

# Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

[www.ci.norfolk.ne.us](http://www.ci.norfolk.ne.us)

July 16, 2013

## “LB840 and Economic Development”

In 2010 Norfolk voters approved a plan to boost economic development in the Norfolk area with the benefits from that vote already providing growth in the community.

“There are a few tools available to bring about increased economic activity and LB840 is one of those tools. It has been a significant reason we’ve been able to bring jobs and business to Norfolk in the past year,” said Courtney Klein, Economic Development Director for the City of Norfolk.



The Local Option Economic Development Act (LB 840) was passed in 1991 by the Nebraska State Legislature to aid businesses in adding jobs to a community.

Norfolk voters approved using \$400,000 a year of property taxes to fund economic projects to attract businesses and jobs to the area. They joined 50 other communities across Nebraska who have increased their economic development activity by offering low interest loans and grants through LB840 guidelines.

On May 6, 2013, the Norfolk City Council voted to eliminate some restrictions that had been placed on the program’s implementation.

“We previously restricted ourselves in using the program. Now we have the full flexibility of the program the voters approved,” Klein said.

Signs of success include the addition of 30 jobs at Premier Senior Marketing and 30 jobs soon to be added at Covidien. Other businesses are eyeing Norfolk as a place to locate.

“With continued growth Premier Companies needed to expand our office facilities. After looking into many options of several locations in Norfolk to relocating outside of town we decided it would be a better option for all the employees to continue to grow in Norfolk. After talking to city and state officials about economic incentives including LB840 funds that were available we made the decision to rebuild at the corner of Riverside and Benjamin,” said Mike Wingate, principal co-owner of Premier Companies.

Under LB840 guidelines, assistance to these companies can be in the form of low interest loans, forgivable loans, infrastructure improvements and guidance in general.

Klein was hired just a year ago as the city’s first full time economic director and works with the Norfolk Area Economic Development Council to decide the best ways to use LB840, TIF (Tax Increment Financing), and other incentives to help businesses come, stay and expand in the Norfolk area.

Klein emphasizes that the Council’s role is that of facilitator in the whole process of economic development.

"We are in partnership with a multitude of entities. If someone comes to our office with a question about starting a business in the Norfolk area, we can connect the dots for them and direct them to the appropriate resources given their stage in the process," Klein said.

Some of those partners include the Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce, Northeast Community College, Nebraska State Department of Economic Development, Madison County, the utility companies, Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District and many other organizations that are willing and able to help a business succeed.

"It takes collaboration and strong community partnerships to get significant results. When we all work together as one, our entire community wins," said Dennis Houston, President and CEO of the Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce.

Both Houston and Klein agree it takes time- months to a year- from start to finish to work with companies who are looking to locate or expand in the Norfolk area.

"We know that these things don't happen overnight. What we do along with city staff is to help facilitate growth. We're in the business of removing barriers, with the goal of sustainable growth in the long term. The benefits of any economic growth will be reaped for years to come," Klein said.