



THE SCEDC NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE SEWARD COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



OCTOBER 2015

SEWARD DOWNTOWN PATRON AND BUSINESS SURVEY 2015

During the months of May through September 2015, the Seward Area Chamber of Commerce, Seward County Tourism Committee and the Seward County Economic Development Corporation partnered together to conduct a shopping patterns survey of downtown visitors and of merchants and property owners in the downtown area.

The survey's primary goal was to better understand the downtown shoppers' purchasing habits and future needs. This also included assessing the needs of the downtown business and property owners. The aggregated data will provide strategic direction for the future of downtown Seward.

The first phase of the survey was conducted by distributing copies of the survey to local businesses for patrons to fill out. Local volunteers also helped conduct the survey by surveying visitors to the downtown area. The second phase of the survey was conducted by distributing a hard copy of the survey to all of the business and property owners in the downtown area. An electronic link was also provided to these individuals for convenience.

A total of 81 shoppers were surveyed with the following results:

* Reasons for Visiting Downtown

Seward

- The two most commonly cited reasons to visit downtown are shopping (83%) and food (80%), followed by professional services (67%), special events (64%), and government (53%).

* Visit Specifics

- On a typical excursion, shoppers visit about 3 businesses
- In a three month period, shoppers visit downtown approximately 40 times

* Primary Drivers for Purchasing Local

- Shoppers surveyed indicate the important reasons* for local purchasing are availability of goods/services (87%) and choices of goods/services (87%)

(*Important and very important choices combined)

- The next most important reasons cited were price (76%), followed by hours of operations (69%)

* Services or Products Desired in downtown Seward

- In terms of "wish list" for downtown Seward, shoppers would like to see more eating establishments, more clothing options, a hardware store, a bakery, and other retail establishments

* Changes Needed in Order to Conduct More Business in Downtown Seward

- Increased parking, additional shopping choices, lower prices, more clothing stores, and extended hours
- A total of 40 merchant and/or building owners were surveyed with the following results:

* Satisfaction with Current Location

- 88.8% of individuals are very satisfied or satisfied with their current location

* Current Business Challenges

- The six biggest challenges indicated by the survey participants were 1) consumers choosing to shop locally; 2) lack of parking; 3) minimal foot traffic; 4) finding qualified employees; 5) the economy; and 6) technology changes.

* Plans for the Next 1-3 Years

- 77.8% plan to continue to operate similar to the current status, 18.5 % plan to move to another location, and 3.7% plan to reduce operations.

* What Needs to be Done to Increase Private Investment in Downtown Seward

- The top four responses were 1) continue working to keep downtown attractive; 2) provide financial incentives to recruit businesses downtown; 3) provide programs to retain and help existing businesses succeed; and 4) create a master

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SCEDC ANNUAL MEETING OCTOBER 1

- The SCEDC Annual Meeting started off with a short formal meeting where private sector members were elected to the SCEDC board of directors for the upcoming fiscal year.
- Lunch was provided by Nate's on the Nine.
- The keynote speaker was Mike Claborn from the Nebraska Public Power District. He discussed the recently completed survey of Downtown Seward Consumers, Merchants, and Building Owners. After his presentation a targeted discussion took place about revitalizing downtowns throughout Seward County.
- A business tour and beer tasting was held at Bottle Rocket Brewery (a member of the SCEDC), which is located in the old Flower Mill (230 S. 5th St. - across the street to the east of the Seward Memorial Library).



DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION SITE VISITS CONDUCTED IN MILFORD AND UTICA

The City of Milford and Village of Utica applied for the competitive Downtown Revitalization (DTR) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Phase 1 Planning Funding through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NEDED). Both communities utilized a tremendous amount of volunteer hours to write the applications and were competitive enough to elicit a community site visit from NEDED representatives. These site visits were approximately three hours in length and required both municipalities to display a broad representation of local support from business, civic, and community leaders for their downtown revitalization initiatives. A recent statement from NEDED representatives indicated that information about the awards for the DTR CDBG Program will be released after the NEDED receives the federal funding to enact the Program in Nebraska for this fiscal year.

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR VISITS SEWARD COUNTY

Brenda Hicks-Sorensen was appointed by Governor Pete Ricketts in January 2015 to become the Director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NEDED). She has made it a priority to visit communities and counties all over Nebraska to familiarize herself with the unique economic development efforts going on across the state. Brenda visited Seward County on September 1. She was introduced to the Seward/Lincoln Regional Rail Campus (industrial development site located in Seward),

had conversations with business leadership from Tenneco, Inc. and Hughes Brothers, Inc., and took a tour of the Southeast Community College campus in Milford. The site visit was planned and hosted by the Seward County Economic Development Corporation. Brenda took home a copy of the City of Seward Playbook (a marketing document highlighting the recent exciting community projects taking place in Seward).

Here is the link for reference: <http://www.sewardregional.com/wp-content/uploads/2015-City-of-Seward-Playbook.pdf>.



LUNCH & LEARN

The SCEDC will hold a Lunch and Learn event on Wednesday, November 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Seward Memorial Library.

Dr. L.J. McElravy will present “Achieving Successful Intergenerational Communication in the Workplace.”

RSVP by Friday, November 13 to Director@SewardRegional.com.



Join us for a great learning and networking opportunity.

PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS AT RURAL OPPORTUNITIES JOB FAIR

The Seward County Economic Development Corporation is partnering with the Seward Area Chamber of Commerce at an upcoming job fair titled, “Rural Opportunities Job Fair.” The event is hosted by the University of Nebraska’s Rural Futures Institute and is scheduled for October 21. It’s intended to connect students with rural communities and businesses. The Fair will allow students to explore internship, job, social and business opportunities in rural Nebraska. This is a first-time event and we encourage all businesses and organizations in Seward County to send us any job openings, internship opportunities, and other opportunities that we can promote during the Fair. If you send them to Director@SewardRegional.com no later than October 15, we will include them in the information that will be shared at the Seward County booth at the event. This is a free opportunity to promote your business and job opportunities to potential job candidates.

MANUFACTURING EVENT TO BE HELD OCTOBER 9

Seward County Manufacturing Day is Seward County’s opportunity to celebrate the manufacturing industry. The event will allow area students to connect with local manufacturing companies. The goal is to promote manufacturing employment opportunities in Seward County, focusing on the technical and skilled labor positions. High school and Southeast Community College (SCC) in Milford students are encouraged to attend.

The event will be hosted on the Milford Campus of SCC. Here is the agenda for the Friday, October 9 event (for more information about how to get involved, please e-mail Director@SewardRegional.com):

- 1:00 p.m. - A panel of speakers representing manufacturing employers from around Seward County will discuss why they enjoy their jobs in the industry

- 1:30 p.m. - Hands-on manufacturing project utilizing equipment on the SCC campus

- 2:30 p.m. - Attendees have the opportunity to visit with manufacturing representatives from around Seward County

- 3 p.m. - High school students leave; Current SCC students are invited to walk through manufacturing companies’ booths to learn about local employment opportunities

- 4 p.m. - Seward County manufacturing representatives will discuss specific needs that are currently affecting their companies and explore opportunities for future local industry collaborations and networking

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS SHOW ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

Middle school students from around Seward County had the opportunity to participate in the Entrepreneurship Investigation Camp (ESI) in June of 2015. During the four days of the camp, the students were able to learn from local business owners about how to obtain a loan, develop business ideas, create a brand, and understand income and expenses.

To start, students received a loan for their business startup costs and materials. By the end of the week, they were selling their handmade products at the Seward County Farmers’ Market and all students were able to pay off their business startup loans with the revenue generated.

Before camp, Jonathan Jank participated in the ESI committee planning meetings. During camp, he taught the young entrepreneurs about how to dress professionally, introduced them to entrepreneurs in Seward County, and also helped them understand how the public and private sectors work together to grow Seward County.



SEWARD DOWNTOWN PATRON AND BUSINESS SURVEY 2015

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business development plan. The majority felt that working to keep downtown attractive was the most important.

* Downtown Parking

- 53.5% feel more parking is needed and 46.5% feel there is adequate parking with the issues lying in perception or enforcement.

*Future of Downtown Seward

- 28.6% can envision Downtown Seward as a highly desirable destination and 53.6% can envision Downtown Seward as a highly desirable destination depending on what is done.

Survey participants were asked what the downtown area needs more of to create the desired mix of businesses. The overall desired mix of downtown businesses are as follows:

- Retail (96.2%)
- Restaurants (92.3%)
- Services (88.5%)
- Professional (76.9%)
- Recreational (34.6%)

Survey Demographics: Of the patrons surveyed, 58% were female, and 42% were male. 16% were under the age of 35, 26% between the age of 35 and 54, 34% between the ages of 54-74, and 24% were above the age of 75. 64% of the people surveyed reside within Seward city limits, 28% in Seward county, and 8% outside of the county. 24% of respondents indicated they commute for work. Of those 24%, 35% commute less than 10 miles, 24% commute 11-20 miles, 29% commute 21-30 miles, and 12% commute 31-40 miles. 43.6% of merchants and/or building owners surveyed were both owner and merchant, 48.7% were merchants, and 7.7% were building owners.

In general, downtown patrons are very satisfied with the downtown area in the Seward community and do not feel any major changes are needed. Merchants and building owners are satisfied with their current location. Key challenges are encouraging more local shopping, providing more parking, increasing foot traffic, finding qualified staff, and the economy in general. Keeping downtown attractive, providing financial incentives and programs for business success are the most important activities to increase private investment in the downtown area. Respondents envision downtown being a highly desirable location in the next 5 years.

SCEDC MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN IS COMPLETED

The Seward County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC) completed their membership campaign on October 1. They will be celebrating their public and private members at their Annual Meeting. There is 4 public and 40 private members that raised nearly \$135,000 for the organization. This will provide funding to operate the SCEDC for the 2015-2016 fiscal years.

LADP WEBSITE IS PROMOTING THE SOUTHEAST NEBRASKA REGION

The Seward County Economic Development Corporation is partnering with the Seward Area Chamber of anizations in Seward County to send us any job openings, internship opportunities, and other opportunities that we can promote during the Fair. If you send them to Director@SewardRegional.com no later than October 15, we will include them in the information that will shared at the Seward County booth at the event. This is a free opportunity to promote your business and job opportunities to potential job candidates.



<https://www.facebook.com/SewardRegional>

Thank You to the 2015-2016 Members of the SCEDC

Private Sector Members

Advanced Association Management
Ayars and Ayars
Betty's Bunch Temporaries
Black Hills Energy
Bottle Rocket Brewing LLC
Breeza Fans USA
Cattle National Bank & Trust Co.
Cheever Construction
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Memorial Health Care Systems of Milford,
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Milford Chamber of Commerce
Milford Public Schools
Nebraska Public Power District
Olsson Associates
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Rembolt Ludtke LLP
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Seward County Independent
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Seward Public Schools
Southeast Nebraska CASA
Underwood Team, PC/Home Real Estate
Union Bank & Trust Co.
Utica Commercial Club
Volzke Corporation
Wild Chiropractic, P.C.

Public Sector Members

City of Milford
City of Seward
Seward County
Village of Utica

2015-16 DIAMOND & PLATINUM MEMBERS



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