



# 2020 | Annual Report



**NGage**  
OPPORTUNITY GROWS HERE

## 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Andrea Schafer, President  
James Lenners, Vice President  
Dave Norton, Treasurer  
Matt Morrissey, Secretary

Erich Tiemann, County Representative  
Rick Clabaugh, City Representative  
Erin Dorn, Board Member  
Traci Froscheiser, Board Member

Chad Lottman, Board Member  
Rex Adams, Board Member

## 2020 MEMBER INVESTORS

### Founder (\$150,000)

City of Beatrice  
Gage County

### Leader (\$5,000)

Beatrice Community Hospital &  
Health Center  
NextEra Energy

### Champion (\$2,500)

Black Hills Energy  
First National Bank  
Pinnacle Bank  
Security First Bank

### Catalyst (\$1,000)

Caspers Construction  
Clabaugh Pharmacy  
Diode Communications  
Echo Electric Supply

Exmark Manufacturing  
First State Bank Nebraska  
Garnett Investment Strategies  
Landmark Snacks  
Neapco Components  
Norris Public Power District  
Precise Fabrication  
Ratigan-Schottler Manufacturing  
Smith, Schafer, Davis, Gaertig, LLC  
Unite Private Networks  
Village of Adams

### Advocate (\$500)

American Family Insurance,  
Cheryl Wirth  
Edward Jones, Steve Hovendick  
Homestead Land Company  
Midwest Livestock Systems  
Nebraska Public Power District  
Worldlawn Power Equipment

### Associate (\$100)

Beatrice Area Chamber of Commerce  
Blackburn Technologies  
Meyer & Associates  
Carriage Motors  
Deines Pharmacy  
State Farm, Ed Easley  
Farm Credit Services of America  
Jones Group  
Brick & Mortar Realty  
LeRoy & Doreen Janzen  
MembersOwn Credit Union  
Mosaic  
Nebraska Department of Labor  
Pickrell Lumber & Hardware  
R.L. Tiemann Construction  
Schuster's Outdoor & RV  
Village of Cortland  
Willet & Carothers  
Woods Bros Realty

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

When I joined NGage in March 2020, I envisioned a vastly different first year at the helm. The organization was thrust into 2020 with great momentum thanks to the hard work of a dedicated board of directors, community partners, and a top-notch staff. Small businesses were thriving, our lodging industry was growing, and there were a handful of good projects nearing the finish line. The agenda for the year was full of travel and opportunities.

Then a global pandemic flipped the world upside down.

NGage and its partners immediately shifted gears in an effort to be the go-to resource for our area employers. We dedicated a section of our website to provide information that our businesses needed—everything from CARES Act funding and area contacts to dissecting state DHM's and associated best practices. We regularly checked in on our businesses with personal phone calls, emails, and two rounds of the COVID-19 Business Impact Survey, which was helpful in determining what assistance was most needed by our employers. We even launched a virtual series called Gage County Watercooler Talk, which provided weekly updates on access to state and federal funding, the latest DHMs, and community events for businesses and residents alike.

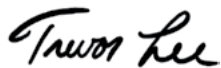
Despite the pandemic, public and private investment in our communities continued, as evidenced throughout this report and with investments like:

- Over \$17M in new construction in Beatrice and over \$9M in Gage County
- 27,000 sq ft to added landmark snacks existing 63,000 sq ft facility
- Over \$800,000 aligned for park improvements in Adams
- \$19M invested at SCC in a state of the art 52,000 sq ft Interdisciplinary Building on top of a \$1.8M 10,000 sq ft Ag Hall Renovation

For many if not most, it will be hard to look back on 2020 with fondness or nostalgia. For us at NGage, however, it was a testimony of the resilience of our businesses, our communities, and our leadership.

“On the other side of a storm is the strength that comes from having navigated through it. Raise your sail and begin.” — Gregory S. Williams

Respectfully,



Trevor Lee, Executive Director

## Staff Updates

### **TREVOR LEE** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Since 2016, Trevor has served on the board of directors for the Nebraska Economic Developers Association (NEDA). He was recently elected Secretary, which will result in a five-year succession through the ranks of NEDA's Executive Board. NEDA is dedicated to strengthening economic development in the state through the educational and professional development of its members. As a board member, Trevor helped facilitate the organization's modernization by hiring an association management company as well as a lobbying firm. Also, in 2020, Trevor was appointed to the Board of Directors for the Heartland Economic Development Course (HEDC). HEDC offers intensive training in the basic concepts, information, methods, and strategies of local economic development. Students' graduation from HEDC fulfills one of the education prerequisites for those who wish to take examinations for Certified Economic Development (CECd) designation. Trevor is a 2013 graduate of the program.

### **ERIN CHADWICK** MARKETING COORDINATOR



Erin has served as the Marketing Coordinator for NGage since August 2017 and often tells people who ask about her career that she gets paid to promote her community. It's a role that she takes pride in so that others will feel that same sense of pride in their Gage County community. Since 2010, Erin has been “staking her claim” in Nebraska, putting roots down in Beatrice through the raising of her two children, the growing of the business she owns with her husband, and her service on numerous committees and boards throughout Beatrice. When Erin isn't in the office, you'll probably find her at home with her family, in the Scooter's drive-thru, or shopping/eating/drinking at a small business in Gage County.

## Trevor Lee Hired in March

Trevor joined Gage Area Growth Enterprise (NGage) in March as its new Executive Director following Walker Zulkoski's departure at the end of 2019. In his new role, Trevor has hit the ground running, attracting new businesses to the area and helping existing businesses navigate a global pandemic.

Prior to joining NGage, Trevor was the Economic Developer in Ord, Nebraska. In that position, he was responsible for economic development, city planning, and other civic duties. The position in Beatrice was attractive to him because of the opportunity to focus exclusively on economic development. "Beatrice and Gage County has strong organizational leadership structures that allow NGage to strategically hone in on opportunities to grow the local economy," he said.

Trevor also noted, "We appreciate the continued support of our city, county, and private sector partners. We encourage the entire community to become ambassadors for Southeast Nebraska, Beatrice, and Gage County. Promote your community and all the things you love about it. Bang your drum. Make sure that your dialogue around the kitchen table is positive. Ensure that your children know that there exists an opportunity for them right here. I don't think I'm alone in my desire for my children to go out into the world, learn, explore and grow. I also want them to return to the abundant opportunities that exist for them as adults in our new home, Gage County."

## EDCC Recertification

The City of Beatrice was recognized by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) and Nebraska Diplomats as a State of Nebraska Economic Development Certified Community (EDCC) for recent growth in capital investments, business expansion projects, and housing developments. Lt. Governor Mike Foley presented the community's second recertification in the EDCC program during the March 16, 2020 Beatrice City Council meeting. The City earned its original EDCC certification in 2009 and was recertified in 2014 and 2020. Beatrice is one of 40 communities to earn EDCC status.



*"Strong leadership generated within NGage and the City continues to spur innovative opportunities for growth in Beatrice and demonstrates success created by local economic partnerships. Ongoing strategic planning between both groups highlights this region's preparedness for development, which is an important component of the EDCC program."*

- LT. GOVERNOR FOLEY

## Showcase Community Award

Each year, Nebraska joins other states throughout the country in celebrating Community Development Week. Established in 1986 by the National Community Development Association, this annual campaign is designed to give local and national attention to accomplishments made possible by Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program. Nebraska celebrates Community Development Week by recognizing top achievers in community and economic development as Showcase Communities.

### **This year, Beatrice won.**

The award was given because of the collaborative efforts between organizations and engaged citizens. These efforts revolved around four main areas: creating affordable housing solutions for all ages and incomes; enhancing community amenities such as outdoor recreation, a vibrant downtown, and quality schools; attracting and retaining a workforce; and fostering a spirit of community pride.

## Purchase Option

Proving our tagline that opportunity grows here, NGage worked through the spring and summer to secure purchase options on 260 acres northwest of Beatrice to develop as a secondary or alternative industrial park.

With continued development in the Gage County Industrial Park, NGage recognizes that growth is hindered if additional ground is not secured. In recent years, NGage has identified land/site development and industry cluster recruitment as key priorities. The decision to secure options on this property supports these goals, and as a result NGage has since submitted projects totalling over 600 MILLION DOLLARS. These options give Gage County a seat at the table at a state and regional level. We need sites with rail access, redundant electricity and natural gas power, and road infrastructure in place or easily attainable in order to be competitive with other communities and states.

Beatrice and Gage County have much to offer, and now, we will have more opportunities to tell our story.



# Business Retention & Expansion

## COVID Impact Survey Data

### Top 3 Concerns:



Decreased Consumer Confidence / Spending



Financial Impact on Operations



Global / U.S. Recession

### Business Support Needed

1

Financial Assistance

2

Employee Resources

3

Community Support

### Strengths Identified by Businesses



Loyal Staff / Customers



Careful Spending



Rural Environment



Networking / Community Partnerships

### Operating

79%

Remained Open

78%

Decrease in Revenue

52%

Applied for PPP

43%

Applied for EIDL

### Employment



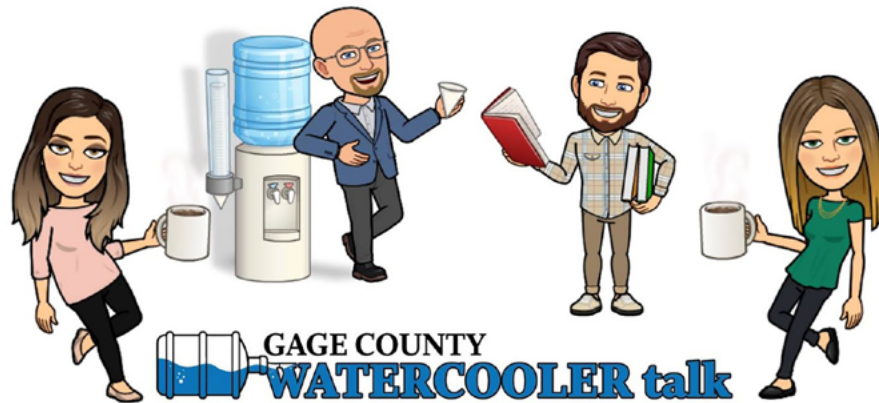
No Change in Employment



Employee Morale

### Weaknesses Identified in Business:

- ✓ Lack of ability to communicate with customers and/or lack of e-commerce
- ✓ Remote work issues and/or workforce availability due to school closures and illness
- ✓ Supply chain issues



## COVID-19 Presents Partnership Opportunities

Not surprisingly, COVID-19 is the biggest story of 2020. It's impacted everything: how we work, how we learn, how we shop, how we live... the list goes on. It's also shown the resilience of our Gage County communities and the resolve to keep pushing forward.

In response to the pandemic, NGage partnered with the Beatrice Area Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Beatrice to discover the impacts our local businesses were experiencing. In March, the first of two Business Impact Surveys was conducted. Open to any business from manufacturers to service providers in Gage County, the survey sought to find how the pandemic affected business operations, workforce, and finances. It also asked questions to gauge respondents' feelings on employee morale, additional assistance needed (aside from financial), and strengths and weaknesses exposed in the business as a result of the pandemic. In April, a second survey was conducted to compare the difference that one month made.

The findings revealed some of what was expected: decreased productivity, slower sales, and a remote workforce, where possible. It also revealed some of the unexpected, namely that of morale. On average, morale was high in both surveys. Despite uncertainties and fears in the world outside of work, Gage County stepped up with positivity and determination to keep moving forward. And we did just that.

Outside of partnering for data collection, NGage also partnered with the Chamber and Main Street for data dispersion in a fun weekly series called Gage County Watercooler Talk. Held on Facebook Live and geared toward Gage County businesses, "Watercooler Wednesday" was a virtual event where the three organizations gathered around the virtual watercooler each week to discuss the ever-changing federal and state coronavirus assistance programs, share best practices for boosting social media presence, and catch up on events happening in our area. The series ran from spring through summer.



**STAKE YOUR CLAIM**

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**N** *Gage*  
**OPPORTUNITY GROWS HERE**

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