



## "OPEN MEETINGS ACT"

City of Blair Regular Council Meeting  
City Council Chambers  
April 29, 2025 - 6:00 PM

**A Copy of the "Open Meetings Act" Has Been Posted at Both Exits**

### AGENDA

**NOTE: A current copy of the agenda can be obtained at the City Clerk's Office at 218 S. 16th Street, Blair, Nebraska or on the City website at [www.blairnebraska.org](http://www.blairnebraska.org). The City Council reserves the right to go into Executive Session at any time.**

- 1.Meeting was called to order by Mayor Rump.
- 2.Roll Call.
- 3.Pledge of Allegiance.
- 4.Approval of Consent Agenda - The following items are considered to be routine by the city council and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a city council member or citizen so requests, in which event the item will be removed from consent status and considered in its normal sequence on the agenda.
  - 4.a. Approval of Minutes of the April 22, 2025 meeting.
- 5.Strategic Plan presentation by Dr. Steve Rathman.
- 6.City staff will lead a discussion regarding the components and purposes of the Comprehensive Plan and a possible timeline for updating Blair's Comprehensive Plan in 2026.
- 7.Motion and second by Council members to adjourn the meeting.

**A Copy of the "Open Meetings Act" Has Been Posted at Both Exits**

City of Blair Regular Council Meeting  
April 22, 2025

The Mayor and City Council met in regular session in the City Council Chambers on April 22, 2025, at 7:00 PM. The following were present: Brent Clark, Holly Hafer, Kirk Highfill, James Letcher, Kent Long, Rick Paulsen, Kevin Willis, and Frank Wolff. Also present were City Administrator Green, Assistant City Administrator Barrow, Director of Public Works Heaton, City Attorney Talbot, Non-Lawyer Assistant Ferrari, Library Director Lukert, HR Manager Guhl, and Community Development Director Beiermann.

The Mayor publicly stated to all in attendance that a current copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available for review and indicated the location of such copy posted in the room where the meeting was being held. Notice of the meeting was given in advance thereof by publication in the Enterprise or the Pilot -Tribune as shown by the affidavit of publication filed in the City Clerk's office. Notice of the meeting was simultaneously given to the Mayor and all members of the City Council, and a copy of their acknowledgement of receipt of notice and the agenda is filed in the City Clerk's office. Availability of the agenda was communicated in the advance notice and in the notice to the Mayor and Council of this meeting. All proceedings hereafter shown were taken while the convened meeting was open to the attendance of the public.

Agenda Item #1, #2 & #3 – Mayor Rump called this meeting to order followed by roll call vote and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Item #4 – Consent Agenda approved the following: 4a) Approval of Minutes of the April 8, 2025, meeting, 4b) Clerk report of Mayoral Action of meeting, 4c) Claims as approved by the Finance Committee, 4d) Approve manager request in reference to the American Legion Post 154, 103 S 12th Street, Blair, Liquor License. Motion by James Letcher, second by Kirk Highfill to approve the Consent Agenda. Council members voted as follows: Brent Clark: Yea, Holly Hafer: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Yea, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 8, Nay: 0. Mayor Rump declared the motion carried.

Agenda Item #5 – Mayor Rump presented a plaque to retiring employee Pat Long thanking him for his 45+ years of public service.

Agenda Item #6 – Beth Clarke gave a presentation on behalf of Teammates outlining the importance of this program to the community and encouraged members of the community to volunteer as a mentor. Blair has been involved in Teammates for over 20 years.

Agenda Item #7 – Fire Chief Leonard, 1303 Maple Dr., presented Tre Murray as a new member of the department. Mr. Murray has completed all the requirements to join the department. He stated the other applicant Zach Lepper has withdrawn his application. They currently have three other applicants waiting to complete the process to hopefully be presented to the Council in the next few weeks. The Police and Fire Committee recommended approval. Council member Highfill introduced Resolution 2025-38 approving Zach Lepper and Tre Murray as new members of the Blair Volunteer Fire Department. Motion by Kirk Highfill, second by James Letcher to amend Resolution No. 2025-38 removing Zach Lepper as a new member of the Blair Volunteer Fire Department. Council members voted as follows: Brent Clark: Yea, Holly Hafer: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Yea, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 8, Nay: 0. Mayor Rump declared

Council Meeting April 22, 2025

the motion carried. Motion by Kirk Highfill, second by Rick Paulsen to adopt Resolution No. 2025-38 as amended. Council members voted as follows: Brent Clark: Yea, Holly Hafer: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Yea, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 8, Nay: 0. Mayor Rump declared the motion carried.

Agenda Item #8 – Mayor opened a public hearing to consider amending the Blair City Zoning Regulations, Article 7, Section 704, adding "Multi-Family Dwellings, to a maximum of six (6) units" and "Residential Condominiums, to a maximum of six (6) living unites pursuant to section 1116" to section 704.02--Permitted Principal Uses and Structures and removing "Multi-Family Dwellings, to a maximum of six (6) units" and "Residential Condominiums, to a maximum of six (6) living unites pursuant to section 1116" from Section 704.04--Exceptions. Community Development Director Beiermann stated the proposed change is another way to help developers with housing in Blair. This change will eliminate the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) requirements to construct multi-family units in the RML zoning. The lot size and the square footage will limit where a developer can construct multi-family units thus eliminating the need for a CUP. The Planning Commission recommended approval. There were no comments from the floor or in writing. Mayor Rump closed the public hearing. Council member Willis introduced Ordinance No. 2573 amending the Blair City Zoning Regulations, Article 7, Section 704, adding "Multi-Family Dwellings, to a maximum of six (6) units" and "Residential Condominiums, to a maximum of six (6) living unites pursuant to section 1116" to section 704.02--Permitted Principal Uses and Structures and removing "Multi-Family Dwellings, to a maximum of six (6) units" and "Residential Condominiums, to a maximum of six (6) living unites pursuant to section 1116" from Section 704.04--Exceptions.

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE BLAIR CITY ZONING REGULATIONS, ARTICLE 7, SECTION 704, ADDING "MULTI-FAMILY DWELLINGS, TO A MAXIMUM OF SIX (6) UNITS" & "RESIDENTIAL CONDOMINIUMS, TO A MAXIMUM OF SIX (6) LIVING UNITS PURSUANT TO SECTION 1116" TO SECTION 704.02 PERMITTED PRINCIPAL USES AND STRUCTURES AND REMOVING "MULTI-FAMILY DWELLINGS, TO A MAXIMUM OF SIX (6) UNITS" & "RESIDENTIAL CONDOMINIUMS, TO A MAXIMUM OF SIX (6) LIVING UNITS PURSUANT TO SECTION 1116" FROM 704.04 EXCEPTIONS, REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH AND PROVIDING WHEN THIS ORDINANCE SHALL BE IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT AND PROVIDING FOR PUBLICATION OF THIS ORDINANCE IN PAMPHLET FORM.**

Council member Kevin Willis moved that the statutory rule requiring reading on three different days be suspended. Council member Rick Paulsen seconded the motion to suspend the rules and upon roll call vote the following Council members voted: Brent Clark: Yea, Holly Hafer: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Yea, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 8, Nay: 0. The motion to suspend the rules was adopted by three-fourths of the Council and the statutory rule was declared suspended for consideration of said Ordinance.

Said Ordinance was then read by title and thereafter Council member Kevin Willis moved for final passage of the Ordinance, which motion was seconded by Council member Frank Wolff. The Mayor then stated the question was "Shall Ordinance No. 2573 be passed and adopted?" Upon roll call vote, the following Council members voted: Brent Clark: Yea, Holly Hafer: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Yea, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 8, Nay: 0. The passage of said Ordinance having been concurred in by a majority of all members of the Council, the Council President declared the Ordinance adopted. A true, correct, and complete copy of said Ordinance can be found in the Ordinance Record Book.

Agenda Item #9 – Mayor Rump opened a public hearing to consider amending the City of Blair Zoning Regulations, Article 11, Supplementary District Regulations, by adding Section 1103.5 – Accessory Dwelling Unit and amending Article 3, Construction and Definitions, adding Definitions 303.01 (2.5) - Accessory Dwelling Unit. Community Development Director Beiermann presented a proposed change to the Zoning Regulations from an Ad Hoc zoning committee that has been working on the development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU). These are residential dwelling units on the same parcel as a single-family dwelling that has a separate entrance and address. The ADU provides complete independent living facilities. It may take various forms: a detached unit; a unit that is part of an accessory structure, such as a detached garage; or a unit that is part of an expanded or remodeled dwelling. They are limited to 1000 square feet and are allowed in all zoning districts by a Conditional Use Permit. Parking requirements have been removed and an ADU cannot be sold separately from the primary structure. The Planning Commission recommended approval. Todd Stubbendieck, 301 S. 13<sup>th</sup> St., Lincoln, NE came in support of this change stating ADU's represent an affordable option for individuals that can help people stay in their homes or allow families to build an ADU to take care of a family member. Jake Loftis, 2129 Park St., supported more housing options for Blair but questioned why the need for a CUP and suggested they be allowed by right. City Administrator Green stated there will be some flexibility down the road where the Council may want to remove the CUP requirements but after reviewing a lot of different regulations that all required CUP's, it was decided to require them at this time. There were no comments in writing. Mayor Rump closed the public hearing. Council member Hafer introduced Ordinance No. 2574 amending the City of Blair Zoning Regulations, Article 11, Supplementary District Regulations, by adding Section 1103.5 – Accessory Dwelling Unit and amending Article 3, Construction and Definitions, adding Definitions 303.01 (2.5) - Accessory Dwelling Unit.

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE BLAIR CITY ZONING REGULATIONS, ARTICLE 11, SUPPLEMENTARY DISTRICT REGULATIONS, BY ADDING SECTION 1103.5—ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS AND AMENDING ARTICLE 3, CONSTRUCTION DEFINITIONS, ADDING TO SECTION 303.01, DEFINITIONS (2.5)—ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT, REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH AND PROVIDING WHEN THIS ORDINANCE SHALL BE IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT AND PROVIDING FOR PUBLICATION OF THIS ORDINANCE IN PAMPHLET FORM.**

Council member Holly Hafer moved that the statutory rule requiring reading on three different days be suspended. Council member Kirk Highfill seconded the motion to suspend the rules and upon roll call vote the following Council members voted: Brent Clark: Yea, Holly Hafer: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Yea, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 8, Nay: 0. The motion to suspend the rules was adopted by three-fourths of the Council and the statutory rule was declared suspended for consideration of said Ordinance.

Said Ordinance was then read by title and thereafter Council member Holly Hafer moved for final passage of the Ordinance, which motion was seconded by Council member Kirk Highfill. The Mayor then stated the question was "Shall Ordinance No. 2574 be passed and adopted?" Upon roll call vote, the following Council members voted: Brent Clark: Yea, Holly Hafer: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Yea, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 8, Nay: 0. The passage of said Ordinance having been concurred in by a majority of all members of the Council, the Council President declared the Ordinance adopted. A true, correct, and complete copy of said Ordinance can be found in the Ordinance Record Book.

Agenda Item #10 – Non-Lawyer Assistant Ferrari presented an amendment to the Blair Municipal Code in reference to fees for the Amphitheatre and Pickleball Court rental. These fees are recommended by the Park, Recreation and Cemetery Advisory Board. All rentals will be made through and paid for at city hall. There are no lights at the pickleball courts, so the rental times are different than other park rentals. Courts 3 and 4 can be reserved but the other courts will remain open for public use. The Finance Committee recommended approval of the proposed fees. Council member Wolff introduced Ordinance 2575 to amend the Blair City Municipal Code, Appendix-Permit, License, and application fees adding the rental fees for the Amphitheatre and Pickleball Court rental.

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE BLAIR CITY MUNICIPAL CODE, APPENDIX—PERMIT, LICENSE, AND APPLICATION FEES ADDING THE RENTAL FEES FOR THE AMPHITHEATRE AND PICKLEBALL COURT RENTAL; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH, PROVIDING WHEN THIS ORDINANCE SHALL BE IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT AND PUBLISHED IN PAMPHLET FORM.**

Council member Frank Wolff moved that the statutory rule requiring reading on three different days be suspended. Council member Brent Clark seconded the motion to suspend the rules and upon roll call vote the following Council members voted: Brent Clark: Yea, Holly Hafer: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Yea, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 8, Nay: 0. The motion to suspend the rules was adopted by three-fourths of the Council and the statutory rule was declared suspended for consideration of said Ordinance.

Said Ordinance was then read by title and thereafter Council member Frank Wolff moved for final passage of the Ordinance, which motion was seconded by Council member Brent Clark. The Mayor then stated the question was "Shall Ordinance No. 2575 be passed and adopted?" Upon roll call vote, the following Council members voted: Brent Clark: Yea, Holly Hafer: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Yea, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 8, Nay: 0. The passage of said Ordinance having been concurred in by a majority of all members of the Council, the Council President declared the Ordinance adopted. A true, correct, and complete copy of said Ordinance can be found in the Ordinance Record Book.

Agenda Item #11 – Non-Lawyer Assistant Ferrari and Director of Public Works Heaton reviewed rental agreements and rules for the Amphitheatre and Pickleball Courts. Ferrari stated she has prepared new rental agreements for the Depot, Shelters, Amphitheatre and Pickleball Courts to model all agreements to be in the same format. The Amphitheatre agreement is extensive but requires more information than the other rental agreements. It spells out what insurance is needed, requirements for any portable restrooms if needed, clean-up requirements, and sound/time limits. Music will be required to stop at 11:00 p.m. even though the city's other parks are open until midnight. Heaton stated courts 3 and 4 will be available for either half day or full day rentals and the other courts to be available for open play at all times. Fees are based on the length of rental and non-profit status. Community events like Gateway to the West Days will not be charged. Generations Park Pickleball Courts – Rules and Regulations are presented as follows: 1) Pickleball court hours are 7:00 am to thirty minutes after sunset, 2) Courts 1 & 2 are for open play, 3) Courts 3 & 4 are available for reservations, 4) For pickleball use only – no skates, skateboards, or bikes, 5) No Pets are allowed on the courts, 6) No alcoholic beverages and no glass containers, 7) Limit play to 1 game while others are waiting, 8) Use the paddle rack from left to right to hold the next game, and 9) Call Blair City Hall at 402-426-4191 to make a reservation 48 hours in advance. These fees are recommended by the Park, Recreation and Cemetery Advisory Board. Council Meeting April 22, 2025

member Hafer introduced Resolution No. 2025-39 approving Rental Agreements for the Blair Amphitheatre, Pickleball Court Rules and Regulations, and Parks Shelters. Motion by Holly Hafer, second by Frank Wolff to adopt Resolution No. 2025-39 as presented. Council members voted as follows: Brent Clark: Yea, Holly Hafer: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Yea, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 8, Nay: 0. Mayor Rump declared the motion carried.

Agenda Item #12 – City Administrator Green thanked the Ad Hoc Committee for their work on the ADU policy. Water was tested at the splash pad today to make sure it is working properly. A ribbon cutting is planned for Wednesday, May 14 at 4:00 p.m. at which the public will be invited. The Council will be meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday on April 29, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. with a presentation by Dr. Steve Rathman who has prepared a strategic plan for Blair. Staff will also be presenting the Comprehensive Plan procedure the city will be following to update the plan which has not been updated since 2015. Staff are still working with the state for permission to install temporary traffic signals at Highway 75 and Hollow Road Bypass intersection. These lights will be installed at the city's expense, but these lights are important for public safety through the summer months.

Agenda Item #13 – Motion by Brent Clark, second by Kent Long to adjourn the meeting 8:00 p.m. Council members voted as follows: Brent Clark: Yea, Holly Hafer: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Yea, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 8, Nay: 0. Mayor Rump declared the motion carried.

The following claims were approved: Accurate Locksmiths, Svc, 1194.19; Black Hills Energy, Svc, 3180.89; Air Products & Chemicals, Inv, 9274.57; American Library Assoc, Svc, 265.00; Amerisource Hr Consulting, Payrl, 2250.00; Apwa Iowa Chapter, Inv, 235.00; Arps Red-E-Mix Inc, Inv, 276.25; Assethr, Payrl, 217992.49; Assethr, Payrl, 255346.35; Axon Enterprises Inc, Inv, 2970.00; Babkel Mechanical, Svc, 621.43; Baker & Taylor Books, Inv, 44.84; Blair Ace Hardware, Inv, 731.92; Buds Auto Repair, Svc, 88.14; Cede & Co, Invest, 14651.25; City Of Blair, Svc, 110.16; Core & Main, Inv, 1222.85; Dick's Electric Co, Svc, 2200.73; Dillon Brothers H-D-Omaha, Svc, 1943.37; Dultmeier Sales Llc, Inv, 125.35; Electronic Contracting Co, Svc, 857.33; Enterprise Publishing Co, Svc, 1635.51; Eriksen Constr Co Inc, Svc, 143260.39; First National Bank, Svc, 1876.53; Firstnet At&T Mobility, Svc, 90.06; Fremont Electric, Svc, 251.72; Gateway Development Corp, Svc, 100000.00; Grainger, Inv, 117.15; Hach Co, Inv, 72.89; Hawkins Inc, Inv, 7062.00; Hayes & Associates, Svc, 21750.00; Hdr Engineering Inc, Svc, 49764.29; Heartland Natural Gas, Inv, 1133.54; Heaton Charles J, Svc, 964.30; I C M A, Inv, 1894.44; Ingram Library Services, Inv, 2264.20; Jeo Consulting Group Inc, Svc, 1220.00; Jpr Investments Llc, Llc, 720.00; Kelly Ryan Equipment Co, Svc, 142.58; Kubie Lowell, Svc, 232.60; Lager Joseph, Svc, 429.76; Law Enforcement Seminars, Svc, 445.00; League Of Ne Municipality, Inv, 554.28; Michael Todd & Co, Inv, 409.75; Mid-American Benefits Llc, Svc, 2297.48; Midland Scientific Inc, Svc, 198.17; Midwest Fireworks, Inv, 10000.00; Midwest Laboratories, Svc, 863.25; Mississippi Lime Co, Inv, 35114.41; Nalco Company, Inv, 119292.18; Nastase Roofing, Svc, 897.00; Ndee - Fiscal Services, Inv, 150.00; Nebraska Dept Of Revenue, Svc, 11721.20; Nebraska Public Health, Svc, 275.00; Ne-Ia Industrial Fastener, Inv, 184.73; Olsson Associates, Svc, 11927.75; Onsite Services Solutions, Svc, 4435.00; Pat Mccarthy Productions, Inv, 495.00; Principal Financial Group, Pen, 64071.31; Pvs Dx Inc, Inv, 1115.84; Raka Rentals, Inv, 1995.80; Safety-Kleen Systems, Inv, 341.25; Sams Club, Inv, 151.69; Sapp Bros Petroleum, Inv, 2191.56; Seh Inc, Svc, 5850.00; The Team Approach, Inc, Svc, 168.00; Thermal Heating Air And, Svc, 346.50; Thompson Solutions Group, Svc, 3188.25; Uline, Inv, 68.01; Univar Usa Inc, Inv, 46164.21; Unmanned Vehicle Tech, Svc, 995.00; Vessco Inc, Inv, 1952.83; Wakefield Towing And Reco, Svc, 800.00; Wood Deborah, Svc, 500.00.

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Melinda K. Rump, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Brenda Wheeler, City Clerk

Seal



*2025 Blair, Nebraska Strategic Plan*

*"We Put Community First" or "We are better together" or "Community First: Better Together" or "Community First: Stronger Together"*

# Blair, Nebraska

Blair is a vibrant community with a population of 8,000, situated along the Missouri River in eastern Nebraska. Blair is a city in and the county seat of Washington County, Nebraska, United States. As the county seat of Washington County, population 22,000, Blair is strategically located just 20 miles north of Omaha, offering residents the perfect blend of small-town charm and easy access to metropolitan amenities. Blair is a part of the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Statistical Area, operating under the Mayor-Council form of government and serving as a vital transportation hub and center for business, agriculture, and industry in eastern Nebraska and Western Iowa. The community features a variety of established and newly developed residential areas and locally owned businesses, all while remaining attractive on the global business stage. Blair operates a publicly owned water production facility that provides safe drinking water to the community and surrounding areas of Washington County. Blair was platted in 1869 and incorporated in 1872 when the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad was extended to the area. Named after John Insley Blair, who was credited with bringing the railroad to town, the town was designated the Washington County seat within its first year. Surrounded by the rolling hills of the Missouri River Valley, Blair exemplifies a community where people live, learn, and work together to create an exceptional quality of life.

According to the United States Census Bureau, Blair's total area is 5.51 square miles, with 5.49 square miles of land and .02 square miles of water. According to the 2023 annual estimate of the resident population, Blair consists of 96.1 % White, 1.1% African American, .3% Asian, .5% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and 2.1% Hispanic or Latino. 27.6% of the population was under the age of 18, 8.0% from 18 to 24, 23.6% from 25 to 44, 23.7% from 45 to 64, and 17.6% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 39.2 years. For every 100 females, the population had 91.4 males. For every 100 females ages 18 and older, there were 83.3 males.

The 2022 5-year American Community Survey estimates show 3,084 households with a median household income of \$74,058. Males had a median income of \$51,769 versus \$29,811 for females. The median income for those above 16 years old was \$39,382. Approximately 11.6% of families and 13.6% of the population were below the poverty line, including 18.7% of those under 18 and 7.9% of those ages 65 or over.

The City of Blair operates under the mayor-council form of government. Eight council members represent four city wards and are elected by their ward on a staggered basis for a four-year term. The entire community elects a mayor for a four-year term. All ballots are nonpartisan. The Mayor and City Council work together to establish goals and objectives for the City and then formulate policies to achieve those goals and objectives. The mayor presides over official meetings and supervises all the officers and affairs of the city. The mayor votes only when their vote is the deciding vote. The mayor has the power to veto any ordinance or resolution. A two-thirds majority, or six votes of the Council, is required to override the mayor's veto.

The City of Blair is a full-service municipal government organization consisting of the following departments:

- City Administration
  - Community Development
  - Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery
  - Finance and Utility Billing
  - Fire and Rescue
  - Human Resources
  - Library
  - Police
  - Public Works
  - Blair Executive Airport
-

## Core Purpose

The core purpose of the city of Blair is to provide high-quality public services to the community and region, ensuring a safe and well-functioning community that addresses the needs of those we serve.

## Core Ideology

“We specialize in public service. All city operations are carried out with this in mind.”

We endeavor to accomplish this through:

- Collaboration
- Dedication
- Resiliency
- Leadership
- Strategic growth

## Mission Statement

The city of Blair aims to enhance the quality of life in our community by providing a sustainable level of municipal services that balance physical, economic, and social quality.

## Vision Statement

To maintain a vibrant city guided by history, governed by contemporary opportunities, and shaped by small-town ideals and a sense of community.

## Core Values

- Community:** Provides belonging, support, and identity
- Quality:** A standard of excellence
- Respect:** A high level of understanding, empathy, and a sense of dignity
- Service:** Taking action to create value for the public
- Transparency:** Building trust through promoting accountability

**“We put community first!” or “We are better together.”**

**or**

**“Community First: Better Together” or “Community First: Stronger Together”**

## SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

### Strengths

- Small or Hometown feel
- Forward thinking
- Location
- City Services
- Safe Community
- Community relations
- Professionalism
- School system
- Location in the metro area
- Industry and jobs
- Adequate volunteer base
- Parks and Recreation
- Water Plant
- Healthcare
- Community Cohesion
- Good pay and benefits
- Citizens are allowed to have a voice
- Camaraderie among staff
- Community willing to step up when called upon
- Recruiting factory/industrial businesses

### Weaknesses

- Communication
- Topography
- Micro-Management
- Lack of transparency
- No defined purpose
- Low morale
- Convoluted hiring process
- Main St.
- Overpopulated with entry-level workers
- Staying focused on one thing at a time
- Delegation
- Employee engagement
- Struggle to move forward due to not having the proper number of employees with the right mindset
- Lack of staffing to provide the level of service that is expected
- Housing options
- Lack of recognition/department heads treated differently

### Opportunities

- Community in Transition
- Small town feel with big town opportunities
- Community growth
- Organizational growth
- Recent and future employee turnover
- Growth from small to mid-sized community
- New perspectives and opinions (new city leadership)
- Community development
- Marketing of Blair (Internal and external promotion)
- Washington County Seat
- Create an identity separate from Omaha
- Improve quality of life issues
- Take advantage of social media opportunities
- Changing trajectory after several years of status quo
- Turnover in city leadership

### Threats

- Unstructured growth
- Recruitment and retention
- Community resistance to growth and change
- Budget constraints
- Decades of status quo
- Being satisfied with the status quo (organization at a standstill)
- Resistance to change
- Highways in Blair
- Hiring the wrong people for upcoming city leadership positions
- Quality of life issues ignored
- Identity crisis (small town vs. growing town or rural vs. urban)
- Lack of appealing factors for families

- Budget restrictions for departments
- Lack of overall vision
- Moving too fast, too soon
- Passively hoping that change will happen
- Staff overworked and stressed
- Becoming stagnant
- Turnover in city leadership
- Brain drain in key leadership positions
- Lack of focus or involvement in city problems or issues
- Employees feeling disconnected from the city
- No clear direction to move forward

## TOWS Analysis (Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Strengths)

### Strengths/Opportunities (leveraging internal strengths to capitalize on external opportunities)

- Small/hometown feel with the potential for bigger town opportunities
- Community in transition with the potential to grow from a small to a mid-sized community
- Forward-thinking organization with new perspectives and opinions
- Marketing Blair's quality of life opportunities (city services, Washington County seat, safe community, public school system, location in the metro, parks and recreation, water plant, health care opportunities)

### Weakness/Opportunities (leveraging external opportunities to address internal weaknesses)

- Communication (internal and external) and growth (social media and technology advances)
- Lack of transparency and community development (housing, marketing, quality of life issues, Main St.)
- No defined purpose and changing trajectory after several years of status quo
- Employee quality of employee issues (no defined purpose, low morale, convoluted HR processes, delegation, employee engagement, employee mindset, lack of proper staffing levels, micro-management of departments, lack of recognition, and department heads treated differently) and turnover in city leadership with a new leadership mindset

### Strengths/Threats (using the organization's strengths to minimize the impact of threats)

- Location vs. Highways
- Forward thinking vs. Unstructured growth
- Community cohesion vs. community resistance to growth and change
- Recruiting business vs. lack of overall vision, moving too fast, too soon, with no clear direction to move forward
- City services vs. staff overworked and stressed, budget restrictions, becoming stagnant due to employees feeling disconnected

### Weakness/Threats (focus on handling both outside dangers and internal shortcomings)

- Housing options vs. lack of appealing factors for families
- Community resistance to growth and change vs. struggle to move forward with purpose
- Budget restraints vs. providing the levels of service that are expected
- Micro-management vs. internal resistance to change (overcoming several decades of status quo)

### Challenges (obstacles that have the potential to hinder success)

- Traffic
- Housing
- Topography
- Culture/Transparency
- Community Identity
- Internal communication
- Infrastructure issues (internal and external)
- Hiring leadership positions
- Funding
- Internal Development opportunities
- Morale
- Highways in town (traffic flow)
- City planning (Industrial vs. Residential)
- Tax Increment Financing
- Zoning challenges
- Changing demographics
- Adequate facilities
- Communication to the citizens
- Stagnant organizational history
- Resistance to growth (culturally)
- Departments feel isolated from one another
- Unnecessary number of meetings
- Focus on what we do best...???
- Need to entice families and young adults before the city stalls out

### **Strategic Initiatives/Pillars (action-oriented concepts used to drive the organization's long-term goals)**

- **Quality of life:** ensuring the overall well-being and satisfaction of the community and region
- **Family friendly:** a community that prioritizes the needs and well-being of families by providing the necessary resources
- **Safety and security:** embracing the diversity of differing groups and individuals, while providing an environment free from fear.
- **Sustainability:** integrating economic considerations into current decision making, designed to ensure long-term organizational health
- **Leadership:** Focus on developing leadership skills and capabilities within the organization and its existing workforce
- **Quality vs. Quantity:** Prioritizing excellence or worth vs. the amount or number of

### **Targets: short-term goals (2025):**

- Focus on short-term growth
- Staffing and succession planning (in line with strategy)
- Increase affordable housing
- Establish and utilize city social media platforms
- Employee training and development
- Manager/supervisor leadership development to enhance the organization's mission and vision
- Challenge the status quo
- Live within physical limitations (balanced growth driven by strategic thought)

### **Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAG): long-term goals (2030)**

- North bypass
- Measurable and Sustainable growth
- Long-term Organizational Improvement
- Streamline hiring process
- Overcome the status quo
- Strategic professional growth for all staff
- Balance between industry and community
- Economic balance (high, middle, and entry-level jobs)
- Decrease commuters/increase people who live and work in Blair
- Positive atmosphere for families/middle class, and retirees
- Increase staffing levels to meet community expectations
- Develop a plan for city facilities and volunteer services

### **Key Performance Indicators (KPI)**

Measurable values that demonstrate how effectively an individual, team, or organization is achieving a specific objective.

1. Community satisfaction
2. Quality of life factors critical to the organization
3. Employee recruitment and retention
4. Economic accountability: (budget and tax revenue)
5. Employee development and growth
6. Leadership development and mentoring
7. Business retention and strategic business recruitment (shopping, restaurants, retail, etc.)
8. Quality vs. Quantity

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# Comprehensive Plan Elements

## Demographics, Economy and Employment

History & Demographics  
Existing Economic Conditions  
SWOT Analysis

## Existing Facilities and Services

Public Buildings  
Parks and Recreation  
Police, Fire & Public Services  
Water & Sewer Utilities

## Housing: Existing and Future Needs

Housing Demographics and Inventory  
Housing Mix and Forms  
Housing Attainability  
Housing Incentives



## Land Use: Current and Future

Current Zoning Districts  
Future Land Use  
Future Growth and Development

## Transportation: Current and Future

Current Infrastructure and Traffic Counts  
Transportation Forecasts  
Future Projects and Cost Estimates

## Energy Element and Utilities

Required Energy Element  
Current Utilities  
Future Utility Needs

# Comprehensive Plan Elements

## Purpose of a Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan has two fundamental purposes:

1. It provides an essential legal basis for land use regulations such as zoning and subdivision regulations.
2. A modern comprehensive plan presents a far-reaching and compelling vision for a community, derived component by component from the feedback and desires of its residents, appointed and elected officials, and establishes the specific actions necessary to fulfill that vision.

## Involvement of Blair Residents, Appointed and Elected Officials

A comprehensive plan is not developed by outsiders and thrust upon a community. It is developed, component by component, through a guided process led by professional city planners and engineers selected through an RFQ process. A Steering or Advisory Committee is often involved in working directly with the consultants throughout the entire process. The Planning Commission and other appointed boards spend significant time evaluating existing regulations and vision-casting the future. Multiple open houses or charrettes are usually held while elements are being developed. A final recommendation is made by the Planning Commission, with final approval and adoption by the City Council.

## Elements (components) of a Comprehensive Plan

### 1. Demographics, Economy and Employment

This section describes and examines important demographic and economic trends that currently exist and will continue to have a major impact on Blair in the future. It begins with a brief history of the community, followed by existing demographic information (population, age/sex/income category breakdowns) and historic growth trends. SWOT information (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) are collected and grouped during public meetings. This section is used to project future population and economic growth and employment needs and opportunities.

### 2. Existing Facilities and Services

This section describes the existing public facilities, their use and physical condition. Also listed are facility needs that are not adequately served. Included in this section is a description of the various public services that are offered and an evaluation of their efficiency and effectiveness. This section is used to project future capital construction and improvement projects, as well as new public services to develop.

### **3. Housing: Existing and Future Needs**

This section describes the current state of housing in Blair, including age, condition, availability, and affordability. These figures are then compared with regional rates and with projects based upon the growth expectations from Element 1. Housing best practices, new approaches, and new incentives are discussed and included, as recommended. This section is used to guide city staff in future housing development initiatives.

### **4. Land Use: Current and Future**

This section describes the current land use (zoning) districts and uses. Public meetings are often held to discuss possible changes to land use zones and regulations. The Land Use element must balance and maintain reasonable goals and objectives while remaining flexible enough to react to unanticipated changes or opportunities. This section is used to guide future annexations, zoning changes, and land development.

### **5. Transportation: Current and Future**

This section describes the current network of highways, roads, trails, railroads and transit services that facilitate the movement of residents and goods throughout the community, as well as the general condition of each segment. This section also establishes the City's goals and policies for future development of the transportation infrastructure within the City and ETJ. Finally, this section is used to project future capital transportation projects and improvements.

### **6. Energy Element and Utilities**

This section is required by Nebraska statute. Energy elements are required to have three components: First, a description of the existing energy infrastructure and energy use by sector. Second, the City's overall utilization of renewable energy sources. Third, what energy conservation measures are being used that benefit the community.

The Comprehensive Plan ends with a detailed section of goals, strategies and recommendations to begin to implement through subsequent budget years.

## PROCESS FOR SELECTING WHICH CONSULTANT FIRM TO USE

From the American Planning Association:

**Request for Qualifications:** In a combined RFQ-RFP process, an agency first releases an RFQ concisely describing the project and inviting consulting firms to submit their qualifications for consideration. RFQs should be widely advertised and can also be sent directly to individual firms. Because RFQs do not require a significant investment of time or resources for consultants to answer, response rates are generally high, and because they do not take significant amounts of time to review, staff can quickly review and rank the applications received. This is a good way for agencies who might not have previously worked with consultants to generate a short list of qualified candidates—typically between four or five of the highest ranked—to invite to submit full proposals through the RFP process.

**Request for Proposals:** Other communities may decide to forego the RFQ and directly issue an RFP. The RFP should describe the scope of work for the project at hand and the consultant services needed, requirements for application, and evaluation and selection criteria. Agencies must write clear and accurate RFPs so that consultants' proposals may respond precisely to communities' needs. Preparing a response to an RFP takes significant time and resources on the part of the consultant, as well as significant review time on the part of the agency, so using an RFQ to identify a limited number of prequalified firms for the RFP invitation can be valuable for both parties.

**Define Your Goals and Scope:** Clearly outline what you want to achieve with the comprehensive plan. This includes identifying key areas such as housing, transportation, land use, and sustainability.

- **Prepare a Detailed RFP (Request for Proposal):** A well-written RFP will attract qualified firms. Include specifics about the project scope, objectives, budget, and timeline.
- **Evaluate Experience and Expertise:** Look for firms with a proven history in creating comprehensive plans for cities similar to yours. Check their portfolio and references.
- **Assess Methodology and Approach:** Ensure the firm's approach aligns with your city's vision. This includes their methods for community engagement, data analysis, and implementation strategies 1.
- **Check Credentials and Certifications:** Verify that the firm has the necessary certifications and professional affiliations, such as membership in the American Planning Association (APA).

- **Conduct Interviews:** Interview shortlisted firms to understand their approach, team dynamics, and how they plan to address your city's unique challenges.
- **Review Proposals and Make a Decision:** Compare proposals based on criteria such as cost, experience, methodology, and fit with your city's goals. Select the firm that best meets your needs.

## **A BUDGET AMOUNT FOR THE ENTIRE PROCESS, INCLUDING ANY AVAILABLE CDBG PLANNING GRANTS**

Nebraska CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) planning grant: Supports project-related studies, data collection, paths to implementation, and the preparation of plans, such as housing studies, comprehensive plans, downtown revitalization plans and historic preservation studies.

**Planning grants applications will open on July 1 and then close September 15, 2025.**

The cost of a comprehensive plan depends on the scope of complexity, and specific needs of the city, along with the size of the city. Hastings (pop. 24,733) spent \$105,000 on new comprehensive plan titled “On the Horizon” and another \$35,000 to update the zoning regulations.

Ashland (pop. 3,546) and Springfield (pop. 1,620) just updated their comprehensive plans for a cost of about \$150,000, each. Ashland decided to “go big” on their plan and services with a new comprehensive plan.

Some payment options: If there are specific timing constraints regarding payment - such as needing to split payments between two fiscal years – that can be identified upfront in the RFP, and should be described in the contract. There are various ways to manage the timing of payments. Depending on the length of the project, a firm might bill upon certain deliverables. Or payments could be monthly. The cost would usually include both fees for service plus any reimbursables like hotel and travel expenses. Regardless of the method, timing of payment should be discussed and agreed upon before the contract is signed (*from the NPZA 2025 conference session on hiring a consultant*).

## **A TIMEFRAME ESTIMATE (START TO FINISH)**

Expect the process to span anywhere from one year to 18 months, again depending on the scope of the work involved. This includes the time spent in focus groups, interviews, surveys and/or townhall-style meetings.

## **MINIMUM EXPECTATION OF INVOLVEMENT BY CITIZEN GROUPS, PLANNING COMMISSION, CITY COUNCIL AND STAFF**

In 2015 the steering committee numbered 23 people comprised of five City Council members; three Planning Commission members; eight citizens; one person each from the Gateway Development Corporation, Blair Community Schools and the Chamber of Commerce. The remainder of the committee was city staff, including the City Administrator.

The adoption of a new comprehensive plan will be part of the regular Planning Commission and City Council public hearings, but the expectation is that the steering committee would meet at least three times, once at the start to establish the scope of work; another meeting midway through the process to gauge and/or advise on the progress and finally to be presented the final plan, including results of various stakeholders meetings, public outreach and other public involvement, such as and information booth at the annual Gateway to the West celebration. Again, these meetings and public meetings would be determined by the goals set by the steering committee.

### **Purpose**

- ***The Comprehensive Plan is about Policy***
- ***Policies Drive Regulations and other implementation tools***
- ***Comprehensive Plans are not directly regulatory***

