depth where the temperature is constant. In the winter heat is extracted from the ground and in the summer waste heat is discharged into the ground. Geothermal systems use less energy to operate than traditional heating / cooling systems.

Solar

Solar power generation may occur at the individual site / user level or as a part of a larger power generating system / arrays for a number of users. Solar power generation also consists of passive and active capture methods. Passive solar methods maximize the use of the sun for lighting and heating purposes related to individual buildings through site planning, building orientation, use of glazing and other building materials in a manner which intentionally lights and heats interior space. Active solar methods utilize solar collector systems that convert sunlight into electricity. Such systems may include the use of photovoltaic or concentrated solar power technology. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory ranks Nebraska as 13th in regard to potential solar energy.

Wind

As with solar, wind power generation consists of both individual site / user applications and larger power generating system (utility scale) applications. Small / individual (less than 100 kilowatts) are generally associated with home, farm or small businesses while utility systems are larger than 100 kilowatts and are associated with electric utility providers.

Nebraska is considered as one of the best wind power generating locations in the nation. Since 2008 Nebraska has increased its amount of wind energy generation which appears to be a trend that will continue. It is estimated that wind power is capable of meeting approximately 120 times the amount of Nebraska's electricity needs.

Gering Energy Education & Savings Efforts

The City of Gering is undertaking several projects to reduce overall energy usage. Currently the City is in the process of converting their system from a 2400 volt system to a 7200 volt system. This will significantly reduce the amount on line loss, meaning the City should be able to use less than half the amount of wholesale electricity in order to deliver the same amount of retail electricity to consumers. Other energy savings measures include converting all street lights to LEDs which saves a considerable amount of power compared to traditional lighting.

Education Sources

The identification and effective use of proper renewable energy sources and systems depends on educating the public and employing the best methods and systems for the geographic area. Such education can ensure that the dollars spent to employ and maintain such methods and systems at both the individual and community scale are maximized.

In addition to local education provided through the City of Gering and the various websites and agencies identified in this element of the comprehensive plan a variety of energy saving tips can be found at (http://www.nppd.com/save-energy/homeenergy_suite/). This resource provides analysis tools for understanding the energy efficiency of a home through a comparison of costs associated with heating, irrigation, lighting, etc. Additional locations for energy savings tips include: <http://www.neo.ne.gov/tips/tips.htm> and http://energy.gov/sites/pro/files/2014/05/f16/Energy_Saver_Guide_PhaseI_Final.pdf

Funding Sources

A variety of funding sources are available to encourage energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy applications. These sources range from tax credits, to loans to grants from both public and private sources. A summary of the various programs and resources in Nebraska can be found at the Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency (DSIRE) website <http://www.dsireusa.org/>.

Grants may come from a variety of State, Federal and non-profit, as well as corporate entities. One such program is the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program which has provided grants to a number of Nebraska communities. Additionally, energy and weatherization assistance programs are available to assist residents needing help paying their utility bills (<http://nebraskaenergyassistance.com/assistance/>) and for lower income citizens that desire to lower their utility bills by making their home more energy efficient (<http://www.neo.ne.gov/wx/wxindex.htm>)

Below is a brief overview of several programs with corresponding links that can be used to obtain further information on several programs in Nebraska.

Dollar and Energy Savings Loans

Created in 1990 the Nebraska Dollar and Energy Savings Loan program was created uses oil overcharge funds and makes low-interest loans available for residential and commercial energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy projects.

A project may be eligible if it is included in a list of prequalified improvements or with the submission of an energy audit that verifies a reasonable payback period for the project / improvement. Additional information can be obtained from <http://www.neo.ne.gov/loan/> or <http://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/detail/214>

Local Option – Property-Assessed Clean Energy Financing

The Property Assessed Clean Energy Act of 2016 allows communities to create clean energy assessment districts. Through the district cities enter into contracts with qualifying property owners and potentially third-party financing for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Assessments added to the owner's property taxes are used to paid back project costs. Additional information can be obtained from <http://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/detail/5869>

Property Tax Exemption for Renewable Energy Generation Facilities

In 2010, Nebraska created a nameplate capacity tax that replaced the Nebraska Department of Revenue's central assessment and taxation of depreciable tangible personal property associated with wind energy generation facilities (see L.B. 1048). In 2015, eligibility was extended to solar, biomass, and landfill gas (see L.B. 424). Additional information can be obtained from <http://www.revenue.state.ne.us/> or <http://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/detail/4946>

Renewable Energy Tax Credit (Corporate)

This tax credit provides an opportunity for corporations to reduce their Nebraska income tax liability or state sales and use taxes paid by the corporate entity (via refund) that implements an eligible renewable technology (e.g. solar, landfill gas, wind, hydroelectric, geothermal electric, fuel cells, anaerobic digestion, and fuel cells using renewable fuels). Additional information can be obtained from <http://www.revenue.ne.gov/>

Renewable Energy Tax Credit (Personal)

This tax credit is similar to the Corporate tax credit but is for citizens who implement an eligible renewable technology. Additional information can be obtained from <http://www.revenue.ne.gov/>

Sales and Use Tax Exemption for Renewable Energy Property

With a minimum investment of \$20 million Nebraska provides the opportunity for sales / use taxes paid as part of an eligible renewable energy system used to produce electricity for sale. The first 1.5% of sales tax charged by a municipality is exempt from this refund program. Additional information can be obtained from <http://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/detail/5427>

04

Vision to Action



5.1

Strategies & Action Plan

Plan Gering includes a strong vision for action. Implementation of the Plan will require time, financial and human resources, as well as coordination between public and private entities. This section is meant to be a pragmatic, action-oriented approach that focuses efforts and limited resources into several strategies to achieve success. The strategies and action plan are organized around the four community values.

The following Action Plan identifies strategies to implement Plan Gering over a period of years. Each strategy or action item is associated with a desired time frame: short-term for the first one to two years, intermediate for years three to five, long-term for years five to 20, and ongoing for implementing actions periodically throughout the planning period. Three categories of actions are identified in the “Type” column. They include: Code Reform, which is a recommendation to change an ordinance; Policy Decision, which will guide day-to-day decisions by staff, Planning Commission, and City Council; and, Program, which is a recommendation for a new program to carry out the goals of this Plan. The “Responsible Party” column lists the partners or groups responsible for implementation.

City staff and planning officials should evaluate the implementation matrix annually to document goals that have been achieved and determine which goals should take priority next.

Nature Close at Hand

Short Term (1-2 years)	Intermediate (3-5 years)	Long Term (5-20 years)	Ongoing	Action	Type	Responsible Party
■				Encourage buildings to orient toward the river edge. This means locating entrances, patios, outdoor seating areas to open toward the river.	Code Reform	City
■				New development located adjacent the river should be designed to permit public access to the river. An example would be a path connecting a public street to the river through the development.	Code Reform	City
■				Encourage development to minimize impacts along the river and on the natural environment. This could mean identifying development standards and management practices such as Low-impact design features.	Code Reform	City
■				Encourage development to preserve and enhance visual connections to the river. This could include preserving public viewsheds whenever feasible or designing outdoor spaces to maximize views.	Code Reform	City
	■			Develop a long-range plan for uses along the river.	Program	City
			■	Promote recreational uses and programming along the river's edge.	Program	City
	■			Create informational displays along the river highlighting the geology and ecology of the river.	Program	City
■				Encourage site and building design to conform to the natural setting with as little disturbance as possible.	Code Reform	City
	■			Create an Overlay based on visual impacts and identify viewsheds to which the Overlay will apply.	Code Reform	City
		■		Identify partners and methods to protect lands adjacent the monument or acquire easements for areas with significant environmental and/ or historical value.	Policy Decision	City
■				Develop incentives and requirements to ensure development near natural features minimize adverse impacts.	Code Reform	City
			■	Promote the use of reclaimed water for large-scale irrigation.	Policy Decision/ Code Reform	City
■				Incentivize low water consumptive vegetation for landscaping.	Code Reform	City
■				Encourage open spaces to offer low maintenance green space.	Code Reform	City
			■	Plan for parks to include natural areas.	Policy Decision	City
■				Minimize light pollution by evaluating and amending lighting standards based on dark skies best practices.	Code Reform	City
			■	Design for safety by encouraging park design to include natural surveillance. This can be accomplished by eliminating hiding places and increasing human presence.	Code Reform	City
			■	Continue to acquire neighborhood park spaces within ½ mile of all residents when funding is available.	Policy Decision	City

		Identify possible connective pathways between parks and open space and pursue opportunities for purchase of land, easements, or other agreements for connectivity.	Policy Decision	City
		Ensure park programming for all ages and abilities of residents.	Policy Decision	City
		Provide incentives to increase residential tree canopy.	Policy Decision	City
		Create a strategy to diversify funding sources for maintenance, operation and development of parks.	Policy Decision	City
		Explore tree preservation programs to encourage good maintenance practices and replanting.	Program	City

Champions of Commerce

Short Term (1-2 years)	Intermediate (3-5 years)	Long Term (5-20 years)	Ongoing	Action	Type	Responsible Party
			■	Develop incentive programs to support the growth and creation of local businesses. This could include resources for small businesses such as tax increment financing or other financial tools.	Program	City
■				Reduce zoning barriers for home businesses.	Code Reform	City
	■			Explore an organizational structure to lead economic development efforts Downtown. This could include Main Street, Downtown Development Authorities, and Urban Renewal Authorities.	Program	City
	■			Brand the Downtown as a recognizable identity.	Program	
	■			Create a “buy local” campaign that leverages Downtown’s brand for collective advertising.	Program	
			■	Investigate how local permitting and regulatory processes affect business activity and address any bottlenecks.	Code Reform	City
	■			Inventory and map property available for redevelopment and market opportunities.	Program	
			■	Communicate funding opportunities to small business owners.	Program	
			■	Promote local recreation venues, e.g., hiking, rock climbing, fishing, biking, and associated services.	Program	
			■	Use a varied marking approach to advertise tourism opportunities.	Program	
			■	List and promote available sites in industrial parks.	Program	
			■	Continue to strengthen partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce, PADD, and other economic development agencies to attract and retain businesses.	Program	City
			■	Support schools in improving student performance.	Policy Decision	
		■		Develop a brand and identity for the city that promotes the community’s assets. This would include an overhaul of the City’s logo.	Program	City
			■	Increase tourism and the city’s profile as a vacation destination by publicizing its quality of life, recreational assets, and tourism opportunities.	Program	

Establishing Roots

Short Term (1-2 years)	Intermediate (3-5 years)	Long Term (5-20 years)	Ongoing	Action	Type	Responsible Party
■				Develop guidelines that encourage design solutions for transitioning between varying intensities of building types and land uses.	Code Reform	City
■				Revise the zoning code to allow for the integration of various residential densities, building types, and styles.	Code Reform	City
			■	Provide incentives to encourage a mix of compatible housing types that meet the diverse economic needs of the community.	Policy Decision	City
	■			Develop tools to create and preserve rental and owner-occupied affordable housing.	Program	
	■			Create an investment strategy that leverages local, regional, state and federal affordable housing resources.	Program	
		■		Create public/private partnerships to expand workforce housing options and availability.	Program	
		■		Create and expand rehabilitation programs to stabilize neighborhoods.	Program	
			■	Coordinate public infrastructure projects with community revitalization.	Policy Decision	City
		■		Develop and implement a community wide historic preservation plan that seeks to identify, retain, preserve, and revitalize the city's historic, cultural, and architectural resources.	Program	City
	■			Create a consistent process for the review of projects that involve a historic property.	Program	City
	■			Develop a system and procedures for code enforcement.	Program	
■				Increase landscaping and design requirements in parking areas.	Code Reform	City
			■	Partner with community organizations to develop initiatives or events focused on cleaning up the community and reducing litter.	Program	City
■				Revise or update zoning code to reduce the impact of sign clutter through amortization of signs that do not conform to requirements.	Code Reform	City
■				Revise zoning code to promote mixed-use development.	Code Reform	City
■				Amend zoning code to require commercial buildings to be built to the street rather than behind a parking lot, or to incorporate screening for large-scale commercial with parking in the front.	Code Reform	City
			■	Promote the re-use, redevelopment, and revitalization of underperforming buildings and sites by employing financial tools and creating expedited review processes.	Code Reform/ Program	City
			■	Develop design guidelines for industrial development that address placement of building, screening, landscaping, and buffering treatments.	Code Reform	City

■	Develop a list of preferred and discouraged building materials for all zoning districts.	Code Reform	City
■	Require large sections of blank walls adjacent to public streets to be broken up using architectural design standards.	Code Reform	City
■	Develop a Design Guidelines Handbook that includes examples of successful buildings with desired materials, architectural features, and design elements.	Policy Decision	City

Meaningful Connections

Short Term (1-2 years)	Intermediate (3-5 years)	Long Term (5-20 years)	Ongoing	Action	Type	Responsible Party
				Develop a streetscape framework that guides landscaping, trees, street furnishings, street lighting and other public real improvements.	Code Reform	City
				Require adequately sized sidewalks on both sides of streets where significant pedestrian activity occurs or is expected.	Code Reform	City
				Protect pedestrians from traffic with street trees and other landscaping elements.	Code Reform	City
				Encourage frequent bus service and weekend bus service serving significant destinations in Gering.	Program	City
				Establish programs with funding sources to provide landscaping enhancements along targeted corridors.	Program	City
				Improve pedestrian safety by building missing links in the sidewalk system and replacing sidewalks in poor condition.	Program	City
				Establish clear funding and responsibilities for sidewalk maintenance and replacement.	Code Reform	City
				Create a network of bicycle lanes, trails and routes that connect people to places.	Program	City
				Improve existing trail connections to streets and destinations.	Program	City
				Maintain traditional grid block patterns with frequent intersection, through-streets, and alleys.	Code Reform	City
				Support daily bike travel with ample bicycle facilities that are safe for all users.	Program	City
				Improve pedestrian safety in activity centers using frequent and comfortable pedestrian crossings that can include raised intersections, pedestrian activated signals, curb extensions and refuges.	Code Reform/ Program	City
				Provide bicycle parking and storage facilities near public gathering places.	Program	City
				Require bicycle parking and storage facilities near building entrances for new multi-family and commercial development.	Code Reform	City
				Increase bike lanes by adding lanes to streets with sufficient capacity and including lanes in future road widening or reconstruction projects.	Program	City
				Establish regulations that require pedestrian connections between new commercial development and adjoining residential areas.	Code Reform	City

5.2

Monitoring & Review

Plan Gering includes several strategies and actions to implement the community's vision. A key component to implementing Plan Gering is regular monitoring. In order for the plan to be successful, the City must establish a method to measure progress. Ongoing monitoring will shed light on strategies in the plan that are working and items that need improvement. The City will also need to solicit the help of its partners to measure whether the strategies laid out in the plan are achieving desired results.

It is recommended the City document any progress made with individual action items in an Annual Report. The Annual Report should include a status indicator of each action item and a work program for the following year. In addition, it should identify any new issues that have come up over the year that are in need of consideration by City Council. Along with the Annual Report, the City should implement a longer term performance monitoring report where it looks to assess whether the action items implemented have had a positive result. Indicators should be identified shortly after the adoption of this plan to make this assessment manageable. As a result of the monitoring program, changes to this Plan may need to occur. Any changes shall be addressed through a public amendment process by the City Council.

An update of the Comprehensive Plan should take place every ten years, unless otherwise directed by City Council. The purpose of the update will be to refresh and reexamine the vision, values, policies and strategies, and develop any new policies if necessary.



Appendices



Appendix A

Public Facilities

Public facilities include the structures and services administered by public and semi-public organizations that provide for the everyday needs of the community. Collectively, public facilities have a significant influence on the quality of life in Gering. This section offers a description of existing facilities.

CITY GOVERNMENT

The City of Gering is comprised of 11 departments that provide municipal services to city residents and businesses.

City Administration Building

The Gering Administration Building is headquartered in Downtown at 1025 P Street. The 12,000 square foot facility was constructed in 1990 and is in good condition. Approximately 8,400 square feet of the building is used for administration, with the facility providing space for the city administrator, city clerk, city engineer, city treasurer and utilities department. The remainder of the space in this building houses the police department.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Gering Police Station

The Police Department is housed in the west end of City Administration Building. The 3,600 square foot facilities, constructed in 1990, is in good condition. The Department provides 24-hour crime prevention, investigation and enforcement services to Gering residents. The Department employs 18 full-time officers, 2 part time officers, 2 clerical support staff, and 1 part-time crossing guard. Jail facilities are provided by the Scotts Bluff County Corrections Department. The average expenditures needed for police protection have averaged \$2,237,000 over the past three years.

Additional office, storage and work space has been identified as a future need for the department.

Gering Fire Department

The Gering Fire Department is a combination department that offers 24 hour, 365 all-hazard response within a 128 square mile area. The department is charged with fire suppression, technical rescue, BLS medical and motor vehicle response, hazardous material emergencies, and fire prevention through programs and ordinance enforcement. Every 4-6 years the department develops and updates their strategic plan.

The department operates from a 9,400 square foot facility that seen an addition in 1995. The facility consists of the apparatus bay, two training rooms, two restrooms with showers and two administrative offices. It is expected to see updates to the training rooms and offices in the future. The department is in need of additional 3,500 square feet of space for equipment and storage. Due to stormwater mandates, the facilities will also need to go through updates to the apparatus bay and exterior concrete finishes.

The fire department added a 3,500 square foot training facility in 2014 to support training needs. This facility is located at 225 D Street and offers live fire training, search and rescue, high angle technical rescue and many unique options for the area. The department plans to add additional training props and outside area to support training and required testing of equipment.

The fire protection within the corporate limits has maintained an ISO rating of 4. The department has 10 firefighting apparatus, 2 command vehicles and 1 technical rescue trailer and maintain a replacement schedule for these vehicles. It has been policy to set aside funds annually to support the replacement schedule. Every year equipment costs increase 3-5% while the funds allocated to the replacement schedule has seen reduction every year. In 2028 the cost of replacing one fire truck will exceed the set aside amount in the sinking fund.

Current staffing model is 1 paid Fire Chief and approximately 32 volunteer firefighters Pro Board certified, with many carrying EMT certification. Average response times meet or exceed NFPA standards. Personnel response does not meet NFPA standards. The department has seen a 24% increase in call volume in the past 10 years and approximately 8% increase every year. Each year the department documents about 12,000 man-hours of training and hosts many state and regional trainings or exercises. With the steady increase of calls for service and community needs, a study should be conducted to determine if the staffing model meets the needs of the community in the foreseeable future.

The department has played a leading role in the county mutual aid association and participates in mutual aid response. Gering FD has an agreement with Scottsbluff to provide automatic aid response to structure fires to meet the ever growing NFPA standards.

The department is also unique as it is the only department in Nebraska that participates in a federal dispatching system to respond to national wildfires. The department intends to continue this process to provide experience to firefighters as well as an additional revenue source.

UTILITIES

Central Stores

The Central Stores Facility is located at 225 D Street. The main building consists of roughly 19,000 square feet and houses the offices and equipment for the Water, Wastewater, and Electric departments. In addition, the Electric Department has another building that consists of about 9,000 square feet that is used to house equipment. A new Streets building was completed in 2018. The building is 14,400 square feet and houses offices, break room, restroom, sign shop, and equipment storage. The Central Stores Facility as a whole currently has adequate space, and does not pose any serious problems at this time.

In the future, improvements will have to be made to the facility to meet the requirements of the City's MS4 NPDES permit.

Water System Infrastructure

The Gering water system has a total pumping capacity of 13.0 million gallons per day with an average daily demand of 2.6 million gallons per day. The peak daily demand is 8.5 million gallons per day. The system has approximately 75 miles of water mains and transmission pipelines ranging from 4-inch to 30-inch.

Through two connections, the City of Gering also provides potable water to the City of Terrytown. The City of Terrytown's annual usage is approximately 150 million gallons with an average daily demand of 410,000 gallons. Terrytown's peak day of 380,000 gallons per day.

The Gering Water System meets all Federal Drinking water regulations. In 2009 The City performed an upgrade on the water system to comply with the new arsenic and uranium standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency. The City located a new groundwater source northwest of Scottsbluff and blends the water with an existing groundwater source located in north Gering. The water is pumped from both well fields to a 1-million-gallon blending reservoir where the water is chlorinated and then pumped to the water system through a pump station. The pump station currently has a total pumping capacity of 14 million gallons per day and has a design capacity of 17 million gallons per day. The pump station site is designed to incorporate a conventional water treatment plant and the city has chosen a lime softening treatment process for a future treatment process.

In 2018 the City had a water system model performed to identified existing hydraulic problems and evaluate effects of additional demands imposed by new development.

This model will assist staff with the proper sizing of water pipelines and replacement of existing pipelines for future growth and subdivision developments.

The City currently has preliminary plans for the water system expansion to serve the Gering Industrial Park and the Highway 71 expressway area from the North Platte River to Five Rocks Road.

The City also has an on-going infrastructure replacement project, where the City is replacing water mains installed prior to 1928. This project will be completed in 2031.

Wastewater System Infrastructure

The Gering wastewater treatment plant has a capacity of 1.2 million gallon per day. The average daily flow is 675,000 gallons per day and our peak flow was 1.1 million gallons per day. The wastewater collection system has approximately 55 miles of sanitary sewer pipelines ranging in size from 6-inch to 24-inch.

The Gering Wastewater Treatment Plant consists of two influent structures. The industrial influent pump station serves the northeast industrial area of the City, east of 10th Street from the Union Pacific Railroad tracks north to Country Club Road. This area used to serve two beef packing facilities until 2005 when the last packing facility closed. The industrial wastewater is pumped through anerobic basins prior to blending with the domestic wastewater. The domestic influent structure serves the remainder of the City. Wastewater enters a bar screen to remove most solids and is then pumped to an accelerated aeration basin, also known as a Sequencing Batch Reactor, (SBR) for primary treatment. After the anerobic process the industrial wastewater also enters the SBR for primary treatment. After primary treatment the wastewater is pumped through three facultative lagoon basins for natural ultraviolet treatment for bacteria and e-Coli remove prior to discharge to the North Platte River.

The anerobic process allows the City the capability to treat higher solids and organic loadings than normal treatment plant processes. There are no odors from the Gering Treatment Plant, the anerobic basins and the SBR have insulated covers to maintain temperature and for odor control.

In 2018 the City had a water system model performed to identified existing hydraulic problems and evaluate effects of additional demands imposed by new development. This model will assist staff with the proper sizing of collection system pipelines and replacement of existing pipelines for future growth and subdivision developments.

The City currently has preliminary plans for the wastewater collection system expansion to serve the Gering Industrial Park and the Highway 71 expressway area from the North Platte River to Five Rocks Road.

Landfill

The Gering Landfill is located at 200531 U Street. The roughly 75 acre facility consists of an equipment/baler building, offices, and a scale, along with the landfill itself. Currently the landfill is on the last cell within the permitted area. At last estimates, the landfill was projected to reach capacity in 2026. The City of Gering is currently working with the City of Scottsbluff to site and construct a new regional landfill, at which time the current landfill facility may continue to be utilized as a transfer station.

PARKS

Department of Parks

The Gering Department of Parks operates and maintains parks, the cemetery, golf course, swimming pool, open spaces, and trail corridors. The Department provides both maintenance to existing parks and facilities, as well as programming and activities at these locations. The Parks Building is located at 900 Overland Trails Road. This building houses offices, a meeting room, break room, and equipment storage. The Department needs additional storage. Their storage building at the RV park is in poor condition and will need replaced, and it would be ideal if the replacement storage could be more centrally located.

Needed Capital Improvements

- **All Parks Departments**
 - Need to make improvements to meet new stormwater requirements under the City's MS4 NPDES permit
 - Need to put all playground equipment on a replacement schedule to ensure it is always safe and in good working order
 - Irrigation system updates to make them more water efficient
- **Legion Park**
 - Bandshell/Bathroom Building needs to be evaluated and a plan made to either remove or renovate the structure

- **RV Park**
 - Bathroom and meeting room facility needs improved/updated and could be expanded
 - Need a storm shelter for guests
 - Need to expand RV park as it is often at capacity during summer months
- **Cemetery**
 - Road needs resurfaced
 - New irrigation system pump and irrigation system updates
- **Five Rocks Amphitheater**
 - Continue ADA updates
 - Create designated vendor area
 - Permanent fencing along D Street
 - Expansion/squaring off of stage to make it more functional
 - Increased seating capacity
- **Golf Course**
 - Line ponds to reduce infiltration, reclaim and fix shoreline/bank
 - New irrigation system for holes #2-8. Current irrigation systems for these holes are over 60 years old.
 - Maintenance Facility Improvements
 - Equipment is becoming increasingly specialized, with larger equipment sizes becoming the norm. Need additional storage space to effectively protect equipment assets.
 - It is now more common for seasonal employees to work part days instead of full days, requiring more staff. This leads to overcrowding of the facility.
 - Clubhouse needs regular maintenance and updating. Foundation issues should be evaluated to determine if settling is a problem.
 - Clubhouse needs expanded to provide storage for restaurant and pro shop
 - Kitchen appliances in clubhouse should be continuously updated to keep in good working condition
 - Awnings or shade structures over the windows of the pro shop and on restaurant patio area
 - Need to evaluate settling issues in the golf car storage building
 - Restrooms on the golf course need upgraded
 - Pump house building needs new siding and new roof

OTHER FACILITIES

Library

The City is served by the Gering Public Library, located at 1055 P Street. The library was originally constructed in 1962 with an addition completed in 1980. The library offers computers for use, WIFI, downloadable audio and e-books, and programming for children and adults.

A Library Study was completed in 2018. This study identified the need for expanded services and a larger facility due to the current library's lack of space and parking shortages during certain time periods. The City should work with library officials to identify sites for a new facility and should prioritize keeping the facility downtown if land is available.

Civic Center

The Gering Civic Center, located at 1050 M Street, was opened in May 1993. The 26,500 square foot multi-function facility accommodates meetings, banquets, reunions, and receptions. The center can entertain up to eight events at one time and offers a full service on-site caterer and full service bar.

The Civic Center has a need for more exhibit space for vendor activities during conferences and large meetings. This is one of the primary destination selection criteria and currently the most limiting factor for drawing more conferences to this facility. The facility is also showing its age and needs to be updated in order to remain competitive. The bathrooms, wallpaper, and wall fixtures are all original to the facility and need to be updated. The carpet is over eight years old and also needs to be replaced due to expected wear and tear. In the future, a funding source and schedule for facility updates and regular maintenance should be put into place.

Department of Tourism-Gering Visitors Bureau

The city-funded destination marketing organization (DMO), Department of Tourism-Gering Visitors Bureau is located at 1050 M Street (inside the Gering Civic Center) and has served Gering since 1992. The Tourism Department and Visitors Bureau coordinates the many constituent elements of Gering's tourism product, provides visitor services and develops and implements comprehensive marketing plans and strategies focusing on convention-meeting, group tour, sports-recreation and leisure markets to increase the number of visitors and tourism revenues coming to Gering.

A long-term goal of the Tourism Department has been to construct a permanent Visitor Information and Interpretive Center in Gering. This facility is envisioned as a year-round, full-service center that would encourage visitors to spend extended time and additional money in the area. While there are various locations where visitors can currently collect information, a stand-alone visitor center could be open weekends and evenings during the main travel season and reduced hours during the off and shoulder seasons. The facility might also include a variety of services and amenities including: interpretive displays highlighting the area's history, culture, tourism attractions and festival-events, adequate parking for private vehicles and motor coaches, public restrooms, a gift shop specializing in locally-made products and souvenirs, comfortable outdoor seating and picnic areas, trained staff and volunteers to offer a variety of services as well as free wi-fi internet access.

