

2019 | *Annual Report*

---

**NGage**

**GAGE AREA GROWTH ENTERPRISE**

218 N 5th Street | Beatrice, NE 68310 | [ngagegroup.org](http://ngagegroup.org) | 402-228-5869

**Nebraska won** the 2018 Site Selection Magazine Governor’s Cup for most projects per capita for the third year in a row with a total of 118 projects. The magazine has awarded the Cup annually since 1988, the results of which are considered the “industry scoreboard”. In the magazine’s ranking of Top Micropolitans – cities of 10,000 to 50,000 – **Beatrice ranked 14th nationally and was the highest-ranked micropolitan in the state of Nebraska with a total of 6 projects.**

Excerpt from Site Selection magazine writeup:

Governor Ricketts tells Site Selection the plan is to keep doing what’s working, which is a four-part plan that has served him well as head of the executive branch.

*“The first pillar is making sure that we are developing our people and connecting them to great-paying jobs,” he explains. “The second is running government more like a business, to make it more effective, more efficient and more customer-focused and to cut the red tape that gets in the way of job creation, to get those obstacles out of the way. The third is to make sure we dollars –managing our providing tax relief. The Nebraska domestically world what a great place markets for our producers and our companies and to seek investment back here in our state.” Those principals are paying off, the governor says, with Nebraska winning accolades from business publications in addition to Site Selection and other state-ranking entities for fiscal stability, low costs for businesses, favorable regulatory environment, workforce participation rate and wage growth.*

**“We’ve created an environment that is conducive for people to invest and to know they can grow their company,”**

*are good stewards of taxpayer costs and by doing that, fourth is to go out and promote and internationally, telling the we have here and opening up*

**mi-cro-pol-i-tan**  
*adjective*

Relating to an urban area with a population of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000



Dear Friends,

What a year. Beatrice was named the top micropolitan in Nebraska (cities pop. of 10K – 50K) by Site Selection Magazine for number of qualified economic development projects. Let that sink in for a second... A national publication, that conducts research all across the United States, identified Beatrice as the top micropolitan in Nebraska and #14 in the entire country. This recognition defines economic development and progress in Gage County. Things are happening.

- Southeast Community College in Beatrice is plugging away on its nearly \$40 million of building projects. Wait, Beatrice has a community college? Yep. And it just got sweeter.
- Exmark Manufacturing doubled down and poured dollars into remodeling a warehouse to accommodate its future growth. #engineers
- Neapco and Precise Fabrication dropped serious investment into sweet robots and lasers. #notcheap
- Nebraska Machine & Tool is expanding their building and business. Again.
- New speculative industrial space was constructed in the Gage County Industrial Park. Thanks, Greenleaf Development.
- The residential boom all over Gage County in the last few years was significant but had us asking “what’s next?”. So, NGage and our friends at Hanna: Keelan kicked off a new Housing Study.

Keeping the pedal to the floor, our approach this year turned to laying the groundwork for the future. Like, the next 20 years. AKA, set yourself up to win. Where do we grow, how do we develop land, how do we complement industry, what’s next? These are just a few of the questions we think about daily. #bigthingstocome

Be proud, bang your drum, tell your kids to move home. The future is bright.



Walker Zulkoski  
Executive Director

## **IN IT TO WIN IT**

The NGage philosophy is this: you have to be present to win.

International companies are looking to enter the United States market. How do we know?

By meeting them where they are, face to face. With several international companies already located in Gage County, our central location in the U.S., and an ecosystem in Nebraska to help companies succeed, it sends a strong message that we're visiting for a reason -and it's a good one. Building these long-term relationships will continue to pay perpetual dividends.

**Canada** - NGage and the Lincoln Area Development Partnership (LPED) teamed up to make recruitment visits to prospective companies in the Montreal region. Our northern neighbor is a prime prospect to find companies looking to expand and grow in the United States.

**Germany** - NGage traveled with Governor Ricketts on his trade mission to Germany. From Berlin to Dusseldorf, the trade delegation covered a lot of ground. A highlight of the trip was attending Agritchnica, the largest trade show in the world.

**Italy** - Reps from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, the Omaha Chamber of Commerce, and NGage participated in a Select USA program that connected Nebraska with Italian businesses with near-term plans for a U.S expansion.

Walker and Erin, along with partners from the Beatrice Area Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Beatrice, Norris Public Power District, and Nebraska Public Power District, did a "BRE Blitz" throughout the Gage County business community both in May and September. A BRE, or Business Retention & Expansion, visit is a crucial part of the work that NGage does and helps to get a pulse on what's happening with local businesses.

Nearly **40** businesses were visited in the **5** days of interviewing and the following data was collected:

## BRE Stats



**\$35 MILLION**  
in planned expansions among **13** businesses

**41** business visited **ZERO**

26 BUSINESSES GROWING  
2 EMERGING  
13 MATURING/STABLE

**DECLINING**



## **INCENTIVES**

---

Incentives were at the forefront of many conversations last year. LB720, the ImagineNE Act, was introduced in the Nebraska Legislature and NGage was there to testify in support of it. Though the bill did not pass in the 2019 session, it is imperative that work be done to pass it in 2020 - the bill is crucial in keeping Nebraska "open for business".



## **CEC CONFERENCE**

---

Beatrice won hosting duties for the 3rd annual Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities conference, put on by Nebraska Extension in Spring 2019. The conference brought in over 100 guests for this noon to noon conference with breakout sessions hosted in various downtown Beatrice businesses.



## **HOUSING STUDY**

---

A Gage County Housing Study "refresh" was commissioned by NGage in 2019. Nearly 750 residents and employees of Gage County provided valuable feedback on the current state of housing and the future need throughout the county. A final report will be available in Q1 2020.



## **MANUFACTURING DAY**

---

2019 marked the third year of MFG Day student tours and was the best event to date. 40 students from Beatrice and Southern High Schools, along with teachers, counselors, and admin toured four Beatrice manufacturers (Precise Fabrication, Neapco, Exmark, and Landmark Snacks). At one location, there was even a surprise guest in attendance - Governor Pete Ricketts!

## **STAFF**

Walker Zulkoski, *Executive Director*

Erin Chadwick, *Marketing Coordinator*

## **BOARD**

Andrea Schafer, *President*

James Lenner, *Vice President*

Darin Baehr, *Treasurer*

Matt Morrissey, *Secretary*

Erich Tiemann, *County Representative*

Rick Clabaugh, *City Representative*

Dennis Rosene, *Board Member*

Erin Dorn, *Board Member*

Traci Froscheiser, *Board Member*

Karen Stohs, *Board Member*

Andy Carothers, *NGage Attorney*

## **MEMBERS**

**FOUNDER:** City of Beatrice, Gage County

**LEADER:** Beatrice Community Hospital, NextEra Energy

**CHAMPION:** Black Hills Energy, First National Bank of Omaha, Pinnacle Bank, Security First Bank

**MUNICIPAL:** Village of Adams

**CATALYST:** Caspers Construction, Clabaugh Pharmacy, Diode Communications, Echo Electric Supply, Exmark Manufacturing, First State Bank, Flint Hills Resources, Garnett Investment Strategies, Neapco Components, Norris Public Power District, Precise Fabrication, Ratigan-Schottler Manufacturing, Smith Schafer Davis Gaertig LLC, Unite Private Networks

**ADVOCATE:** American Family Insurance / Cheryl Wirth, Edward Jones / Steve Hovendick, Homestead Land Co., Midwest Livestock Systems, Nebraska Public Power District, T&T Seed Express, Worldlawn Power Equipment

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