



NGage
OPPORTUNITY GROWS HERE

Annual Report

Feb 2024 - Feb 2025

Prepared By :

NGage Staff

Presented By :

Rachel Kreikemeier
Executive Director

402-228-5869
info@ngagegroup.org
www.ngagegroup.org

About Us

NGage is a county-wide economic development group consisting of an experienced economic development director and a 10-member Board of Directors. The Mayor of Beatrice, members of the Beatrice City Council, and the Gage County Board of Supervisors formed NGage to provide support for economic development in Gage County, Nebraska.



NGage seeks to improve the communities in Gage County by retaining and growing our local businesses, increasing and improving a skilled workforce, and attracting new businesses to the area.

www.ngagegroup.org

Our Mission

NGage's mission is to sustain and grow our region's economy and quality of life by providing leadership and resources for business retention, expansion, recruitment, and community development.

Strategic Goals

1

Expanding business & industry

2

Building business relationships

3

Youth engagement & talent attraction

4

Gage County is a community for kids

5

Housing is abundant, diverse, and affordable

Letter from the Director

As we reflect on the past year, I am both proud and inspired by the progress our county has made in 2024. This year has been marked by remarkable growth, new opportunities, and the resilience of our local businesses, workforce, and residents. The economic development initiatives we set in motion have not only supported businesses in navigating the challenges of a rapidly changing world but have also laid the foundation for continued success in the years ahead.

In 2024, we saw the launch of several key projects aimed at fostering innovation, attracting new business and industries, and revitalizing downtown Beatrice. From new infrastructure investments across the county, to the expansion of workforce development programs, the momentum we've built is nothing short of exciting. The collaboration between public and private sectors has been a driving force behind our achievements, and I want to express my gratitude for the unwavering commitment of our community partners. Total investment amounted to \$39.1 million, including roughly \$10.7 million directed toward housing development throughout the county. While it may not be immediately apparent to everyone, 2024 was an outstanding year for Beatrice and Gage County! Additionally, we've made strides in supporting small businesses, helping them thrive in an increasingly competitive landscape. Our initiatives have helped local entrepreneurs access resources, network with industry leaders, and through our partners' efforts; training to enhance their digital presence. The resilience and innovation shown by our business community, despite economic uncertainties, speaks volumes about the spirit of this region.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on the goals that will keep our communities on a path toward sustainable growth. We will continue to prioritize initiatives that promote workforce development, enhance infrastructure, and foster a business-friendly environment. It is clear that the future of our economy will be shaped by the partnerships and collaborations we continue to build today.

Thank you for your continued support.

"I am grateful to serve as your Economic Development Director and for the opportunity to work alongside so many talented and dedicated individuals. Together, we are shaping a brighter, more prosperous future for our community and county."

Rachel Kreikemeier, Executive Director

Our Staff

NGage staff is committed to working with businesses exploring growth in Gage County. NGage will do three things for a business (large or small):

- Maintain confidentiality about your business needs and inquiry
- Reduce and/or eliminate the time business spends trying to understand Federal, State, and local incentive programs. NGage will show you how to access these programs if your project qualifies
- Work thoroughly and professionally, yet swiftly with you through the selection process, so a decision to choose Gage County as a place to grow your business is timely and will meet your needs.



Rachel Kreikemeier

Executive Director
rachelk@ngagegroup.org



Callie Smith

Marketing Coordinator
callies@ngagegroup.org

Our Board

The NGage Board of Directors, is responsible for overseeing the organization. Directors are divided into two groups:

- Automatic Directors: Two seats on the board are reserved for representatives appointed by local governing bodies. One is chosen by the Beatrice City Council, and the other by the Gage County Board of Supervisors.
- The remaining eight board members are elected. Four of these individuals must live within the city limits of Beatrice, Nebraska, while the other four must reside outside Beatrice but within the boundaries of Gage County.



Andrea Schafer
President



Chad Lottman
Vice President



Dave Norton
Treasurer



Traci Froscheiser
Secretary



Erich Tiemann
County Representative



Terry Doyle
City Representative



Heath Stewart
Board Member



Erin Dorn
Board Member



Samantha Thompson
Board Member



Randy Kinney
Board Member

Our Members

Gage County businesses have chosen to become NGage members knowing that they are investing in the vitality of our county for future generations. By growing business, we build a resilient economy for every citizen in Gage County. With your expertise, vision, and investment, along with NGage, we can create a more vibrant and economically sound community and county. Business prospects view Member Investors as indicators of growth and development support in our area.

Thank you to the 2024 NGage Members listed below for their investment in our mission and dedication to growing Gage County:

\$150,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Beatrice • Gage County 	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BluCor Construction • Caspers Construction • Clabaugh Pharmacy, Inc. • Diode Communications • Echo Motor Group • Exmark Manufacturing • First National Bank • First State Bank Nebraska • Garnett Investment Strategies • Landmark Snacks, LLC • Midwest Livestock Systems, LLC • Neapco Components • Norris Public Power District • Precise Fabrication Inc. • Premier Chevrolet Buick GMC • Rosene Machine • Smith Schafer Davis LLC • Stonebrook Exteriors • Tredz Central • Unite Private Networks • Village of Adams 	\$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nebraska Public Power District • Southeast Community College • Terracon Consultants, Inc. • Homestead Land Company
\$2,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Hills Energy • Pinnacle Bank • Security First Bank • Tallgrass 				
\$5,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beatrice Community Hospital & Health Center, Inc. 			\$100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beatrice Area Chamber of Commerce Inc. • Blackburn Technologies • Brick & Mortar Realty, LLC - Krista Wiedel • Bryant & Associates, PC • Jones Group • LeRoy & Doreen Janzen • MembersOwn Credit Union • Mosaic • Nebraska Department of Labor • Dave & Betty Norton • R.L. Tiemann Construction, Inc. • Village of Cortland

**The City of Beatrice & Gage County fund NGage through a 3-year contract.*

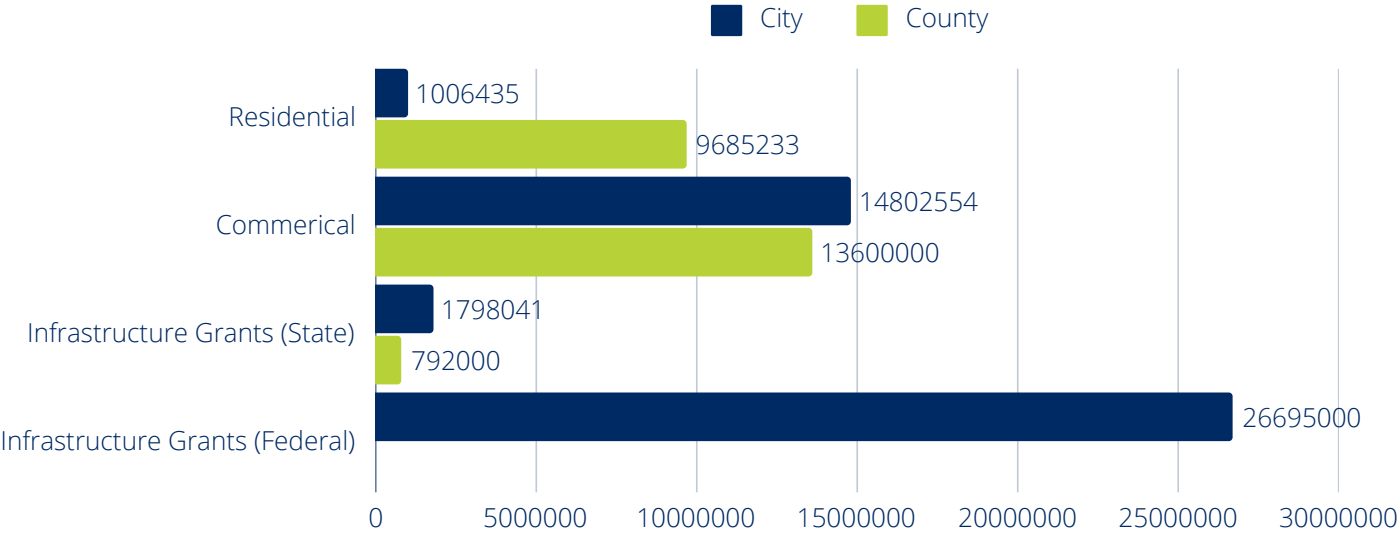
***Members at the \$1,000-\$5,000 level are voting-level members.*

Expanding Business & Industry

Maximizing opportunities for business and industry recruitment, investment, and expansion efforts to boost Gage County’s economy.

2024 was a year of incredible growth throughout Gage County. As seen in the chart below, commercial and residential additions and improvements amounted to over \$39 Million, and grant funding for streets, water systems, and general infrastructure totaled nearly \$28 Million. Year after year, we see these kinds of investments poured into our communities; it makes us proud to see people invest and reinvest in the communities that we call home.

Total City, County Invesment, 2024



NGAGE LOCATES TWO NEW BUSINESSES TO GAGE COUNTY



A groundbreaking ceremony took place in May 2024 at 1302 N. 6th Street, the future home of Jimmy John's. Sam Nixon, of Nixon Restaurant & Property, Inc. received a \$50,000 LB840 loan in October 2023 that helped secure the project in Beatrice. After months of construction, Jimmy John's opened in January 2025 with a warm

welcome. The store was so successful in its first few days that it was the #1 store in the country for numerous consecutive days!

In October 2023, Radiant Tech, LLC purchased real estate in the Gage County Industrial Park to establish their data center facility and began operations in 2024. The Beatrice City Council approved an agreement with the company regarding the use of electrical energy, highlighting the company's significant power consumption. The company provides colocation data services, which involve offering space, bandwidth, and power to clients' servers and computing hardware within their data center operation. Radiant Tech is a wonderful addition to the diverse business mix in our Industrial Park and is one of the target industries that NGage has identified as prime for growth.

NGage is proud to have been involved in the process for each of these businesses from the start, from helping to secure the purchase of the property to connecting the businesses key people to local resources and helping plug them in to the local community.

We hope that both Jimmy John's and Radiant Tech continues to see success well into the future in Gage County.

BUSINESS & INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

Randy Kinney, owner of Kinney Manufacturing and his Beatrice location, Precise Fabrication, broke ground on the construction of an additional 80,000 sq ft building to include additional space that will bring all of his Beatrice-based businesses under one roof in the Industrial Park, thereby opening up two large industrial properties for lease or sale.

Business retention and expansion are among the best possible outcomes for economic growth in a community and we are thankful when businesses continue to invest in our communities.

Since NEAPCO came to the Gage County Industrial Park as its first tenant in 1985, the Park has consistently grown, so much so that it is at near capacity. The NGage Board approved executing an Industrial Siting Study to address the shortage of industrial lots, **the process of identifying land suitable for a new industrial park is underway**. Sites will be identified through this process throughout the county.

RARE EARTH SALTS RECEIVES \$4.22 MILLION FROM U.S. DOD

The Department of Defense announced a \$4.22 million award to Rare Earth Salts in for developing and expanding production of terbium oxide from recycled fluorescent light bulbs. Terbium is an essential element for rare earth magnets in many key defense systems. This effort is funded through the Defense Production Act Investment (DPAI) office and aligns with the National Defense Industrial Strategy's priority of increasing supply chain resilience by expanding domestic production and sustainment of critical production.

"This award adds a domestic source for one of the most difficult-to-obtain rare earth elements," said Dr. Laura Taylor-Kale, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy (ASD(IBP)). **"Rare Earth Salts' capability will help the United States** establish a mine-to-magnet supply chain without reliance on foreign sources of material."

Building Business Relationships

Cultivating relationships to increase engagement from key community stakeholders

At its core, economic development is all about relationships. While it is driven by data, incentives, and infrastructure, **the real magic happens through network-weaving and relationship-building**. NGage acts as a connector, introducing key players, fostering partnerships, and making sure resources flow where they're needed.

NGage is proud to partner with many organizations throughout the state of Nebraska and nationally, such as:

- Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development (assists with business recruitment efforts, such as the Community Venture Network and GSLI)
- SBA, CFRA, SENDD (drives economic development issues like road/water infrastructure, provides small business financial resources, alerts organizations to changing legislation that affects businesses, etc.)
- NEDA

Locally, NGage staff prioritizes involvement in serving on local boards, committees, and organizations. This engagement ensures that staff members are well-positioned to influence, connect, and advocate for the Gage County communities' growth.



Conferences are a great way to network with industry and community leaders, and market Gage County. This year, NGage was in attendance at a variety of conferences throughout the state, including:

The Governor's Ag & Economic Development Summit, held in Kearney this past August, was themed "One Nebraska" and convened over 600 leaders from across Nebraska, including industry experts, policymakers, and community stakeholders. The conference leverages Nebraska's strengths, like a skilled

workforce, abundant natural resources, and sustainable agricultural practices, to foster economic development and address secondary issues like housing, childcare, and talent pipelines. NGage Executive Director, Rachel, was both a presenter and an attendee at this event.

In September, the **Bio Innovations Midwest** conference was held in Omaha, a pivotal event dedicated to advancing industrial biomanufacturing in the United States. The conference attracted over 400 industry leaders, including bio developers, producers, global brands, buyers, investors, financiers, suppliers, and community enablers. The event underscored the momentum within the U.S. bioeconomy, highlighting the importance of collaboration and innovation in achieving commercial success in bio manufacturing.

Also in September was the **6 Regions, One Nebraska** conference, a joint initiative of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry, backed by Governor Jim Pillen. This initiative aims to foster regional collaboration across Nebraska by aligning economic development efforts within six designated regions.

Youth Engagement and Talent Attraction

Engaging area youth by connecting them to career opportunities to increase their sense of place in the community

The Young Professionals Gage County (YPG) Group was re-launched last year after a number of years in hiatus. The group is a collaborative effort of the Beatrice Area Chamber of Commerce and NGage and, at its core, seeks to increase civic engagement in our young adult community. Its mission is to expand a YP's network in the community to enhance further career opportunities, which will prepare them to advocate for themselves, their skills, and their careers

If you are interested in joining this group or would like to get a member of your team plugged in to the group, please contact us! The lineup of events in 2025 are a great mix of socialization, meaningful connection, and professional development.

YPG Event at BCHHC



MFG DAY



Students at Precise Fabrication

In October, NGage hosted its 8th Annual MFG Day event for area high school students, aimed at bridging the gap between education and local industry. This event introduces students to high-paying, skilled career opportunities in modern manufacturing, which is often overlooked in favor of traditional college paths. By providing facility tours and direct interactions with industry professionals, **MFG Day helps students see the potential for stable careers close to home, reducing workforce shortages and strengthening the local economy.** This year's event drew students from a record six regional high schools.

Thanks to the following manufacturers for their participation in this year's event:

Kinney Manufacturing

Landmark Snacks

Neapco

Koch Industries

CAREER FAIR

In April, NGage collaborated with Beatrice High School and area employers for the second year in a row to host a Career Fair. This event provides students with firsthand exposure to career opportunities within their community, helping them understand the skills, education, and training required for various roles. For local businesses, career fairs serve as a pipeline for future employees, allowing them to engage with potential candidates early and shape the next generation of workers. By fostering these connections, **NGage hopes to retain young professionals, strengthen the local economy, and ensure businesses have a skilled workforce to meet evolving industry demands.** There were 29 business participants at this year's fair, consisting of local businesses, three branches of the military, and SCC Beatrice.



Career Fair participants

"One thing we're really hoping for is to connect our youth with employers and give them that sense of place in their community. We're showing them what is available and hoping to retain them in Gage County."

-Rachel Kreikemeier, NGage Executive Director

Gage County is a Community for Kids

**Creating partnerships to addressing childcare availability and affordability,
allowingn our workforce to be utilized at its full capacity**

The Gage County Communities for Kids (C4K) initiative was spearheaded by NGage in 2021 in response to community requests for assistance with shortages of high-quality early care and education programs — shortages that both impact children's optimal development and pose a challenge for communities hoping to attract and retain the viable workforce they need to thrive.

The C4K initiative has grown in its mission and urgency in that time, so NGage recently formed a brand new non-profit to support further efforts, the Gage County Childcare Collaborative! As a soft launch in 2024, the organization participated in Big Give Gage, a 24-giving hour event aimed at matching community members' passions and generosity with non-profits already doing great work in Gage County.



Housing is abundant, diverse, and affordable

Examining our current housing stock and identifying needs



NGage regularly completes housing studies, aimed at assessing current and future housing needs within our region. Its primary purposes include identifying housing supply and demand; guiding development and planning; attracting investment and funding; addressing gaps and challenges; and supporting economic growth. The most recent housing study was completed in 2021 and showed a need for nearly 400 units in our area. With one year left in the five-year study timeframe, there have been **over 300 units added**. A new housing study will need to be conducted in 2026 to determine future needs.

Current projects include the renovation of the former Stoddard Elementary School building into senior living units; planning stages for the conversion of the Paddock Lane and Lincoln Elementary School sites into single family homes; the preservation and renovation of the Kensington in downtown Beatrice, and many more projects all throughout Gage County.

Gage County *by the numbers:*



63.1% labor force participation



\$68.4M of investment injected into county



755 business establishments



80.9% - number of all parents in a household in labor force with children under 6



Population **21,646**

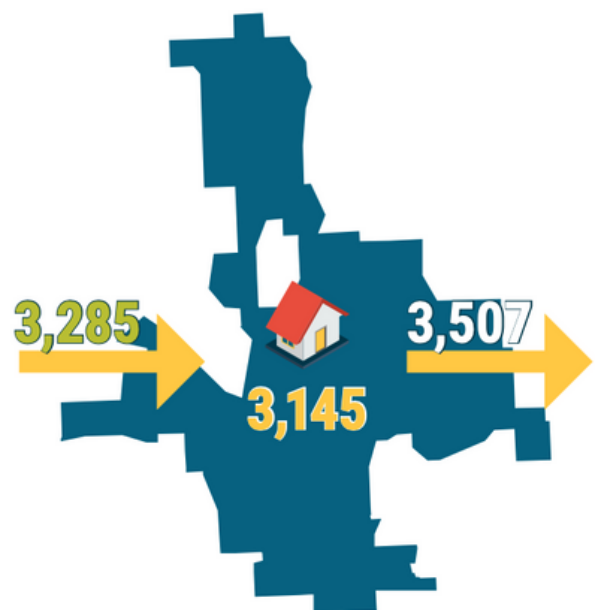


150+ housing units/lots in planning/construction phases

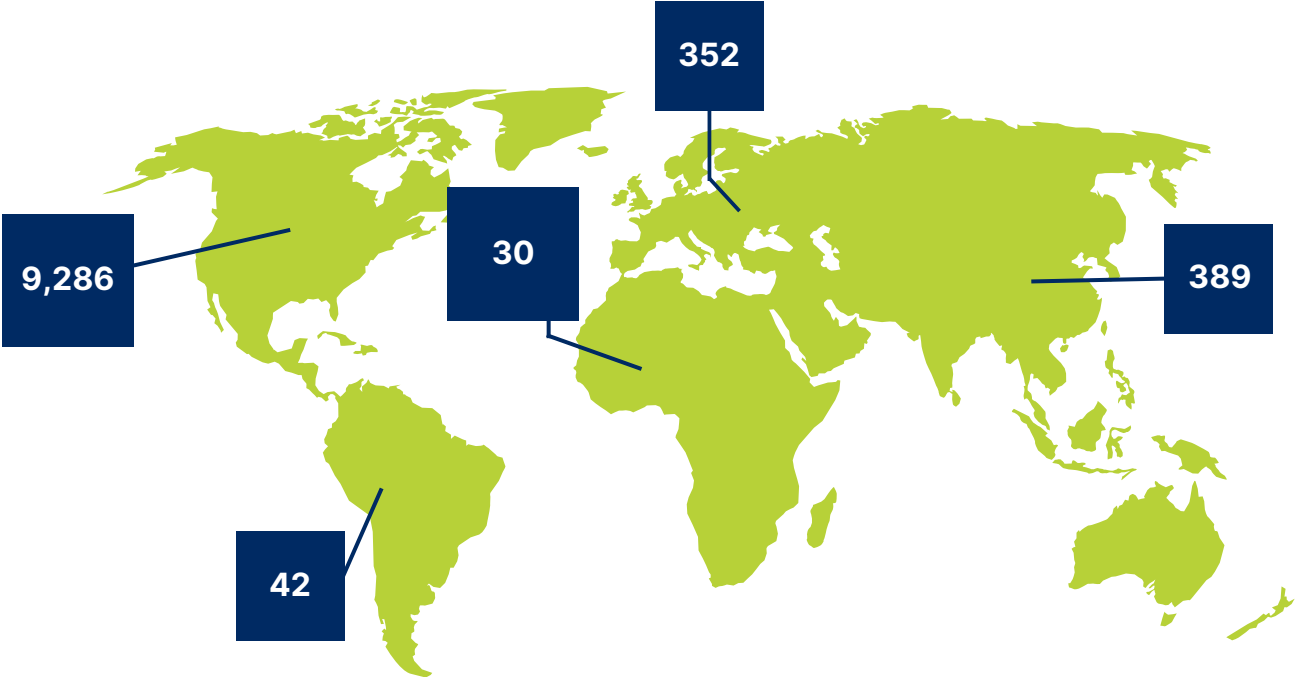
On the move...

In a survey among 123 businesses and 252 households, it was found that 32% of people both lived and worked in Beatrice, 33% of people worked in Beatrice but lived elsewhere, and 35% of people lived in Beatrice but worked elsewhere.

These numbers show a fairly even commuter pattern, meaning that of those leaving the area for work, a similar number are coming in to work. **Our strategies of youth engagement and housing seek to increase the number of residents who both live *and* work in Gage County.**



Number of Website Users by
Continent (Q1-Q4 2024)



Total Users: 8,315
Total Views: 54,510

Digital Reach



NGage is a proud partner with Golden Shovel Agency (GSA) for its website creation and management services. GSA empowers economic developers to improve their communities by providing tools to reach wider audiences, make connections, and attract businesses, investments, and workers.

Last year, GSA worked with NGage to address search engine optimization to drive more traffic to the website, write news articles highlighting our community and its businesses, and consistently pushed social media content out to our followers.

Invest in NGage

NGage works to improve communities and lives in Gage County by retaining and growing local businesses, increasing and improving a skilled workforce, and attracting new investments to the area. We collaborate with key partners in our area and beyond to form partnerships and drive meaningful economic development. We aim to:

- bring new businesses in and promote the community as a location for economic activity
- help existing local businesses solve problems that would cause them to fail, close, or move away
- help local businesses grow and expand
- improve Gage County communities' quality of life
- work with partners to prepare residents for available careers, connect businesses to skilled workers, and build the pipeline of future workers in the community
- help entrepreneurs and new firms start up and access the resources they need to succeed

The bottom line:

A vibrant economy is the result of deliberate choices and actions. All communities need a person or an organization that wakes up every day charged with improving the health of the local economy. That's what economic developers and economic development organizations like NGage do.



Join today!

Investing in NGage is far more than just a financial contribution - it's a powerful partnership with a proven leader in driving economic growth, creating opportunities, and transforming communities.

Proven impact.

Strategic Influence.

Access to resources.

Strengthen your community.

Explore the membership levels below, then call us to chat about your membership!

	Leader \$5,000	Champion \$2,500	Catalyst \$1,000	Advocate \$500
Logo on website	x	x	x	x
Website recognition	x	x	x	x
Social promotion	x	x	x	
Voting rights	x	x	x	
Media spotlight	x	x		
Tailored support	x	x		
Opportunity Here video	x			



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