

Chapter 6

Social and Environmental Indicators

Thayer County

6.1 Partner Organizations

Community economic development is a collaborative process. In today's competitive economy businesses and communities integrate private and public resources to serve their development needs. In Thayer County, public and private entities work cooperatively as partners at the local level to promote development.

The collaborative efforts of these civic leaders have successfully identified the needs of the area and developed the resources to assist with projects are financing and implementation.

Inclusive in this process are the following partnerships and linkages maintained by Thayer County agents of economic development to facilitate local and regional progress.

Thayer County Economic Development Alliance

The Thayer County Economic Development Alliance is a non-profit corporation which fosters economic development within the county and local communities. It is the lead organization facilitating collaborative efforts for community economic development activities among private and public entities in the county.

Nebraska Department of Economic Development

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development is the key state agency responsible for promoting the economy of Nebraska. It implements various financial incentive tools, recruitment and retention programs, and community capacity and assessment programs.

Nebraska Work Force Development Program

The Nebraska Department of Labor is responsible for state-wide work force development. It is responsible for implementing state and federal job training and labor force programs to assist individuals and businesses with training and recruitment. In addition, training is provided through community colleges, the businesses themselves, or other qualified providers. The nearest Nebraska Workforce Development Career Centers are located in the cities of York, Beatrice, and Lincoln.

Southeast Community College

The Southeast Community College (SCC) serves fifteen counties in southeast Nebraska, providing vocational, technical and academic programs. SCC offers specialized and customized training to existing and new businesses and industries in the region.

Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership

The Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership provides a comprehensive array of

services to small- and medium-sized manufacturers and processors.

Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality

This agency is responsible for implementing and managing state and federal air, water, waste, and other environmental assistance programs throughout the State of Nebraska.

The agency is a key partner in providing technical assistance and financing for community water and wastewater facilities.

Other Regional Organizations

Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD)

NPPD works in partnership with municipalities and other development organizations to assist in evaluating Nebraska locations for business attraction and expansion. NPPD assists in the economic development of the areas its serves.

Norris Public Power District

Norris Public Power District was created under the Rural Electrification Administration and serves Thayer, Gage, Jefferson, Lancaster and Saline Counties. It works cooperatively with municipalities and other development organizations to advance economic development in its service area

Nebraska Economic Development Corporation (NEDCO)

NEDCO is a state-wide Community Development Corporation that offers several types of Small Business Administration Guaranteed Loans to small businesses including, SBA 504 and SBA 502 fixed asset subordinated loans for land, building acquisition and equipment, and SBA 7A working capital loans.

Southeast Nebraska Development District (SENDD)

SENDD is a voluntary association of counties and municipalities formed under the Nebraska Interlocal Cooperation Act to identify common problems; identify solutions and to provide continuing support for efficient and effective government among its members. Current services provided by SENDD include General Governmental Contacts and Liaison; Grant Writing; Business & Industry Financing; Grant Administration; Housing Rehabilitation Program Management and Special Studies/Plans.

Trailblazer Resource Conservation and Development

Trailblazer Resource Conservation and Development area is a locally sponsored multi-county organization affiliated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It serve seven counties in south-central Nebraska. The purpose of this Resource Conservation and Development program is to encourage and assist rural areas to plan, develop, and carry out programs for resource conservation and development.

Blue Valley Community Action Partnership (BVCA)

BVCA is a non-profit human service agency serving a nine county core area in southeastern Nebraska. The BVCA staffs Family and Community Service Centers providing health, maternal and child, Head Start, transit and housing & rural development programs.

Heritage Highway/Byway 136

Heritage Highway/Byway 136 extends almost 240 miles from the wooded and hilly area of the Missouri River near Brownville to the prairie lakes region of south central Nebraska near Oxford. The Heritage Highway showcases the region's landscape, communities, historical and cultural attractions, great outdoors, and other tourism opportunities.

Federal Sector

Thayer County and the Nonmetropolitan Region have access to programs and technical assistance available from federal agencies providing resources for community economic development initiatives. Federal partners active in the region include:

USDA Rural Development

The United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development provides political subdivisions, nonprofit entities and private concerns with low-interest loans and grants to construct community facilities and business endeavors. Programs of particular interest include:

- ✧ Community Facilities Loan Program
- ✧ Intermediary Relending Program
- ✧ Housing Preservation Grant Program
- ✧ Rural Business Opportunity Grant
- ✧ Community Facilities Grant Program
- ✧ Water & Waste Disposal Loan Grant Program
- ✧ Rural Business Enterprise Grant
- ✧ Industrial Development Grant

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

The EDA programs are directed to the financing of public works and development facilities that contribute to the creation or retention of private sector jobs and to the alleviation of unemployment and underemployment.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

The Small Business Administration provides guaranteed loans to small businesses for land, buildings, inventory, equipment and working capital. SBA loans are offered through private Certified Community Development Corporations in Nebraska.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

Thayer County and the Nonmetropolitan Region do not encompass any entitlement areas but may work with the State of Nebraska to identify opportunities to utilize CDBG economic development funds for business assistance and community development funds for community facility projects.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Communities and unincorporated areas in the region have the opportunity to access the expertise and specialized funding programs of the EPA. Federal assistance for water and wastewater treatment facilities is an important resource qualified municipal areas.

Local & Regional Organizations

Public and private partnerships are instrumental in fostering community economic development initiatives in Thayer County and the Nonmetropolitan Region. From providing technical assistance on planning initiatives to serving as applicant for public and private funding agencies, these partnerships are key agents serving the needs of residents and business enterprises.

Partner organizations include local, regional and state-wide entities that offer specific programs and/or a broad array services accessible to area residents, businesses, and communities. A non-exhaustive list of these organizations includes:

Thayer County Economic Development Alliance

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University of Nebraska

The University of Nebraska offers services, research and opportunities to business in Nebraska. It contributes to the economic and social fabric of the state, including the creation of new products and technologies, leadership in biofuels and renewable resources, and focus on education.

York College

York College is a liberal arts institution with programs in the arts, sciences, and professional areas. It is engaged in community life and development activities supporting its mission and regional activities.

Peru State College

Peru State College (PSC) serves the southeast Nebraska region through education, research, and public service programs. PSC offers specialized services to contribute to the economic and social/cultural development of its service region.

Federal Home Loan Bank - Topeka

The Federal Home Loan Bank – Topeka (FHLB-Topeka) is a privately owned, federally chartered corporation that promotes housing, homeownership, and community development through its member financial institutions.

Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC)

The Nebraska Business Development Center provides consulting and training services with support from these federal programs: Manufacturing Extension Partnership (U.S. Department of Commerce), Small Business Development Center program (U.S. Small Business Administration), Procurement Technical Assistance Center program (U.S. Department of Defense), and Pollution Prevention Regional Information Center (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). The NBDC has a regional office in the City of Geneva (Fillmore County) to serve the area business community.

6.2 Public Safety

The rate of crime in the nation and Nebraska declined during the 1990s. This trend has continued within Nebraska and the region of study. Between 1999 and 2004 the arrest rate for all crime decreased in all but two counties in the Nonmetropolitan Region (See Table 6.1).

Even though arrest rates for crime have declined, there is growing concern about the manufacturing and availability of illicit drugs. Local and state law enforcement agencies have responded to this concern for public health and safety. Local officials are also concerned about the costs that drug use and manufacturing have on local resources and funds.

Table 6.1
Arrest Rate for Crime (per 1,000 population)

Area	Arrest Rate for All Crime		Arrest Rate for Juveniles*	
	1999	2004	1999	2004
Nebraska	59.2	54.7 [^]	46.5	35.2 [^]
Butler County	18.0	10.2	16.0	5.7
Fillmore County	20.5	15.3	16.0	7.6
Gage County	42.0	39.1	52.0	41.4
Jefferson County	28.6	16.1	35.6	12.2
Polk County	17.0	15.9	NA	4.4
Saline County	40.7	44.3	46.3	27.1
Seward County	50.8	39.4	30.2	17.0
Thayer County	15.5	16.0	11.0	14.3
York County	43.2	32.0	48.8	43.6

*Arrest rate for juveniles under 18 years of age. [^] Nebraska arrest rates in 2002.
Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, 2004 and Nebraska Crime Commission, 2005.

6.3 Maternal and Child Health and Well-Being

Indicators of maternal and child health and well-being are compiled by the State of Nebraska. These indicators provide important measures of the health of the population and assists in directing resources to priority areas of service.

The rate of low-birthweight babies is one such indicator. Low-birthweight babies, defined as babies weighing less than 2,500 grams (or about 5.5 pounds) at birth, have a high probability of experiencing developmental problems. Therefore, this indicator reflects a group of children who are likely to require special services from public service providers.

The rate of low weight births varies across the nonmetropolitan region. No individual county rate met the Nebraska Year 2010 target rate of no more than 50.0 low weight births per 1,000 live births (See Table 6.2). The rate of low weight births in Thayer County was below the statewide average in 2002, 57.8 per 1,000 live births compared to 67.7.

Another indicator of maternal and child health and well-being is the percentage of births to adolescent girls aged 10 to 17 years. According to The Annie E. Casey Foundation's *2004 Kids Count Data Book*, "Research shows that children born to single mothers are twice as likely to drop out of high school, twice as likely to have a child before age twenty, and one and one-half times as likely to be 'idle' - out of school and out of work - in their late teens and early twenties." The percentage of births to adolescent girls aged 10 to 17 years resident of Thayer County is not available due to confidentiality requirements; suggesting the figure is extremely low given that the Nebraska Health and Human Services System suppression guidelines do not permit publication of annual figures when there were less than five for any given county.

Table 6.2
Maternal and Child Health and Well-Being

Area	Rate of Low Weight Births*	Births to Adolescent Girls	Number of Children with Elevated Blood Lead Levels
	2002	1997-2001	2000
Nebraska	67.7	3.4%	518
Butler County	52.7	NA	5
Fillmore County	68.7	2.8	1
Gage County	65.9	3.1	2
Jefferson County	55.6	3.9	4
Polk County	58.3	NA	1
Saline County	56.6	2.1	1
Seward County	65.2	1.7	3
Thayer County	57.8	NA	6
York County	68.8	1.7	1

* Low weight births per 1,000 live births.
Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

The State of Nebraska supports programs that include screening activities to test blood lead levels in children under six years of age. Information reported in Nebraska Epidemiology Report (September 2001), "Blood Lead Surveillance Data: 1998-2000" presents data from all cases of child blood lead levels reported to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Regulation and Licensure. Blood lead data are submitted by physicians, clinics, laboratories and hospitals, and are required by Nebraska law.

The report identifies the primary risk factors for elevated blood-lead: age of housing (pre-1950) and child poverty.

Housing built before 1950 is more likely to contain lead-based paint, which can be ingested by young children in the form of dust or paint chips. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 97% of all pre-1950 homes contain some lead-based paint. Children in poverty are more likely to live in housing that contains lead contamination hazards due to the presence of deteriorating, flaking and chipping lead-based paint.

This indicator is significant for Thayer County and the Nonmetropolitan Region where 56.4 percent and 47.3 percent, respectively, of the housing stock was built prior to 1950. Jefferson County and Thayer County have the highest percentage of pre-1950 homes, 58.8 percent and 56.4 percent, respectively. Many of the municipalities operate or would benefit from housing rehabilitation programs. The hazard of lead-based paint suggests that additional resources may be necessary in order to provide safe, decent and affordable housing opportunities in the region.

Table 6.3 presents the Teen Births to Total Births and the new Families at Risk Rate. The "new families at risk" is a category which identifies first births occurring to unmarried women under age 20 years with less than a high school education. The 2002 average rate of "new families at risk" for Nebraska was 10.1 percent of first births.

Table 6.3
Teen Births and New Families at Risk Rate

Area	Percent Teen Birth of Total Births		New Families at Risk Rate
	1990	2003	2002
Nebraska	9.8%	9.0%	10.1%
Butler County	8.4	NA*	7.5
Fillmore County	NA*	10.7	NA*
Gage County	11.2	8.8	9.9
Jefferson County	6.6	14.7	8.9
Polk County	8.1	9.2	NA*
Saline County	8.8	13.6	8.1
Seward County	5.9	4.9	6.2
Thayer County	6.0	10.7	NA*
York County	4.2	8.4	8.0

*Teen Births and New Families at Risk Rate not provided if there were less than five

for any given county for reasons of confidentiality.
 Source: Nebraska Health and Human Services, 2004.

6.4 Indicators of Poverty

The proportion of residents living in households with incomes below 100 percent of the federally defined poverty level in 1989 and 1999 is reported for Thayer County and other counties in the Nonmetropolitan Region in Table 6.4.

Three counties (Gage, Thayer, and Jefferson) have recorded county-level poverty rates higher than the average for Nebraska in 1989 and/or 1999.

The estimated 2002 poverty rates for all people and for children (ages 0-to-17 years) in four counties, Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson and Thayer counties are above that for the state.

Table 6.4
 Proportion of Residents with Income Below Federal Poverty Level

Area	1989	1999	2002 (Estimate)	
			All People	Children (0-17)
Nebraska	11.1%	9.7%	10.0%	12.3
Butler County	11.5	8.2	9.5	11.8
Fillmore County	8.9	7.8	10.3	13.5
Gage County	14.2	8.7	10.4	12.3
Jefferson County	11.8	8.9	10.8	13.4
Polk County	8.3	5.8	8.3	9.1
Saline County	10.9	9.4	8.8	8.6
Seward County	9.2	7.0	7.6	7.4
Thayer County	13.8	10.7	11.6	14.3
York County	6.6	8.5	9.0	10.3

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000 Census of Population and Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2004.
