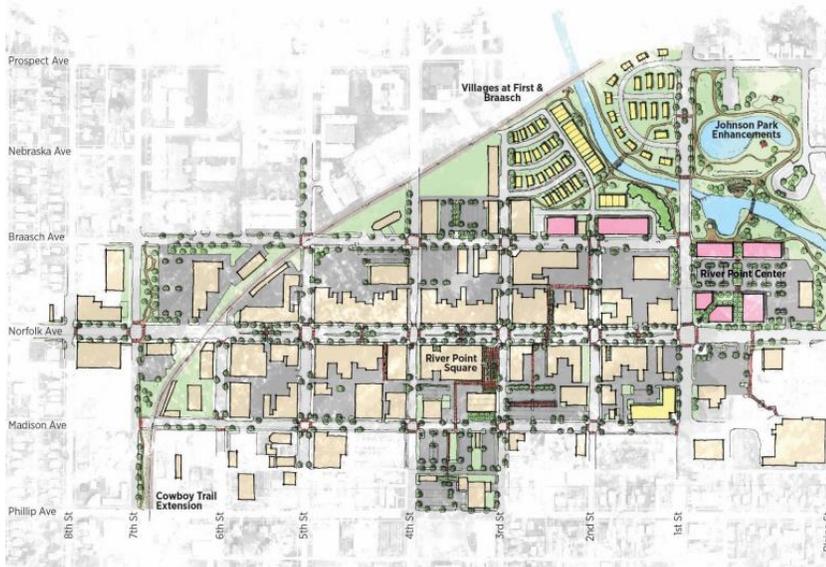


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City of Norfolk Wins Large Grant Awards for Street Construction, Downtown Improvements



The State of Nebraska recently announced the City of Norfolk has been awarded two grants from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED). The grants will play a key role in funding a major downtown street improvement project and downtown enhancements.

“Competition for these grants is statewide and intense. I’m very pleased we won both,” said Mayor Josh Moenning. “This success is a testament to community members engaging in the planning process and staff working hard to submit visionary, well-

developed plans for infrastructure improvement and downtown enhancement.”

The first grant is a \$350,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Comprehensive Development (CD) - Phase II which is designated for street, sidewalk, and infrastructure improvements along Braasch Avenue.

“This grant is a huge help in reconstructing Braasch Avenue, a much-needed street repair project,” said Josh Moenning. “We can leverage these state funds to not only reconstruct the street, but also improve sidewalks and streetscape along an important corridor that links downtown to the riverfront and Johnson Park area.”

The intent of the CD category is to enhance and expand the impact of existing and new partnerships towards community development and revitalization. Resident and stakeholder engagement is the foundation of a comprehensive development effort. Phase I, which was a pre-development planning stage, was required to access Phase II implementation funds and was completed earlier this year. During Phase I, citizen input was gathered through a survey sent to those living within the specified zone. The results of the survey showed that the highest priority to citizens was the condition of city streets. Phase II is highly competitive as it includes the possibility of a two-year funding maximum allocation of \$350,000 each year for those qualifying communities.

The money is part of Nebraska's annual allocation of CDBG funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Funds are administered by DED. The focus is to foster a greater capacity for local community and economic development initiatives, carrying out an enhanced and stable comprehensive revitalization strategy principally benefiting low/moderate income residents of the community.

The second grant is a \$350,000 CDBG for Downtown Revitalization (DTR). This grant will be used for the continuation of an existing façade improvement program and the development of a community gathering space.

“Previous DTR grants have assisted several businesses with façade improvements. Along with more such work, this grant will help improve public spaces already being used for community events and festivals, helping these gatherings grow and drawing more people to downtown Norfolk.”

The intent of the DTR category is to develop a strategy for improving businesses and infrastructure within the community's central business districts.

Citizen input was vital to the application process of this grant. A series of seven stakeholder meetings were held to engage community members in compelling conversations about the opportunities, challenges, and aspirations they have for downtown Norfolk. While much of the process featured targeted outreach to the business owners, property owners, and community leaders, a series of community open house meetings were held to recognize the essential role that residents have on the vitality of the district.

The meetings unveiled a need for a community gathering space located in downtown Norfolk. Numerous ideas were discussed but the most prominent of them all was the creation of the River Point Square. River Point Square will be located at the southeast corner of Third Street and Norfolk Avenue beside the Johnny Carson Mural.

The CDBG Downtown Revitalization category is open to CDBG non-entitlement incorporated municipalities throughout Nebraska. Grants are administered by DED from the State's annual allocation of CDBG funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Communities that successfully complete the planning phase have the opportunity to apply for Phase II (implementation) resources, which may include up to \$350,000 per community for implementing the CDBG-eligible activities defined in the approved plans.

Additional information regarding the DTR grant can be found online at: www.ci.norfolk.ne.us